



DECORATIONS

DECORATIONS, honors granted by the Persian government. Although in general Western usage orders are badges reflecting the distinction of belonging to select societies, whereas decorations and medals are awarded in recognition of various types and levels of civil or military achievement or service, in Persia there are no orders in the Western sense, but only decorations and medals. Nonetheless, decorations (*nešān*), elaborate combinations of badges and accessories, are frequently referred to, especially in Western writings, as “orders.” The recipient of such an honor has the right to wear a collar or chain from which the decoration itself is suspended by a badge, a sash in a specified color, and a large pendant star adorned with the relevant insignia. Medals (*medāl*) are awarded either collectively or individually in recognition of services performed for the nation and are usually reserved for junior and noncommissioned officers or for lower-echelon civil servants.

These honors are to be distinguished from commemorative medallions (for illustrations of such medallions, see Mošīrī, 1354 Š./1975; idem, 1355 Š./1976; Rabino di Borgomale; Šahīdī).

Qajar period (1193-1342/1779-1924).

The practice of awarding such honors was initiated by Fath-‘Alī Shah (1212-50/1797-1834), who introduced the Lion and sun (*nešān-e šīr o koršīd*) in 1223/1808, apparently inspired by the Red Crescent adopted by the Ottoman sultan Salīm III (1203-22/1789-1807). It was bestowed on military men and



civilians, native and foreign.

Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (1264-1313/1848-96) increased the repertoire of honors to include the Temṭāl-e Amīr-al-Mo'menīn (referring to Imam 'Alī and bearing his image; [Plate XVII.a](#)), which was reserved for the shah; the Sun (Āftāb) for royal women; and the Royal portrait (Temṭāl-e homāyūn). At first he reserved diamonds for the highest decorations, especially that with the royal portrait (Šahīdī, p. 208). The Amīr-al-Mo'menīn was introduced after the Qajars recaptured Herat in 1273/1856; it was worn by the shahs at public ceremonies and national festivals (Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* II, pp. 702-04; Sepehr, I, p. 295; E'temād-al-Saltāna, 1988, p. 1275). The Āftāb was introduced in 1290/1873 specifically for presentation to queens and princesses, including the empress Augusta of Germany and Queen Victoria, during the shah's European tour in that year (Reuters despatch; *The Freemason*, June 28, 1873, p. 421). The shah's wife Anīs-al-Dawla received it on his birthday in 1306/1888 (for text and illustrations, see Šahīdī, pp. 224-25, 235-36; E'temād-al-Saltāna, *Rūz-nāma-ye kāṭerāt*, p. 596; idem, 1988, p. 1722). In 1314/1896 Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah (1313-24/1896-1907) awarded it to the wife of the Ottoman ambassador Šams-al-Dīn Beg (Sepehr, I, p. 296). During his reign decorations were made of silver (Sepehr, p. 297).

Under Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah the central medallion with eight radiating points framed a lion against a rising sun; it was ornamented with jewels (see Mošīrī, 1354 Š./1975, p. 13). The crown prince 'Abbās Mīrzā issued a similar decoration for military valor; it bore a legend on the obverse and a distich composed for the occasion on the reverse (Rabino di Borgomale, 1945, pp. 68-69). Under Moḥammad Shah (1250-64/1834-48) there were eight classes of the lion and sun, corresponding to military rank, from four-star general to noncommissioned officer, each with three grades (for text and illustrations, see Šahīdī, pp. 187-207); under Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah the number was raised to nine with the creation of the rank of *mīr panj* (comparable to lieutenant general). The lion was shown holding a raised sword in one paw, and the decoration was set with diamonds. For civilians rubies and sapphires replaced the diamonds, and the lion was depicted reclining without the sword (Šahīdī, pp. 205-07). In 1278/1861 Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah created three new categories of the lion and sun, which became the highest decorations during his reign; they were the Aqdas ([Plate XVII.b](#)), the Qods, and the Moqaddas (for the text of his edict, see E'temād-al-Saltāna, 1988, pp. 1399-1405; Sepehr, p. 291). Each consisted of a central medallion set within a twelve-pointed star and bearing



the image of the lion and sun with a crown above; it was set with diamonds and rubies. The highest was the Aqdas (E'temād-al-Saltāna, 1988, p. 1449), reserved for kings and prime ministers; among those who received it was the Ottoman sultan 'Abd-al-'Azīz, in 1280/1863. Ambassadors and dignitaries of comparable status received the Qods (e.g., Mīrzā Yūsof Khan Mostawfī-al-Mamālek; E'temād-al-Saltāna, 1988, p. 1821). The Moqaddas was intended for ministers, governors, and the like (Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* I, pp. 118-19; for illustrations, see Šahīdī, pp. 17, 219-20; cf. Mošīrī, 1354 Š./1975, pls. 10-11). In 1289/1872 the vizier Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan Mošīr-al-Dawla Sepahsālār established five classes of the lion and sun for foreigners and Persian civil servants (*nešān-e šīr o koršīd-e kāreja*), on the pattern of the French Légion d'honneur (Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* I, pp. 118-19; Sepehr, p. 297). Thenceforth civilians and foreigners no longer received the Moqaddas; those who would previously have been eligible for it received instead the Lion and sun, first class (Plate XVII.c). The different classes were represented by the number of points in the framing star: from eight for the first class to four for the fifth class. The Lion and sun, first class, was parallel to the military Lion and sun given to three-star generals and was awarded with a green sash (Sepehr, p. 297; cf. Afzal-al-Molk, pp. 43, 194, 200, 421, 429).

The Royal portrait was intended for high-ranking officials and foreign dignitaries. It consisted of an oval medallion 12-14 cm long with the portrait of the shah; it was framed in diamonds, rubies, and sapphires and had a crown at the top (Šahīdī, pp. 200, 213; Mošīrī, 1354 Š./1975, ill. 3, 9, 38). There were three classes of this decoration (Sepehr, I, p. 295).

Except for the lower classes of the Lion and sun, all these honors were awarded with the sash (*ḥamāyel*). The shah's sash was light blue. The grand vizier and four-star generals wore plain green; when the vizier was wearing the Royal portrait his sash was bordered with dark-blue stripes. Ambassadors generally wore dark blue with the Royal portrait, a darker blue with the first class of the Lion and sun. The commander-in-chief of the armed forces wore a blue sash bordered with green stripes, three-star generals red with green border stripes and two-star generals red with white border stripes, brigadier generals plain red, and colonels plain white. These sashes could also be awarded separately (Šahīdī, pp. 214-15; E'temād-al-Saltāna, 1988, pp. 1240, 1300, 1316, 1318, 1617).

The eighth and ninth classes of the Lion and sun for military personnel were considered medals. In 1269/1852 *Dār al-fonūn* began awarding gold, silver,



and copper medals bearing the image of the lion and sun to outstanding students. The Madrasa-ye nāṣerī and Madrasa-ye neẓām-e dawlatī also granted medals (Šahīdī, pp. 226-29; Rabino di Borgomale, 1974, pl. 44/51; many examples are in the collection of the Sepah bank museum in Tehran). Later this system was replaced by the ‘Elmī medal, with three classes, for the dissemination and advancement of knowledge; it was bestowed upon students, teachers, university professors, writers, and scientists, both Persian and foreign (Šahīdī, pp. 226-35; cf. Sepehr, p. 297).

From the latter half of Naṣer-al-Dīn Shah’s reign to the end of the Qajar period the Lion and sun and the Royal portrait underwent a kind of “inflation,” being awarded with increasing frequency (Amīn-al-Dawla, pp. 17-18; Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* I, p. 105). The Lion and sun for foreigners became particularly known in Russia, to the point that in the last decade of the 19th century Anton Chekhov satirized the eagerness of his countrymen to possess it (pp. 130-33; tr., pp. 219-25; cf. Spasskii, p. 99).

Pahlavi period (1304-20 Š./1925-41).

A new system of official honors was instituted by the Pahlavi dynasty, though two decorations were continued, with major modifications, from the Qajar period. The five classes of the Lion and sun for civilians persisted under the name Homāyūn, and the Amīr-al-Mo’menīn became the military *Ḍu’l-faḡār* (the name of ‘Alī’s sword). The complete Pahlavi *nešān* included the badge, the star, and the sash (Plate XVIIIa.a).

Among the new decorations introduced there were three royal honors (*nešānhā-ye salṭanatī*). The Pahlavī, with two classes, was introduced in 1304 Š./1925, as the highest Persian honor. The first class was limited to reigning monarchs and foreign heads of state; the second class was for male members of the royal family and heirs apparent of foreign monarchies. The badge consisted of a central medallion framed by four Pahlavi crowns forming a cross, each set off from the central medallion by two gold loops joined by a blue enameled ring; on the medallion was an enameled image of Mount Damāvand with the rising sun above it. The star of the order was similar to the badge, except that, instead of rings and loops, the medallion was surrounded by five rays. The sash was cornflower blue with yellow borders. There was also a Pahlavī badge of honor, the frame of which retained the crowns, separated by paired gold loops connected by blue-enameled rings (Werlich, p. 243).



The other new decorations were intended for women and were introduced under Moḥammad-Rezā Shah (1320-57 Š./1941-79). The Haft peykar (Pleiades, referring to Torayyā, the shah's second wife), with three classes, was adopted in 1336 Š./1957. The first class was reserved for Torayyā and foreign queens and first ladies. The badge consisted of a royal-blue enameled medallion with the seven stars of the constellation Pleiades set in diamonds within a white-enameled frame set with twenty-four gold stars within a gold rim, the whole topped by the royal crown in red enamel; it was set within a star frame. The star was identical but larger than the badge and was worn with a sash of light yellow bordered with blue stripes. The second class was for princesses and the third for other distinguished women (see Werlich, pp. 243-44; Mofakḵam, pp. 1-2; Mošīrī, 1355 Š./1978, p. 48). The Āryāmehr, with two classes, was introduced on 4 Mehr 1346 Š./26 September 1967, expressly for Queen Farah to wear during the coronation ceremony. Only she was entitled to wear the first class; the second class was reserved for the shah's sisters Šams and Ašraf. The badge consisted of a gold star with sixteen radiating swallowtails, each covered with diamonds, and in the center a gold Pahlavi crown on a blue-enameled disk framed in diamonds. The star was identical but larger than the badge, and the sash was royal blue (Werlich, p. 243).

Civil honors. The two main Pahlavi civil decorations (*nešānhā-ye rasmī-e kešvarī*), the Tāj-e Īrān and the Homāyūn, each with five classes, were instituted on 26 Bahman 1317 Š./15 February 1939 for high-ranking Persian civil servants and foreigners who had performed outstanding service for Persia (Mofakḵam, p. 4). The Tāj-e Īrān, first class, was intended for the prime minister and former prime ministers, and there could be no more than ten people at one time entitled to wear it; the recipient received the title *janāb* (excellency) and was entitled to a state funeral. One exception was made for Jamšīd Āmūzgār, minister of finance, who received the decoration in 1350 Š./1971 for his role in oil negotiations and his arrangement of a meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Tehran (Alam, p. 201). The second class (Plate XVIIIa.a) could be held by only fifty people at one time and the third class by 150. The badge consisted of a blue-enameled medallion, bearing the Persian crown and rimmed in gold overlaid with a green-enameled laurel wreath, set within a green-bordered white-enameled star, each point tipped with a gold globe. The star consisted of a second, larger badge superimposed upon a gold sunburst. The sash was of yellow moiré silk, with light-blue borders (Werlich, p. 244).



The Homāyūn (Plate XVIIIa.b) was a simplified and modernized version of the original Qajar Lion and sun. The badge consisted of a central medallion bearing an enameled disk of the lion with upraised sword and the rising sun, framed within a six-pointed star; the star was a similar badge superimposed upon a sunburst with eight points (Plate XVIIIa.b); the third class consisted only of the star, without the badge (Plate XVIIIa.c). The first class was worn with a green sash bordered in red stripes, the second class suspended from a red-bordered green ribbon by means of a rosette. There was also a Homāyūn medal, with three grades, of gold, silver, and bronze, intended for lower-ranking civil servants. In the last decades of the Pahlavi dynasty it ceased to be awarded (Werlich, pp. 244-45; Mofakḵam, p. 4).

Various badges of honor and medals were issued by ministries and government agencies during the Pahlavi period. For example, the Ministry of education (Wezārat-e farhang, later Wezarat-e āmūzeš o parvareš) awarded four badges of honor for scholars and scientists and one medal for administrative staff and students. The Nešān-e dāneš for science, with two grades, both of gold, was awarded to high-ranking scholars and scientists. The Farhang, with three grades, was awarded to prominent educators, teachers, and administrative staff of the ministry; the first grade was of gold, the second and third of silver. There was also a Farhang medal, with two classes, each with two grades, for teachers, lower administrative staff, and honor students; the first grade was of silver, the second of bronze. The Honar, with three classes, was awarded to prominent people in the fine arts; the first class was of gold, the second and third of silver. The Sepās, with three classes, was awarded to civil servants and to people who had made financial contributions to educational institutions; the first class was of gold, the second of silver, and the third of bronze (*Āʾin-nāma*).

Military honors. By the order of Reżā Khan Sardār-e Sepah (Ḥokm 86, 20 Asad 1301 Š./11 August 1922) the Duʾl-faḡār (Plate XVIIIb.d) became the highest Persian military honor. It was awarded in two categories, to officers and to lower ranks, for demonstrating exceptional courage or sustaining injury or death in the line of duty (Farmān 271, 21 Farvardīn 1304 Š./10 April 1925). After the Sepah decoration was introduced, on 30 Farvardīn 1303 Š./19 April 1924, the Duʾl-faḡār was reserved exclusively for those who had fought in foreign wars (Farmān 271). Only Reżā Shah himself and a handful of army officers received it during his reign. After the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Moḥammad-Reżā Shah on 15 Bahman 1327 Š./4 January 1948 the



armed forces “requested” that the shah grant himself the order of *Ḍu’l-faqār*. The Sepah, with three gold and silver grades, was intended for military men who fought courageously in internal wars (Farmān 206). There was also a Sepah bronzemedal for ranks below officer (*Ā’in-nāma-ye Esfand-e 1319*, art. 5).

Many other, lesser honors were introduced for military personnel in war and peace. Reżā Shah created two service decorations that survived to the end of Pahlavi rule, the *Līāqat* and the *Eftekār*. The *Līāqat* was the higher, a badge of honor awarded to military officers for distinguished service in peace or war (*Ā’in-nāma-ye Esfand-e 1319*, art. 5). In 1316 Š./1937 the *Eftekār* was also established in recognition of distinguished service. Medals corresponding to the *Eftekār* (1333 Š./1954) and the *Līāqat* (1338 Š./1959) were introduced for the upper ranks of enlisted men. Moḥammad-Reżā Shah introduced five new war honors: the *Kedmat* decoration (Plate XVIIIb.e) and medal in 1328 Š./1949, the *Sepāhī* medal in 1332 Š./1953, both examples of honors given collectively for outstanding service (*Ā’in-nāma-ye 1350 Š.*, p. 39); the *Farr* medal in 1332 Š./1953 for continuing military education (*Ā’in-nāma-ye 1338 Š.*, p. 46); the *Čatr* badge in 1338 Š./1959 for successful parachute jumps in difficult circumstances (Farmān 9150); and the *Pādāš* medal in 1332 Š./1953 for perseverance in the performance of duty (*Ā’in-nāma-ye 1350 Š.*, p. 40).

The military awarded a number of other honors, including the *Bāznešastagī* badge for retirement, with four classes (1959 Š./1970; *Ā’in-nāma-ye 1350 Š.*, p. 82); the *Jāvīd* badge and medal (1322 Š./1943) and *Sarbolandī* badge (1350 Š./1971) were awarded respectively to the families of military personnel who died or had been killed (*Ā’in-nāma-ye 1338 Š.*; *Ā’in-nāma-ye 1350 Š.*, p. 61). Two military honors were designed for civilians who assisted the military, the *Hamkāri* badge (Esfand 1335 Š./1957; Farmān 5828, *Ā’in-nāma-ye 1338 Š.*, p. 81) and the *Šajā’at* medal (*Ā’in-nāma-ye 1338 Š.*).

Commemorative medals included one commemorating the [coup d’etat of 1299/1921](#); medals for active participants in the operations against the Soviet-backed autonomous government of Azarbaijan in 1325/1946 (*Dastūr-e ‘amaliyātī* 717; see [Azarbaijan v](#)); the *Rastākīz* and *Bīst o hašt-e Mordād* (28 Mordād/18 August) for active participants in the [coup d’etat of 1332 Š./1953](#) (Farmān 7973; *Ā’in-nāma-ye 1350 Š.*, pp. 67, 69).

Islamic Republic (1357 Š./1979-present).



After a lapse of twelve years civil honors were revived. New regulations governing their award were approved by the cabinet of President 'Alī-Akbar Hāšemī Rafsanjānī on 27 Ābān 1369 Š./18 November 1990. There are three categories of such decorations: high (*'ālī*), specialized (*takaššoštī*), and general (*'omūmī*).

There are four high decorations. The highest, the Enqelāb-e eslāmī, is awarded to the president of the republic after his inauguration. The other three are awarded by the president at the suggestion of ministers and with the approval of the cabinet. The Esteqlāl and Āzādī are intended for those who are deemed to have contributed to the goals of the regime; during each presidential term the former can be awarded only four times, the latter eight. The Jomhūrī-e eslāmī, with three grades, is awarded to foreign heads of state, heads of international organizations, and other foreign dignitaries who have contributed to the stated goals of the regime, including expansion of the Islamic revolution; defense of the world's poor; struggle against political, economic, and cultural colonialism; support for Persian international policies; and cooperation in the expansion of relations between the Islamic Republic and their own countries.

Specialized decorations include the Dāneš (erudition), Pažūheš (research), Līāqat wa modīrīyat (merit and management), and 'Adālat (justice).

General decorations include the Sāzandagī (constructiveness), Kēdmat (service), Kār o tawlīd (work and producton), Šajā'at (bravery), Ītār (sacrifice), Ta'lim o tarbiāt (education), Farhang o honar (culture and art), and Adab-e fārsī (Persian literature).

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