



# LITHOGRAPHY IV. LITHOGRAPHED ILLUSTRATIONS

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## LITHOGRAPHY

### iv. LITHOGRAPHED ILLUSTRATIONS

Lithographic illustration is a particular art form that was practiced in Persia for about a century, from 1850, when lithographic printing was first introduced to Persia, to about 1950. Lithographic illustration relies on the experience of refined illustration and illumination as previously applied in Persian manuscripts over many centuries. At the same time, it constitutes an intermediary between the often highly artistic miniatures in manuscripts and more popular forms of creative expression, such as painting on glazed tiles (*kāši-kāri*; see [CERAMICS xv](#)), painting behind glass, or the naive painting on canvas known as *naqqāši-ye qahva-kāna*.

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*The historical development of lithographic illustration in Persia.*

The technique of printing by way of lithography was invented by Aloys Senefelder (b. Prague, 1771; d. Munich, 1834) at the end of the eighteenth century and was introduced to Persia through Russia in the early decades of the nineteenth century (Shcheglova, 1979; Bābāzāda, 1999; Golpāyegāni, 1999). While lithographed books were produced in Persia as of 1833, it took publishers almost a decade to exploit the potentials of lithography as a printing process. Lithography in Persia was preferred to printing from movable type as it constituted a direct continuation of manuscript production, bringing forth similar results, albeit in greater numbers, and involving basically the same set of specialists. The master copy of any item printed by way of lithography in Persia was a sheet of specially prepared paper on which viscid ink was applied. This would stick to the printing stone once the upper face of the paper was applied to it. It did not make a substantial difference whether the paper surface was used for writing, for the drawing of illumination, or in order to apply illustrations. In other words, as in manuscript production, line-drawers, scribes, illuminators, and illustrators would cooperate while applying their own particular contribution to the paper pages one after the other. The scribes are variously known to have complained about the difficulties of writing with the viscid lithographic ink. Illuminators and artists aiming to produce extremely delicate lines and fine drawings might have found their task even more arduous.

The first-ever illustrated Persian lithographed book is the 1259/1843 edition of Maktabi's *Leili o Majnun* (Nafisi, 1945-46, 1958) copies of which have been preserved in the National Libraries in Tehran and Tbilisi (Georgia). The four illustrations contained in this book are simple and fairly crude. Besides the illustrations, the booklet contains no other adornment. Even though this first experiment successfully demonstrated the potential of printing lithographed illustrations, it still took a number of years before illustration in lithographic prints became a common practice.

At the same time, publishers kept experimenting with various techniques to produce illustrated books in print. The 1261/1845 edition of *Rowzat al-mojāhedin* (commonly known as *Moktār-nāma*), printed from movable type, contains eight illustrations probably printed from wood-engravings (*grāvur-e čubi*). Early editions of Jowhari's *Ṭufān al-bokā'* that were also printed from movable type (1269/1852, 1271/1854, 1272/1855, 1273/1856) contain lithographed illustrations each extending over a full page, suggesting that the



illustrations were added in a separate process after the printing of the text had been achieved. These hybrid printings, combining a text printed from movable type with illustrations printed by way of a different technique, remained exceptional and became obsolete when printing from movable type went out of currency around 1273/1856.

Meanwhile, the production of lithographic books containing illustrations remained a comparatively rare phenomenon for a number of years. Early lithographed editions of books whose later editions were regularly illustrated are devoid of illustrations. Examples include the Persian translation of the *Arabian Nights* (first edition 1259-1261/1843-45; first illustrated edition 1272/1855), Neẓāmi's *Ḳamsa* (first lithographed edition printed in Persia, 1261/1845; first illustrated edition 1264/1847), and Sa'di's *Kolliyāt* (early editions 1257/1841, 1262-64/1845-47; first illustrated edition 1267-68/1850-51). At present, only two illustrated items dated 1261/1845 (*Anwār-e Sohayli*, and *Yusofiya*) and four items dated 1262/1845 (*Dozd o qāzi-ye Baḡdād*, *Leyli o Majnun*, *Tarassol* [two editions]) are known to exist. It was only from 1263/1846 that the production of illustrated lithographed books became a regular phenomenon. The items produced were at first of a rather small size and of popular content, and brought about considerable commercial interest. This assumption is also corroborated by the fact that in 1846, a whole series of popular romances was published, including *Nuṣ-āfarin-e gowhar-tāj*, *Čehel tuṭi*, *Hormoz o Gol*, and *Dalla-ye Moḳtār*. The year 1847 witnessed the production of a number of lavishly illustrated books, including the Persian version of Qazvini's *'Ajā'eb al-maḳluqāt* with more than 300 illustrations, Mollā Bamān-'Ali Rāji Kermāni's *Ḥamla-ye Ḥaydariya* with 51 illustrations, and the profusely decorated folio edition of Neẓāmi's *Ḳamsa* with intricately illuminated chapter headings, 39 large-scale illustrations and some 300 miniature drawings of fabulous creatures in small triangles on the margin (Robinson, 1979). The first Iranian edition of Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma*, published in 1267/1850 after having been in preparation for about two years, contains 57 large illustrations by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Ḳo'i, the most productive artist of the day in the field of lithographic illustration.

#### *Genres of illustrated lithographed books.*

From then on, illustration was a regular feature in several genres of lithographed books including cosmographical and zoographical encyclopedias such as Qazvini's *'Ajā'eb al-maḳluqāt* (first edition 1264/1847) and its adaptation *Ḳawāṣṣ al-ḥayavān* (first edition 1275/1858) as well as Damiri's



(Arabic) *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān* (1285/1868); dogmatic theology such as the popular catechism *ʿAqāʿed al-šīʿa* (1266/1849 and numerous subsequent editions) or Kašfi's *Toḥfat al-moluk* (1273/1856); historical works such as *Noṣrat-nāma* (1275/1858) by Mirzā ʿAbbās-ʿAli Ṣafā, or *Nāma-ye Kosrovān* by Jalāl-al-Din-Mirzā b. Faṭḥ-ʿAli Shah; medical works such as *Anwār-e nāšeriya* (1272/1855), *Jawāher al-tašriḥ* (1306/1888) or *Žiāʿ al-ʿoyun* (1309/1891); astronomical and/or astrological works such as Mollā Moṣaffar Gonābādi's *Šarḥ-e bist bāb-e Mollā Moṣaffar* (first edition 1271/1854) and Eʿteżād-al-Salṭana's *Falak al-saʿāda* (1278/1861); books on military drill such as *Qānun-e neẓām* (1267/1850); travel literature, such as *Safar-nāma-ye Nāšer-al-Din Šāh ba-Māzandarān* (1294/1877) or *Safar-nāma-ye Nāšer-al-Din Šāh be Korāsān* (1300/1882); pedagogical handbooks such as *Taʿdīb al-aṭfāl* (1307/1889); translations of European narrative literature such as Pétis de la Croix's *Mille et un jours* (*Alf al-nahār* 1314/1896), Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1322/1904) or Alexandre Dumas' *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (1312/1894). Besides, contemporary journals such as *Šaraf* and *Šarāfat* contained lifelike portraits of various Iranian and international politicians, and the *Ruznāma-ye waqāyaʿ-e ettefāqiya* regularly boasted the Qajar emblems on the top of its first page. Lithographic printing was also used to produce decorative single leaf prints, some of which supposedly were distributed or sold at the Shiʿite places of worship (Vinchon, 1925).

Meanwhile, the majority of lithographed illustrations are encountered in works pertaining to traditional Persian literature, whether classical or contemporary Qajar compiled in the classical style (Marzolph, 2001). These works are frequently of a narrative and thus mainly fictional character. While the stories contained often serve to illustrate specific moral or edifying points, many tales readily offer themselves for illustration. The most popular of the classical Persian works in illustrated lithographed editions were Saʿdi's collected works (*Kolliyāt*), published at least 15 times between 1851 and 1892, Neẓāmi's *Ḳamsa*, published nine times between 1847 and 1352/1933, Moḥammad-ʿAli Hablerudi's book on proverbs and related tales, *Jāmeʿ al-tamṭil*, published at least eleven times between 1852 and 1903 (Marzolph, 1999), and Ḥosayn b. Wāʿeẓ Kāšefi's *Anwār-e Sohayli*, published some seven times between 1845 and 1880.

In the genre of religious literature, illustrated works treating the pivotal tragedy experienced by the Shiʿite community, the martyrdom of Ḥosayn and his companions at Karbalāʾ, were of particular prominence. These works above all include Mollā Bamān-ʿAli's *Ḥamla-ye Ḥaydariya* (six illustrated



editions between 1264/1847 and 1312/1894), Sarbāz Borujerdi's *Asrār al-šahāda* (eight illustrated editions between 1268/1851 and 1292/1875), and Jowhari's *Ṭufān al-bokā'* of which, besides the editions printed from movable type mentioned above, some ten illustrated editions were published between 1271/1854 and 1300/1882. Other works of the genre include *Anwār al-šahāda*, (*Ketāb-e*) *Fāreḡ-e Gilāni*, *Ganjina-ye asrār*, (*Ketāb-e*) *Judī*, *Kāvar-nāma*, *Majāles al-mottaqin*, *Mātamkada*, *Moḡtār-nāma*, *Toḡfat al-majāles*, *Toḡfat al-dākerin*, and *Wasilat al-najāt*. In the small group of religious narratives belonging to the popular genre of stories of the prophets, Nā'ini's *Yusofiya* is of particular interest, as it links the Islamic version of the biblical narrative of Yusof to the martyrdom of Karbalā'.

A third major category of illustrated lithographed books comprises various kinds of imaginative narratives. While the largest compilation of this category, the voluminous *Romuz-e Ḥamza* (first edition 1274–76/1857–79) with its more than 1,100 pages, apparently did not undergo a second impression in the Qajar period, other works were published more frequently. The *Eskandar-nāma* was published at least five times between 1273–74/1856–57 and 1316/1898, and the Persian translation of the *Arabian Nights* (*Hezār o yek šab*) experienced some seven illustrated editions between 1272/1855 and 1320/1902. Most of the illustrated lithographed versions of fictional narrative are concerned with numerous relatively brief tales of adventure and romance, a genre that obviously enjoyed an overwhelming popularity in the Qajar period. To name but the most popular: *Dalla-ye Moḡtār*, *Hormoz o Gol*, *Ḥosayn-e Kord-e Šabestari*, *Ḳosrow-ye divzād*, *Nuš-Āfarin-e gowhar-tāj*, *Qahramān-e qātel*, *Rostam-nāma*, *Salim-e Jawāheri*, *Širuye*, *Žarir-e Ḳozā'i*. Many of these narratives remained popular well into the twentieth century. A number of traditional collections of stories (*Baḡtiār-nāma*, *Čahār darviš*, *Čehel ṭuṭi*) also belong to this category, as do humorous tales (*Dozd o qāzi-ye Baghdād*, *Laṭā'ef o zārā'ef*, *Mollā Našr-al-Din*) and a few folktales in verse (*Ḳāla Suska*, *Ḳāla Qurbāḡe*, *Šāngul-o Mangul*).

#### *Artists active in lithographic illustration.*

Judging from the amount of lithographed illustrations preserved, numerous artists must have been active in the field, but many of them remain unknown. Even for those artists whose names have been preserved, we usually have very little biographical data. The majority of lithographic illustrations do not contain the artist's signature. If the artist signed his work, he would normally do so in specific illustrations he had executed, usually by mentioning his



personal name, sometimes introduced with a variant form of the term normally employed for “illustration/illustrated by ...”, *ʿamal(-e)* or *raqam(-e)/rāqama(-ye)* ... The most prominent artists active in lithographed illustrations were the following (with the years in which their signed production proves them to have been active):

Mirzā ʿAli-Qoli Kōʿi (1846-55)

Ostād Sattār Tabrizi (1850-58)

Mirzā Maḥmud al-Kvānsāri (1852-56)

Mirzā Ḥasan b. Āqā Sayyed Mirzā Eṣfahāni (1854-64)

Mirzā Rezā Tabrizi b. Moḥammad ʿAli-Kān Āštiyāni (1855)

Mirzā Hādi (1854-67)

Mirzā Moḥammad-Esmāʿil Tabrizi (1854-57)

Mirzā Sayf-Allāh al-Kvānsāri (1855-63)

Bahrām Kermānšāhāni (1863)

Naṣr-Allāh-Kvān Kvānsāri (1869-82)

ʿAbd al-Ḥosayn al-Kvānsāri (1872-98)

Moṣṭafā (1881-93)

ʿAli-Kān (1880-1913)

Javād (1898-1902)

Ḥosayn-ʿAli b. ʿAbd-Allāh Kān (1899-1905)

Moḥammad-Kāzem al-Hamadāni (1901-05)

Sayyed al-Šoʿarāʾ (1902-06)

Moḥsen Tāj-bakš (1923-41)

Moḥammad Šāneʾi b. Faṭḥ-Allāh Kvānsāri (1931-46)



While some artists might have practiced lithographic illustration exclusively, a number of them are known to have excelled in art forms such as single-leaf drawings (*siāh-qalam*), oil painting or lacquer painting. As a rule, the activities of artist and scribe would constitute separate professions. A notable exception to this rule is Moḥammad Ṣāne'ī, who worked at the very end of the lithographic period and both whose calligraphy and illustrations are of a very modest quality.

The most prolific artist, in fact the supreme master of lithographic illustration was Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Ḳo'i (Marzolph, 1997). Originating from Western Azarbaijan, he most probably spent his early days in Tabriz, where lithography was first introduced. After the court had moved to Tehran in the early days of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, 'Ali-Qoli Ḳo'i in 1850 attained an official post and towards the end of his documented career signed his illustrations as an employee of the *Dār al-fonun* (*kādem-e madrasa-ye Dār-al-fonun*). Over a period of about ten years, 'Ali-Qoli Ḳo'i signed illustrations in some thirty works, containing a total of more than 1,200 illustrations, and varying in size from the format of a small stamp up to a full folio page. Moreover, he prepared numerous intricate illuminations of chapter headings and final pages, in addition to about two thousand miniature decorative and ornamental drawings. He has been justly praised as the “pioneer among artists who devoted their talents to the printed book” in the early Qajar (Robinson, 1979, p. 62). Both the wide range and the intricate quality of his production remain unparalleled.

*Particular features of lithographic illustration.*

Probably the most important peculiarity of illustrations in Persian lithographed books is their potential uniqueness, resulting mainly from two special characteristics. First, during the process of printing, the stone used for printing a specific illustration was liable to break up, and the artist would be forced to illustrate the same scene again, which he would usually execute in a slightly different design. Second, most of the books containing illustrations were frequently read up to the point of wear and tear, and a great number of the books or specific editions of books are only extant in unique copies. Similar to woodblock prints in medieval Europe, illustrations have sometimes been preserved only as pasted flyleaves in later books. Considerable collections of illustrated Persian lithographed books, besides libraries in Iran, are presently kept in the British Library in London, the Paris Library of the Institut nationale des langues et civilisations orientales (Inalco) and various



Russian libraries (Shcheglova, 1975, 1989, 2002).

Research on the potential sources of inspiration for lithographed illustrations is lacking. In terms of the impact on later tradition, the available data permit the identification of standardized programs of illustration. Once fixed in an authoritative edition, the set of illustrations to be included appears to have remained fairly consistent. Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma*, for instance, was first published in illustrated lithographed editions in India in 1262/1845 and 1266/1849 (Marzolph, 2003). Both editions develop a similar program of altogether 57 illustrations featuring more or less equivalent scenes or topics, yet they also show distinct variations in terms of which moment of a larger event is chosen for depiction or in which manner particular scenes are represented. Four out of the five ensuing Iranian editions follow the narrative program of one of the two early Indian editions. While the Iranian *editio princeps* illustrated by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Ḳo'i (1265–67/1848–50; see Šafi-nejād, 1995) and the second Iranian edition illustrated by Ostād Sattār (1275/1858) follow the illustrative program of the Indian edition of 1262/1845, the later Iranian editions, dated 1307/1889 (illustrated by Moṣṭafā) and 1316/1898 (illustrated by 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn and Karbalā'i Ḥasan), more or less follow the illustrative program of the second Indian edition of 1266/1849. Only the *Šāh-nāma*'s last Iranian edition, the so-called *Šāh-nāma-ye Bahādari* (1319–22/1901–4), deviates from the traditional models both in terms of imagery and illustrative program (Marzolph, 2006).

While similar evaluations apply to the illustrative program of Neẓāmi's *Ḳamsa* or the *Ḥamla-ye Ḥaydariya*, other frequently published works such as the *Anwār-e Sohayli* document a steady decrease in the amount of illustrations included in later editions. Still other works, such as the *Kolleyāt-e Sa'di*, failed to develop, for reasons unknown, a standard program of illustrations. In addition to these characteristics, the artistic quality of the illustrations is subject to a steady decline. While prominent artists of the early days of lithographic illustration, such as Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Ḳo'i or Mirzā Ḥasan, devoted considerable effort to executing minute details and a fairly individual style, most illustrations in lithographed books prepared after the end of Qajar rule betray a modest popular character. Those books have been prepared with comparatively little effort and were aiming at a large readership willing to spend only small amounts of money for entertaining reading-matter. In short, quantity eventually replaced quality of production.

In addition to the above-mentioned points, the illustrations in lithographed



books of the Qajar period constitute a valuable source of information about the material culture of the day. As a recent comparison of lithographic illustrations with contemporary photographs (Āqāpur, 1998) has shown, the former constitute a faithful depiction of contemporary reality. This applies to clothing, housing, food, and eating habits, musical instruments, songs and dance, as well as to systems of transportation, the depiction of various occupations, funerals and graves, and mosques and religious ceremonies.

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