

By Catherine David²

Catherine David: Among all the Muslim countries, it seems that it was in Iran where photography was first developed immediately after its invention – and was most inventive.

Bahman Jalali: Yes, it arrived in Iran just eight years after its invention.

Invention is one thing, what about collecting? When did collecting photographs beyond family albums begin in Iran? When did gathering, studying and curating for archives and museum exhibitions begin? When did these images gain value? And when do the first photography collections date back to?

The problem in Iran is that every time a new regime is established after any political change or revolution – and it has been this way since the emperor Cyrus – it has always tried to destroy any evidence of previous rulers. The paintings in Esfahan at Chehel Sotoon³ (Forty Pillars) have five or six layers on top of each other, each person painting their own version on top of the last. In Iran, there is outrage at the previous system. Photography grew during the Qajar era until Ahmad Shah Qajar,⁴ and then Reza Shah⁵ of the Pahlavi dynasty. Reza Shah held a grudge against the Qajars and so during the Pahlavi reign anything from the Qajar era was forbidden. It is said that Reza Shah trampled over fifteen thousand glass [photographic] plates in one day at the Golestan Palace,⁶ shattering them all. Before the 1979 revolution, there was only one book in print by Badri Atabai, with a few photographs from the Qajar era. Every other photography book has been printed since the revolution, including the late Dr Zoka's⁷ book, the Afshar book, and Semsar's book, all printed after the revolution⁸. The outrage against the Qajars during the Pahlavi era was an extraordinary thing. There was no opportunity to exhibit photographs.

But people did keep them?

Mina Saïdi: Yes they did, but they did not show them.

During Shah's era⁹ very few people collected photographs. Those who did had great interest in photography or had family ties to the Qajars, like Masoud Salour.

Otherwise, photographs were not considered worth collecting. We still don't have that many collectors, but in the past ten years a few people have become interested. For example, Shahriyar Adl¹⁰ is connected to the Qajars, Dr Zoka had Qajar lineage; these people were related to the Qajars and that's why they were keen on the photography of that era and collected.

This may be a paradox, but it was the revolution that in the end liberated photography. These families were important aristocratic families. Where were these exhibitions?

The practice of photography basically started and grew in the Golestan Palace and at the Dar al-Funun (Polytechnic University), which had the first school of photography. The school was launched by Abdollah-Khan Qajar. 'Reza the Photographer'¹¹ was the first professional photographer of Iran, who came out of the Golestan Palace. There was no photography studio outside the palace, it was too expensive for ordinary people, with all the necessary equipment. Nasir al-Din Shah¹² created two things in relation to photography. One was the Album Khaneh (Photo Archive), which still exists. Many of its photographs were in the albums that were given to the king by foreign visitors, who would bring him leather and mahogany albums, because they knew of his passion for photography. He would display his own photographs or ones that others took of his family in them. He built the Emarat-e Gallery¹³ [ill. p.13], which was essentially the first photography gallery in this country. Although, the building has been destroyed, nowadays the same collection that Nasir al-Din Shah had assembled for the Album Khaneh (the place where the albums were made and kept) is in the Golestan Palace. They are now recording and archiving these photographs and working on several books.

This era is the beginning of photography and this gallery was created to exhibit photography. So from the beginning there was a specific space, which goes a little beyond looking at a family album, to talk freely in a room with educated people and amateurs... Did they come from outside to view?

What is obvious is that ordinary people were not allowed in, but of course the elite and acquaintances of the king were.

I remember this photo in *Visible Treasure*.

The interesting thing about that book¹⁴ is the essay in the introduction, which was too difficult to translate, a beautiful piece that was written about one hundred and ten-to-twenty years ago by a clergyman, Mohammad ibn Ali Mashkat; he argues that photography is a proper art form and that images depict reality in a



way not possible in other art forms. He was astonished by the reality of photography and compared photography to the Judgement Day. This is how well he illustrates the realistic and documentary power of photography.

This is a piece of writing that speaks of the interest of photographs in showing the real. It says how possible it is to prove things with photographs. Isn't it a rule of Islam that there needs to be a witness for events?

This is a tricky question. I am not a specialist in Islamic law, but what I do know is that, while you don't need a witness for common offences, you do for the severe ones like murder. And I also know that the most advanced forensic science is employed here. That includes DNA testing and, yes, a photograph is a document. For example, Bahram Chehrenegar from Shiraz [ill. pp. 16-19] had a grandfather who learned photography in Bombay and brought it back to Iran. Returning from Bombay, he stopped at Bushehr on his way to Kazerun where he opened a photography studio. One week after he opened his studio, the imam Jomeh¹⁵ declared his work illegitimate and closed down his studio. So he invited him to his studio, which was in the courtyard, because there was no light or electricity back then, so the sun was used for lighting. He asked him to bend down over the courtyard pool and tell him what he saw. The imam Jomeh said he saw his reflection in the water. The photographer asked him whether this was illegitimate or not, to which he responded it was not. The photographer said that what he did with photography was to preserve the imam Jomeh's reflection in the water, so that when he was gone, his image would stay. He asked whether what he did was still illegitimate? The imam Jomeh responded that it was not, and allowed him to open his studio again.

Why did he go to Kazerun from Bushehr?

He left his Bushehr studio to Yahya Firouzi and since the ruler of Kazerun had invited him to go there, he went and stayed in his grandfather's house and opened the first photography studio in that place. Mirza Hassan Chehrenegar couldn't bear living in a small town, so after a while he left for Shiraz and opened his studio there.

When?

It was hundred and eleven years ago according to the book *Photography in Shiraz*¹⁶. There were three generations of photographers in that family, son, father and grandfather. The grandfather, Fatollah Khan Chehrenegar, was originally from Shiraz and learned photography in Bombay from the British. When citizens of Shiraz wanted to go abroad, they usually went to one of two places. One group

would go to Kuwait or Dubai and another would go to India. There are still many Zoroastrian families from Shiraz and elsewhere living in Bombay and Calcutta.

Is what you are telling us information that comes from the youngest person in the family photography business, or is there any text written about the history of this studio?

It partly comes from his grandson and some from a book. I knew a photography student by the name of Mansour Sane, whose thesis was on the history of photography in Shiraz, which has now been published as a book.¹⁷ This book mainly focuses on the Chehrenegar family, based on documents and interviews. All this information is in there.

Three years before opening the city photography museum – designed by Mohammad Hassan Khoshnevis (founder and director of the Cultural Research Bureau),¹⁸ Rana Javadi (photographer, director of photography and pictorial studies at the Cultural Research Bureau, and director of *Aksnameh*, a quarterly photography magazine), and me – I went to the provinces for two years to gather photographs and instruments for the museum. Persuading Bahram Chehrenegar to sell his archive and his studio equipment was a hard job, which I had not anticipated. But finally the Cultural Research Bureau managed to buy all his belongings, including photographs. [ill. pp. 20-22] And deposited the equipment and many other things from it studio in the city photography museum, Akshkhaneh Shahr. Today the museum has many of the instruments his grandfather worked with in Bombay, which he had brought to Shiraz with him, including his camera, papers, retouching equipment: it's all in the city photography museum. We built the museum from scratch and then we were taken over, but you can still see all this in there.

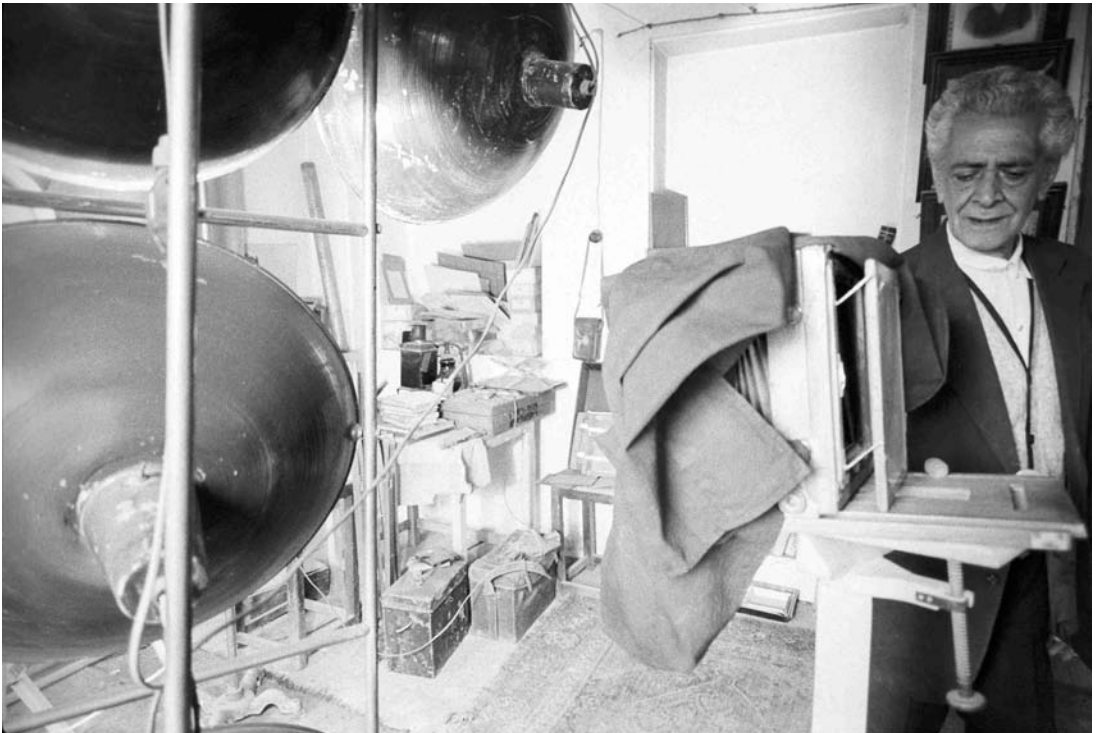
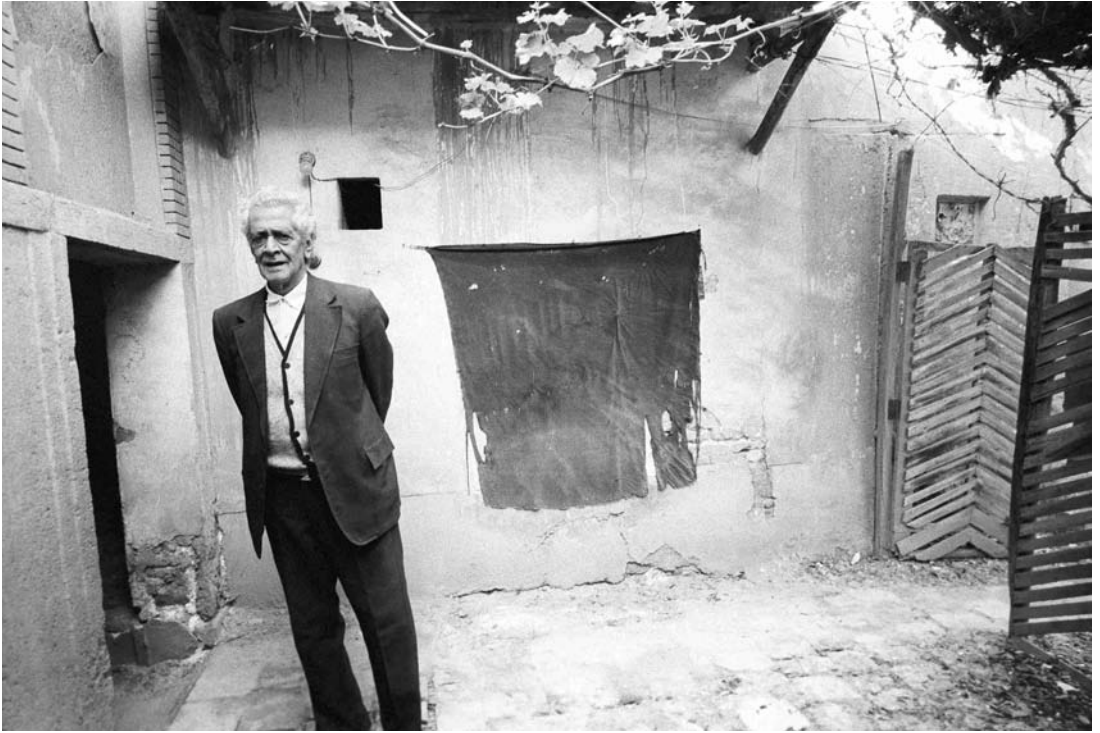
So this museum is open to the public and still there. You worked hard on it. Does Mr Khoshnevis still have connections with this museum?

We left because we couldn't work with the new authorities that had taken over the cultural centres back then. Their approaches to cultural issues were different from ours so we couldn't continue working. Mr Khoshnevis and all the museum staff left with us. The only thing we could do was to secure a letter from the authorities saying that the collection would remain in the museum until it reopens to the public. Fortunately it remains open and all the Cultural Research Bureau's collection is still there on display.

There are things in Iran that are not collected by the museums, like the Qajar and Reza Shah eras furniture, clocks, accessories and many other items that never made it to the museums and were destroyed. I dreamed of a place for housing my photography collection, but finding a place was difficult and expensive. I couldn't















afford it by myself, so Mr Khoshnevis came up with this idea of establishing small museums. Following this idea we decided that the first one should be a photography museum and he found the location and got permission from the city, which was a difficult process. He asked us to purchase anything relevant to photography, which we did. I also loaned many items that I had collected or were given to me by friends. For example, Mehdi Khansari, a very dear photographer friend, kindly gave me a stereoscopic camera, which is in the museum now. The museum was supposed to feature historical photographs of Iran, and not supposed to be a gallery at all. Now it has mostly become a gallery like any other showing contemporary photographs.

Meaning they show but no longer collect. So who is collecting in Iran now?

I don't know if they collect or not: you can't believe what has happened. Two years ago, instead of dedicating funds to the upkeep of the museum, the municipality of Tehran started building a huge public toilet adjacent to the museum. Which makes me cry. Although the museum is not our responsibility anymore, as citizens we thought we owed it to ourselves. We wrote letters protesting about the building of such a facility next to the museum, but nobody took any notice other than to send polite replies. Fair enough, we have a clear consciousness because we said what we had to say.

So what do they do now at this museum? How many images do they have? And from what period? How does it work?

They have contemporary photography exhibitions as well as historical ones of course. From time to time they publish books, which is a good thing, and the museum is open to the public, although I don't know what else they do.

You said you have difficulty publishing your magazine or might stop publishing it?

Since the Cultural Research Bureau is an NGO, it sustains itself with its research projects and has six quarterly magazines and book publications. But now we have difficulty publishing our quarterly photography magazine, *Aksnameh*. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance used to provide subsidised paper, which was a help to private publishers, but since they have decided to stop this support it has become difficult for us to publish our magazine on time.

If one wanted to organise an exhibition on the history of photography in Iran since the 1930s, where would one go to see archives? Private collectors, the Golestan Palace?

The most important archive in this country is undisputedly at the Golestan Palace. Another kind of archive has sprung up in private homes, for example the Ghaffari family¹⁹ and other big Iranian families have a large number of albums and old photographs. The Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies on Fereshteh Street²⁰ is one of the archives with lots of material; they also publish a quarterly magazine from their archive historical photos and articles. Other collections of photographs are with the descendants of Qajar families or other interested families who collected but never showed them. There is another group of people who act as intermediaries, buying and selling photographs. There is a member of the Qajar family, L.A. Ferydoun Barjesteh van Waalwijk van Doorn, who has a publishing house in the Netherlands. His efforts focus on gathering the entire Qajar family together. Their first conference, two years ago, was on photography during the Qajar period.

So, they are somewhat classified – there are themes, texts? For example, at the Centre for Documentation, do they know who owns the photographs and where they come from?

They have been organising things for the past twelve years and working on the archive, Bagher Agheli, a specialist in the Qajar era, worked there until recently. His job was to identify the people in these photographs and the owners as well. Mohammad Hassan Semsar used to help with this. Semsar himself has published a book²¹ on the collection at the Golestan Palace.

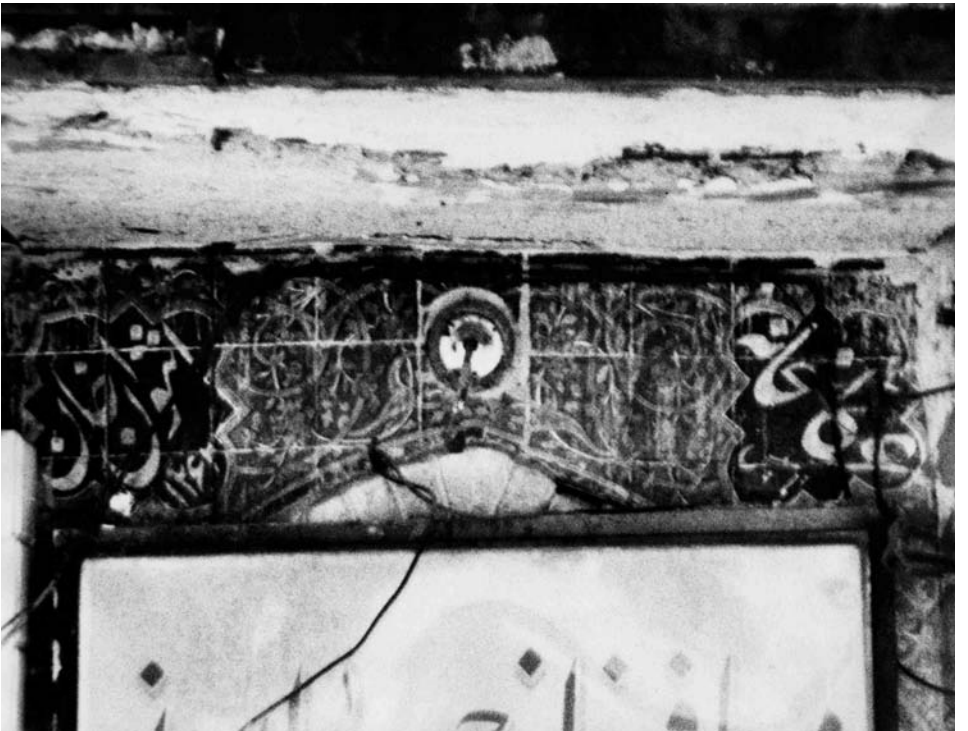
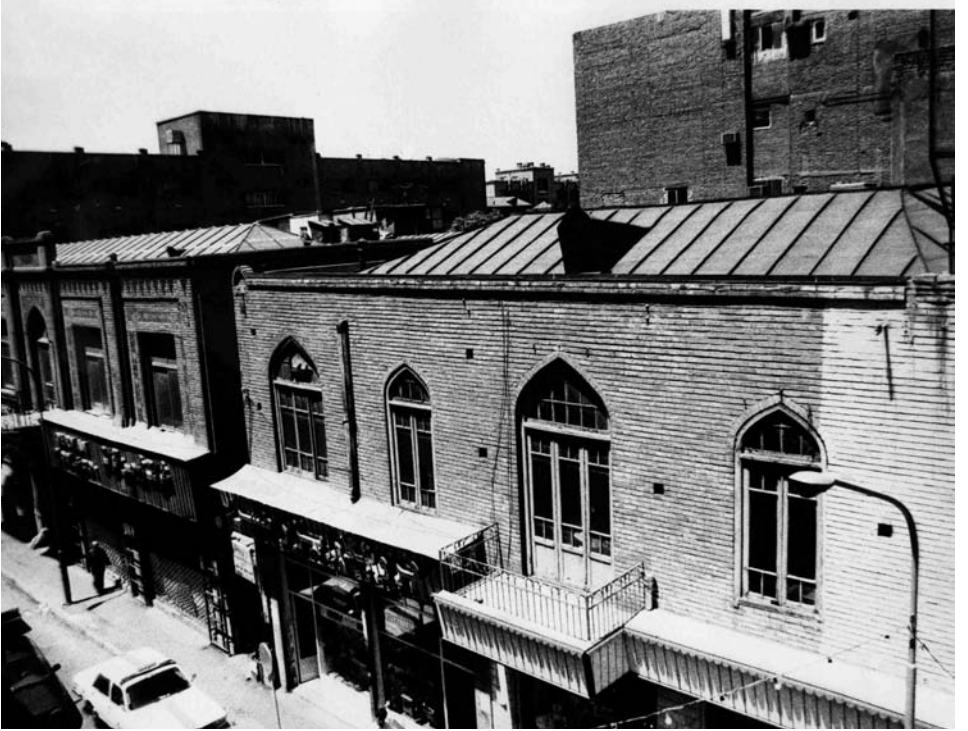
So just to clarify so far: there are photographs that were confiscated. There were also probably confiscated photographs from the Qajar era. Did Qajar-era photographs go to the Golestan Palace?

The collection has not increased after the revolution. Certain images have gone to institutes that were created after the revolution by the revolutionaries, like the Foundation for the Disempowered. And I don't know about the rest. Nothing has been added to the main collection there at all.

It's not enough to have only two people identifying the photographs.

The problem we have is that many of the photographs are not identified on the back. We do not know who took the photographs. There are only a handful of people who can identify these photographs in Iran. There is a collection at the Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies.

But I think there are now a certain number of collections outside Iran. And what about Antoin Sevruguin?

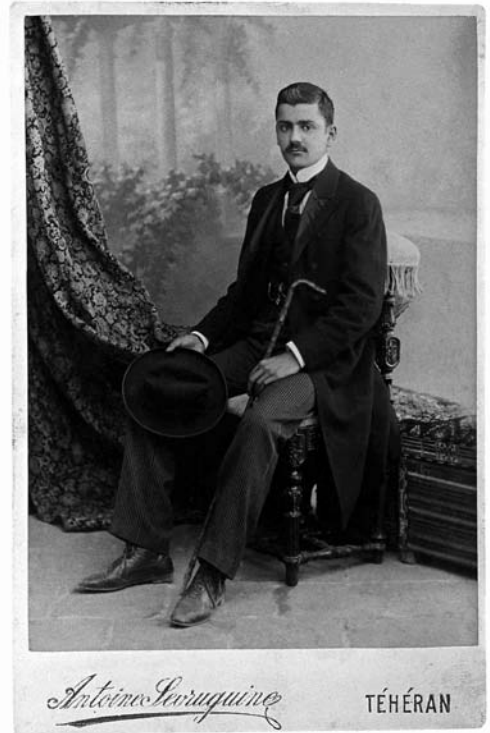




Antoin Sevruguin was originally Russian, and had come to Iran, so he was different to Iranian photographers. First of all, he was a photographer and a painter and was familiar with European art history. He was in touch with the embassies and was very prolific and rather cunning.

He had his own studio, which was destroyed by fire. Were many photographs lost?

Yes, a photographer colleague Arman Stepanian found his studio in Ferdowsi Square in Tehran, as well as his store sign, which we sent to Esfahan for a well-known tile-maker to restore and is now displayed in the museum. He did not include this in his book. Sevruguin's studio was in ruins, we photographed it [ill. p. 25]. They sell electric wire there now. His photography was informed by his knowledge of Western painting. The poses are Western. Now this is not an Iranian pose [ill. p. 26 left]. Another way to identify his photographs is the accessories and the backdrops in them, which are not Iranian, but totally Western.



I saw a book on him at a collector's house. This book contains many photographs of Iran, with traditional rural people and scenes from various provinces. These photographs are somewhat Westernised and attributed to Sevruguin.

I have an issue of *National Geographic*, from I think April 1921. The whole issue is dedicated to photography in Iran with photographs and credits. There are photographs, for example, that have been credited to another photographer and we see the same picture in Sevruguin's book. I don't understand what happened here, how Sevruguin's work was published under someone else's name. But the only thing I know is that he was one of the most important photographers in Iran, and also a very clever one. But these are my own opinions and I do not have concrete facts. I think there are different reasons why Sevruguin is recognised more in the West in the context of Iranian photography. It's because either he or others who purchased his work sent his collections to the West. There is one collection in Leiden University library in the Netherlands and one in the US



at the Smithsonian. These collections were ready to go. Also, he was Christian. And the compositions, poses and accessories in his photography were very close to European photography of his time and therefore palatable to the Western eye. When you look at the works of other Iranian photographers not familiar with Western painting, you'll see they're so primitive and pure, they are totally different. Europeans don't really understand them, but understand Sevruguin's work. Finally, he photographed ordinary people, historical sites, people from different ways of life, which were very attractive to Europeans. These were the reasons why Sevruguin was more topical than others like Mashallah-Khan²², Reza, Malek Ghasem Mirza²³ and Abdollah Khan.²⁴ Unfortunately, it is our fault if we haven't studied the work of these photographers; one of our goals for the museum was to find, collect and study their work.

Look, this is the same one [ill. p. 26 right]. This is how we could find Sevruguin's photographs in the studio. All his photographs include these items. There were no pianos in Iranian photography. The difference between this photograph and Sevruguin's is that this one is raw and pure and without accessories. The backdrop

is a simple Iranian cloth, totally different from the other [ill. p.27 left]. Or this one, this is not a pose by a foreign photographer [Points to a photo].

When we look at the work of the next generation, you can say that the five photographs that we mentioned were in the purer tradition, but at the same time, it's not by accident that you could have seen a connection with the West.

Exactly, but in other instances, photographers act the opposite. There are two types of photographers. There were those who were familiar with Europe and travelled there, like Abdollah-Khan Qajar whose photographs had white backgrounds, and their poses were European. This group was familiar with Western painting and composition. Another group were Iranians who had not travelled to the West, and were unfamiliar with it. They were familiar with miniatures, paintings from the era of Zandieh, Safavieh and Qajar²⁵, none of which could have helped them compose their photographs. It is cultural knowledge that creates this know-how. An Iranian not familiar with the West could not do this. Cultural knowledge is what creates a style. Although what was created was very beautiful. Because Chehrenegar did not have electricity, he built his studio in the courtyard. You see while Sevruguin's accessories are these [ill. p. 27 right], the accessory Chehrenegar uses is the flowerpot next to his courtyard pool [ills. p. 28 right]. This sort of decoration with the flowerpot only existed during this era in Iran. This is a typical Iranian pot for geraniums or jasmine. You would never see a flowerpot in Sevruguin's photographs because he had an indoor studio with electricity.

Now that we are speaking about the history of photography, when did you become interested in photography and how? Was it before the revolution? Did you study photography.

I started photography at least ten years before the revolution, while I was studying economics and political science at the university. I thought you knew I am a self-taught photographer.

So when you were studying economics, you were already known as a photographer.

Yes, in the last years of my studies I used to work part-time for a magazine the television network published, called *Tamasha*. It was a cultural magazine and because I worked as a photographer they asked me to help them with the university curriculum. The network called Sound and Image (Seda va Sima),²⁶ created the Sound and Image University, back then a two-year programme. After the revolution they decided to make it four years and issue baccalaureate degrees. They asked two other people and myself to help with the photography curriculum. They



offered degrees in film editing, directing cinema, television and photography. We worked there for two years and created a book based on our work, which is actually the first textbook for photography. This was the first school to offer an undergraduate degree in photography. Because I was interested in our own history of photography, I included a two-term course on the history of Iranian photography in the curriculum. But we did not have any teaching material. The late Dr Zoka, who was from a Qajar family, was just collecting data for his book on the history of photography in Iran. I asked him to teach and he did. That's when I went to the Golestan Palace and created a darkroom in order to make contact prints of their existing glass plates to use as teaching material. Until that time all the attention was on Album Khaneh and the glass plates had been ignored. With the help of a few of my students I started cleaning them up and about 700 glass plates were cleaned and archived while I was there. I have been involved with the history of photography for 26 years. It's given me the opportunity to teach this material and use the experience to create the museum. Using the Qajar photos in class is a way of reviving and re-introducing the photography of that era.



So you never worked as an economist?

No, never. But it helped me a lot in my photography, because I learned sociology, anthropology, etc.

When did you take your first photos?

I started photography seriously from 1966 and the first exhibition I had was in 1971.

What did you show?

I showed documentary photographs of Iran in the Ghandriz Gallery. And my second exhibition was in the Zarvan Gallery, showing photographs from the Zoroastrian cemetery in Yazd [ill. pp. 30-31] and also the photos of Hedayat's house. These first photographs were published in a French-Iranian newspaper we had by then.

So what information is missing about the history of photography in Iran?

All the recent books published about the history of photography are about Qajar photography. But during the years that Reza Shah and his son reigned, a lot of significant historical events took place, such as the Second World War, the Tehran Conference,²⁷ and the growth of the press, but no one has worked on them yet and they remain unstudied.

Where are these archives?

Some were destroyed after the revolution, some are at the television archive, some at the *Keyhan*, *Ettela'at* newspapers and Pars News agency archives. But many people had to destroy their photographs because they could have been used as incriminating evidence against those who changed sides after the revolution.

Were many of them moved outside the country?

They might have been, but no one has been seriously researching them because they are not gathered in one place and we have no knowledge of their whereabouts.

Information after the revolution is also very crucial to learn.

The problem is that since the revolution, a big gap has been created between two generations. Some of Iran's literary masterpieces were published again only a few years ago. Works of many poets like Shamlou²⁸ and Forough Farrokhzad²⁹ were banned until recently. So students were not aware of much. At least my generation remembers what has happened since the revolution.

During the decades from the end of the Qajar era until the revolution, were there any photographers of note we should know about? Have any exhibitions been done on their work?

Yes, Mirza Mehdi Chehenama, Mirza Hassan Chehrenegar, Fatollah-Khan Chehrenegar, Bahram Chehrenegar, Hadi Shafaeieh, Adjamian, Mohammad Jafar Khadem, Ali Khadem, Ahmad Ali, Masoud Maasoumi, Kaveh Golestan and a few others.

This is Adjamian's photography [ill. p. 33], one of our most important studio photographers who worked for 30-40 years, an Armenian, whose archive has been bought by Cultural Research Bureau. Also in the 1950s, there are some very good official documentary photographs, like the photographs of the Shah, Shahpour Gholamreza, Fereydoun Hoveyda, reflecting political events in Iran, but getting access to those photographs in archives in order to study is not easy.

It seems that the regime is tolerant with exhibitions of Qajar photographs, that does not bother them.



Yes. But during the Pahlavi era, Qajar photographs were not allowed to be exhibited.

This means that aside from you and the Cultural Research Bureau, no one else was interested in these snapshots.

Some people might want to collect them out of personal interest, but I don't know of any place to make such collections.



They are just for sale to people who are doing books, and basically they are just to make money.

In many cases, they are closing down the old studios and a new generation is opening modern laboratories, using quick developing and printing machines instead. What can these plates and negatives be used for any more? So they discard them. There is also no place to turn them in for recycling, because it takes funds and planning to preserve them.

But for example, showing the photographs of Chehrenegar's studio, even of the last period, when the studio was in Tehran. I am not speaking of Bushehr or Bombay. Is it allowed?

There is no problem with this one. It depends. Before, even showing a musical instrument was forbidden but nowadays things have changed. For example, take these two pictures: this one we can show [ill. p. 34], but this one we cannot [ill. p. 35]. Now why is that? To me both pictures are historical photos. In both pictures women playing music, but the difference is in the photo belonging to the Qajar era



the player's hair is covered and in the other picture taken 60 years later the woman who is playing music has bare hands and uncovered hair, so it can't be printed.

But this is now a historical photograph, an anthropological testimony. It's still not allowed?

History is good for people who know history. So for example, Pari Zanganeh³⁰ is an example of a female vocalist whose audience at her concerts can only be women. As a rule, women vocalists can only be heard by women, but recently they have deemed that a female chorus in the background is permitted for a mixed audience.

But even nowadays they let brides get married without having their head covered.

There is not such a thing allowed by law. People might do whatever they want in their private space, but this is not something that is allowed by law. Wedding photographs are taken in private spaces and they are only distributed to the bride and groom and family members.

Hamid Dabashi and Peter Chelkowski's book, *Staging a Revolution. The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran*,³¹ talks about sophisticated iconographic deviations that happened during the revolution, aside from the caricatures and political propaganda.

Not all the film directors and producers send their films off to festivals through Government channels. For example, over the past few years, Abbas Kiarostami has made four or five films that were only shown outside Iran and never inside. Maybe some of them have been screened in some events for a small audience, but not in the cinemas.

No cinema screening at all, not even a censored version? Because one can't deny that Kiarostami has export value. They reclaim glory through him.

Yes. But a month ago they did not grant a film permit to Bahman Ghobadi (who made, *A Time for the Drunken Horses*, and *The Flight of Turtles*), which caused him to write a letter with a severe tone to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. But Kiarostami is very smart, which is great. He makes his films with small cameras. No one even notices when they are made, perhaps because he doesn't use sophisticated equipment. He has said it many times.

He does not have a lot of people around, he must be well organised.

He did one of his last films, *Ten*, with two people; just him and another person. When you watch an Iranian film in international film festivals what you see is not necessarily what we can watch in Iran. Sometimes we view a different version in Iran. The filmmaker Daryiush Mehrju'i submitted one of his films, *Santuri*, to the Fajr Festival in Iran,³² and they were fine with it, but suddenly four days ago, they disqualified it. They mess with the films too much. And then they don't even allow them!

They say Kamran Shirdel,³³ who directs the Kish Documentary Film Festival, has a much easier time for his festival.

They are documentary filmmakers.

You had an exhibition in 1971, and you had been taking photographs for ten years before the revolution. When did you begin teaching at the university?



The universities were closed for two years after the revolution, if you remember, and then the Iran-Iraq war started. About a year after the shutdown, we began planning for a year or so and then the universities re-opened two years after the revolution.

You mean classes started during the Iran-Iraq war?

Yes, it was in 1982.

What came after your first photographs in 1971?

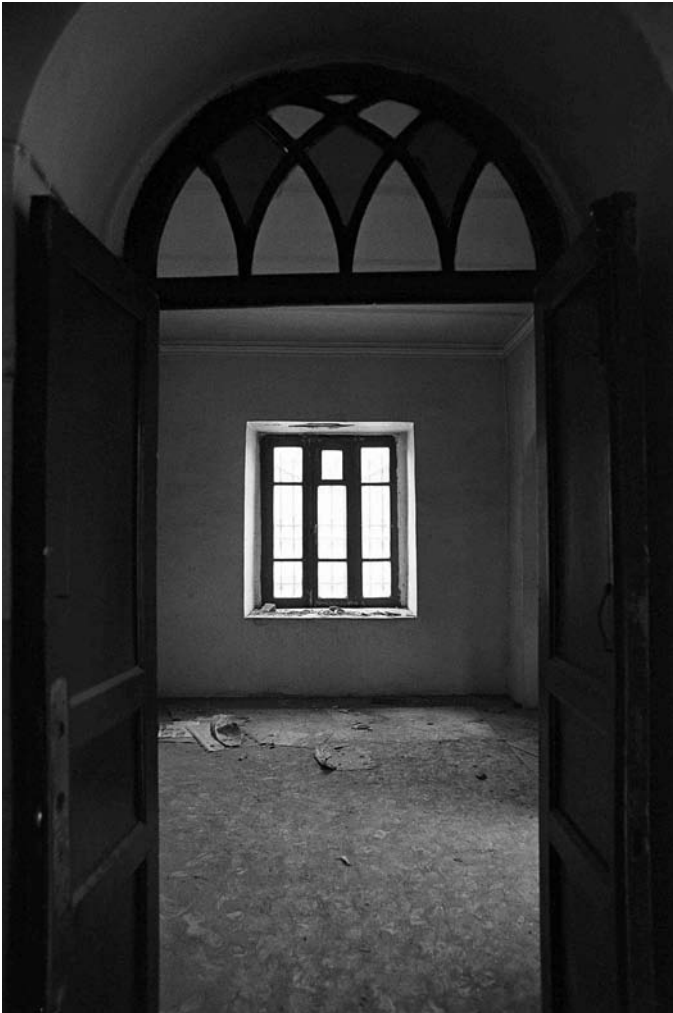
Zoroastrian and Hedayat's house [ill. pp. 37-39] was my second exhibition. Usually I had a main theme to all my exhibitions, and included other photographs alongside. I had found the house in which he had written *The Blind Owl*. When I found it, Amir-Alam hospital was about to demolish it and build a new ward. I took photographs over two years and published them in *Tamasha* magazine to raise awareness



and prevent the demolition of the house. For example, this is the window to his room. (Pointing to a photograph).

Did they demolish it in the end?

No! I was so stubborn and stuck to it for so long that they decided to renovate and turn it into a museum, a project for which they appointed Ms Lily Golestan as project director. But it never opened. I organised the exhibition as a way to raise



awareness and instigate a grass roots effort to stop the house from being ruined. I keep the invitation card for the exhibition. On the back is the photo of the home itself.

When was this?

1973 or 1974. Once, I went to the house and found people living in it. Anyway, seven, eight years after the revolution the building was still there and had been

converted into a day care centre for the children of the employees of Amir-Alam hospital. There's a lot of damage to the rooms, including this deck, which is referred to in *The Blind Owl*. The newspapers helped a lot as well. The house is still standing, even if it is a day care centre. But it is really sad that a culture does not preserve anything from one of its greatest writers.

It's important that the photographs caused something valuable to be saved. How many photographs do you have from this house?

50 or 60. What happened was that my father's first marriage was to Sadeq Hedayat's sister. My father and she had two sons, my half-brothers. One is a physician, and the other was a poet, Bijan Jalali, who passed away four years ago. Bijan and his mother and his uncle, Sadeq Hedayat, lived in that house for some time. It was Bijan who showed me the house.

These photographs are very important; are you holding on to them?

Yes, for two reasons: one, it was so sad to see the house belonging to one of the most important Iranian writers in ruins. Two, because I was the only one who could do something about it by publishing the photographs.

Where were the photographs exhibited?

In a gallery called Zarvan, which is now a carpet store. It belonged to the Varjavand family.

In the summer of 1974, we have the photographs of Hedayat's house, which were not in the works you had shown us before. So are there other series of photographs that you have not shown us yet? What was the next project?

After this was a huge project, to exhibit art from seven large African countries. I won a commission, one of three freelance photographers to go to the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leon and Gabon, to photograph their museums, which are these photographs here. Before going to Africa, I spent two years in England (1975-1976), where I did a photography course, took photographs and worked. I photographed London for a while. I had come from a city with no colours. Tehran was grey and brown. It was so strange to see so much red in a city. So I started photographing the 'Red London' series. Then I came to Iran and left on assignment to Africa, after which I came back to London to print the African photographs, where I also printed the 'Red London' photographs. I showed the photographs five, six months before the revolution. I keep the red poster of the exhibition. There are few remaining photographs from that

exhibition. Africa was an assignment for me, so some of these photographs you see were not in the exhibition.

Who commissioned the Africa assignment? And where are these photographs?

I was sent by the television network. This resulted in a book that we published³⁴ featuring photographs exhibited in the museum. I only photographed museum art pieces in Africa. The exhibition was held in the old Ferdows Garden building near Shemiran and the Museum of Contemporary Art, the project managers were Parviz Tanavoli,³⁵ and late Farideh Gohari, an interior designer working for the television as director of their decoration department.

The two years you spent in London corresponded with the end of Swinging London times. What happened to you and what interested you there?

Before I went to London, I did not know much about photography because there were no training schools or photography magazines or books here. Documentary photography in this country constituted chronicling what the Shah and Queen Farah did, which buildings they inaugurated, etc. It was nothing much. The rest was landscape photography. When I went to London, I realised the many dimensions of photography. I saw that so many books and magazines are dedicated to this medium and how important it is. That's when photography became meaningful to me.

Did you meet writers or other people who interested and influenced you? British or other international figures?

The only important person I had the opportunity to meet was Peter Turner,³⁶ whom I only saw twice in my life. He published a magazine called *Creative Camera*, which was re-issued under a different name. The editors were Peter Turner and Colin Osman. I had taken a lot of photographs with me. The way it worked was that you took your photographs and they interviewed you and either accepted your work to be published or not. They went through my photographs and talked to me about my pictures and why some of them were better than others and so on. Their comments were very precious to me because for the first time I was hearing a professional opinion about my work. In London I got to know a student who introduced me to the late John Wickers, who was a portrait, fashion and advertising photographer. I started taking some classes with him, but after a few sessions he told me that I did not need to come anymore because they were covering basic techniques that I already knew. So he suggested I go and work with someone. At that time, according to the Home Office, I was supposed to attend school in order to get residence. I told him I did not know anyone. So he told me that the Home Office had given him permission to accept ten students in his studio and if I wanted

to, I could work for him, which was great for me. So I worked in his studio for six months. He recommended I join the Royal Photographic Society. So I went and showed my photographs and was accepted as a member. I would go visit the galleries and communicate with photographers. Someone told me there was a gallery called The Photographers Gallery, directed by Sue Davies, who was familiar with Iran and loved it and whose husband had been there as an employee of the Iranian Oil Company. When I visited The Photographers Gallery and she found out that I was from Iran, she was very helpful and gave me a few books to look at. From then on until I left London, I would go to all the exhibitions held there and go through the new published books and magazines without buying them, because I couldn't afford it. Later, when I had returned to Tehran and worked in television, The Photographers Gallery exhibited Ernst Hoeltzer's photographs. Hoeltzer³⁷ was a German photographer who lived in Esfahan in the nineteenth century and had photographed the Armenians there. They were documentary photographs that had been kept in a chest and no one had seen them. Hoeltzer's daughter had found them in the basement of their home and showed them to Sue Davies, which is the collection Sue Davies curated the exhibition from.

What were the photographs about?

Mostly Esfahan and its Armenian population. I also have books with images of the nineteenth century³⁸. Iran was able to buy his snapshots and negatives through the efforts of Sue Davies.

Who finally bought the archives?

The Ministry of Art and Culture. They published a book before the revolution. The second volume, which had remained unpublished, has been published recently by the Cultural Heritage Organisation of Iran.

How were you connected to this?

No connection in fact. Since I worked in television, the late Karim Emami, who was the director of *Tamasha* magazine, told me the photographs were important and that they wanted to buy them, but since they apparently did not have the necessary funds, they asked the Ministry of Art and Culture to buy them. My only connection was that I had seen them.

Where are these photographs that were purchased during the Shah's regime through the Queen's office? Were they destroyed?

I don't know. The Queen's office had two missions: one to support Iranian artists, the other to purchase works for the collection of the Tehran Contemporary Museum

of Art and other museums or collections. What would happen is that the office would go through foreign dealers to buy a large number of art works, including eighteenth and nineteenth century European paintings and photographs, now in the museum.

The Queen's office asked government agencies to buy artwork from Iranian artists who exhibited work. For example, I remember, of my 'Red London' exhibition, four were bought by the television, three by the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and two by the Queen's office. In fact, that was the only time I sold photographs from an exhibition before the revolution. They had collected a large body of work by Iranian artists. Now, I don't know where those artworks are. I know the foreign works are still in the museum, but I never followed up with the rest.

That included buying the archives and the historical works as well?

Most probably. It was during this period that the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, the Reza Abbasi Museum, the Negarestan Museum of Qajar Dynasty Arts and the Carpet Museum were inaugurated. The Queen's office helped. For example, the calligraphy collection at the Reza Abbasi Museum was created with the help of Aidin Aghdashlu,³⁹ and Reza Mafi,⁴⁰ meaning the funding came from the Queen's office and the government agencies would purchase them for the museums. Reza Abbasi is a museum with archeological and antique pieces and has nothing to do with the museum of modern art.

Who was in charge of supporting Iranian artists in that office?

They had advisors like the late Firouz Shirvanlou, for the purchases.

Are the works still in museums inside Iran?

They should be. All I know is that museums and foundations in the decades after the revolution have been created, and yet have not bought artwork, so these pieces have to come from somewhere.

There were definitely people who worked with the Queen's office then, they would know.

Those who confiscated would know. For example, the Museum of the Foundation for the Disempowered (Mostaz-afin) would know. Sami'i Azar the director of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in the past years would know.

Bahman, did you want to stay in England after your scholarship was over? Those were such exciting times in London. Why didn't you stay in England more than two years?

I didn't have a scholarship. I had gone there because at the time Rana was studying in London and we never intended to stay for good. A photographer and Persian historian by the name of Dr Asad Behrouzan,⁴¹ who had studied in the US with Professor Pope⁴² and who had encouraged Pope to come to Iran, came to London and told me he was creating a large archive at the television and had told Reza Ghotbi⁴³ about this and that I should go and work on this project back home with him. Because I liked him so much, I returned. After two or three months working on the archive, the project was cancelled, but I stayed because going back would have been difficult.

Was Behrouzan well known?

Yes, though the young generation does not know him. He is the most important professor of Iranology. Roman Ghirshman was also Pope's friend. When Pope died, he had specified in his will that he should be buried near the Zayandeh Rud [Zayandeh River]. Both his and his wife's graves are by the river, he loved Iran so much.

Was that archive cultural and general? Was it before the Queen's office?

The Queen's office was already created around 1976. They had different centres: Ghotbi created one in the television for Iranology, another concentrated on contemporary art. The Ministry of Art and Culture concentrated mostly on traditional culture. They performed different tasks. The late Farrokh Ghaffari and Fereydoun Rahnama worked on cinema in a different branch. Ghaffari created the National Film Archive of Iran.

Yes, Hamid Dabashi gives some very interesting information in the introduction to his book, *Close-up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*,⁴⁴ on the history of cinema and its contemporary developments in Iran.

Anyway, it was Behrouzan who suggested that I return. Another reason was that I could not take my own photographs in England, because I did not know that society at all, not from the inside. Most of my photographs were about colour and also about form, which I was not too fond of. In fact, now when I look at those photographs, I dislike them.

So you came back to Iran with Mr Behrouzan. Then what did you do?

I worked for two, three months for the large archive, the project was cancelled and they fired Behrouzan from the television.

What did you do immediately after?

I stayed in television because I worked for the magazine *Tamasha* which allowed me to take my own photographs without being bothered, because I had a press pass.

Did Behrouzan's influence eventually lead to the systematic documentation of the human and architectural inventory one can see in your work? It is also like if you had retaken a tradition of Iranian photography from its beginning, this inventory of human types, architectures and landscapes. Indeed, from the beginning of photography in Iran, we see the parallel discovery of a technique, a vision and the invention of a country. I don't think it has anything to do with 'folklore', but that the country was being discovered, taken stock of through photography. Compared to what happened with 'orientalist' photography it seems to me that the photographs which were taken by local photographers are much stronger than those taken by travellers and foreigners. Which is not true in the other countries of the region. The history between photography and Iran is very deep and strong from the beginning.

Within a photograph there exist two forces, which we call the 'inner potential' of a photograph. One force is the realism in the photo. The other is time, which we can determine by the objects, rituals and the people in the photograph. This is really the first overwhelming force in a photo that draws the viewer. The viewer sees something that must be believed. That is how photography is different from graphics and drawings. This is the photo's realism. Nasir al-Din Shah and Iranians became interested in photography in the same way that Africans became interested in the mirrors the first missionaries took with them. Slowly, they became attracted. The seduction is undeniable. Nasir al-Din Shah had 50 to 100 concubines, and visited a different one each night. So then why did he seek more pleasure elsewhere, in photography? He wanted to have them with him at all times, which can only be done with photographs. As photography advanced, it was really the first time we encountered our own visual history; our people, beggars, rich people, all of it.

Meaning that we constructed our history through images?

Yes, we constructed history through photographs. We were informed by them.

And you see from the beginning that something is happening in Iran with photography that didn't happen in the rest of Middle East. I think that it has to do with the fact that Iran was under the influence of the West but never colonised.

You see, we didn't have a visual culture. With thousands of paintings in churches and museums, and portraits in palaces, Europe had a visual culture. It was not

like that in Iran. Paintings only depicted kings. This is why when we discovered photography, it seduced us.

When one looks at Iranian photography from the beginning, compared to other non-European bodies of photographic work, in the context of everything that has been articulated as ‘orientalist’ photography, whether done by outsiders or locals, when one compares it to photographs taken in places like Egypt and historical Palestine (which included nowadays Jordan, Syria, Israel and most of Lebanon), it is different. There is less interference.

From which period in history?

From the very beginning of photography...

Exactly, the photographs taken in Palestine and Egypt were taken by Westerners, with a European eye.

It is true that there were less local photographers in those countries, less than in Iran, but there were some.

Their local photographers are influenced by the West. In those years, Iran did not have a close relationship with Europe. Photography only existed amongst the aristocracy, but not amongst the ordinary people. Firstly, we’ve never had a tradition of imagery to use. Secondly, we did not have museums and institutions to know what we were doing and for what purpose.

Catherine, you say that the introduction of photography forced people to see this country again and they found things in the photographs they could not see themselves. I want to say that sometimes in Iran they have played and still play games with photographs. The kind of games that you cannot find elsewhere. Take this photograph for example. Is this the king? [ill. p. 47] I mean why has the photographer stepped so far back? In practice, we place a background to show the king a little better. But here, the photographer has gone so far back that the king looks theatrical, without his majesty, and there are a bunch of servants around. At first glance, you might think the photographer did not have the technical ability to move forward, but we know that he did, so why did he step back? If you ask me, I think the photographer is playing political games. He conquers the king and turns him into a theatrical puppet.

Also when you look at the way people are looking at each other, it’s between them, it’s not for the viewer. You see the power relationship.







In Europe, it was much later after the invention of photography that you would see these kinds of edits in photographs. The photographer took this photo, even though he could have done otherwise. These are all princes. These are extraordinary games in Iranian photography. You can find such framing in the photographs of David Burnett, one hundred years later. Here's another one. He is doing the same thing. So you see that his photography is not after documenting, but after farce, a game, theatre. [ill. pp. 48-49] They have turned photography inside out; they're playing a game of *mise-en-scène*.





It seems they used photography as a device to solve problems internally?

Not only that. A lot of it is capriciousness, comedy, joking. Isn't this comic? Where would you decorate a person with flowers like this? [ill. p. 50] Where in the world would they pin flowers to someone's head like this? Where do they dress a man in women's clothing and stick him there?

This one with the cigarette... [ill. p. 51]



Or this one where they use a rice pot as a boat in a river [ill. p. 52]. We don't know who they are, but look at what the photographer saw, how he made a fool of them all!

When you read about Qajar photography you find very knowledgeable texts, but you don't find these kind of comments.

Because those books are written by historians: Zoka, Afshar, Semsar, Agheli,⁴⁵ all of them. None of them actually looked at the photographs. You know what I mean? They did not analyse them from the point of view of aesthetics or its different applications. But my selection of photographs in *Visible Treasure* is the first book of its kind in which I have tried to look at photographs for what they are, not in terms of imagistic history. It is not important to me who this person is....

Has the book been received well in Iran?

No, many copies are still left in the publisher's stock.

Have they understood what you are trying to get at?

I doubt it, it takes such an effort to make them understand.

There is little writing, just photographs.

Yes, there is little writing. Look, this was taken one hundred and thirty years ago. I think it's extraordinary! Amazing! We ask ourselves one question, when the appeal of photography was to see a person's face, meaning a portrait, how did a non-photographer take this photo? Now look at Gibson's book!⁴⁶ There are ten or more photographs like this. But this Iranian photograph is one hundred and forty years old. See how beautiful it is. You cannot find this anywhere in the world. Impossible! This is the stuff of Iranian photography. We are always looking to find who the photographed subject is, which aristocratic figure, but we are not looking at the photograph!

When you were working in television, what photographs were you taking?

At that time, there was political activity in the universities. So though we were not necessarily politically active, we had tendencies to the left, so we photographed the poor, the provincial, the disabled, the overworked. And some of the work was assignments for the magazine *Tamasha*, where I had a salary.

Where are those photographs?

They were not photographs with artistic value. They just kept us busy and we were able to show people a few things. We basically took documentary photographs of the lower classes. This kind of photography exists in all developing and the third world countries, in Turkey, India, Bangladesh, in a lot of places. This is typical documentary photography that focuses on the poor.

The question is, aside from the photos of the revolution we see very few urban images, photographs of city people. We have photographs from during the revolution, but what about before?

Back then there were not that many photographers, universities or even people. Photography was a profession, meaning you got hired to work at a newspaper to take official photographs or opened a studio. There was no other way then. And this small group of us were not interested in the city, although now I wish we had been.

It's interesting that it was during this time that Forough Farrokhzad directed *The House is Black*. It was lepers she documented, not the city.

Although we were not politically active, we were a generation that had tendencies to the left, whether we liked it or not. And our leftist tendencies made the poor

important for us. The homeless, not the city, was important. Forough Farrokhzad also had these tendencies. Kamran Shirdel's films are all about the poor of the south side. We struggled with the city; we were not attracted to it at all.

But there were also poor people in the city. These problems existed in the cities, why did you make the city disappear?

The city was not as beautiful as the villages. The difference between the provinces and Tehran was vast. Another reason is that we did not anticipate that things would change so drastically, to the point that it would have needed documenting. Now we ask ourselves why we did not document it. Now when I walk the streets, I remember what it was like before and regret that I did not photograph the streets then. It was not important to us then.

Just before the revolution there was leftist political activity and demonstrations in the city, according to the book by Asef Bayat⁴⁷, for instance.

But before, the city was calm and there was nothing in it, just people coming and going. It was during and after the revolution that it bustled with activity and change. Time seemed to speed up.

You knew full well that something was happening, things were heating up. You were already a photographer at the time, with experience. You had worked at the television, with exhibitions under your belt. You were not an amateur. So at what point did you decide there was something significant happening? Because your photographs were not assigned, this was something you decided to do. So how did you organise yourself? Knowing that you were not working for a magazine, or for a foreign agency, and that the photographs were not going to be seen until later in a book, that would probably be banned. What was the point of view, the agenda – if there was one in the beginning?

Even though I made a living taking photographs, I tried to stay an amateur so I would distance myself from professional rules. When the revolution happened, it was a cultural publication that I worked for, which had nothing to do with political photographs. I did not take pictures for an agency or an institution or any other place. All I did was leave the house with my camera every morning and return around seven or eight at night, whether I got something or not.

Photographed as a civilian...

Yes, as a civilian. Like regular folk, I would take photographs and keep them without touching them. No one paid for them. When you are a photographer, your first job

is to find your subject matter. Suddenly something happened that would put my subject matter in front of my eyes, in the streets. Another thing was that we did not know what revolution was, had never experienced one. We had read about them, but did not have experience photographing it. It was all very interesting to get into. We were different than Abbas Attar, Gilles Peress and David Burnett. When they dispatched Gilles Peress from Magnum to photograph the revolution, he had no idea where Iran was on the map. The book he created looks great on the cover, but is not comparable to the project he did in Ireland.⁴⁸ I read a review in *Photography in the Visual Arts* magazine, from 1995, where the writer says that Gilles Peress kept asking his agency what should he photograph. This was because he didn't know where he was and was unfamiliar with the culture of the country and confused. That is why at the end the result wasn't as good as his other projects. He had no idea what was happening! But when Abbas Attar came here, he had Gamma experience under his belt.⁴⁹ He came alone working for an agency, which assigned him for the photographs they wanted. The same with David Burnett.

Who is Burnett?

He is a photojournalist who was first sent to Iran by *Time*. He has a book on the revolution. He also photographed in Vietnam.

But there were so many people, for example, Iranians like Reza... Reza did not have any photographs of the revolution, even less of the war, because he was imprisoned during the Shah.

Reza does not have too many photographs, not from the revolution, not from the war. Because during the war he went to the south to photograph, but he was hit by a mortar shell and was injured, after this accident he went to Paris.

With the photographs?

I don't know that, but I assume he took his negatives with him as any photographer would do.

But when he went to Paris, he sold a lot of photographs.

I don't know about that either. I have only seen what has been published by him.

He had photographs of the revolution.

As far as I know, he was politically active before the revolution, and he was imprisoned for six months. When the revolution gained victory he came out of prison and photographed.

And what about ‘Abbas’?

Abbas Attar. Yes, he had an assignment from Gamma to photograph, so he photographed as an agency photographer, but not as an Iranian.

Do you know any other photographers like yourself who photographed the revolution, maybe young Iranian ones?

Yes, many. Kaveh Golestan, Mohsen Shandiz, Mohammad Sayyad, Kaveh Kazemi, Hadi Haraji, Rana Javadi, Mahmmud Mohamadi, Behrouz Shahidi, and Hossein Partovi, all took photographs and some other photographers whose names I don’t remember now.

Was there ever an exhibition, in Iran or elsewhere?

We exhibited our work on the revolution in Iran and then in Finland and Czechoslovakia, but you see, in the beginning Kaveh Golestan worked for the newspaper, *Keyhan*, as photographer. Then he worked for *Time*. Kaveh Kazemi worked for an American agency. Sayyad worked for Reuters with Kaveh. Shandiz worked for *Khabar Gozari* (a news agency). No one was as crazy as me and took photographs without working for anyone, although Rana and some other young amateurs also took pictures for themselves.

Why didn’t you work for anyone?

Because I was doing documentary and the agencies wanted news. I wasn’t made for it and the other problem is I can’t take orders, I like to do my own work. Unless you are a photographer, you cannot understand that it’s impossible to stay home knowing something important is happening that you can photograph. You suffer, so you have to go out. At that time it was not important to me that these photographs be published, it was only important to take and keep them. My work is not reportage, it is documentary. So as a result I do the kind of work that no one else does. The difference in people is shown through their work.

Aside from your book *Days of Blood, Days of Fire*, published twice and banned the third time in 1979, are there other books published in Iran?

The first book that was published was my *Days of Blood, Days of Fire* [ill. pp. 57-58]. We didn’t have any documentary books on social-political subjects. Before the revolution books had a historical approach and were about the past. Nothing on contemporary subjects. *Days of Blood, Days of Fire* was the first documentary book of its kind.

Who published it?



I had a boss during the revolution at *Tamasha* magazine, his name was Karim Emami, who is now deceased. So Karim Emami, Bagherzadeh and myself. Bagherzadeh at the time was in Tehran on behalf of Time Life publishers in London to institute a Time Life branch here. He is a big publisher himself now in London. Bagherzadeh and the few of us started a publishing house called Zamineh Publishing, which published *Days of Blood, Days of Fire* as its first. The second book was about the war, but then we went broke, so we published a culinary catalogue for Moulinex.

Which was the book published after *Days of Blood, Days of Fire*?

It was *Allah-o-Akbar* (God is Great) by Shahrokh Hatami.⁵⁰

Were your photographs in there?

No, that was Hatami's own work. There's another book by Kaveh Golestan and Mohammad Sayyad called *Shuresh*, which features the photography of Mohammad Sayyad and Kaveh Golestan together. All books after this include photographs



that either we all exhibited together or they got from us to publish in various publications. I have Hatami's book, *Allah-o-Akbar*. I also have a Gilles Peress book with an introduction by [Gholamhossein] Saedi. I also have Michel Setboun's book to show you.⁵¹ But none of them has the documentary value of *Days of Blood, Days of Fire*. Because this book is multi-dimensional. I owe it to Karim Emami for giving me the idea. Aside from photographs, it also documents revolutionary slogans and the manifestos of different political groups. You'll see how many different factions existed at that time.

It would be interesting to print a facsimile of this book as we'll never recover the negatives they used for it. This book is unique and it reminds me of a typical style of the late 1970s, like the famous book, also out of print, about Soweto in South Africa, called *House of Bondage*, by Ernest Cole. In *Days of Blood, Days of Fire* there is a very specific way of editing, the way you cut your photographs, and I think there are a certain number of books, from late fifties to the early seventies like this. Do you know the work of the Dutch photographer Van der Elsken? This very sharp and

strong way of editing also appears in this book I mentioned, *House of Bondage* by Ernest Cole, a close friend of David Goldblatt – who gave Cole the film to shoot in Soweto –. There is something very Pop about it; it's very strange for a political book, but there is something Pop in the editing of texts and images... The way in which you cut your photographs and use the political texts. It belongs to a tradition.

Yes, it's a retro 1970s style, which is no longer practised or trendy.

Can someone get copies of these photographs, for research purposes?

After the revolution, Seyed Mohammad Ehsaei took our book abroad.

Where did he go, England?

No, he went to New York, stayed there for some time and arranged an exhibition by enlarging the pictures of our book 1 x 1 metres without our knowledge. Then after some time he brought me back a handful of photographs, which he had taken from the exhibition in New York and told me he had organised an exhibition for me. I said, 'I am not blind, I can see what you have done, but you did this without my permission.' This was one year after the revolution. We have not been on speaking terms with Ehsaei for twenty years.

This book was published in 1979, in three editions.

It was published twice by Zamineh and the third edition was banned.

Why was it banned?

There never was a clear answer, just that Zamineh was told it can't be reprinted. Of course this is back 27 years ago. This is the first edition, which came out a few months after the revolution. The second edition came out a few months after the first. Two editions in one year!

When did you want to do the third printing, which you were not able to do?

When the second printing ran out, Zamineh tried to get permission for the third printing, but were denied.

Is there an overstock or are they all gone?

There are a few copies in a few libraries.

What were you doing after all these events in 1979, after the publication of this book?

The magazine *Tamasha* launched in 1970, but after the revolution it appeared with a new editorial team and changed its name to *Sorush*. It is still being published and I worked there as director of the photography department until I retired a few years ago.

Did you still take photographs?

I came and went to the Iran-Iraq war front for eight years.

All the photos are taken in the surroundings of Khorramshahr. Did you systematically spend more time in Khorramshahr?

I first went to Ghasre Shirin. That was where things started. I went to Kordestan twice, but it did not appeal to me. Khorramshahr was appealing to me because it was the largest city destroyed. Abadan and Khorramshahr were international cities because of their oil industry.

Bombs were also thrown on Tehran, but you seem to photograph only the front.

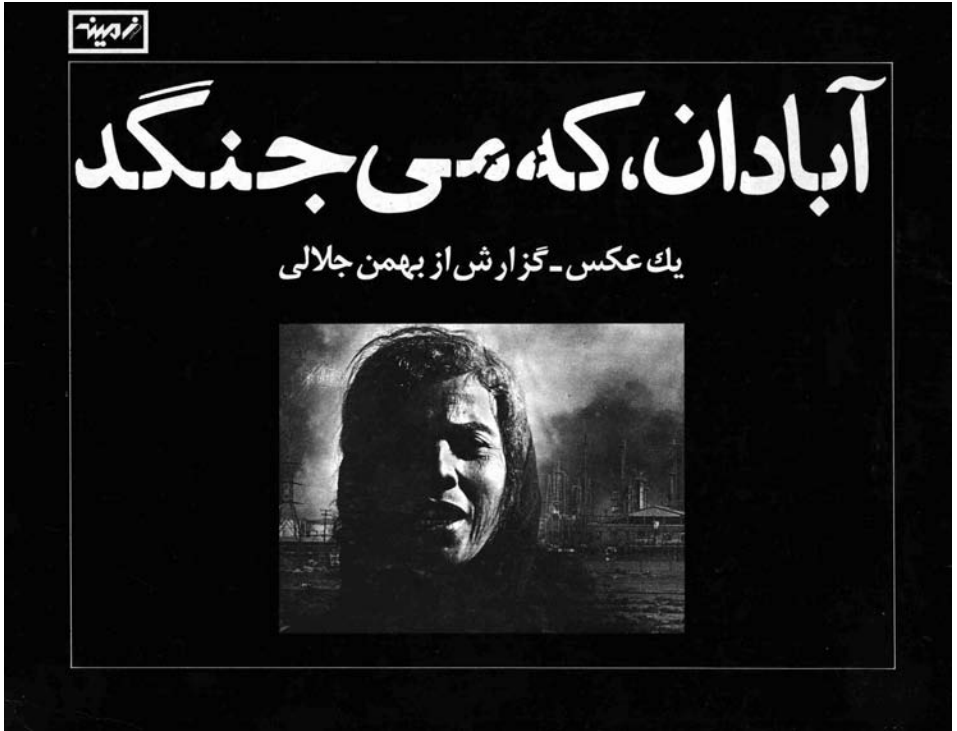
I never photographed Tehran. But I encouraged two of my students to photograph old houses of Tehran, which resulted in a book by Fatemeh Tamidi and Fatemeh Taeb.⁵² Unfortunately, many of the houses in this book don't exist anymore. Two other young photographers whom I know worked on Tehran during the war: *Tehran Under Missile Attack* by Jasem Ghazbanpour, was published by Daspan in co-operation with Deputy of co-ordination and planning – the research and planning centre of Tehran, in 1997. He also photographed Khorramshahr because he was from there. Sassan Mo'ayyedi was my young colleague at *Sorush*. Both guys took photographs of Tehran during the attacks.

To have the dates straight, when was this published? The date is not written in English.

1997.

What does he do now?

Ghazbanpour is a very good photographer. He now takes photographs of historical sites mostly and published a very good book on the Bam earthquake. It's difficult to have a job with security, money and ease of mind as a photographer. Take the twelve years I worked for *The Book of Iran*.⁵³ If I were not conscientious, I would have told myself that I was crazy to leave a secure job, that I should just continue and make a lot of money.

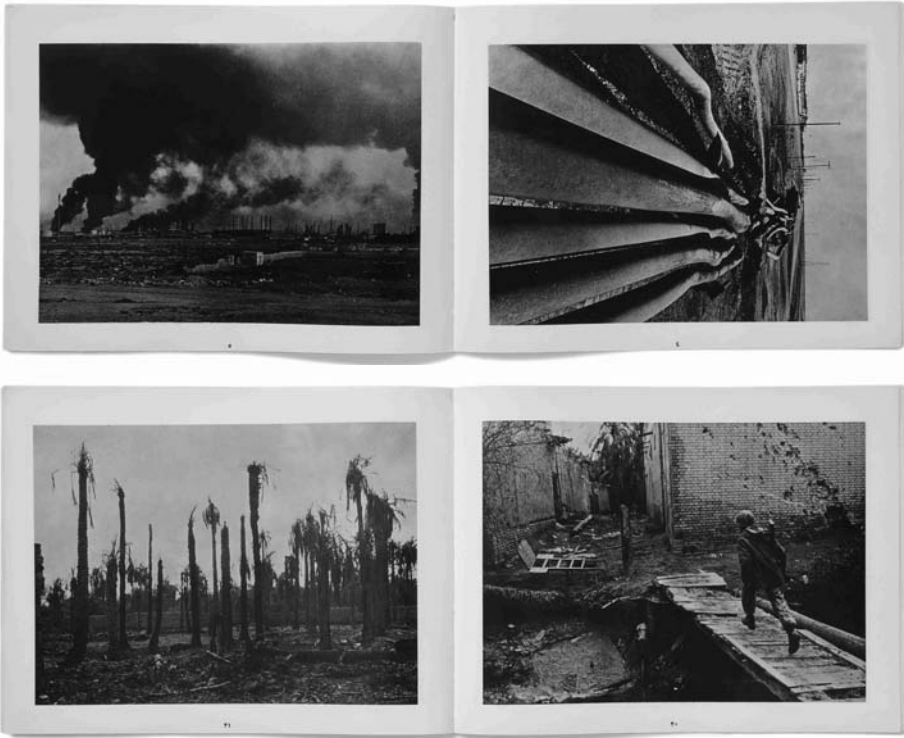


It is true that most of the chaos was happening at the front, but even then there was serious damage in Tehran as well. You were at the front and you were working alone, not for an agency.

When the war broke out, I sent the photographs from my first visit to the front to Sipa Press and they were published a couple of times in *Time* and other papers and magazines. The director's name was Göksin Sipahioğlu. He was driving me crazy. He would call me every night – back then there was no email – to get me to photograph here and there when the oil carrier was hit or whenever there was a killing. In the end I told him I did not want to work with him any longer. I was bored. What was I going to do with an oil carrier on fire? So I quit. I just could not work with an agency. They want the photographs they want.

How long did you work with an agency?

Three months. These here, for example, are some of my first photographs published through Sipa. And I never got my negatives back. These Abadan ones are in my



book⁵⁴ now [ill. pp. 61-62]. There were no foreign photographers in Iran and none were coming in either, so if one wanted to, one could easily work with an agency and earn a lot of money. I could not take it for more than a few months. The photographs they wanted were just so different to those I wanted to do.

Bahman, you must have made contact with many Iranian and Iraqi reporters and photographers, because the American and international press did not bother with this war. This war was at the same time very primitive, in the sense that they would just send people massively to the front lines, but also very organised logistically as it shows in your images.

Because this war was so dangerous, without rhyme and reason, international reporters and photographers would show up and get scared, so they would hire Iranians.

How did you decide to represent this war? Because when one is in the middle of things, one does not have the time to analyse. So how did

you decide at the time, not after when you had had the chance to think about it?

I had done my military service, but I had no idea what to expect. The first couple of days were very difficult and it took a while to find myself. You know it's such a massive event and you instinctively go towards where the action is. I was very lucky I was not working for anyone, so I could make my own decisions as to what I wanted to do. So I came to realise that my photographs were not reportage photographs, because I was not, nor did I want to be working anywhere. My point of view was documentary. I wanted to photograph the streets, what had been left of the city, and buildings, the death and destruction and the agony it caused. And the reason they gave me for not allowing Abadan to be printed for the third time was that it was anti-war. Which is true, I don't like war.

You were showing war as a bad thing.

Yes, and nobody liked or wanted my photographs because they were not encouraging. But when you have been attacked, you have to defend yourself whether you like it or not. We hadn't started the war; we had been attacked and got stuck in it. In my opinion, after all the Vietnam photographs were made public, and the demonstrations against the war, we are not allowed to photograph war freely anymore, particularly wars that Americans are involved in. Take the Persian Gulf War, where did we see photographs of that war? Or the Iraq War, where did we see actual war photographs? Or the war in Afghanistan? We see some images here and there, but not the real killings. The US Defence Department doesn't allow their publication.

From the very beginning you knew this was a personal project. Working alone, how did you decide your schedule, your travel plans? What was your strategy? How would you know where something was happening?

Nothing special, I would listen to the news and keep my ears open. But those events were not important to me. I used to get on a bus or rent a car when I had free time. The chances were that I could capture something wherever I was. I would take anything: a press car, bus, military car, train, whatever.

Did you show the war photographs in Iran anywhere?

In Iran? Some of the photographs, yes, and some of them were published in a six-volume book by the Supreme Defence Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁵⁵ You'd be amazed to see the dimension of the crimes and the destruction that occurred in this war. The purpose of these books was to document the war; and

as a matter of fact, these books are very well done and designed, and there are photographs by most of the photographers of the war in Iran.

Was there an exhibition as well?

I never exhibited all of them. Very few were exhibited. I never had a solo exhibition of my war photographs. They were partially shown in a gallery. And there is a small catalogue.⁵⁶

At the end of war, did you suddenly stop taking documentary photographs? I suspect that you have continued taking photographs that we have not seen.

No, there was really nothing to photograph after the war. We reverted to what it was like before the revolution; photographing official building inaugurations and things like that. It was called the Construction Period, remember?

The period of re-building Khorramshahr and all that?

Yes. It was during those twelve years that I worked on the project of Iran book.

Is it in print now?

Yes, it was published in 2001 and then reprinted in 2002.

The war ended in 1988 and for twelve years you worked on *The Book of Iran*. And you said that you always had other work to live on.

I taught at the university. Then I also worked at the television magazine until ten years ago when I retired. After that, the photography museum opportunity came along and we were collecting photographs. Five years ago I started working mostly on the Qajar photographs.

Meanwhile, I am sure you were taking pictures.

Yes.

Where are they?

(laughter all around)

If one is to do serious work, you can't be occupied with all this other work and then leisurely take a couple of photographs in the streets once in a while. When you have reached my age and have a body of work to show, a few stray photographs



don't do you any good. I would have to work seriously on a project unless I have a specific thing I can dedicate two, three years to.

You can't make a living from part time teaching. You certainly can't make a living from photographing the streets. You're lucky if they don't arrest you, let alone pay you for it! So, I sell some of my photographs. If I want to start a project, it can't be random and has to be serious; to have a subject, something I can delve into deeply and work on for a few years. My retirement income from the television network is about 130 euros a month.

Do you still teach?

Yes, I get paid by the hour for teaching, not a full-time salary.

What do you have in mind for future projects? Is there anything in the way society is changing that is inspiring you to dedicate two or three years to?

I have a couple of subjects in mind; one is the urban disorder in Tehran, in society, architecture, construction, and vision [ill. pp. 65-71].













I find that for such a strict regime, there is indeed a lot of chaos going on here.

Take the advertising billboards for example. Or traffic. Or the buildings that are springing up every day from god-knows-where; Spain, France, Dubai. There's such a mishmash of character in this city. There are things next to each other that are totally unrelated. This is what I find attractive as a subject.

Many people feel what you are saying and are bothered by this...

And they don't know why they are bothered, they don't pay attention. So this is a good subject. The other is these dual lives that we lead, one in public and one in private, which have nothing to do with each other. So I am working on two subjects, one of which I'll eventually pick.

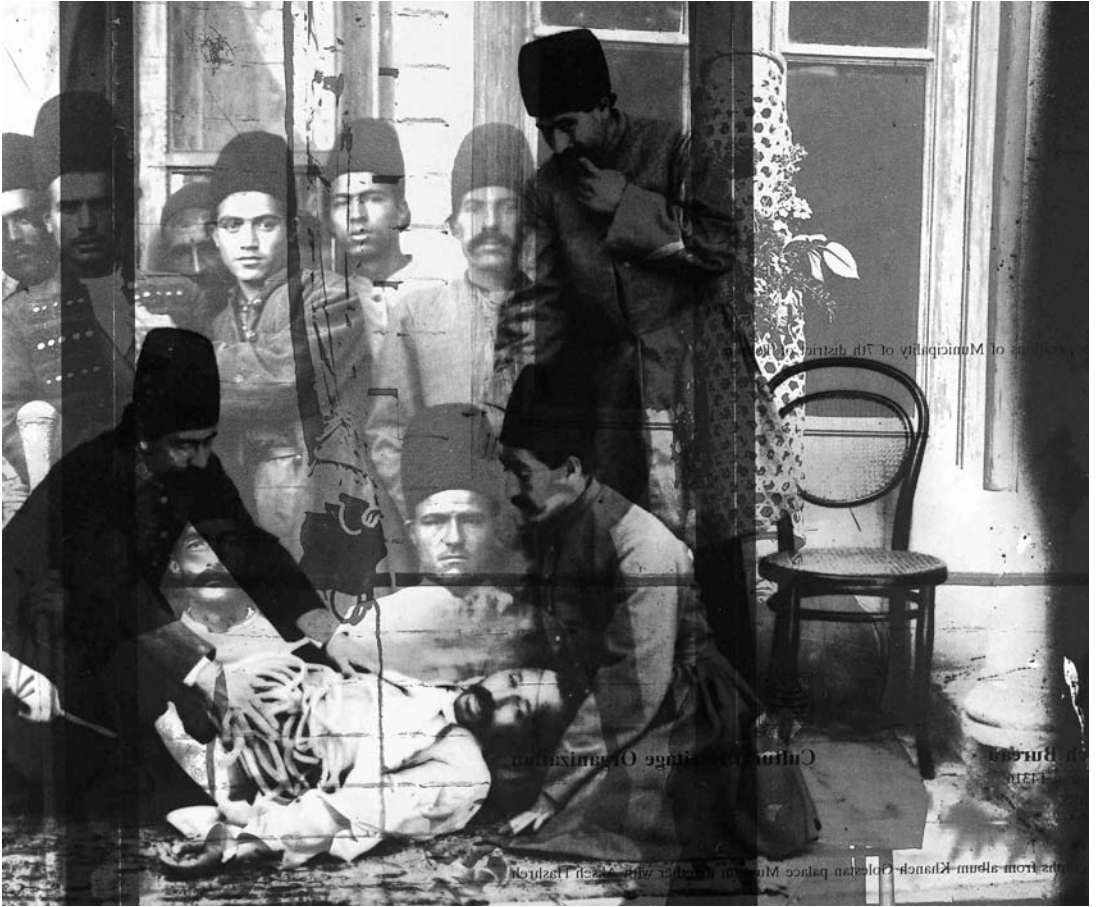
There is tension between the people and things. But there are a lot less police visible in Tehran than in Paris. I rarely see police here; in Paris they are everywhere. Here there is both control and disorder.

When a country cannot create jobs for its youth, the atmosphere becomes one where people with private cars start transporting people for a living. This is so no one protests. People spend so much money on these motorcycles and the city is full of them now, but they cannot arrest them because they don't have jobs to give them. So everything is all mixed up.

Tehran is full of police, but they are in plain clothes. Just today I read in the newspaper that two thieves snatched a woman's purse on a motorcycle, and a police officer in plain clothes caught them. But people thought the officer in the plain clothes was also a thief, so they almost beat him to death. And the two thieves escaped. The people are saying they could have not possibly known it was a police officer. In France they are visible in their uniforms. Here, they're not.

You stopped taking documentary photographs after the war and began the *Image of Imagination* series. [ill. p. 73] Now that you are prepared to work again on a documentary project, how do you consider the work you started after the war, from the time you started work on the Golestan Palace archive until today, with the latest series, the superimpositions, the snapshots, and the flowers? Are you considering this work as a parenthesis within the larger body of your work?

Sometimes you are interested in documentary photography and you take so many photographs that you get to a place where it is impossible to produce, publish and sell them anymore. Therefore, you really must have another job alongside your work. And it should be like this, or you can go work in other fields like many other photographers do.



How did you begin with *Image of Imagination*?

I would go to the printing house when the *Visible Treasure* book was in production to check the colour on each page as they were being printed. And I have about eighteen years of experience looking at colour in the Qajar photographs because I had a passion for it and I wanted to discover it more. When I started doing this work, it was out of a sense of sadness that photography students knew Minor White⁵⁷ or Ralph Gibson⁵⁸, but they did not know 'Reza the Photographer', and that was because he was not mentioned in books. It was sad. I myself knew that, considering the history of photography, we were only eight years behind Europe. I had sadness that 'Reza the Photographer' was not known, because if he was known, then I would be known too.

With offset printing machines, they test pages first. They print a hundred sheets at a time and check them. They're called 'cancelled prints'. They recycle them through the machine for other runs and I saw other images being printed on top of the first ones. I saw how they were mixing three or more images on top of each other, creating a different world. That's how I got to this idea. So for two months I brought these photographs home and kept staring at them, trying to figure out what connection I could find in them with contemporary times. I saw in them exactly the same disorder I was talking about earlier.

So I rented to the offset machine in the printing house and took zinc [plates] there with me. I had no idea what would happen, I just told them to keep printing them on top of each other and I would bring stacks of paper home. But then I realised they were useless, because they were offset prints and I could not do anything with them, so I photographed the few superimpositions that had turned out well. Then I decided to make the rest of the decisions with respect to the materials of photography: what the machine was making automatically, I would do myself.

Doing these mixes was much easier with computers and Photoshop. I am not adept at anything electronic, but a friend came over and montaged a few of them. Once we printed them, we realised the quality was nothing like old photographs. Not only did digital photography not have the look of old photographs, but Photoshop had pixels that did not exist in old photographs, so I put Photoshop aside all together.

What about the snapshots?

So then I collected a lot of photographs and also used ones from my own collection. I copied each photograph with a large format camera. I would identify each photo on top with a marker. Then I would choose a second photograph to superimpose on the first where it would not cover anything up and work together. It was difficult to be precise. I tried it a few times.

How long?

Very long. I worked for two years for the black and white photos you saw.

How did you come across the vandalised studio sign you are using in the *Image of Imagination. Red* series?

Well the sign was kept in the Cultural Research Bureau's collection [ill. p. 75], they had bought it together with other photographic equipment from Esfahan, which was generously given to me when I asked if I could have it to work on. I looked at it for days, trying to figure out why someone would vandalise it so violently with red paint after the revolution. I thought this type of violence only stemmed from the fact that they had also photographed women in this studio. It could not have been for any other reason and I wanted to find a way to talk about



this issue in my work. So I brought the same violence to photographs of women, in the red series. If I could not show this woman's photograph, then I should show what happened.

For me none of these are decorative illustrations: they are documentary photographs. The only thing I did was bringing that violence into these photographs. And they're all photographs of women. You know it is interesting when you work on something; it opens other doors, gives birth to other ideas if you concentrate on it. Well, this is done. The second phase is the Zoorkhaneh (Traditional Fighters) series where my approach was mainly to show how men are in power in the society.

In your latest working technique, you partially removed the reflective layer from behind a mirror and instead you imbedded photographs in there? [ill. p. 76]

For me the basis was this: when you look in the mirror you see yourself, but when you die, that goes away. I wanted to bring back the images of those who died a hundred years ago and put them in a mirror again. It was very difficult. I had



to do this layer by layer with acid. I can take this mirror anywhere I want to: I can imbed a photo underneath it anywhere I want. Although my mirrors are very heavy and difficult to handle, they have still been very popular. Some have been bought and taken abroad, and collectors of my work have bought many of them in Tehran as well.

Do you know what is important to me about this exhibition at Fundació Antoni Tàpies? It's that I am probably the only photographer in Iran with this wide range and variety of work. With this exhibition, I can do with my photographs what I have never been able to do in Iran. Nobody would work this hard to have an exhibition. They just don't do this here. If you go to a museum, you'll find they've just hung a bunch of photographs on the walls and call it an exhibition. Nobody works! We don't have any curators here.

Yesterday I was telling Rana, after this exhibition an era of my work comes to an end. Finished. Then I can concentrate on the two projects I mentioned. I can rest easy now; I have taken this work as far as I could. It's documentary photography that keeps you alive, but with this style of photography you get to a place where you cannot do it any longer, even if the city is still out there to be photographed.

NOTES

1. Conversation between Bahman Jalali and Catherine David at Jalali's studio in Tehran (7-9 February 2007). With the participation and collaboration of Mina Saïdi, who helped with the translation Persian-French-Persian and Iranian cultural clarifications; Rana Javadi, whose contribution in the editing process has been fundamental for the final version; and Nuria Enguita Mayo, Chief-Curator of Fundació Antoni Tàpies, who also took part in the conversation.
2. Transcribed and translated by The Translation Project, San Francisco. Edited by Niloufar Talebi.
3. Esfahan, located about 340 km south of Tehran, is the capital of Esfahan Province and Iran's third largest city (after Tehran and Mashhad).
4. Qajar dynasty: Shahs of Persia, (1779-1925): Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar (1779-1797); Fath Alí Shah Qajar (1797-1834); Mohammad Shah Qajar (1834-1848); Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar (1848-1896); Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar (1896-1906); Mohammad Alí Shah Qajar (1906-1909); Soltan Ahmad Shah Qajar (1909-1925).
5. Reza Shah, also Reza Pahlavi (Iran, 1878 – Johannesburg, 1944) was Shah of Iran from 1925 until he was forced to abdicate by the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran on 1941. Reza Shah overthrew Ahmad Shah Qajar and founded the Pahlavi Dynasty.
6. The Golestan Palace is the former royal Qajar complex in Iran's capital city.
7. Yahya Zoka is a researcher and author of the book *History of Photography and Pioneers in Iran*, Sharkate Entesharate Aalmi va Farhangi: Tehran 1997.
8. Badri Atabai, *Fehreste-e Albumhaye ketabkhaneh saltanati* (Index of the Royal Library Archive), Tehran: Ketabkhaneh Saltanati, 1978; Yahya Zoka and Karim Emami, *History of Photography and Pioneers in Iran*, Tehran: Sharkate Etesharate Aalmi va Farhangi, 1997; Iraj Afshar (compiled by), *A Treasury of Early Iranian Photographs*, Tehran: Nashr-e Farhang-e, 1992; Mohammad Hassan Semsar and Fatemeh Saraian (compiled by), *Golestan Palace Photo Archive Catalogue of Qajar Selected Photographs*, Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, 2002. Other references: Parisa Damandan (compiled by) *Chehrenegaran-Esfahan (Portraitists of Esfahan), a View of the History of Photography*, Tehran: Cultural Research Bureau, 1999; L.A. Ferydoun Barjesteh van Waalwijk van Doorn, Gillian M. Vogelsang-Eastwood (eds.), *Sevruguin's Iran / Iran az negah Sevruguin, Late Nineteenth Century Photographs of Iran from the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden*, Rotterdam: Barjesteh Publishers, 1999; Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour, *Italians and Photography in Iran*, Tehran: Nashr-e Ghu, 2006; Elaheh Mahboob and Behzad Nemati (compiled by), *A Selection of Historical Photos in Documentation Centre of Astan-e Quds-e Razavi*, Tehran: Astane Ghodse Razavi, 2005; Agh Reza Akasbashi, *City Photo Museum Introducing a Treasure House*, Tehran: City Photo Museum, 2006; Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour, *Nasir-ad-Din Shah. The Photographer King*, Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikhe-e, 2002; Nasrin Torabi, *Akashkhaneh-e ayam (Photography Studio of the Time)*, Tehran: Nashr-e Kalhor, 2003.
9. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (Tehran, 1919 – Cairo, 1980) was the Shah of Iran since 1941 until the Revolution on 1979. He was the second monarch of the Pahlavi dynasty and the last Shah of the Iranian monarchy.
10. Shahriyar Adl is an archaeologist and researcher who has written some articles on the history of photography in Iran. He is related to the Qajar family.
11. Agha Reza Eghbal Al-Saltaneh is the first professional photographer and the first photojournalist of Iran.
12. Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar (Tehran, 1831 – Tehran, 1896) was the Shah of Persia from 1848 until his death on 1896. He was a son of Mohammad Shah Qajar.
13. Nasir al-Din Shah built the gallery building in order to display his pictures. It was placed near the Abyaz Palace in Tehran, which was destroyed in Reza Shah's era while renovating and making some changes to the Abyaz Palace.
14. Bahman Jalali (compiled by), *Visible Treasure*, Tehran: Cultural Research Bureau, 1998.

15. The Friday prayer Imam.

16. Mansour Sane, *Photography in Shiraz*, Tehran: Soroush Press, 1991.

17. *Ibid.*

18. The Cultural Research Bureau (CRB) is an Iranian private sector initiative comprised of a team of multidisciplinary authoritative academicians and professionals, active in the fields of education, heritage, visual media, information technology, youth, urban development, environmental issues and governance. The CRB research groups act as project brokers, facilitators and consultants. Their activities have been in partnership with community based organisations, government stakeholders or have been independently initiated and executed.

19. Farrokh Ghaffari (Tehran, 1921 – Paris, 2006) was one of the first Persian cinematographers who together with Ebrahim Golestan and Fereydoon Rahnama are regarded as founders of an avant-garde movement in Persian Cinema. He was the founder of National Film Archive of Iran and had written articles about photography.

20. Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies, established in 1986 in Tehran, has a collection of documents that were obtained after the revolution, including photographs which have been gathered from different organisations' archives after the revolution. The Institute also holds the private collections, documents and photo albums that were confiscated from private homes during the revolution.

21. Mohammad Hassan Semsar and Fatemeh Saraian, (compiled by) the *Golestan Palace Photo Archive Catalogue of Qajar Selected Photographs*, Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, 2002.

22. Mashallah Khan established a photography studio almost a century ago. He was a photography student of Abdollah Khan. His studio was one of the best studios in Tehran. He taught photography to many young students who became good photographers and opened their own studios later on, among them Reza Tabatabaei, Ebrahim Partu, Mirza Mohammad Khan Dibadin and Mahmud Nastaligh.

23. Malek Ghasem Mirza is mentioned to be the first Iranian who worked with a daguerreotype camera. He was the 24th son of Fath Ali Shah Qajar.

24. Abdollah Khan Qajar was the photographer of Nasir ad-Din Shah. He studied photography in Paris and Vienna and taught in Dar al-Funun, Tehran.

25. Period from 1760 to 1925.

26. Seda va Sima (Sound & Image) was the Iran's National Broadcasting.

27. The Tehran Conference (codenamed EUREKA) was the meeting of Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill between November 28 and December 1, 1943 in Tehran, Iran. The chief discussion was centred on the opening of a second front in Western Europe. At the same time a separate protocol pledged the three countries to recognise Iran's independence.

28. Ahmad Shamlou (Tehran, 1925 – Tehran, 2000) was a Persian poet, writer, and journalist. His poetry was initially very much influenced by and was in the tradition of Nima Youshij.

29. Forough Farrokhzad (Tehran, 1935 – Tehran, 1967) was an Iranian poetess and film director. She published two volumes, *The Wall* and *The Rebellion* before going to Tabriz to make a film about Iranians affected by leprosy. This 1962 film was called *The House is Black* and won awards worldwide.

30. Pari Zanganeh began her musical studies at Iran's Music Conservatory. She travelled to Italy, Germany and Japan, amongst other countries, to complete her studies. She's a specialist in folk music from around the world.

31. Peter Chelkowski's, and Hamid Dabashi, *Staging a Revolution. The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, New York: New York University Press, 1999.

32. The Fajr Film Festival has taken place since 1983. In its early years it had a competition section for professional as well as amateur film (8 mm, 16 mm). Since 1990 there has been an international along with the national competition. The festival also features a competition for advertisement items like posters, stills and trailers. In 2005 the festival added competitions for Asian as well as spiritual films.

33. Kamran Shirdel (Tehran, 1939) is a renowned Iranian documentarist. His films have often been banned and confiscated. Shirdel is the founder and director of the Kish International Documentary Film Festival.

34. *Exhibition of African Art. Photos by Bahman Jalali*, Tehran: Soroush Press, 1977.

35. Parviz Tanavoli (Tehran, 1937) is a renowned Iranian sculptor. He has been influenced heavily by his country's history, culture and traditions.

36. Peter Turner (London, 1947 - Wellington, New Zealand, 2005): photographer and editor of the influential British photographic magazine *Creative Camera* in the 1970's and 1980's. During his editorship, photographic imagery rather than photographic theory was his main point of view. Author, amongst others, of *American images 1945-1980* (1985) and *The History of Photography* (1987).

37. Ernst Hoeltzer (Germany, 1835 - Julfa, Iran, 1911). In 1863, he was employed by the British government and shortly afterwards assigned to supervise the construction of the telegraph lines in Iran. He lived in Julfa until his death and was buried there at the Armenian cemetery. He was a curious and diligent observer, with a passionate and painstaking attitude toward photography. He took numerous pictures of Esfahan and its people in the second half of the nineteenth century.

38. *Thousand Sights of Life, Photographs of Ernst Hoeltzer from Naser al-Din Shah's Era*, Tehran: Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, Documentation Centre, 2003; Mohammad Assemi (ed.), *Persien vor 113 Jahren*, 1. Teil: Esfahan by Ernst Holtzer, Tehran: Vezarat-e Farhang va Honar, 1976.

39. Aidin Aghdashlu (Rasht, northern Iran, 1940). He is a painter, author, art critic, historian, and graphic designer.

40. Reza Mafi (Mashhad, 1943 –Tehran, 1982), calligrapher. He was greatly influenced by Master Mirza Gholam Reza Esfahani's method, one of the greatest calligraphers of the nineteenth century.

41. Dr Asad Behrouzan was an intellectual, photographer, filmmaker and a researcher in Iran.

42. Arthur Upham Pope (Phoenix, 1881 -Warren, 1969) was an American archaeologist and historian of Persian art.

43. Reza Ghotbi was head of Iran's National Television and Radio before the revolution.

44. Hamid Dabashi, *Close-up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, New York: Verso, 2001.

45. See note 8.

46. Ralph Gibson and Peter Weiermair (exhibition catalogue), *Light Years*, Frankfurt: Frankfurter Kunstverein, 1996.

47. Asef Bayat, *Streets Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

48. Gilles Peress went to Northern Ireland to begin an ongoing 20-year project about the Irish Civil Rights struggle. *Power In the Blood: Photographs of the North of Ireland* (UK: Jonathan Cape/Scalo, 1997) a book that synthesizes his years of work in Northern Ireland, is the first part of his ongoing project called *Hate Thy Brother*, a cycle of documentary stories that describe intolerance and the re-emergence of nationalism in the postwar years. *Farewell to Bosnia* (Zurich: Scalo Publishers, 1993) was the first achievement of this cycle, and *The Silence* (Zurich: Scalo Publishers, 1995), a book about the genocide in Rwanda, was the second.

49. Abbas Attar, *Iran Diary 1971-2002*, Paris: Autrement, 2002.

50. Shahrokh Hatami, *Allah-o-Akbar*, photographs by Shahrokh Hatami, Tehran: Iran Culture and Art Foundation, 1979.

51. Michel Setboun, *Iran: l'ecatement*, Paris: Éditions Sycomore, 1979.

52. Fatemeh Taeb, and Fatemeh Tamidi, *Old Houses, The Memories of our Gathering*, published at Tehran by Soroush Press in 1995.

53. The book was produced in collaboration with the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in order that a book could be given to official and political visitors, which introduces the past as well as the contemporary Iran. Bahman Jalali was the director of photography of the book, took photos and gathered them from other photographers. It was published in 2001 and reprinted in 2002.

54. Bahman Jalali, *Abadan Fights On*, Tehran: Zamineh Books, 1981.

55. *The Imposed War*, 1983.

56. See note 8.

57. Minor Martin White (1908 – 1976) was an American photographer born in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

58. Ralph Gibson (1939, Los Angeles, California) is an American art photographer best known for his photographic books.

IMAGES

P. 13. Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar, while crown prince. Second from right, Hassan Mirza Motazed-Os-Saltareh, third from right, Mirza Mahdi Kashi. In the gallery building (see note 13). Unknown photographer.

Pp. 16-19. Studio Bahram Chehrenegar in Shiraz. Photographs by Bahman Jalali, 1993.

Pp. 20-22. Photographs from Bahram Chehrenegar studio archive, 1923.

P. 25. Outside the studio of Antoin Sevruhin, Tehran. Photographs by Arman Stepanian, 1996.

Pp. 26-27 Right. Photographs from Antoin Sevruhin studio, early twentieth century.

P. 27 Left. Photograph from Qajar period. Unknown photographer, mid-nineteenth century.

P. 28. Photographs from Bahram Chehrenegar studio archive, 1923.

Pp. 30-31. Zoroastrian cemetery in Yazd. Photographs by Bahman Jalali, 1970.

P. 33. Photograph from Adjamian studio, Tehran, 1942.

P. 34. Photograph from Qajar period. Unknown photographer, mid-nineteenth century.

P. 35. Musicians playing at a wedding ceremony in a private home in Tehran. Photographs by Bahman Jalali, 1968.

Pp. 37-39. House of Sadeq Hedayat in Tehran, where he wrote *The Blind Owl*. Photographs by Bahman Jalali, 1972.

P. 47. Mozaffar al-Din-Shah Qajar. Third from left, Aqa Mohammad Kajeh (eunuch), better known as Faghir ol-Ghameh. Unknown photographer, mid-nineteenth century.

Pp. 48-49. Aqa Mohammad Kajeh (eunuch), better known as Faghir ol-Ghameh. Unknown photographer from Qajar period, mid-nineteenth century.

Pp. 50-51. Abol Ghasem Ghaffari. Photograph from Qajar period, unknown photographer, mid-nineteenth century.

P. 52. Photograph from Qajar period, mid-nineteenth century. Unknown photographer.

Pp. 57-58. Cover and backcover of *Days of Blood, Days of Fire*, Tehran, 1979.

P. 61. Cover of *Abadan Fights On*, Tehran, 1981.

P. 62. Image from *Abadan Fights On*.

Pp. 65-71. Tehran. Photographs by Bahman Jalali, 2007.

P. 73. *Image of Imagination* (2000-2003). Photograph by Bahman Jalali.

P. 75. Damaged sign of a photographic studio in Esfahan, used by Bahman Jalali in his series *Red*, from his work *Image and Imagination*, 2003.

P. 76. *Mirror*, 2005.