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To cite this article: Zahra Fanaei, Bahar Rahimzadeh & S. Ali Mojabi (2017) An analytical and comparative study of male and female images in Qajar dynasty paintings during the reign of Fath-Ali Shah (1797–1834), Middle Eastern Studies, 53:3, 420-441, DOI: 10.1080/00263206.2016.1261829

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2016.1261829

Published online: 09 Dec 2016.

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An analytical and comparative study of male and female images in Qajar dynasty paintings during the reign of Fath-Ali Shah (1797–1834)

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Most researchers and scholars inside Iran consider Qajar dynasty art (1789–1925) in line with the Safavid (1501–1736) and Zand (1750–1794) dynasties. Assuming the Safavid period as the starting point in the Farangi Sazi tradition (a term used for some art schools in Iran which are influenced by European art), and assuming the art in the Afsharid (1736–1796) and Zand dynasties as more impressionable disciples of the tradition, then it can be asserted that Qajar dynasty art pursued the same tradition with minor changes and variations through the offspring and grandchildren of those same artists. Qajar painting represented an effort to forge a delightful balance between the two non-similar Iranian and European elements which received some favourable but minor success in the first half of the twentieth century.1

The royal style of figurative painting created in Fath-Ali Shah’s era (1797–1834), when Qajar dynasty painting began, is a manifestation of the apogee of intermingling Persian and European art in a refined and splendid framework. In another words, it was a school in which there is a brilliant collaboration of naturalism, abstraction and ornamentation and a school in which the tendency to highlight the portrait removes the realism in European perspective and modelling.2 In Naser al-Din Shah’s reign (1848–1896), his keen interest in photography is manifest in its evident influence on Qajar paintings. Portrait painting began to be so dependent on photography that the length of time the model sat before the painter decreased. Paintings of this era had an extreme similarity with single portrait photography. As photography was promoted, creating perspective, simulation, chiaroscuro and the application of the law of proportions, these same aspects developed and were promoted in painting.3

A significant part of this study stresses the comparison between men and women in the paintings from the Fath-Ali Shah Qajar period as well as similarities and differences among them. Thus, with the employment of a descriptive method this research aims to identify characteristics of men’s and women’s images in the content of the paintings in order to understand the Qajar school better. Comparative analysis will be used to examine the role of females and males as well as their place in the court of Fath-Ali Shah. The article focuses on explaining the picture’s elements, the features of single portraits, types of composition, the presence of females in the court, characteristics of females and males in the paintings and comparison of their pictures. Appreciation theory by Harry Broudy is applied
to describe and interpret the pictures. Broudy suggests that art education needs a method of perceiving and analysing. Therefore, based on the theory, appreciation of artworks consists of both aesthetic perception and aesthetic criticism. Aesthetic perception is divided into four sections: sensory properties, formal properties, technical properties and expressive properties. Based on the objectives, we use sensory, formal and expressive properties for analysing artworks. This paper will address two main questions: first, what are the similarities and differences between female and male figures in the paintings of the Fath-Ali Shah’s period? And, second, what is the concept of male and female figures in the paintings of this period. Meanwhile, readers may gain a better understanding of the aesthetic properties of the paintings in this specific period (Qajar painting school), and also of its style and content.

Principles of Qajar paintings

The principal subject in the royal style of figurative painting that became dominant in Fath-Ali Shah’s era was the human, and the painter presented it in a world which was an indicator of glamour, beauty, love, joy and even occasionally legends, and thus nature elements were of secondary importance. Moreover, the painter would have attempted to execute an art form as commanded by various individuals who probably had different tastes. Consequently, there is a great deal of subjectivity and variety in art pieces of the Qajar school.

With their extravagantly western perspective, the paintings of the Qajar period seem strange and to some extent ridiculous. The shade work together with the attempt to take advantage of perspectives at the same time in a space which is merely two-dimensional is thoughtful. To the artists creating these art forms, this method of expression indicates their initiative which was also pleasing to their patrons. In general, although there is a dearth of high quality art works in the paintings of this era, the attempt to implement Western elements such as perspective and shade work in addition to merging it into Persian art was a significant revolution undertaken by the artists of the time. The science of perspective has a Renaissance, especially Italian, background; the motifs on cloth and paintings are among examples from eighteenth-century France. The implementation method of assimilation with natural textures is abundant in these art works where the artist attempted to copy exactly from nature and to reflect it in the paintings and this style of portrait painting was at its height at this period.

Colour combinations are among the other notable points of the era. In paintings of this era, colour is more emphasized than form, and colour is the factor that attracts the viewer’s attention. The main and dominant colour used is red, then golden yellow, orange and black respectively which were used for men and women proportionately. Though the range of colours was limited in this era, the painter sets red, orange and dark orange colours beside green, or accompanies yellow, white and blue planes with arabesque motifs and tiny flowers and achieves an unprecedented balance between plane and motif. In some cases, these colours are implemented on a dark background to add to the art work’s transparency; it facilitates coloration, the shades are not faded into one another and for the first time, colouring is introduced to painting through chiaroscuro (Figure 1).

The works of Qajar painters were used to ornament and embellish court life. In this era, ornamental art was greatly enforced. Costumes, crowns and cloaks are all designed with
pearl, ornamented in handmade cloth with golden threads, and embellished with pieces of jewellery. The eighteenth century ornamental motifs consist of Eslimi and Khataie (arabesque and traditional designs and changing into bunches of special spices of fragrant rose flowers), medallions of Term (a traditional handmade piece of priceless cloth threaded with silk) and repeated miniature flowers on the margins, corners and the central circle. The representation of the substantial appearance of the outside world and the harmonic repetition of motifs and colours is introduced in the paintings attributed to this era. All in all, the utopia of the painters of this era had been to show a perfectionist beauty.

**Single portrait painting in Fath-Ali Shah’s reign**

While manifesting visual specifications of their own kind, mentioned above, the portrait paintings of the Qajar period also have a significant conceptual load. Though among the regimes after Islam (Table 1), Qajar kings had not been the only rulers who had taken advantage of visual arts for propaganda; their emphasis on single portrait painting especially in Fath-Ali Shah’s period, which had been the starting point and pinnacle of this art, differentiates the Qajar dynasty and his reign from others. Indeed, this interest of Qajar
kings in figure painting as the epitome of kingdom embodied a more extensive approach to this art in the early nineteenth century.

One of the considerable aspects of the Qajar era is the path of change and revolution in art and the interaction of tradition and innovation. This interaction appeared from the very outset in the Fath-Ali Shah’s single portrait (Figure 1) by Mirza Baba (1789–1810); the style of the art form belongs to the Zand painting tradition but there is a sort of innovation in the conceptualization and atmosphere. Painting of the Zand period never appeared in splendid art style. Its principles included reflecting the influence of Safavid art, European royal portrait painting in composition with simple taste and attraction, merging three-dimensional visual elements and two-dimensional embellishments, cloths and curtains, frames and floor of the chambers that add more light to the image atmosphere (the Zand school was a continuation of Safavid art). It should be mentioned that Fath-Ali Shah himself inspired this new spirit in art by his theatrical representation of his own character and royal discipline and well-organized ceremonials and formalities. These conceptual changes accompanied a major revolution in painting style and technique. In the paintings of Fath-Ali Shah’s time, only faces had been given prominence while other parts of the body were differentiated from one another only through some lines and consequently were shadow-like, adding to their eminence. From this time on portrait painting lost its symbolic character in order to add to its descriptive aspects, and headed towards its renovation or modernization.

Fath-Ali Shah attempted to renovate the life of royal art. He gathered famous artists and painters in the capital and assigned them to draw large-scale paintings to ornament new palaces. This explains why these paintings are mostly drawn to fit the shapes and the sizes of shelves and niches in particular halls. Others were bought and cut and clipped into sizes in proportion to the niches. In these paintings, the reduction made at the top or bottom disturbs the harmony. As mentioned above, in these paintings the pinnacle of merging Persian and European traditions is evident. In this school, naturalism, abstraction and embellishment have merged glamorously. The human body is given fundamental significance. As to the importance of the human figure, assimilation is sacrificed for the

Table 1. Periods of Iranian history by dynasty (before and after Islam).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynasties</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Achaemenid Empire</td>
<td>550–350 BC</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Seleucid Empire</td>
<td>312–63 BC</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parthian Empire</td>
<td>247 BC–224 AD</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sassanid Empire</td>
<td>224–651 AD</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Omavi Caliphates</td>
<td>661–750 AD</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Abassi Caliphates</td>
<td>750–1258 AD</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sammanid dynasty</td>
<td>875–999 AD</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Qhaznavid dynasty</td>
<td>963–1186 AD</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Seljuk Empire</td>
<td>1037–1194 AD</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Kharazm Empire</td>
<td>1077–1231 AD</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Mongol il-khanates</td>
<td>1256–1335 AD</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Timurid Empire</td>
<td>1370–1405 AD</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Safavid dynasty</td>
<td>1501–1736 AD</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Afsharid dynasty</td>
<td>1736–1747 AD</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Zand dynasty</td>
<td>1760–1794 AD</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Qajar dynasty</td>
<td>1796–1925 AD</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Pahlavi dynasty</td>
<td>1925–1979 AD</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Islamic Republic of Iran</td>
<td>1979 AD–Present</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
purpose of figurative beauty, glamour, eminence and elegance in appearance. Most images, both male and female, are very similar to one another (Figure 5) with characteristics such as eyebrows that are all in arched forms and were drawn as connected eyebrows in most of them. Eyes were elongated and occasionally look dreamy. The painter intended to draw the portraits in two-thirds position but was not successful in so doing therefore there are some problems in the portrait faces. For instance, the face is drawn in full-face position; the eyes are drawn in the right place but are in the full-face form (Figure 2).

The eyeball is complete, dreamy and stable, and the gaze is towards the front without regard to the rotation in head position. The nose is the right scale and proportion but is shown in two-third position. The mouth is too small and inclines to the full-faced form. The neck is cylindrical and tall. The ears are hidden, or one of the ears is partially seen. Work on the volume of the faces is also expressed mostly by encompassing lines, curved lines and forms rather than through light and shadow, and in some cases the painters have used working/processing techniques (point processing is a delicate style to make the shapes embossed by using numerous points which are performed with tiny taps of the brush) in order to clarify the volume (Figures 2 and 3).

All figures are depicted wearing gold thread and pearl ornamented costumes, indulged with jewellery and embellishments (Figures 4 and 5). The throne, crown, hats, back cushions, weapons, rugs and other items are also embellished with plant and abstract motifs and jewellery; they are splendid and can be seen in every painting. In most cases, the king, princes and princesses, women, court singers and musicians, and others just are
placed in front of Orosi, a traditional window-type whose doors open vertically and are designed with mirror work and fretwork or any window whose curtains are pulled back to the side (Figures 6 and 7).

In general, the objects in people’s surroundings like a decanter, a glass jug, fruit bowls, vases and other images that could fill the two-dimensional space were given more attention than the spirit of people themselves, and in some images, there is a view of nature or architecture in the background (Figure 8). In Qajar paintings, much attention is paid to the element of costume drawing and giving them prominence to the extent that the characteristic features in the outfits of various social classes are completely recognizable.

**The composition of single portraits of Fath-Ali Shah’s period**

In the composition of Qajar paintings, in addition to taking tradition into account, the artists give more prominence to both an approach to Western realistic art and an attempt to be innovative. They chose the shortest possible method in their selection of visual elements, that is performance speed was of great importance to them as beside other issues, concerns about short-lived demand on them and lack of job security must have been considerable. Another element that should be taken into account regarding the single portrait paintings of this period is their being a feature of embellishment, which is true of all single portraits either of religious figures or portraits of the king, princes, courtiers, women and
dancers. Embellishing elements abound in these art forms including costumes designed with plant and abstract motifs, decorative hats and crowns ornamented with embossed jewellery work, full floral design carpets, fruit bowls, vases full of flowers, fruits scattered around, curtains and others elements intended to enhance the artwork (Figure 8).

Contrary to the paintings of earlier schools of art in Persia, simple compositions, the prominence of details to the whole and the application of large elements are the characterizing features of this school, and symmetry is intensely observed as well. For instance, in the paintings of the girl balanced on the poniard (Figure 9), even the hair falls symmetrically on both sides of her face and neck. The legs are equally inclined on either side. The paisley motifs on her loose pants are placed next to one another and do not overlap (Figure 9), and other visual elements like the curtain, carpet and window are symmetrical. A similar intense symmetry is also obvious in other paintings. This precise symmetry in composition is visible in almost all paintings by masters of the Qajar period.

In the restricting framework of royal disciplines and rituals and in the whole set of formalities which dominates both the painter and the subject, the person of every painting possesses a regular disciplined posture in standing, sitting or riding (on horseback in hunting) positions, on the whole both a regular movement and inertia. They are generally graceful, elegant and formal. This mode is also kept the same in the movement of female dancers who naturally have various fluid motions. For example, in two paintings, the
women who are standing on their hands, have a graceful staring and faded look and there is no indication of the pressure of being upside down and performing difficult movements. This look is prevalent in all female images in any position. Even these two paintings are symmetrical to one another as if a painter has assigned them to be installed in a specific place (Figures 10 and 11). In the restricted frameworks of this art, the paintings mostly transfer a feeling of loneliness and exhaustion, together with artificial grace and a faded look. In the monotonous drab spiritless royal life of the nineteenth century this constant boredom and loneliness might have been the most original mode felt by the painter, courtiers and ruling figures of the time. This is also visible in the masterpieces of that era (perhaps with no intention of giving prominence to it).

The general characteristic features of these two artworks can also be seen in most paintings of that period. As can also be seen in the images of this school, there is a simple merging of the vertical, horizontal and curved elements to shape strong symmetrical compositions. Vertical elements are seen in windows, people standing, columns, doorframes and objects like sticks, swords and guns. Horizontal elements are displayed by the margins of the carpets, cornices, embellishing ribbons and stripes, the connecting lines of the wall and the floor of the hall. Curved elements are seen on the edges of sleeves, skirts, curtains, cushions, musical instruments and the motifs in costumes. The principle of symmetry is built upon the vertical axis, giving a sense of resistance to the painting.
Figure 6. External view of Orosi (extracted from https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C#/media/File:Aragkarimkhan6.JPG).

Figure 7. Internal view of Orosi (extracted from https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C#/media/File:Moavenol-molk-2.JPG).
Another factor is the size and shape of the work which has a direct correlation to the type of order and the desire of the person who commissioned it. The works are generally big, more than one and a half meters long. These paintings were to be installed on the shelves or in the niches of buildings. This explains why the upper edge of most of these paintings is either arched or polygonal, affecting the design and composition of the work. The subject and place of installation were interrelated and therefore were an important element in the design of the work. The artwork was set in proportion to its allotted place. Bought works were occasionally cut and clipped from the top or bottom to fit their intended location. Hence, the composition in these reduced art works is problematic.

The presence of women in the court of the Qajar kings

At the outset of a discussion on the comparative analysis of male and female images in Fath-Ali Shah’s period, it is necessary to point out and explain how and why the artists of the era attempted to draw so many female images. Perhaps the most important factor was the strong presence and involvement of women in the court in this era which was more prominent than ever before. Another significant factor is the presence of women from a range of social classes and positions such as musicians, dancers, fortune tellers, hair dressers and make-up artists. In addition, many women lived in the Qajar kings’
Haramsara (the king’s hall of privacy). In Fath-Ali Shah’s court, there was an insider court or Haramsara with 700 women, 300 of whom were his official wives and many more were young girls from different points in Persia.11 These women were from various social classes and, depending on their position, popularity and degree of influence on the kings, used to play an influential role in decision-making. The wives, ladies-in-waiting, handmaidens, women with temporary marriages, servants, musicians, dancers and even the previous king’s wives together with their servants and ladies-in-waiting used to pass their whole lives in the royal court. Occasionally, the king would select a wife from among these dancers and musicians.

Upper class women had nothing to do but wear make-up before becoming mothers. They mostly used to lie down on very beautiful rugs before the window or next to the pool, smoking the hubble-bubble and drinking coffee, watching the crows fly. They even happened to faint from too much hubble-bubble. They used to pay others visits, or head for the bathhouse or doctors’, which was among their entertainments.12

The power and influence of women of the court throughout the Qajar dynasty had a rising progression which reached its climax in the period of Naser-al-Din Shah. This was an indirect consequence of the revolutions in individual and social thinking of the women of the time and the increased awareness among the women of the court compared to previous periods.

Figure 9. Girl is somersaulting on a poniard, nineteenth century, attributed to Shirin Negar e Naghash (extracted from http://persianpaintings.com/qajargalleries/index.htm).
It is worth mentioning that affluent women enjoyed a good level of literacy and had a glamorous involvement in the arts of poetry, literature, music and calligraphy in this period. Dance was not considered an acceptable entertainment for famous families while music and singing were regarded as arts enjoying respect and affection. M.A.S. Azad al Doleh, the author of *Azodi History*, has named some of Fath-Ali Shah’s wives and women of the court who were proficient in arts such as Moshtari Baji, Shah Pari Khanom (the grandmother of Iraj Mirza, the poet of the Constitutional period (Mashrooteh, 1874–1926)) and Shah Pasand Khanom, who were all three so expert and invariably skilful in music, together with Taj-o-Saltane, his temporary marriage wife who had been an expert in literature and poetry.

The features of women images in Qajar dynasty

The first traces of women in paintings are found before the Qajar period. For instance, one of the chambers of Karim Khan Zand palace had a painting of the key female figures of the time. This tradition was passed on to the Qajar era too. Qajar kings considered women’s faces to be ornaments for the walls of their palaces in some of which there was an emphasis on disgracefulness. The above-mentioned images are not of kings’ wives but of the king’s entertainers: dancers, musicians, acrobats in entertainment. The images of these women are drawn with equal beauty, charm and glamour as those of men and people in a
position of authority, but as they are drawn with the purpose of arousing the viewer, parts of their bodies are exposed and bare, illustrating one of the most important differences between men and women. These types of paintings were not specific to royal palaces as they could be found in the houses of wealthy people; for instance in the house of Malek-o-Shoara, some images of Persian nymphs and European beauties in different shapes and positions are among the brazen scenes.

Most of the existing images of the women of this era depict the interests and entertainments of women in the court. There is a dearth of graceful and elegant images of women, although there are a few.

Besides cosmetic instruments, cushions and beautifully embroidered pillows, we see tambourines for dancing and singing, the most important entertainment for women when they gathered together and were smoking the hubble-bubble. All these instruments can be seen in the paintings. The characteristic features of these images are as follows: in images of dancers and acrobats who are painted in exotic and often specially designed clothes, which includes a high percentage of the paintings of this era, the colour of the costumes is bright and brilliant, notably the upper torso of the costumes are to some extent open exposing the dancer’s nude body. Some clothes are made of fine lace and tulle which expose the body beneath. Dresses were loose with a slash in the middle exposing the breasts down to the belly button. Long cotton skirts which cover the leg or loose patterned pants were worn. Some sort of embroidery skull-cap on the head is often embellished with

Figure 11. Female tumbler, 1800–1839-oil on Calico, Islamic Middle East, (extracted from http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O81783/female-tumbler-oil-painting-unknown/).
pearls. They had small metal spoon-like instruments in their fingers; they used these to clap to each other in harmony with the dance movements and sang to make further sound.

Another feature in female paintings of this period is the extensive use of embellishments to which the painters have paid great attention. The extravagant uses of jewellery and ornament-like big pendant earrings, necklaces, costumes decorated with pearls and various precious gems, hanging pearl chains connected to their hats, bracelets, bangles, rings and bracelets worn on the upper arm are evident in these paintings. In addition, the costumes are generally patterned and have elaborate borders. The faces and body movements of the women in the paintings of this period are particularly theatrical.

A significant feature of the (early) Qajar period is tattoos on faces and speckles above lips, on the face, neck and between the eyebrows. This was an element of beauty which is repeatedly seen in the literature too. The round shape of faces resembled the full moon, and the faded, big, elongated eyes are very notable in comparison to other features. In the images of women, the earrings and the ornaments hanging from them are drawn without showing the ears themselves. Blushed cheeks, red lips, eyes made up with eyeliner, the connected eyebrows and fingers dyed with henna are the notable elements while painting women (Figure 12). In these paintings, women’s hair is exposed, and in most cases the hair is long, dense with plaits and ringlets falling on shoulders, some fringes on the forehead, and some braids as long as the mid-thigh (Figures 12 and 13). In the images in which women are the main figures, fruits and flowers are often seen in

Figure 12. Lady dancing and playing castanets, 1800–1830, oil on calico, private collection, (extracted from http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O133584/lady-dancing-and-playing-castanets-oil-painting-unknown/).
the composition which, in addition to being decorative and filling the scene, are a symbol of royalty, prosperity, profusion and court privacy. These elements can also be seen in some male paintings of younger Qajar noblemen and princes to which I will refer later.

It is worth mentioning that in male ceremonies, young boys used to wear female clothes and dance. Young orphan boys used to do this. The dancing boys’ long hair falls on their shoulders, and they wear women’s clothes while dancing in such a way that they could have been mistaken for women. In images of these young boys, the same features as in paintings of women are evident. A young boy with a fine nice face, long hair with ringlets falling over his shoulders, make-up on his face, sits like a woman and pours wine (Figure 14). In some paintings, there are also men with moustaches, wearing men’s hats but women’s clothes, dancing or playing musical instruments (Figure 15).

The features of male paintings in the Qajar period

In Fath-Ali Shah’s time, most men in portraits have beards; it seems as if a long beard is one of the features of royal make-up influenced by Fath-Ali Shah’s long beard. The crown, hat, throne and armchairs with splendid cushions are the two-dimensional decorative elements used in male portraits. Their body gestures and the shape of the face are more strict and formal in comparison to Zand women and the early Qajar period. This is a sign of a theatrical mode of authority. Men are depicted with long black beards, small waists, a hand on a cummerbund, another on the hilt of a dagger, seated on a throne, a priceless
Figure 14. Dressed as woman, oil on canvas, Persia, Qajar, (extracted from http://www.icsa.ir/files/site1/pages/ronaghian/8/pic_7.jpg).

Figure 15. Dressed as woman playing traditional instrument, Persia, Qajar (extracted from http://persianpaintings.com/qajargalleries/index.htm).
Persian carpet, and a chair or inclined on a cushion, fully dressed with splendid costumes, often with embossed designs and laden with jewellery and gem badges. Like that of women, the men’s positioning in portraits is at a two-thirds angle, and is always in a similar form (Figures 16 and 17).

Except for the images of royal authorities which are always formal, disciplined and full of grandeur, some portraits of princes or other individuals have moved away from strict formalities and are inclined more towards delicate, nice, emotional female forms. In such paintings that were always comprised of young men (princes), the men were depicted with branches of flowers, a fruit or a bird on the hand beside a window with flower pots, some fruits or a fruit bowl on its edge, or a window with a view of a scenic perspective. In these images, the faces are completely feminine, and the flowers, pots, fruits and birds are the major elements of composition (Figures 18 and 20).

As is obvious in the pictures, the princes’ portraits are totally feminine. The young princes, like women, have long hair, arched eyebrows, small lips, facial make-up and small waists. In these images, flowers, fruits, birds and pots are the main compositional elements (Figure 19).

**Comparing and contrasting men and women in Qajar paintings**

The most significant issues in analysing the similarities of images of men and women can be categorized as follows:

1. In the paintings of this period, there is an exaggerated beautification which indicates the perfectionism in royal portrait painting. Hands and legs are delicate,
Figure 17. Fath-Ali Shah Portrait, oil on canvas, 1825 (extracted from https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%85%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C_%D9%86%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B4#/media/File:Mihr_Ali_1813.jpg).

Figure 18. A prince and his hawk, oil on canvas, mid-nineteenth century (extracted from https://www.pinterest.com/pin/29115563389238281/).
waists are small, eyebrows arched, eyes exaggeratedly big and lips are tiny. Men’s faces have make-up as do those of women. The degree of work expended on the person is equal.

(2) The deformation of shapes and forms indicates painters’ perception. Most faces are in the two-thirds position, and rarely is a face painted from the front or profile view, which keeps faith with the rules of the past.

(3) In all images the proportions among the sizes of parts of the body and the proportion among the people and the environment are matched and are more like natural real proportions.

(4) In some images, men and women manifest the same facial expressions; for instance, a young man with a feminine face stands beside the window, with a flower or a bird at hand (there is no symbolism attached to beauty).

(5) The application of vertical, horizontal and curved elements with the same particular structure can be seen in all images.

(6) The number of people in most compositions is limited, not exceeding one or two individuals, and individuals are usually located in the centre of the painting.

(7) There is an equal balance of attention given to all structural elements, composition and tonality, work on intricacies of luxury, ornamentation of court life, embellishments of costumes, curtains, carpets and the size of paintings.
8) In all images, the outfit, types of costume, embellishments and fabric have received considerable attention, which makes it possible for the viewer to become familiar with the various male costumes and female formal and private dressings (Figure 20).

9) Though female images are more vibrant than those of men and men are depicted as strict and formal, all people are depicted as having a regular motion and inertia, and are generally formal and graceful. That is, no matter whether they are moving or stationary and in a standing position, they all follow the same rule.

To analyse the contrast, the following points can be made:

1) The compositions with women as their major subjects enjoy more variety.
2) In female images – whether seated or standing, while dancing or playing an instrument, or of servants serving a bowl of fruits or a tray of glasses and a decanter – all their limbs are depicted as having a fine movement, and their modes vary in different images. By contrast, men – in a sitting or standing position, either on a chair or royal throne or on a carpet reclining on splendid cushions, or while riding a horse – have very strict harsh and formal body movements (Figures 12, 13, 16, 17).
3) Female paintings enjoy more joy, pep and vibrancy than those of men.
(4) In female images, we see them upside down on a poniard, or bent over completely on their backs. In these situations, all the parts of their bodies and clothes have changed and taken on a new shape whereas men have a fixed, formal and strict pose. Even the furrows and wrinkles of the clothes are the same in different images as the subjects of these paintings are the key figures of the court.

(5) Women have taller necks than the men. Men, on the other hand, have strong, stout necks that are mostly hidden behind dense black beards.

(6) A long black beard and moustache was particular to authoritarian Qajar men, but the princes are always drawn without beards, and only occasionally with moustaches. In some of the images of the princes, it is as if a feminine face has been set on a masculine body and costumes.

(7) In the images of men, we witness the presence of the court authorities like the king, princes and ministers, while in women’s portraits, we see dancers, musicians and acrobats.

(8) Women are sometimes shown with some parts of their body bare, but men are always fully clothed.

**Conclusion**

Single portrait painting had been the most significant subject of Qajar paintings which is routed in Safavid and Zand art and was fully influenced by photography. In these paintings, humans are the first priority and natural elements are second to them, they displayed a great variety as to the taste of those who ordered them. In Qajar paintings, women’s images bore equal value and status with those of men. Qajar kings and authorities used to take advantage of images of women, female musicians, dancers, entertainers, and so on, drawn so beautifully and astonishingly, in order to ornament the walls of their houses and to relish them.

These paintings possess the same features as those of Qajar kings and authorities, with the difference that as the characters were all dancers, musicians or servants, the images enjoyed more pep and vibrancy. There is more variety in costumes and compositions, as their faces, hands and feet are embellished with make-up.

In these images, some parts of women’s bodies are occasionally nude. On the contrary, male images mostly show key figures of the royal court like the king, princes and ministers. That is why these paintings are always with official costumes, so solemn and elegant.

Male faces, especially those of princes, are drawn with female make-up. As the subject of most paintings is the dignitaries, and important figures, almost all are presented with the same form, shape and composition; therefore, they lack the pep and vibrancy of female images.

The dominant colour on these paintings is red in the first place, then golden yellow, orange and black used proportionately in all men and women artworks.

The attempt to create realism with the instrument of perspective, chiaroscuro and merging it with Persian art was a great novel revolution which was taken into account in this period. Other noteworthy feature of these paintings to be mentioned is the speed of execution, applying big-size elements, the significance of details rather than totality, simple composition, applying embellishing elements, especially in the costumes, and so on.
Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Notes

6. B.J. Jafari, Qajar Painting (Tehran: Kavosh Ghalam, 2004), p.44