



# CROWN V. IN THE QAJAR AND PAHLAVI PERIODS

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When he regained his freedom after the death of Karīm Khan Zand (1163-93/1750-79) *Āgā Moḥammad Khan Qājār* returned hastily to his tribe and supporters in northern Persia. He declared himself shah and began the long process of retaking both the territory and the treasures that had been controlled by the Zands. He did not officially assume the crown until 1210/1796. An ovoid crown of copper, padded on the interior and with a finial at the top, now kept at the Golestān palace museum in Tehran, was probably the one worn by *Āgā Moḥammad Khan*, the earliest extant crown from the Islamic period in Persia; it is decorated with enamels but was probably originally set with jewels and pearls, which were later removed and reused in the Qajar crown.

*Āgā Moḥammad Khan* named his nephew *Bābā Khan*, who later ruled Persia as *Fath-ʿAlī Shah* (1212-50/1797-1834), crown prince and governor of *Fārs* in *Shiraz*. While his uncle was still alive *Bābā Khan* devised means of enhancing the coronation, enthronement, and courtly audience ceremonies, taking his ideas from the reliefs at *Persepolis*, descriptions of the coronations of ancient kings in the *Šāh-nāma* of *Ferdowsī* (q.v.), and his uncle's own innovations. For



example, the rich collection of jewels captured by Nāder Shah (1148-60/1736-47) in India had fallen into the hands of the Qajars and was exploited to underscore the magnificence of the monarchy. Faḥ-‘Alī Shah also ordered the construction of several jeweled thrones (Taḳt-e K̄voršīd or Taḳt-e Ṭāwūs, Taḳt-e nāderī, and Taḳt-e marmar or Taḳt-e Solaymān) and the creation of a tall, jeweled crown with eight peaks on a red velvet cap, the Kayānī crown (plate xxxiii). From that time on all Qajar kings wore this crown, which is now kept in the Bānk-e markazī-e Īrān (Central bank of Iran).

The Kayānī crown retains most of its original form (height without aigrette 32 cm, diameter at the base 19.5 cm). During the reign of Faḥ-‘Alī Shah’s grandson Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (1264-1313/1848-96) the arrangement and setting of some of the jewels on the crown were modified. The original aigrette (Meen and Tushingam, p. 79 ill.) was removed and is now preserved among the jewels at the Bānk-e markazī (pace Meen and Tushingam, p. 73, who suggest that this change took place for the coronation of Moḏaffar-al-Dīn Shah in 1313/1896). It was replaced by two aigrettes, one at the crown consisting of an emerald boss with a spray of curved “plumes” studded with emeralds, the other at the front incorporating an 80-carat emerald set in a diamond clasp with diamond-studded plumes and various pendants and tassels of emeralds and diamonds. The crown itself is ornamented with 1,800 pearls, 1,500 spinels, 300 emeralds, and a number of finely cut large and small diamonds.

The third surviving Persian crown is the Pahlavi crown (plate xxxiv), which is not yet seventy years old. It was ordered by the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, Reżā Shah (1304-20 Š./1925-41), who did not wish to wear the Kayānī crown, which was associated with the Qajars. In 1304 Š./1925 he commissioned a group of Persian craftsmen, under the supervision of the renowned Caucasian jeweler Serāj-al-Dīn Jawāherī, who had formerly served the amir of Bukhara, to fashion a different crown, which is now kept in the Bānk-e markazī. It is 19.8 cm tall and 19.8 cm in diameter at its base. It consists of a red-velvet cap encircled by four four-stepped crenellations of platinum set with pearls, a design inspired by the crowns of Achaemenid and Sasanian kings (see i, ii, above). In the front is a diamond sunburst set with a yellow diamond of about 60 karats in the center. Above it a jeweled aigrette with a white plume rises from a gold-and-diamond clasp, perhaps representing a stylized lotus flower. Each of the other three sides is ornamented with a diamond sunburst above a lion’s head within a ribboned diadem (see Meen and Tushingam, p. 50 ill.). Along the base of the crown is a row of jeweled



lotus shapes echoing that of the aigrette clasp and alternating with smaller jeweled escutcheons. Every part of the crown is edged with pearls, a total of 368. The jewels in the crown include 3,380 diamonds weighing a total of 1,144 karats, five emeralds weighing a total of a little over 199 karats, and two large sapphires weighing a total of 19 karats. The total weight of the crown, including precious metals, jewels, and velvet, is about 2.8 kg.

Most Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian queens wore crowns, and Moḥammad-Rezā Shah sought to revive this ancient tradition, ordering a jeweled platinum crown to be created for the coronation of Queen Farah in 1346 Š./1967 (Meen and Tushingham, p. 57 ill.). It is set on a cap of dark-green velvet and ornamented with four large emeralds, one of them 91.32 karats, the others ranging from 46.73 to 66.35 karats; three large dome-shaped spinels; thirty-two medium and small emeralds; thirty-three rubies and spinels; 105 large pearls, most of them pear-shaped; and 1,469 diamonds of varying sizes, all selected from the unmounted stones in the royal treasury. The crown was made by Pierre Arpels in Paris.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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