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BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN IRAN

To the memory of Prof. dr. Iraj Afshar (Tehran, 1925-2011)

Upon the official request of Mohammad Shah (reigned 1834-1848), two daguerreotype cameras had been sent to the Persian court as early as 1842, one by the Russian government and the other by the British government. Fate decided that the one sent from Russia would arrive first, in mid-December 1842. The details of this fundamental historical event have been researched in-depth by the leading scholar Chahryar Adle, and as he states,

the Russian set, a present of the Czar, arrived earlier. Nikolai Pavlov, the young diplomat trained for the purpose, brought it to Tehran and took the first photograph recorded in Iranian history in presence of Mohammad Shah on the date mentioned. (Adle 2000: 1)

Due to recent research done by Adle, we can conclude that Pavlov took daguerreotypes at court as early as December 1842, so just three years after the announcement of the daguerreotype process in Paris. Shortly after Pavlov arrived in Iran, the French photographer Jules Richard (1816-1891, later known as Richard Khan) was the first European photographer to work in the Persian court. He arrived in Tehran in 1844 and, after the change of king in 1848, his work expanded from teaching photography at court to teaching photography to Iranian students in the Dār al-Fonun from 1851 onwards, Iran’s first institution of higher learning based on Western models, where a special department of photography had been opened. He mastered the process of daguerreotype, which was his main teaching subject. Unfortunately, to date only one of his daguerreotypes has been found, hosted at Musée d’Orsay.

It was under Nāser al-Din Shah (reign 1848-1896) that photography was really developed and different techniques learned and mastered. His interest in photography began when he was very young, devoting time to learning the photographic technique and becoming, later on, a serious and engaged amateur photographer. The Shah decided to bring this new invention close to his servants at court, and several rooms were reserved for photography (known as Akskhāne-ye Mobārake-ye Homāyuni, i.e. “the Royal Photographic Atelier”, established within the grounds of the
Golestan Palace in 1858), as well as at the Dār al-Fonun. This academy was envisioned by Nāser al-Din Shah’s prime minister Amir Kabir (1807-1852) for the training of future military officers and civil servants. As stated by Maryam Ekhtiar and Marika Sardar,

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.4

The Shah’s encouragement of photography in Iran was promoted in two ways: by inspiring his courtiers and actively engaging them in the photographic technique, and by providing Dār al-Fonun with professional photographers as teachers to prepare a solid generation of students that would strengthen the basis of the new invention in Iran. Some were even given the opportunity to refine their skills in government-sponsored training in Europe, in workshops or on courses. It was also thanks to the Shah that several books on photography were translated to be used as teaching material at court or at Dār al-Fonun. According to Yahyā Zokā, in 1859, the first book on photography by an unknown Iranian author was printed, 14 pages long and very small in format (6 x 15 cm) (fig. I). It was a handbook to be used as an introduction to the new medium. Zokā and also Iraj Afšar refer to a second book entitled Ketāb-e ‘aks by Mohammad Kāzim, printed in 1863.5 As argued by the Iranian photo-historian Mohammad Rezā Tahmasbpour, who has been working on this topic in-depth, soon after the first technical books were translated, aesthetic, philosophic and religious debates were to follow.6 Both pioneers in the history of Iranian photography, Iraj Afšar and Yahyā Zokā introduced in their books some of those early publications, such as Qavā ’ed-e aks va telegrāf (Principles of the Photograph and Telegraph, 1880) and the book Aksiyye-ye hashar-iyye (1889). These are among the pioneering books on theoretic precepts of photography in Iran.

European professionals were brought to the court and to the Dār al-Fonun to work as teachers, such as the Austrian August Karl Krziz (1814-1886, active from 1851-1859 in Iran), and the Italians Fochetti (active in Iran from 1851 onwards), Luigi Pesce (active in Iran from 1851 onwards), Antonio Gianuzzi (active from 1859 onwards) and Luigi Montabone (active in Iran in 1862, died 1877)7, and the Frenchman Francois Carlhian (active from 1858 onwards). As remarked by Afšar, among the earliest documents that inform us about the introduction of photography in Iran we find the third volume of the Mer’at al-boldān-e Nāseri written by E’timād al-Saltane (Sāne al-Dowle) in 1863-64.8 He says that,
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. For our information about the French photographers, we are indebted to an article by J. Qa’im-Maqami 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 Carlhée and 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)”. The article deals in a comprehensive manner with the background of the Mission and its members, including the two photographers Luigi Montabone and Pietrobon (Afshar 1992B: 262-263).

Afshar quotes the relevant pages of E’timād al-Saltane’s book referring to pioneer European photographers in Iran:

Towards the end of the reign of that pious King and Fighter for the Faith, Muhammad Shah, may the Almighty clothe him in light, Monsieur Richard Khān who at present teaches English and other languages at Dar al-Funun used, with much toil, to take pictures on silver plate. In the early part of the reign of our present Shah, may our souls be sacrificed for him, when the Dar al-Funun was built, Monsieur Krziz, the Austrian artillery instructor, did some photographic experiments on paper. Monsieur Focchetti, the biology teacher, was the first person to use the collodion process at the Tehran College: and Monsieur Carlhian who had accompanied Farrokh-Khān Amin al-Dawle from Paris to Tehran in order to propagate the science and methods of photography, made the use of the collodion process widespread (Afshar 1992: 5).

Carlhian then taught the collodion process to Nāser al-Din Shah and to Rezā Akkāsbāshi (1860). There is an album hosted at the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet where photographs taken by Carlhian, Pesce and Gianuzzi are shown together with some watercolours collected by the French colonel Victor Francois Brongiart (1809-1968).9 He became a teacher at the Dār al-Fonun and did some experiments with cyanotype.10 Most probably Āqā Rezā (later Rezā Akkāsbāshi, 1843-1889) learned this technique from him around 1863 and became the first Iranian photographer active in the Persian court. Brongiart was most probably responsible for the introduction of Western props and paraphernalia in the Iranian photographer’s studio as well as the typical Victorian poses: frontal and hieratic. Being as he was one of the first Western photographers to work
as a teacher for Iranian students, he may have been an influential photographer for Iranians, both technically and aesthetically. Āqā Rezā, one of the court’s children, became the first qualified photographer to work in the Akskhāne. He was later awarded the title of Akkāsbāshi (Court Photographer), and adopted the name with which he became known as the first professional Iranian court photographer: Rezā Akkāsbāshi.11 Already in 1857, Pesce took photographs of ancient cities such as Persepolis, while Gianuzzi took photographs mainly of Mashhad. Both were active in Tehran as well. It was also around this time that Nāser al-Din Shah became actively involved with the new technique and photography became one of his favorite pastimes. Nāser al-Din Shah is considered to be an influential figure in the history of Iranian photography because he was a serious amateur photographer himself, next to the fact that the expansion and development of the technique and art of photography in Iran is indebted to his supporting policies. He photographed everything and anything that belonged to him with overflowing enthusiasm. But his fame in the world of photography, especially outside of Iran, is due to the numerous photographic portraits that he took of his wives. We can recognize the most influential and favorite of his wives by the number of times that they have been depicted, and also because they present a noticeable complicity with the Shah in the way that they have posed: Fātimah Sultān Anis al-Dawla (d. 1897) and Zobayde Amina Aghdas (d. 1893). According to the historian Abbas Amanat:

In the later years of his reign, the Shah complained of the stress caused by the rivalry among his wives and their unending demands on him. There were a number of influential wives of peasant background to whom he felt particularly attached. Contrary to princesses and other members of the nobility, these women of low birth better indulged the Shah’s undernourished emotional needs. Two of them in particular, Fatima Sultan Anis al-Dawla (d. 1897) and Zubayda Amina Aghdas (d. 1893), brought into the royal harem a certain plebeian mentality and lifestyle – and, in the case of the latter, a degree of vulgarity and homeliness – that appealed to the Shah because of their simplicity (Amanat 1997: 436).

The Qajar prince Malak Ghāsem Mirzā (c.1806-c.1861) was, according to Zokā, the first Iranian photographer to be active in photographic technique and produced some of the earliest examples of court photography in Iran. Zokā argues further that he may have produced earlier daguerreotypes than Richard Khān.12

Montabone, who belonged to a family of professional photographers, introduced hand-colored photography in Iran. The photographs taken during his Italian mission were exhibited successfully at the international
exhibition in Paris in 1867. He produced a well-known album entitled *Ricordo del Viaggio in Persia della Missione Italiana 1862*. Three copies of the album have been identified: one in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice, one in the *Albumkhāne* of the Golestān Palace in Tehran and a third one in the Royal House Archives in the Hague, the Netherlands. 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 Golestān 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 (Tahmasbpour 2007: 17).

Ernst Hoeltzer (1855-1939) and Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933) are two of the more interesting and prolific photographers that were active in Iran in the last decades of the nineteenth century. They not only stayed longer and lived there for over 30 years, but married Iranian women. Hoeltzer arrived to Iran for the first time in 1871, lived in Iran for over 30 years and married an Armenian woman in Isfahan. As a residing European photographer in Iran, he produced a remarkable corpus of photographs, specially of Isfahan and the surrounding area. I will analyze his work in chapter 5.

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 photographer. His work’s aesthetics were remarkable. His photography finds itself halfway between staged studio portrait and ethnographic/anthropological documentary photography. Sevruguin’s work was very well known by Western travelers and was often used in their travelogues, although he was rarely acknowledged as the photographer. One of the most shocking examples of this is the April 1921 National Geographic Magazine, *Modern Persia and its Capital*, that I will analyze in chapter 5, where many pictures taken by Sevruguin appeared with another author’s name (Faye Fischer). Another well-known journal is *Die Welt des Islams* by Dr Walter Phillipe Schulz published in 1917 which also contains several uncredited photographs by Sevruguin.

W. Ordén (often spelled M. Hordet) was one of the most mysterious and elusive photographers active in Central Asia at the end of nineteenth century. His work produced in the Khānates of Khiva, Bukhara and Khokand has been published in different books, but to date, it was not known that he also traveled through Persia at the end of the nineteenth century and that he took many photographs there of landscapes, architecture and people. Almost nothing is known of Hordet, except, as mentioned by Vitaly Naumkin, that he traveled in Central Asia between 1885 and 1892. His
prints are captioned by writing directly on the negative and sometimes also on the print itself in both French and Russian, but his name is signed using Cyrillic print.

Looking unsuccessfully for the footsteps of the Iranian court photographer Abdollāh Mirzā Qajar (1849-1908) in Austria, I came across the W. Ordén collection of photography hosted by the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna. Being a totally unknown photographer active in the last decade of the nineteenth century in Iran, I will devote some more space to him here in order to properly introduce what I have been able to find so far. The collection comprises 700 photographs from Central Asia and Persia. Next to the collection, there are two letters written in German by the photographer himself and signed "W. Ordén" in which he offers the collection (of photographs taken in Caucasus, Central Asia and Persia, as can be read in the first letter) to the museum stating clearly his conditions. He sent these two letters from St Petersburg. The first one was dated 19 March 1896 (fig. II) and the second one 7 April 1896 (fig. III). So, without a doubt we can date all his photographs hosted in this collection as taken before those dates.

In all the books that printed W. Ordén’s photographs taken in Central Asia mentioned above, the photographer is identified as M. Hordet. The accepted transliteration of the photographer’s name from Russian seems to have been M. Hordet, but the two letters are signed by “W. Ordén”, so both names obviously refer to the same photographer.

W. Ordén’s sepia-toned album prints hosted in this collection are in the general range of 16 x 22 cm in size and mounted on board. As stated by Kate Fitz Gibbon, “his negative numbering system gives some clue to his prolific nature. Known prints span at least between the numbers 1504 and 1602, a few are numbered in the 1880s or 2000s, and many more appear between 2745 and 2791”. Remarkably, in this collection I have found numbers that go up to 4281 (a photograph taken in Erzurum), so quite a lot higher than was known to date. In particular, the photographs that concern this study, the ones taken in Persia or that depict Persian types, go up to number 3189. The subjects of the photographs include studio portraits (often collages of two, three or four photographs), landscapes (there are several cemeteries), archeological sites and street scenery. There are several photographs of the Golestān Palace (figs. IV and V), of cemeteries of various cities in Iran (figs. VI and VII), a caravanserai in Shiraz (fig. VIII), a tower overlooking the Caspian see in Anzali (fig. IX), and several collages of Persian types, that I shall introduce in chapter 5. So far I have been able to locate two institutional archives and two private collections that hold photographs by Ordén: The Ethnology Museum in Vienna, the KunstKamera in St Petersburg, Anhaita Gallery in Santa Fe, and Elmar Seibel Collection in Boston. I will introduce his work further in chapter 5,
since he constitutes a new (unknown) name in the history of photography in Iran.

We know of three Western women active in Iran in the Qajar Era, the French archeologist and journalist Jane Dieulafoy (1851-1916, active in 1881-82), the English Isabella Lucy Bishop-Bird (active 1890) and the archeologist Gertrude Lowthian Bell (1868-1926, active in Iran in 1911). Dieulafoy and Bell’s travels were inspired and conditioned by their interest in archeological research, whereas that of Bishop-Bird was basically motivated by an interest in traveling and being faced with unknown realities. I will briefly introduce each one of them, as well as a few Iranian female photographers, in chapter 5.

Aside from the professional European photographers brought to the Persian court on the Shah’s request, there were other foreign visitors and travelers to Persia who actively or passively participated in the development of photography in Iran. Western nineteenth-century travelers to Persia came from different interests and cultural backgrounds. There are three categories in which these travelers can be classified according to the motivation that led them to travel: diplomats and travelers on political or military missions; travelers on archeological missions; and tourists (this last group was very small in numbers). Some of these early travelers to Iran wrote and published their studies and memories in the form of books and travelogues. Here it is important to stress the fact that the amount of foreign travelers to Persia was quite insignificant compared to other countries in Asia. A good way to prove this is by comparing the amount of guidebooks published at the end of the nineteenth century in different countries in Asia. If we just consider the most popular British publisher, John Murray’s guidebooks, the first guidebook to Persia (as an independent short chapter within the whole guidebook) was published in 1895, by which time Murray’s guidebook to Japan was in its 5th edition and to India in its 3rd edition. In the 1854 Murray’s guidebook to Turkey (3rd edition) we find just two pages referring to Persia, precisely the route number 60 from Erzurum to Persia.

Scholarly travelers took, bought or commissioned photographs to illustrate their publications. A number of art historians and archeologists commissioned quite extensive photographic surveys, among them the German photographer, Iranologist and writer Franz Stolze (1836-1910) who stayed in Iran from 1874 to 1881; the French archeologist and photographer Jacques Jean Marie de Morgan (1857-1924) who was in Iran in 1897; and the German Friedrich Sarre (1836-1910) who traveled in Iran and Turkestan in 1897-98 and 1899-1900. Some of these travelers, as in the case of Sarre, used photographs by Sevruguin without crediting him. This was, not surprisingly, very much the norm in the nineteenth century, when copyright issues were unheard of. They concentrated on the landscape, archeological sites and daily life of local people living in small villages.
Other travelogues are those by the French writer Henry René D’Allemagne (1863-1950) and the Swedish geographer and explorer Sven Hedin (1865-1952). D’Allemagne’s travelogue, *Du Khorasan au Pays des Bakhtiarias. Trois mois de voyage en Perse*, was published in 1911 in four volumes. Hedin’s travelogue *Zu Land nach Indien*, published in Leipzig in two volumes in 1910, presents 308 images that include his photographs, watercolors and drawings. At least two of the photographs were probably taken by Sevruguin, since he acknowledges the authorship by another photographer as by an Armenian photographer.22

As noted above, the first professional Iranian court photographer was Rezā Akkāsbāshī. He was son of Esmā’īl Jadid al-Eslāmī, a well-known court servant and brother of Nāser al-Din Shah’s private doctor. He became a court servant while still a child. In 1863, while he was still a servant, the Shah decided that he would be trained as a photographer under the guidance of Carlhian. I will repeatedly come back to this photographer throughout my book since a few of his photographs will be analyzed in the different chapters. Rezā Akkāsbāshī’s students, who worked at court or as teachers at Dār al-Fonun, became the first generation of Iranian photographers. For a graphic idea of the amount of court photographers (both non-Iranian and Iranian) active during the reigns of Mohammad Shah and Nāser al-Din Shah (both with or without the title Akkāsbāshī), and of the photographers working at Dār al-Fonun, see fig. X.

Ali Khān Amin Hazrat (active from 1873, d. 1888) was the son of the Ābdārbāshī of Nāser al-Din Shah. As explained to me by Iranian photo historian Rezā Sheikh in e-mail communication (January 2012), “Ābdārbāshī is someone who is in charge of daily refreshments of all sorts, mostly on the liquid side (tea, sharbat...), also light sweets etc, someone who not only took care of the king but also his guests. Their job was extremely important as they also made sure no one poisoned the king, hence very trusted people, very close to the king”. In 1876, he became the head of the Akkāskhāne in the Golestān Palace, responsible for training and controlling other photographers, such as Mirzā Hoseyn Ali Akkās (active 1877-1889). Album 129, kept at the Golestān Palace, has 70 photographs of different places taken by Ali Khān Amin Hazrat in 1881. From 1882 to 1887, he took the position of his father as the Shah’s Ābdārbāshī.23 Mirzā Hoseyn Ali Akkās was his most advanced student. He was sent to Europe for further studies in photographic technique. He became Nāser al-Din Shah’s private doctor, and the head of the Akkāskhāne for some time. He accompanied the Shah on his second trip to Khorasan and took 76 photographs on the way to Mashhad, 95 photographs in Mashhad and 81 photographs on the way back, now kept in three boxes at the Golestān Palace Library.24 The brother of the famous court painter Mohammad Ghaffārī, Kamāl al-Molk (1852-1940), Sāne al-Molk who was himself a painter, used many of his photographs as models for his paintings, an example of
how photography also influenced Persian painting at the end of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{25} He was undoubtedly one of the most prolific photographers of his time.

Abbās Ali Beyk (active from 1863 onwards) was a student of Rezā Akkāsbāshi as well. He supervised the Akkāskhāne and helped Rezā Akkāsbāshi to develop his photographs. In 1870, the Shah sent him to Arak to take photographs before a planned trip of the Shah with his mother to that land. When he came back to the court, 79 photographs taken by him were printed by Rezā Akkāsbāshi and placed in two identical albums: one for the Shah and one for his mother, both kept at the Golestān Palace. Later on, in 1868, the first studio outside the court was opened and run by Abbās Ali Beik, under the supervision of Rezā Akkāsbāshi.\textsuperscript{26}

Yusof Khān Akkās (active from 1892 onwards), a court photographer in the last years of Nāser al-Din Shah’s reign, also was granted the Akkāsbāshi title. In the Golestān Palace there are three albums (Nos. 109, 110 and 111) with a total of 145 photographs taken by Yusof Khān Akkās between 1894 and 1895.\textsuperscript{27}

Mirzā Seyed Ali is no doubt one of the best Iranian photographers of the Qajar Era. His photographs can be found easily among family albums in private collections. He assisted his father, who was himself mostowfi. As explained to me by Sheikh, “mostowfi is like a clerk and accountant combined, they kept track of all kinds of financial transactions, property, selling and buying, also any kind of financial flow in or out of the treasury. They had the ability to keep daily accounts and supply all kinds of reports. Any ruler, provincial, local, or country wide, king and his boys, all had their own mostofi. Mostowfi al-mamālek was the head of all the mostofis”. When his father died, he took over his position. There are many photographs with his studio’s stamp. In album No. 278, kept at the Golestān Palace, there are many of his photographs.\textsuperscript{28}

Manucher Khān Akkās (active around 1882), was active in the last part of the reign of Mozaffar al-Din Mirzā in Tabriz. Zokā explains that in the Golestān Palace there are 83 photographs in two albums (Nos. 434 and 401) that bear Manuchehr Khān’s signature.\textsuperscript{29}

Mirzā Ahmad Khān Sāne al-Saltāne (born 1847), studied medicine at Dār al-Fonun and learnt photography by himself. He was so attracted by it that it later became his profession. Dust Ali Khān Nezām al-Dawle sent him to Europe to study photography, graveure, etc, for 15 months. Upon his return to Iran, he started working at the Akkāskhāne and also at Dār al-Fonun. He was also actively working theoretically on photographic technique in 1873-1882 and wrote a book about photography entitled Amal-e Akkāsi o Resāla’i dar Akkāsi, which was presented to Nāser al-Din Shah. Later on (without royal permission or request) he went to Europe and spent over 7 years there.\textsuperscript{30}
Aghayanz Armeni (active around 1890-1910), was an Armenian photographer, active in the last years of the reign of Nāser al-Din Shah and the first years of Mozaffār al-Din Shah’s. He opened a photo studio together with the Iranian photographer Amishu and other colleagues. Several of his photographs are kept at the Palace Golestān Library (albums 285 and 292). There also is an album with forty-eight photographs in the Zokā private collection. His work follows the aesthetics of pictorialist photography, best represented in the West by Margaret Cameron and in Iran by Antoin Sevruguin. One of his favorite topics was portraits of dervishes using on them the light, atmosphere, composition and pose of the pictorial tradition in photography.

Joseph Papaziant (active from the 1870s onwards) was an Armenian photographer and also a well-known theater actor. In 1875, he opened a studio in Tehran. Due to his outstanding work, the Shah gave him a royal medal (Shir-o Khorshid) that he printed on his card.

Mohammad Hasan Qajar (active during the last years of Nāser al-Din Shah, between 1890 and 1895), worked as a court photographer specializing in military matters. There is a well-known album with photographs of prisoners in Qazvin, most probably a project commissioned by the Shah, taken in 1895 (album No. 334 at Golestān Palace).

Abdollāh Mirzā Qajar attended the Dār al-Fonun and, in 1869, traveled to Europe to study photography. He lived in Paris for one and a half years and in Salzburg for three years. He started his career as a professional photographer immediately on his return from Europe, and was placed in charge of photography in Dār al-Fonun. Later in the reign of Mozaffār al-Din Shah he became the head of the Imperial Printing Press and his name stamp can be seen at the end of the books printed in that press. He is one of the photographers whose work I will present throughout my book. As noted by Afshar, the best source of information about him is his own account (written in 1896-7), which is reproduced in Mr Iqbāl Yaghmā’i’s article “The Beginning of the Craft of Photography and Stereotyping in Iran”.

Amir Khān Jalil al-Dawle Qajar (d. 1888), a prince photographer whose talent has been remarked by Zokā and Adle. In 1896, he took several photographs in Khorasan that were pasted into an album now held at the Golestān Palace (album 438).

Mirzā Jahāngir Khān Akkās (active 1890s to 1910s), worked at the court both with Nāser al-Din Shah in his last years of rule and with Mozaffār al-Din Shah. Unfortunately, no specific albums with his photographs have been found so far, and his photographs are hard to find scattered among different collections.

Abd al-Qāsem ebn al-Nuri (active from the 1880s onwards), Mirzā Jahāngir Khān Akkās’s father, worked in Nāser al-Din Shah’s court. He learned the photographic technique when he was quite young. Several of
his photographs are kept in albums at the Golestān Palace Library. His work is especially interesting for my research, since he was fond of using inscriptions within the photographic space. He placed his signature within cartouches and in the same way as the illuminators did. Most of the sitters depicted in his photographs are kneeling in the traditional Iranian pose and hold objects borrowed from the Persian painting iconography.39 I will come back to him repeatedly, since his work is very interesting for my research, especially concerning the relation of text/calligraphy and image.

Another important Iranian photographer, Ali Khān Valī Hākem (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. 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.40 Ali Khān Valī’s photograph album documenting his career as a governor at various places in Azerbaijan (Northwest Persia) between 1873 and 1896, is of virtually unprecedented quality and character. His work will be introduced and analyzed in chapter 5, since it bears some interesting elements such as the field studio paraphernalia used while taking portraits of people he met during his travels.

In Shiraz, there was a whole family of photographers. Mirzā Akkāsbāshi (1854-1916) was the first photographer of the family. When he was 16 years old, he emigrated to Bahrain where he met an English photographer who taught him the photographic technique. Four years later he traveled to India and settled in Mumbai for 20 years. There he kept on improving his photographic skills with another English photographer, who was also his student of Persian. He started working as a professional photographer when he was 24 years old. During the last eight years of his stay in Mumbai, he worked as a professional photographer and then returned to Shiraz. In 1894, he opened a studio in Bushehr, the first one to open in Fars province. Later on, he opened a studio in Kazerum and in 1895, he went back to Shiraz where he did the biggest part of his production as a photographer.41 His work, and also that of his family, is interesting for my research, especially due to the use of text within the photographic space, pots of flowers and the understanding of the photographic space in general, as we shall see with examples in the different chapters of this book. Mirzā Mohammad Rezā Akkāsbāshi (1862-1902) was the brother of Mirzā Hasan (1853-1915) and started taking photographs in 1886. He traveled, like his brother, to Irak or in India, where he also worked as professional photographer.42 Mirzā Habibollāh Chehrehnegār (1896-1942) was the son of Mirzā Hasan, and Mirzā Fatollāh Cheherhnegār (1877-1932) was his grandson. Both also traveled to India and settled in Mumbai for a while.
I will, throughout the book, introduce some historical information related to the history of photography in Iran or to the life and work of the photographers considered. This brief historical introduction should be taken as an aid for the general reader to understand the book in its proper historical context. At the end of the book, there is an appendix that will be useful as a chronological guide to historical facts and information about the photographers considered in this book. For further reading in English about the history of photography in Iran, Iraj Afšar’s *Remarks on the History of Early Photography in Iran* remains a good source of information. The best sources in Persian on the history of photography are the classics by Yahyā Zokā and Iraj Afšar. In the last ten years there has been a remarkable increase in research done on Iranian photographers by leading Iranian photohistorians. A detailed bibliography (by Francesca Bonetti, Alberto Prandi and Khadijeh Mohammadi Nameghi) will be published in a special issue of “History of Photography” (HOP) on nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Iranian photography due in early 2013 (guest editors: Rezā Sheikh and Carmen Pérez González), with all publications in Persian.

### NOTES


5. For more information about these two books, see: Zokā 1997: 291-293; and Afšar 1992: 11.

6. Tahmasbpour has considered this topic in several articles and books. See, for example: Tahmasbpour 2010 and Tahmasbpour 2001.

7. For a good source of information on the Italian photographers active in Iran in the nineteenth century, see: Bonnetti & Prandi 2010.


10. 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 light. The paper turns dark except where the object blocks the light. The resulting image is white on a blue ground. As quoted from Rosenblum 1997: 651.

11 For further information on Rezā Akasbashi, see Zokā 1997: 47-57; and Tahmaspouri 2007.
12 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 8-17. For further information about this photographer, see: Adle 1983.
13 See Vuurman 2004: 23.
14 For a good source of information on Ernst Hoeltzer and a wide selection of his photographs, see Damanand 2004.
17 Fitz Gibbon 2009: 19.
19 The author outlined a route from Tabriz to Tehran, and an alternative one (described as shorter and more picturesque, from Sultaniah to Kasvin): see, Handbook for Travelers to Turkey, describing Constantinople, European Turkey, Asia Minor, Armenia, and Mesopotamia, London, John Murray Publisher, 1854: 270-271.
20 There are 351 photographs taken by Morgan in his first assignment in Iran organized in four albums at the Palace Golestān Library: Nos. 1397, 1398, 1399, 1400. I thank Ms Khadijeh Mohammadi Nameghi for this information.
23 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 79-82.
28 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 121-124.
29 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 193-196.
30 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 75-78.
31 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 197-205.
33 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 119-120.
37 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 128-134.
38 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 135.
39 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 117-118.
40 As summarized and translated from Zokā 1997: 66-74.
41 As summarized and translated from Persian from the book: Sane 1990: 9-12.
42 As summarized and translated from Sane 1990: 13-14.