

## The Links between Art and Politics during the Qajar Era and Its Consequences

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### Abstract

In the assessment of art history in Qajar era, in addition to their aesthetic elements, the social, historical, and political processes influencing on the formation of the works must be taken into account. These studies never detract from the values of the artworks, but demonstrate the share of ultra-aesthetic elements in them. The historical evidence of Qajar era reveals to us some manifestations of the impact of policies, especially those of the governmental elite<sup>1</sup>, on the art of this period. The headlines of governmental offices, orders, notifications, circulars, and political themes of the artwork are evidenced. In the second half of Qajar government, the growth of modern ideas created a new discursive space, the development of which had a significant impact on the emergence of artistic styles and appearance of eclectic styles.

Focus on the interaction between art and politics and analysis of the factors affecting the formation of artwork are among the topics that have been less paid attention to by the researchers in this field. Yet, from among the factors influencing on the creation of works of art, governance policies have played a decisive role. The two fundamental questions this paper was formed to answer were what relationship there has been between art and politics during the Qajar era and what factors have influenced on it. This article aimed at evaluating how the governing elite dealt with artists, artworks, and their outcomes by using a descriptive-analytical method. The article has been further theoretically inspired by the relationship between knowledge and power based on Michel Foucault's thoughts. Therefore, according to Foucault's theories and viewpoints on the relationship between knowledge and power, the relations between art and politics were analyzed. The results of this study were indicative of the interactions between politics and art in the form of politics supporting art, and in some cases, contrasting it, the manifestations of which could be found in the critical aspects of the works of art.

### Keywords

Art, Qajar, Fath ali Shah, Naser al-Din Shah, Politics.

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## Introduction

Historical documents and evidence indicate the links between art and politics throughout history. The background for this link dates back to the beginning of the political formations. Many of the works and cultural-artistic achievements of ancient civilizations include the names and memories of rulers, warriors, and wars that have contributed to shaping the course of history. It is worth noting that in the works of Greek philosophers such as Plato's Book of the Republic, in which the first vote on art in the Western attitude has been proposed, the political censorship of the arts is support of government's expediency has been defended.

To organize the debate and avoid burbling, the relationships between art and politics can be studied in 4 modes:

1) Art in support of politics; 2) Politics in support of art; 3) Art in contrast with politics; 4) Politics in contrast with art

The present article aimed to assess these relationships in the Qajar era with an emphasis on the second and third modes. The analytical outlook and theoretical framework of this paper were inspired by the idea of Michel Foucault, a French theorist, concerning power-knowledge. According to Foucault, knowledge is never neutral (unbiased and impartial). Power creates knowledge to serve its objectives. The existing knowledge embodies the power that has created it. At any time, depending on which class or group owns the truth regime or in other words, the power/knowledge discourse, the truth is interpreted by that group (Jenkins, 2005: 10, translator's preface). Regarding the research literature, it can be said that the majority of the studies performed in this area have assessed the impact of politics on a branch of the art of this period, such as "The influence of politics on the art of iconography in Qajar period" published by Amir Hussein Chitsazian in the Quarterly Journal of Iranian Studies, No. 21, Spring of 2012. After a glance through the political and social developments in the Qajar era, the author of this work has evaluated the art of painting and its growth since the time of

Fath ali Shah Qajar, while he has not mentioned the kings' policies in support of the various types of arts in this era.

From among the other researches, the article entitled "A reflection on Qajar art and its importance", which was translated and published in the Journal of Golestan-e-Honar by Valiollah Kavooosi, could be mentioned. In this article, after giving a brief reference to the orientation of the art of imaging in the Qajar era towards the pre-Islamic Iranian art, the author has addressed the influence of Western art on the art of painting in this period only in one page. Another article entitled "An overview of Qajar art" has been translated and published in the book of Mah-e Honar by Pardis Bakhtiari, in which the author has presented an overview of the different types of arts in Qajar era.

From among the sources, Vahid Qobadian's book entitled "Architecture in Naseri's House of the Caliphate could be mentioned. The author of this work has only addressed the architectural features of the Qajar era. Another source is Mohammad Yusuf Kiani's "The history of Iranian art and architecture" could be cited. The author of this work has dealt with a brief survey of the genesis and historical development of the art of architecture from the beginning of Islam to the present time, while nothing has been mentioned about the relationships between art and politics in it. In this respect, the necessity of performing such researches becomes clear.

In this paper, the research questions have been answered using a descriptive-analytical method by providing the historical evidence.

### • Questions

The current study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What relationship has there been between art and politics during the Qajar era?
2. What factors have affected the relationship between art and politics during the Qajar era?

### • Assumptions

1. Evaluation of the relationship between art and politics in the Qajar era indicates the existence of an

interactive and sometimes contrastive relationship between art and politics.

2. The political strategy, governance ideology, and interests of the Qajar kings have affected the relationship between art and politics.

### **The relationship between art and politics in Qajar era**

#### • Politics in favor of art

Several factors have influenced on the process of formation of the Qajar era artwork, from among which an important contribution to the relations between art and politics should be noticed. Due to its controversial nature and historical feature, bearing in mind the 3 factors of time, place, and persons is necessary in assessing these relations. Given these triple factors, the formation and flourishing of the works of art would not occur at the time of crisis, war, and insecurity.

At the beginning of Qajar government, i.e. Agha Mohammad Khan's period the arts underwent a recession and interruption due to various disputes for the establishment and consolidation of the dynasty. In addition to the crises of this period, the personality traits of Agha Mohammad Khan were effective on disregarding the arts (Pakravan, 1969: 2). Due to his greed and avarice in collecting much wealth, he took no actions to build a palace or mosque and the seedlings of literature and culture did not grow at his time either. Most sources believe his nomadic mood and tribal context to be the reasons for his indifference (Dialafua, 1982: 689). He was interested in writing his memoirs and sometimes astonished his courtiers with his historical and literary information during his reign. Of his good deeds after his coronation, his visit of the shrine of Imam Reza (AS), order of building a gilded shrine on the tomb of Imam Ali (AS) in Najaf city, and building the Dome of Imam Hussein (AS) can be mentioned (Hedayat, 2006, vol. 9: 7475). Nonetheless, the most important act of Agha Mohammad Khan that can be regarded as a turning point in the history of Iran has been choosing Tehran as the capital city. From the standpoint of history,

Tehran can be proud of inheriting the ancient honors of Persepolis and Pasargadae and succeeding a high rank, which Shiraz and Isfahan were eligible for a few centuries earlier. As Tehran gained power, the Medes regained their superiority that was lost against the Persians at the time of Cyrus once again and got to such a degree of importance in the late 18th century that Agha Mohammad Khan made it as the capital city, thus granting it the honors he had received by overcoming the Zand dynasty (Jackson, 1990: 474). By selecting this location as the center of government, Agha Mohammad Khan showed his great insight. Apart from preventing the Russian advance from Tabriz direction (governorship of the northwest Iran), the main reason for the selection of Tehran as the capital city was its central strategic position or centralized power and easy dominance on the roads leading to the major states of the country, thus dominating over the two eastern and western governorships at more or less equal distances and yet locating at a relatively close distance to the Caspian Sea littoral provinces. On the other hand, Tehran possessed a better position compared to the other former capitals such as Isfahan and Shiraz since there was always left the possibility of transferring the capital to those cities much easier in the event of a catastrophic attack from the north (Curzon, 2001, vol. 1: 442). The measures taken by Agha Mohammad Khan to stabilize the Qajar dynasty and choosing Tehran as the capital city was indicative of a single discourse and it was what Foucault referred to as the power of discourse, i.e. the power whose focus was on governance from the very beginning. Of the features of this type of power was that it was directly applied and continued through the ownership, asset, and wealth of the society independent of the interaction with the body of the society that made the nation (Fouladvand, 1998: 63; Foucault, 2004: 86).

In assessing the relationship between art and politics in the Qajar era, the eras of Fath ali Shah and Naser al-Din Shah are considered as distinguished periods. During these periods, the different modes of the relations took place in supportive and sometimes

contrastive forms. In fact, the picture of power display with its precedent dimensions in Iran's history was part of a coordinated plan to announce the dominance of the Qajar period over the country's political arena (Diba, 1999: 433). Of the Qajar kings and princes, Fath ali Shah is the one from whose time numerous arts showing him sitting or leaning on the throne in a variety of different clothes have been left. Fath ali Shah's pictures and petroglyphs provoke the same sense of respect and submission in the Iranians as the icons of saints or the ideal images of Iranian Kings do.

Seeking to consolidate his power as the leader of the Shiite community by having his pictures, his court, and his military equipment portrayed, Fath ali Shah was raised as a mediator between social orders and heritage of the Iranian kings' ancient traditions (Diba, 1998: 45). Of the major achievements of his kingdom, a return to literature, artistic movement, and government-based half renaissance have been mentioned (Golmohammadi, 1990: 98).

Using full body figures as a means to consolidate power and diplomatic relations with foreign governments put portraiture at the center of the visual arts of the early Qajar period. In this regard, due to his commanders' defeat in the war with the Russians, Fath ali Shah took a strong response. His interest in all his self-expressive pictures was as an apparent compensation of his soldiers' incapacities manifested in the very defeat they had undergone from Russia, at least in his own opinion (Panahi, 1997: 65)

The arts were taken into consideration in this era not only to demonstrate the power and glory of Qajar court (Diba, 1999: 428), but the Qajar government sought to preserve the heritage of the ancient traditions of Iranian kings by supporting the various forms of art manifested in the form of art in support of politics and politics in support of art. At the time of the Qajar kings, "restoration of the grandeur of ancient Iran not only found a way through the visual arts, but also was part of recreating Iranian language, history, and culture (Flor, et al, 2002: 31). The respect and wonder Fath ali Shah's images induced in the

Iranians astonished the European tourists traveling to Iran in the early 19th century. In this respect, Sir John Malcolm writes: "the same respectful ceremony could be observed in front of a portrait of Fath ali Shah painted as a gift for the governor of Sind state in the streets as for the king himself ..." (Diba, 1999: 422). In fact, Fath ali Shah was the governor of Fars Province before he came to the throne. During this time, he got familiar with the ancient Iranian history and heritage, especially those of the Achaemenian and Sassanian dynasties, and this was an important factor in his consideration and desire of the great past of Iran insofar as he knew himself as the rightful heir to the great Iranian kings and followed their examples of creating their own government systems and courts. Following this, Fath ali Shah ordered poets to imitate Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and compose Shahanshahnameh in praise and glory of the Qajar dynasty. For this reason, he benefited from the entire verbal and visual imageries to show the revival of the power and glory of Shahnameh (Chitsazian, 2012: 75). After the reign of Fath ali Shah, portraiture became more attractive to the extent that Naser al-Din Shah's relief portrait in Larijan was the continuance of the same representation and tradition of authoritarianism and imitation of the ancient Iranian kings. In fact, the West-oriented trend of the Persian art commenced from the Safavid era produced a major change in the artwork of Qajar period.

During the reign of Fath ali Shah when stability and peace returned to Iran to some extent, efforts began to improve the situation of Iranian art in the king's interest. Fath ali Shah was interested in writing poetry, calligraphy, and painting, which led to his attention to artists and flourishing of the mentioned arts insofar as artists such as Zine el-Abidine Ashraf al-Kottab Esfahani, Mohammad Shafi', the son of Muhammad Ali Tabrizi, Vesal Shirazi, and hundreds of Naskh (a type of Persian handwriting style) writers and other famous calligraphers were trained at that time (Haqiqat, 2005: 579). During the reign of this king, exquisite manuscripts and valuable manuscripts and illustrated books were collected due to his taste

and fascination with the art of writing. Furthermore, he encouraged calligraphers and artists to produce handwritten books decorated with the writing arts including illumination and inlaying with gems. In the meantime, characters such as Mirza Shafi<sup>3</sup>, prime minister of the time, and Mirza Abdul Wahhab Mousavi Isfahani and (Mo'tamed al-Dawla) whose penname was Nashat, and other men of letters of the period sought to promote Iranian art (Ibid: 580). During this period, some factors that have been effective in the art history of this era in an indirect and gradual manner should not be hidden from view. In this regard, the Griboedov's presence in Iran should be noted. Griboedov, the Russian ambassador in Fath ali Shah's court (1795-1829 AD) was a master playwright apart from mastering political issues. His play entitled "Gore ot uma" is one of the best comedies of Russian literature. The mentioned comedy is a satire on Moscow society and a masterpiece of brevity and wit (Sepehr, 1998, vol. 1, Footnote: 418).

The presence of this playwright as an ambassador in the court of Iran for political reasons could open a path for the introduction of Iranian society with such literary and artistic styles to the West. Evaluation of the themes of some works of art in the era of Fath ali Shah can reveal the motifs of this king of Qajar concerning the various branches of art. He removed the great and precious carvings of Sassanid era in Ali spring and carved his and his sons' names on them for his name and the greatness of his court to remain for future (Dyalafva, 1982: 289).

By the orders of Fath ali Shah, another portrait of him was carved in a part of Rey old castle. In this carving, he is riding on a horse, while killing a lion with a spear. Also, his picture has been carved on large stone in the large cave of Taq-e Bostan near Kermanshah. Other examples of the kind could be pursued in the artwork (Haqiqat, 2005: 675-676).

In the discussion of the relationship between art and politics during the Qajar era, the existence of artistic workshops in the court is also noteworthy. "Homayooni (royal) Workshop" whose name has

been repeated in the books of painting history in Qajar era many times was a place for the flourishing of art in the Qajar court. In fact, some artistic works of the great masters of painting were formed in this royal workshop (Flor, et al, 2002: 9).

In the era of Fath ali Shah, the king's house of painting had become as a place for painters to supply their artworks. The painters locating near the palace of the king of and their proximity to the king indicated the king's trust in them (Flor, et al, 2002: 104; Pakbaz, 1999: 117).

Moreover, foreign tourists have written about painting workshops and the house of painting in their travels. The supervision over of painters and paintings in this period was the responsibility of head-painter. This point is understood from Muhammad Shah's command issued for Abdullah Khan, the architect. By issuing this command, Abdullah Khan was chosen as the head of the different groups of artists, including painters, architects, engineers, enamelists, carpenters, carvers, brick-bakers, potters, house owners, gardeners, pitmen, and candle-makers. In Iran of the 19th century, there were at least a dozen head-painters. Other artists also had such a title, but they were not from among the royal painters since this title only belonged to the crown prince head-painter in other cases. The mentioned title was also awarded in the army (Flor, et al, 2002: 10).

From among the famous head-painters of this period, the following could be noted:

Mirzababa (until 1225/1810), Abdullah Khan (in 227-280/13-1813), Mirza Ahmad, the son of Mirza Hassan (apparently in 1234/1829), Ismail (in 1252/37-1836), Abdullah Khan, the architect (in 1255/40-1839), Mehr Ali Esfahani (in 9-1258/43-1842), Mohamed Ibrahim (in 1265/49-1848), Kazerooni Saheb (after 1266-1850), Abol-Hasan Ghaffari (Sani-ol-Molk in 1277/61-1860), Mohammad Ismail (until 1288/1871), Mirza Ali Akbar Mozayyan al-Dawla (in 1288/1871), and Mirza Mohammad Ghaffari Kamalolmolk (in 1300/83-1882). (Flor, et al, 2002: 11).

Naser al-Din Shah's personal interests and

virtuosity were of the determining factors in the mentioned relationship, especially in the flourishing of some branches of art. Accordingly, on his trips to Europe, he found an opportunity to visit the works of European arts and familiarity with them (Soodavar, 2001: 14). Moreover, to satisfy his artistic interests, he provided a large collection of music instruments in the royal museum, and even engaged some masters of music from France and Austria. From a variety of music, he had a more passion for military music (Curzon, 2001, vol. 1: 522). It was in the light of this interest that a systematic program of military music in European style was added to the training courses of Dar ul-Funun (Academy) under the supervision of foreign experts (Ektiar, 2001: 161).

Naser al-Din Shah was of the kings whose peace and relief of life depended on hearing lyrics and music. On this basis, his bedroom had 4 doors, one of which opened to the room of the minstrels, while he used to listen to the sound of music when going to sleep. Concerning this, in the book of "Notes from the private life of Naser al-Din Shah" Mo'ayerrolmamalek wrote: "The especial crew of cheerfulness including Soruralmolk (dulcimer player), Agha Gholam Hussein (Tar player), and Ismail Khan (player of a violin-like instrument) played for the king until he went to sleep and they stopped playing when there was no signs of awakening in him." It seemed that Soruralmolk spread a piece of cloth on his dulcimer at the moment he saw the king was gradually falling into a sleep so as to let the sound of his instrument reach his ears much softer (Mo'ayerrolmamalek, 1982:75).

In his memoirs of the last 15 years of Naser al-Din Shah's life, E'temad al-Saltaneh, the minister of publication in Naseri court, wrote: "The crew of cheerfulness was usually present at the king's meals, playing for him, especially when cooking the annual soup." By this, he meant to refer to an occasion held once a year in the age of Naseri in a way that they cooked a soup before the king and it was customary that all the ministers and court dignitaries participated in cleaning vegetables and cereals and cooking the soup. According to E'temad al-Saltaneh, there were

always a number of special players and at the event and sat at the table beside the court ministers and dignitaries.

Of the master musicians during Naser al-Din Shah, Mirza Abdullah and Agha Hussein gholi (Tar players), Asadollah Esfahani, vice-chancellor (flute player), Bagher Khan (player of a violin-like instrument), and Mirza Ali Akbar Shahi and Hassan Khan (dulcimer players) can be mentioned (E'temad al-Saltaneh, 1971 D: 276).

Naser al-Din Shah's great interest in painting led to not only the flourishing of this art in his time, but also to providing a ground for his interest in photography and its flourish as well in the Qajar era. Additionally, the desire for the immortality of his name and display of the symbols of royal authority were not ineffective in his interest in this new art. In the early years of his reign, political and military delegations and the tourists or foreigners who were employed by the Iranian government began their activities in photography. Through the mentioned men's memories and notes, his great passion of photography can be discovered. Undoubtedly, the spread of theoretical and technical knowledge photography and writing the relevant books in this field in the period of Naseri were all under the supports of the king (Tahmasebpour, 2002: 49).

With the support of Naser al-Din Shah, different fields of art appeared in Dar ul-Funun (Academy) (Fevrieh, 1984: 217). In addition to the king's interests in establishing these disciplines, the political issues were involved. It seems that Shah made a particular effort in the artistic disciplines including painting, photography, music, and especially architecture for distracting the students' minds of the academy from some risky disciplines, through which some revolutionary ideas were being promoted among them.

Due to the king's interests in arts, Dar ul-Funun Institute of Military Music, which was part of the military reform program, was established in Dar ul-Funun in 1235 (lunar calendar). The measures of the institute in introducing new styles, writing

books, describing the Iranian music according to the European system, and producing and directing an orchestra in accordance with European methods were considerable. Among the foreign experts who came to Iran to teach and supervise the Dar ul-Funun Institute of Military Music, Alfred Jean-Baptiste Lomer was an outstanding figure (Alizadeh Birjandi, 2008: 119). He was the founder of Iranian scientific music. In addition to teaching and writing activities, he made the first Iranian official greeting song of "Hello King!" It is worth noting that the first National Anthem of Iran was composed by Lomer (Koohestaninejad, 2005: 25-27). Among these activities, the establishment of the School of Music was important for its role in the history of music education in Iran (Ostovar, 2002: 21). The policies of Naseri government supporting the painters appeared in different ways. In this regard, a number of Iranian painters, including Mirza Ali Akbar Khan, the head-painter, Mozayyen al-Dowleh, Mo'ayyed al-Dowleh, and Moshaver al-Mamalek Mahmoudi were sent to Paris (Goudarzi, 2005a: 69, Goudarzi, 2001b: 26).

The portraits of the king and other officials remained in various historical works of art reveal that each of the government's elite have benefited from this art in an applicable manner directed towards their own purposes. In 1273 (lunar calendar), Sani-ol-Molk finished the portraits of people in the military hall of "Loqanteh" by the orders of Mirza Aqa Khan E'temad al-Dowleh, Nuri Chancellor, which included 84 excellent pictures of the figures in Qajar court, showing the greeting ceremony of "Hello Naser al-Din Shah!" The paintings are now kept at the Museum of Ancient Persia (Haqiqat, 2005: 584). Paying attention to the arts, such as painting, calligraphy, and architecture besides creating art workshops in the court, and attempting to train the artists and supporting them directed towards improving the state Iranian arts by the kings of this era clearly indicate the relationship between power and knowledge in such a way that the development of knowledge is not separable from the issue of the exercise of power. According to Foucault's theory

of the knowledge and power, human behavior is formed from a certain point onwards, which should be then analyzed. All these facts are related to the mechanisms of power that practically materialize and analyze man and his society and the like at a certain moment (Haqiqi, 2000: 190).

Another branch of art supported by the kings was architecture. The court architecture of the early Qajar period is a manifestation of the great heritage of the ancient past. In the Qajar era, a reconstruction of the royal grandeur and power system appeared in an imitation from the ancient Persia. For this purpose, inspiration from ancient Achaemenid and Sassanid periods was considered. The use of the design pattern of Sassanid palaces is evident in some palaces of this period. On the other hand, the great decoration inspired by the ancient architecture, including carvings and paintings can be seen in the aristocratic houses (Afshar asl, 1999: 133).

The impact of local art, especially decorative elements and motifs can be seen in the architecture of the Qajar era. Paintings of hunting scenes, performance of lion-and-sun emblem, and the uses of figurative forms, yellow and red colors in tile-work, and decorative elements are of the examples revealing the influence of Iranian ancient art on the architecture of Qajar period (Doroodgar, 2003: 14). In this period, we witness a return to the glorious pasts of Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties. For example, the Great Hall of the Golestan Palace is like Damghan Sassanid palace in its general plan. This is a proof of the continuity of architectural traditions of ancient Iran (Ayatollahi, 2001: 303-304).

Attention of the kings of the era to the great legacies of the past is a manifestation of identity conceptualized through Foucault's thought in the form of a capillary since power affects any points it reaches like the blood in the body's capillary network. From Foucault's point of view, power produces identity and subjectivity (Foucault, 2004: 62).

In fact, architecture of the Qajar era must be assessed in two parts. The first part is from the beginning to Naser al-Din Shah's period, which is referred to as a

continuation of Zand and Safavid architecture with only slight changes in the building and decoration. During these periods, Iranian elements have been dominant over architecture and foreign influence has been minimal in the early Naseri Kingdom. The second part of the architecture as a successful fusion of Western-Persian architecture started since late Naseri period (Ayati, 2001: 300).

Therefore, architecture in the Qajar era has faced with a new issue of growing a tendency to European buildings on the one hand and never negating the tradition on the other hand. In the meantime, a reflection of what is called European architecture in Iranian buildings is seen through images and descriptions of those buildings never leading to a mere simulation, but coverage of modern Iranian decoration that gives them an Iranian spirit.

It is worth noting that the different types of arts during the Qajar period did not result from a direct continuation of the arts of the previous immediate periods (Nader Shah Afshar and Zand dynasty). The art in Qajar period represented 3 fundamental characteristics: 1) the increasing separation of Iranian culture from the great Islamic tradition as a result of the victory of the Shiite and competition with the Ottoman Empire; 2) the cumulative emergence of folk art elements; and 3) the growing dependence on the effects of Western art. Though being on a lower level than those of the previous periods in terms of quality, the art of this period demonstrated a completely independent and refined feature and identity (Askarcha, 2005: 35).

With regard to a return to the architectural traditions of the past of Iran, perhaps, the most important measures taken by the kings of Qajar in the field of architecture could be classified in several categories: a) an interest in art branches; b) modernization; c) religious interests; and d) acquisition of the kings' legitimacies.

A) Interest in art branches:

In the first part of the architecture of this era and the Qajar king interests in it, there is a necessity of paying attention to Fath ali Shah's reign and his

actions in the field of architecture. At this time, the small size of Tehran before becoming a capital city changed and the interior lands within the ditch walls of the city were gradually developed into buildings. Shah created buildings within the lands of the citadel ditch for his own royal system inevitably developed in turn (Mostaufi, 1992, vol. 1: 36).

Fath ali Shah also established a school called jurisprudence school in Qom (Hedayat, 2006, vol. 3, 7475). Moreover, by his orders, Shah' mosque was built with a beautiful dome in Semnan while the tiles used on the dome and interior walls have further added to its beauty (Pollack, 1982: 67).

Qajar palaces are referred to the constructions whose orders of building were issued by Fath ali Shah (Sepehr, 1998, vol. 3, 1460). Lord Curzon has mentioned the most prominent and appropriate places outside the city walls to have been allocated to the Qajar families' palace-buildings. Ghajar palace is one of the main buildings established on a high land about two miles to the north of the city walls with interesting scenery from a distance. In the palace, a photo of Fath ali Shah standing between Zal and Afrasiab and some paintings of Europeans have been exhibited (Flanden, 1977: 112; Curzon, 2001, vol. 1: 450). Fath ali Shah also built Negarestan (painter's studio) Palace for his summer residence. The Palace was called painter's studio because of the large number of exquisite paintings adorning the walls of the hall (Brown, 2008: 128) and it was mentioned as a lofty paradise, land of fairies and headquarter of nymphs (Curzon, 2001: 446). Also, in one of the halls built in the middle of the garden, appropriate murals showing Fath ali Shah being welcomed by the European ambassadors can be seen (Dosersy, 1983: 152).

European representatives have been painted with different postures. Fixed relief colors have been used in them to suggest that the Iranians have been masterful painters. In this regard, Flanden writes: "It must be admitted that though Iranian people have had very little relationship with Europe, among their paintings, especially those present in mentioned painter's studio, paintings and drawings in European



style have been employed and specific initiatives have been expressed" (Flandin, 1977: 112).

### **B) Modernization:**

In general, the period of Naser al-Din Shah's reign was more prominent in many ways. Unlike the periods of Agha Mohammad Khan, Fath ali Shah, and Mohammad Shah, during Naser al-Din Shah's long reign, which was accompanied with internal and external wars, a relative peace and calmness was achieved, while architecture and other related arts such as tiling, stucco, mirror-work, carvings, and paintings were flourished (Qobadian, 2006: 89).

On the other hand, the growing urbanization undoubtedly brought about new expectations from the government. For this reason, Tehran was expanded and old ditches were filled out by orders of Naser al-Din Shah in 1286 (lunar calendar) (Mostoufi, 1992: 258).

In this era, a fundamental change took place in the architecture of the capital city, during which a type of architecture with no background in the architecture of our land appeared. The important governmental palaces and buildings that were built in this period were a combination of traditional and European architecture in terms of source of inspiration, shape of body, and type of decoration, which were different from the buildings of previous periods. In fact, a branch of the architecture of this period which was a mix of Iranian traditional architecture and European eclectic was mentioned as the architectural style of the late Qajar period, some examples of which can be observed in many of the buildings built by Naser al-Din Shah.

Among all Qajar kings, Naser al-Din Shah has showed more interest in architecture and building in a way that many buildings in the prior periods were destroyed and amended in his taste (Mostoufi, 1992: 407).

He further built Soltani houses with much more elegance (Sepehr, 1998, vol. 3: 1512).

The art of architecture and dramatic arts in this period came to flourish under the considerations and supports of Qajar kings. Trips to Europe and interactions with

Europeans affected the developments of both arts (Dieulafoy, 1982: 689) as the governmental religious theater, which some called "the largest display house in the theater history," was established after Naser al-Din Shah's trip to Europe to be inspired by the "Royal Albert Hall" of London (Fallahzadeh, 2004: 208; Gharibpoor, 2005: 41).

In the second part of architecture in the Qajar era beginning from late Naser al-Din Shah's era, although the influence of the West sometimes goes beyond the original Iranian elements of architecture, Iranian architects' tastes of combining these two architectural traditions are undeniable. Sahebqaranieh Palace, the Great Hall of Golestan Palace, Shamsol'emareh, Almas Hall, and Louvered Building on the south side of Golestan Garden are some examples (E'temad al-Saltaneh, 2001b, c1: 83). The Great Hall of Golestan Palace is the largest and most luxurious halls of the palace where the saluting ceremony was practiced. Large and numerous other halls, such as Hall of Mirrors, Hall of Dining, and Berlian Hall show a mix of European and Iranian architectures at that time, which have come into existence according to the requirements of the Royal Palace (Amanat, 2006: 261). Shams al-Emareh Palace was the most significant building built in the governmental citadel and the tallest building of Naseri House of the Caliphate, the project of which had been adopted from the images of European buildings due to the king's interest (E'temad al-Dowleh, 2001b, c2: 663). The main function of this high-rise building was for watching Tehran City and around it from the top of the building by the king, guests, and the households. Another function of it was related to a formality aspect, while the important officials were welcomed on its porch and in its magnificent halls as a manifestation of the king's power, wealth, and quasi-cultural mentality. Pergolas, clock, and height of the building associates its great similarity to European buildings (Dieulafoy, 1982: 132). Also, there is a portrait of Naser al-Din Shah standing in this massive building, which has been portrayed by one of the court painters (Fevrieh, 1984: 199).

Among the other buildings designed in the style of European palaces in this period, Melijek Palace dating back to 1934 (lunar calendar) can be mentioned. Application of a combined architecture in this building is in such a way that, no parts of the original building of the palace look like Iranian traditional buildings after exerting the secondary changes in it, thus being imitated from an all-European project. Another palace is Yaqut (ruby) Palace composed of 2 parts. The first part is known as the outer pavilion built as the European summer buildings with an utmost beauty. Bab-e-'Ali at the beginning of St. Shamsolemareh is of the building made with a roof decorated entirely with mirrors in European style (E'temad al-Saltaneh, 2001b, c1: 88). Of the other palaces of this period, Eshratbad palace can be mentioned that has been built with a slight difference from European style on the top of a hill in front of the city (Mostoufi, 1992: 193). In his description of Eshratbad palace decoration in European style, Serena writes: "With the exception of a very beautiful hall of an Iranian atmosphere and decorations with small Indian pieces of glass, the European furniture of the other rooms is highly commonplace and lacks a good taste. Eastern residents prefer their rooms to be decorated with European furniture and objects instead of using the national artistic tastes of their own countries." (Serena, 1983: 199) This palace was established when the king returned from Europe and was mostly used for holding the king's wedding parties. Fath ali Shah benefited from the traditional and European architectural styles in the construction of buildings such as Negarestan (painter's studio) Palace, Imam Mosque, and Sulaimaniyah Palace, the case which is significant anyway.

From among the writers who thinks differently from Europeans' thoughts of Naser al-Din Shah's modernist measures to improve his country and offers a completely distinct opinion is Edward Brown. He writes: "Those in Europe discussing and arguing about receiving ratings from European companies believe that the interests of the king and his people

are the same, while it is not only so, but their interests are often in conflict with each other. They think that the Shah of Iran is an enlightened leadership, while he is a despot without a popular base and only thinks about his comfort and personal interests. He opposes the spread of any liberalistic ideas among his people, while the speed of transferring ideas among Iranian people besides their high sensitivities, inherent acumens, and learning aptitudes have added to his concerns. He does anything he can to prevent the spread of such ideas that lead to real progress and development, while his apparent respect for European civilization and modernity is due to his interest in exotic mechanical toys" (Brown, 2008: 122). Iran's relations with Western countries increased during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah. Many ambassadors of the king went to Europe and became familiar with the arts of that country. In fact, the king did not fear to face Western countries since he could bring Iranians closer to western nations by his several trips to Europe and thus acquaint them with the knowledge and art of Western nations. In his itinerary concerning the reasons for the lack of continuation of this reform, Dieulafoy writes: "He is not capable of reforming for fear of religious leaders. In addition, how can something that should be gradually done over the centuries to find strength and continuity be performed immediately? Naser al-Din Shah should leave the honor of doing this to his descendants, who should fear the day when Iran, like Turkey, will not get involved in retrospect if its authorities embark on modernity and accept the customs of some western countries not fit with the ethics and habits of Muslims" (Dieulafoy, 1982: 689). By Mohammad Shah's orders, a royal building including houses, outer and inner buildings, mosques, and castles, was established as a mixture of Iranian and European architectures near Asadabad and Ferdows Garden and several thousand tomans was spent on building it by the king (E'temad al-Saltaneh, 2001b, vol. 1, 950). Also, renovation and reconstruction of Hezarjarib Garden by Mohammad Shah indicating the artistic tastes and aspects of

Shah Abbas I period shows his attention to him to architectural organization more than ever, so that the garden became as a resort for the residents of Isfahan (Yavari, 1984b: 654).

### C) Religious interests:

Qajar kings' positions in relation to art sometimes derived from their intellectual and ideological tendencies as in Mohammad Shah's age, the tombs of mystics were repaired, renovated and decorated due to his desire of the Sufis (Zarrinkub, 1994: 171). On a trip, Mohammad Shah visited Ma'soumeh's shrine in Qom and returned to his House of Caliphate after ordering the buildings and structures there to be repaired (E'temad al-Saltaneh, 1988c, vol. 1, 906). Also, the repair of the dome of Imam Hussain's shrine was performed by him (Hedayat, 2006, vol. 9, 7475). Fath ali Shah also made a great effort in creating buildings and decorating holy places. Renovating the courtyard of Imam Hussein's shrine, making a shrine of pure silver on his tomb, constructing a new apron at the shrine of Imam Reza (AS), donating 5 condyles of red gold, installing a door of enamel gold (Curzon, 2001, vol. 1, 218), installing a silver shrine over the tomb of Prince Abdul Azim and Shah-e-Cheragh, and illuminating Ma'soumeh's dome and porch were of his good actions (Sepehr, 1998, vol. 3: 1512). From the above, we can see that the policies of the Qajar kings in support of the arts and artists suggest the fact that power is generated by knowledge in every era, while it is run within a network of intertwined relationships, the very thing determines and legitimates the structure of a society. Power in this sense is rooted in the different layers of social and linguistic interactions (between the ruler and people). In other words, power is not run downwards in the form of a linear vector, but is formed and conceptualized within a so-called discursive capacity. Based on Foucault's notion, the issues of a governor's power and politics run everywhere. In traditions, occasions become important within the verbal interactions between social individuals, classes, and groups expressed in different ways

and manners. Thus, facts and wishes are of the effects of power. An individual is both the product of power and the means to identify and manifest it (Dreyfus, 2000: 25-26, Smart, 2006: 100).

### D) Acquiring legitimacy

In addition to personal interests and artistic tastes, many acts of the kings of this era are significant in terms of legitimacy. Illuminating the domes and porches of Imam Reza and Ma'soumeh's shrines, illuminating the porches of Imam Hadi and Imam Hassan Askari (AS), developing the apron of Imam Hussein's shrine (E'temad al-Saltaneh, 1995a, vol. 1, 83), gilding and tiling of the dome of Hazrat Abdul Azim in Rey, repairing the tower and building in Mashhad that had been destroyed in Salar's sedition, and constructing of mosques such as Sultani Mosque can taken as Naser al-Din Shah's measures in order to gain the support of religious authorities (Hedayat, 2006, vol. 10: 8977). What matters is that besides the personal interests, the kings sought legitimacy, so that one of the concerns of Fath ali Shah after getting to the kingdom was whether he would acquire legitimacy as a king among the people (Rezazadeh Malek, 1975: 11). Although the Qajar court was involved in the problem of legitimacy and Fath ali Shah tried to show off his glory to cover up his military weaknesses and failures with the help of Iranian and in the meantime the court art and literature, Naser al-Din Shah's court followed the religious aspects of popular art and literature to justify its legal status, which became as the biggest supporter and even a folk-making heretic (Mohammadzadeh, 2007: 60). Of his folk-making aspects, his support of passion play and portraiture of the Infallible Imams can be noted (Chitsazian, 2012: 74). However, the Qajar kingdom could not gain a legal and religious popularity like the Safavids. Although the kings of this era communicated with a group of religious authorities and besides their pretense of piety, they spent some costs on paying pensions and constructing and rehabilitating a number of religious buildings,

they were unable to win agreement of the majority (Yavari, 2009a: 232; Yavari, 1984b: 126).

### **Art at odds with politics:**

Besides expressing a relationship between politics and art, some forms of art could show an opposition between them and the challenges this kind of art could produce for governments. The contrast between art and politics reflects the principle of reversal or change in the principles of Foucault's methodology. The principle of reversal is what man may assumingly induce an opposite concept in his mind (Zamiran, 2008: 38) since when a historical phenomenon or event is considered from a particular angle or horizon, other contrary angles and horizons can be raised to provide a new idea about that phenomenon.

Some examples of the contrast between Qajar court and dramatic arts can be traced in the clown shows at the court. In addition to entertaining and making the king and courtiers laugh, one of the important functions of the court clowns was expressing the truth and criticizing the conditions and courtiers' adverse performance. According to the conditions in the court and flattering of the courtiers to often hide the facts from the king, the roles of the clowns as a channel of transferring the facts to the king and informing him of his administrators became important. The themes criticized the this troupe included the courtiers' performance, king's overspending, especially on his third trip to Europe, exploitation and oppression of governmental agents, and their presence in the king's duties. Manifestation of all these themes can be found in "The grocer play in the presence of the King" acted by Karim Shishe'ie, the famous Naseri court jester, and his team (Alizadeh Birjandi, 2008: 99).

In fact, the principle of reversal is seeking to dissect the governor's discursive style in a historical or philosophical outlook and review its hidden layers (Ibid: 39).

Based on the above, it can be realized that knowledge is both the generator of power and its consequence. Thereby, it first makes human beings as identifiers,

and then masters over the very identifiers (Ritrez, 2000: 324). Therefore, according to Foucault, power and knowledge directly imply one another. It means that neither the relations of power exist without creating a field of knowledge to be correlated with, nor the knowledge that does not require power relations and does not make will find a possibility of existence (Fuladvand, 1997: 8). For this reason, Foucault rejects some philosophers' thoughts of trying to establish an inevitable interval between the domains of knowledge and authority since knowledge is produced whenever power is applied and on the other hand, power is the cause and source of knowledge and wisdom (Gholipour, 2009: 162).

The Qajar kings' policies in support of the arts reflect the relations between art and politics. On the other hand, a governor's discourse in each age is not an ideological indication of the class position but is part of the power structure within the community, revealing the game of power in special positions. According to Foucault's theory, discourse should be measured in terms of power and knowledge (Ritzer, 2000: 60). Relying on the principle of discontinuity, Foucault believes any period is distinguished from the previous periods because of its special features. In his view, it is the episteme and knowledge system prevailing any particular period that makes the specific knowledge of that period. Therefore, in each period, the relationship between knowledge and power is manifested on the discursive system in a particular manner to cause a distinction of that period (Zamiran, 1999: 51-52). In terms of the link between tradition and modernity and development of the ideas of modernism, the Qajar era created a new discursive atmosphere, the effect of which on the appearance of artistic styles and emergence of consolidated styles is negligible.

According to the above, it is noteworthy to say that among the researches published on the arts of Qajar era, a gap of study is felt in the investigation of the relations between art and politics. This issue, i.e. the links between art and politics in this period took on new dimensions due to the developments in Iran,

emergence of modernization, and enhancement of relations with Europe. In fact, the studies published on the art and architecture of this period have addressed the effects of modernization, especially the artists' adoption of neoclassical (western) art and architecture. In addition, each present work has been dealt with the kings' roles in the construction and decoration of buildings in a case study and sometimes in the form of monographs. However, the links

between art and politics have not been explained and analyzed in them. The difference between this paper and others is its adoption of a conceptual framework relying on the ideas of the postmodern philosopher, Foucault, in addition to dealing with the mentioned links. The central part of this theory and its critical approach is the pursuit of knowledge and power relations connected with the subject and examples presented in this article.

## Conclusion

Qajar era is of the sensitive periods of the history of Iran, a period in which tradition and modernity are first interconnected and the art of this period is closely tied to politics. The historical evidence of the Qajar era represents the different types of bonds between art and politics. The main relationships between art and politics in this period have emerged in the form of politics supporting the art. Beyond this support, the authorities' political interests and instrumental exploitation of art can be seen. In these relationships, art has been employed sometimes for eternizing the kings' names and dynasties and displaying royal authorities, sometimes for satisfying the kings' artistic interests, sometimes for acquiring legitimacy, and at times for showing an interest in modernity.

This approach of the authorities to art has led to attaining governmental appointments and titles by the artists and talented in arts in the Qajar court. Therefore, the institutional positions of the Qajar kings have made a great contribution to the promotion of some branches of art. Nevertheless, in some cases, some of the favorite arts of the Qajar kings have been functioning contrary to the expectations of governments. The dramatic arts in the age of Naseri found such a function, as the court jesters' shows challenged those responsible in the governments in some cases due to some of their critical themes. Therefore, functions of the kind reveal the confrontational relations between art and politics in this period.

In fact, analyzing the evidence presented in this article demonstrates how the relationships between art and politics in this period have emerged in the two interactive and contrastive forms. The interactive relations were based on the governmental supports of the artists and strengthening the arts and the contrastive relations appeared in the form of a ban on some branches of the art by the government and artists' criticism of the governance. In fact, the political benefits and expediencies of the sovereignty and interests of the Qajar kings on the one hand and political and intellectual tendencies of artists on the other hand have been of the factors affecting the development of the relations between art and politics in this era.

## Endnote

1. The governmental elite are referred to those who directly or indirectly have a major role in the government. The elite status is quite associated with a superior ability only in completely open societies with full social mobility. It is only in this context that the governmental elite are combined of those who mostly deserve to rule (Kuzar, 2007: 523).

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