

8. Lithographic Illustrations of the Qajar Period as a Source of Inspiration for Contemporary Iranian Art

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Iranian artists, like artists all over the world, draw their inspiration from a variety of sources, whether indigenous or foreign, modern or historical. One of these sources, the illustrations contained in lithographed books of the Qajar period, and their use in contemporary Iranian art, is the topic of this essay. Constituting an indigenous historical practice, lithographic illustrations of the Qajar period have remained a mine of inspiration for Iranian artists for several decades and, if my assumption proves right, will increasingly continue to do so, as public awareness of the wealth of this historical material grows. The following presentation of this topic is divided into three parts: First, I provide a short sketch of the history of lithographic illustration in Iran, from its beginnings in the middle of the nineteenth century to its decline and the termination of its primary existence in the middle of the twentieth

century. Second, I demonstrate the frequent secondary use of this traditional material in a variety of cases during the second half of the twentieth century. And third, I discuss in some detail the artwork of Ardashir Mohasses (1938-2010), 'Iran's best known cartoonist and satirist.' Who said this? Needs reference or add 'reputedly' before 'Iran's ... but z quotes.¹

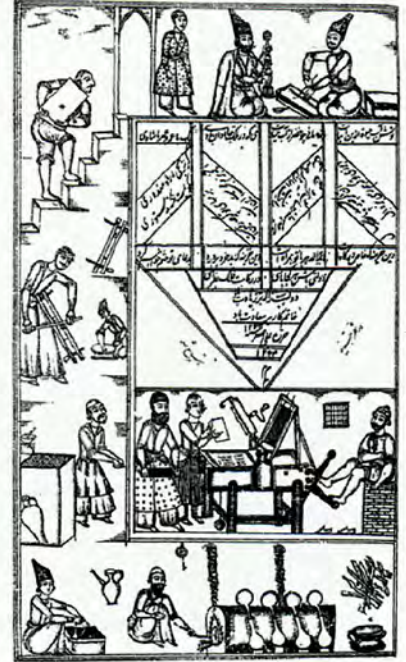
In its historical dimension, lithographic printing constituted a widely used medium of publishing in Iran for more than a century.² Early in the nineteenth century, Iran had been one of the areas of the Muslim world in which printing as a continuous cultural practice was established. Previous attempts to introduce printing to Iran date back to the Safavid period, and the printing press of the Armenian community in New Jolfā, that was used to print five books between 1638 and 1647 still exists today.³ The lasting intro-



1. Unknown artist, *Liyā and Majnūn Visit School Together*, In *Maktabeh's Liyā va Majnūn*, 1259/1843, ca. fol. 12b, approximately 20 × 12 cm

2. Mirzā 'Ali Qulī Khu'ī,
The Process of Lithographic
Printing, In *Nizāmī, Khamsa*,
1264/1847, fol. 108a,
30 × 17.5 cm

duction of printing to Iran, however, dates only to the early decades of the nineteenth century, when on the initiative of 'Abbās Mīrzā, governor of the province of Azarbayjan, the equipment for printing with movable type, or typography, was imported from Russia. Due to a variety of arguments, this way of printing was at first not very successful in Iran. A total of only some 55 books were printed with movable type between 1233/1817 and 1273/1856, when this way of printing fell out of use for a period of two decades.⁴ In the meantime, Iranian printers had also become acquainted with the technique of lithographic printing that had been invented by the Bohemian Alois Senefelder towards the end of the eighteenth century. While the equipment for lithographic printing had probably been imported into Iran as early as 1824, the first preserved book printed in this technique is a Qur'ān dated 1248-49/1832-33. In the following decades, lithographic printing experienced an overwhelming success in Iran. It was the only existing technique of printing for the period of almost two decades between 1273/1856 and 1291/1874 and continued to be practised until the middle of the twentieth century. Lithographic printing held several advantages in contrast to printing in movable type. First, the equipment was simple, readily available, considerably cheap and easy to manage. Second, lithographic printing constituted a smooth continuation of the previous technique of producing books as manuscripts, particularly in terms of the aesthetic impact of the calligraphy. And third, printers soon realised that in lithographic printing, it was possible to produce both text and graphic adornment, whether illumination or illustration, in one and the same technique. Early illustrations in lithographed books, starting with the 1259/1843 edition of Maktabi's *Liyī va Majnūn*, are still quite clumsy, as it obviously took artists some time to adjust to the new technique (Figure 1). Already a mere five years after its incipience, Mirzā 'Ali-Qulī Khu'ī produced the unprecedented and later unsurpassed masterpiece of lithographic illustration, the profusely illuminated folio edition of Nizami's *Khamsa* of 1264/1847, containing 39 illustrations related to the text, a large illustration documenting the process of lithographic printing (Figure 2), and almost 300 miniature representations of fabulous creatures in triangles on the margin.⁵ There onward, illustrations constituted a regular feature in numerous lithographed books, particularly those of narrative literature, whether classical or modern, refined or popular. Moreover, illustrations served to decorate works of historical, technical, medical and military concern, besides books on archaeology and astronomy, travel accounts, and translations of Western literature.



Particular favourites for lithographic illustration were the Persian classics.⁶ Ferdawsī's

Shahnameh was produced in probably more than 30 different lithographed editions (albeit most of them in India). Other classics published in considerable amounts of illustrated editions were the collected works of Sa'di (at least 15 editions between 1268/1851 and 1328/1892), Mohammad 'Ali Hablerūdi's book on proverbs and their tales, *Jāme' al-tamsil* (at least 11 editions between 1269/1852 and 1333/1914), Nizami's *Khamsa* (ten editions between 1264/1847 and 1328/1910), and the Persian version of *Kalila va Dimna*, the *Anvār-i Suhylī* by Hossein ibn Vā'iz Kāshifī (at least seven editions between 1261/1845 and 1298/1880). Other popular books of the period include various works of *rawzeh-khānī* literature such as Mollā Bimān 'Alī's *Hamleh-i Hiydarī* (first illustrated edition 1264/1847), Sarbāz Burūjirdī's *Asrār al-shahāda* (first illustrated edition 1268) and, above all, Jowharī's *Tūfān al-bukā*, numerous illustrated editions of which were published at least as of 1269/1852. Besides, a number of the voluminous compilations of imaginative literature were produced in illustrated editions, such as the Persian translation of *Alf layla va-layla* (at least seven illustrated editions between 1272/1855 and 1320/1902)⁷ or the prose epics *Iskandar-nameh* (first edition 1273-74/1856-58) and *Rumūz-i Hamza* (first edition 1274-76/1857-80). While lithographed books with or without illustrations continued to be published till the middle of the twentieth century, the style of both their calligraphy and illustrations deteriorated towards the end and was nothing more than a faint memory of the days of glory before going out of use. Although the traditional art of lithographic illustration as practised in books of the Qajar period has fallen into oblivion, it was reintroduced to Iranian art work later in the twentieth century.

As for the actual existence and accessibility of lithographed books, it should be mentioned that, in contrast to manuscripts, printed books in Iran till quite recently met with little esteem. Printed books, whatever their mode of production, were primarily considered as objects of use. They were read till they were torn and tattered, and many of them ended as wastepaper employed for various purposes. In consequence, numerous



3. Homa Journal (February 1971), back cover (illustration 17.5 × 19.5 cm); Mirzā Nasrullāh, *The battle between the Prophet and Ibn Khalaf*, In Mustafā b. Mirzā Mohammad-Hassan ishtiyānī's *Ifikhār-nāmeḥ-i Hiydarī*, 1317/1892: 78, 15 × 25 cm

4. Farshid Mesghali, Poster for the Eleventh Tehran International Festival of Films for Children and Young Adults in November 1967 (size unknown)

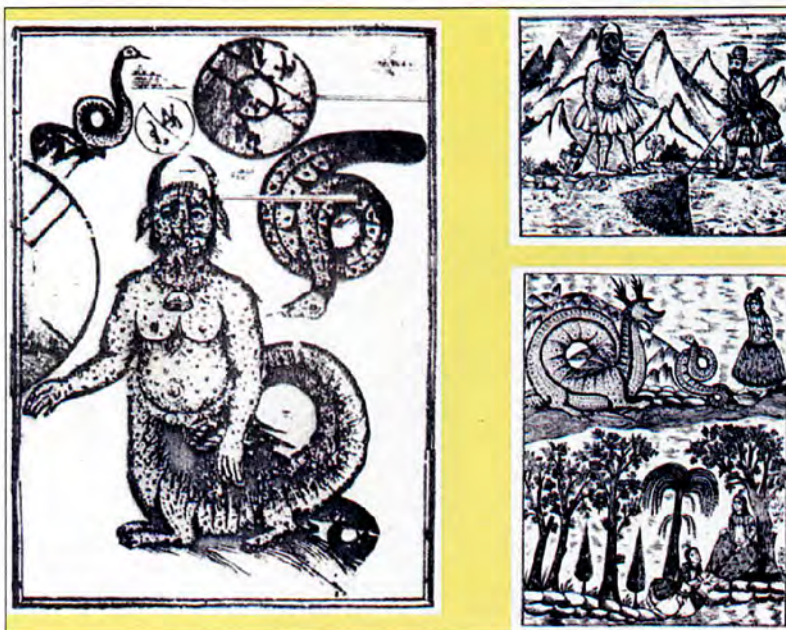
► illustrated books of the Qajar period have only been preserved in unique copies, some of them even defective or fragmentary, and many of these books are preserved only outside of Iran, particularly in the libraries of Orientalist scholars or collectors who bought them for their personal use or delectation. In Iran, a considerable quantity of these books is kept in public libraries. A large amount of valuable items, many of them not documented in libraries accessible to the public, remains in the possession of private collectors and art-lovers, some of them, probably, artists themselves.



5. left: Farshid Mesghali, Illustration to Afsāneh-i āfarīnīsh dar Irān, 1356/1977 (size unknown); right: 'Ali-Khān, The Fisherman and the Jinni, in Hizār dastān, 1317-18/1899-1900:18, 14.5 × 16.5 cm; (above) *The Young Woman about to Kill the Dragon that Pursued the Serpent*; (below) *The Demon Serpent in Human Female Shape Caressing at the Young Woman's Feet*, ibid: 51, 21.5 × 16.5 cm

▼ The following survey of the secondary existence of lithographic illustration is, admittedly, somewhat haphazard. If one were to collect or document the phenomenon in any comprehensive, let alone exhaustive manner, a large amount of highly interesting items would surely deserve mention. The few examples from the past four decades presented here should, however, succeed in conveying a representative impression of the potential of lithographic illustrations as a source of inspiration for contemporary Iranian art after the period of their primary existence had terminated.

The earliest specimen of the secondary use of lithographic illustration available to me is contained on the outside cover of *Homa*, the Iran National Airlines inflight magazine, dated February 1971 (Figure 3). The back cover contains what appears to be a miniature clipping from a larger illustration, magnified to several times the original size. The image is immediately recognisable as belonging to one of the numerous battle scenes, or rather the preparation for a battle, abounding in the *Shahnameh* as well as in Persian popular epics and martyrological works. While the scene on the magazine's front cover is referred to in detail as a 'mural painting in the Chihil Sotoun palace in Esfahan showing Safavi monarch Shah Abbas the Great (1587-1629) on a picnic',⁸ the source of the litho-



graphic illustration on the back cover is given somewhat summarily as 'a drawing on the theme of the *ta'zīyeh* play "Moslem" seen during the 1970 Shiraz Festival of Arts'.⁹ The magazine's article about that festival does not mention any exhibits of lithographic illustrations but states that there 'was an exhibition of paintings by 22 contemporary Iranian artists, which provided interesting examples of the ways in which Iran's young painters are re-interpreting traditional styles and motifs'.¹⁰ No mention is made of lithographed books being exhibited. While it is quite unlikely that the clipping represents a modern recreation of the style of lithographic illustration, its exact source cannot be verified. The style of drawing is, however, extremely close to that of Mīrzā Nasrullāh, an artist whose documented work spans the period from 1289/1872 to 1316/1898.¹¹ This proximity in style may be demonstrated by a closely similar clipping from an illustration in the 1317/1892 edition of the *Ifīkhār-nāmch-i Hiydarīyeh* as illustrated by Mīrzā Nasrullāh. Whatever the clipping's original source, it obviously served to demonstrate the impact of lithographic illustration as a mine of inspiration for the artwork exhibited at the Shiraz Festival.

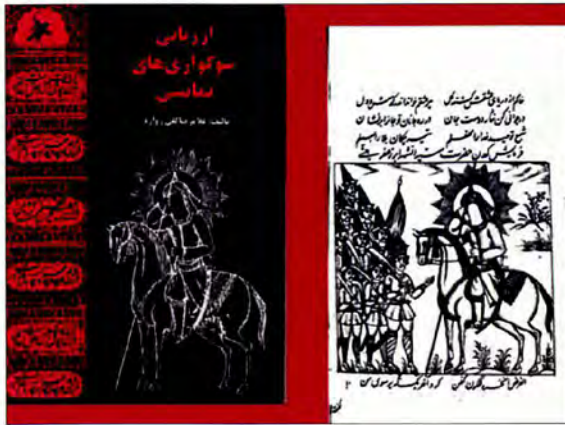
Next in chronological order, a number of illustrations prepared by Iranian artist Farshid Mesghali (b1943) demonstrate a different way of creative appropriation.¹² Mesghali is known to have possessed a microfilm copy of illustrations from lithographed books kept in the central library of the University of Tehran, where director at the time was the well-known scholar Iraj Afshar. His work consists of a collage of clippings from various lithographic illustrations that were subsequently coloured. Mesghali prepared advertisements, such as posters for the 11th Tehran International Festival of Films for Children and



6. Mohammad Ali Baniasadi, front cover of *Surūsh-i Kūdakān*, Diy 1374/1995, approx 23.5 × 16.5 cm; 'Abd al-Hossein Khānsārī, 'Ali-Akbar Joining the Battle of Karbalā, in Sarbāz Burūjirdī's *Asrār al-Shahāda*, 1291/1875: 90, 11.5 × 11 cm; Siyfullāh Khānsārī: same scene, In *Jawharī's Tūfīn al-bukā'* (n.d.), fol. 105b, 17.5 × 16.5 cm



7. Mohammad Ali Baniasadi, cover of *Qisshāy-i Mashdī Galīn Khānum*, 1374/1995, approx 24 × 38 cm; Right: unknown artist, *Rustam Slays Shaghād*, in William T Robertson, *Roostum Zaboolee and Soohrab* (Calcutta 1829) (size unknown)



8. left: Front cover of Gholam Reza Goli Zavareh's *Arz-yābi-i sūgvārī-hāy-i namāyishī*, 1375/1996, 23 × 16.5 cm; right: Mirzā 'Ali Qulī Khu'ī, *Imam Hossein rests during the battle of Karbalā*, in Sarbāz Burūjirdī's *Āsrār al-Shahāda*, 1268/1851, ill. no. 38, ill. 13 × 13 cm

9. left: Shahrazad Shush-tariyan, front cover of Mahin Javaheriyān's *Tārīkhcheh-i anīmīyishīn dar Īrān*, 1378/1999, 20 × 22 cm; right: Mirzā 'Ali Qulī Khu'ī, *A Rider on Horseback*, in Qazvinī's *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt*, 1264/1847 ca. fol. 198 a, ill. 6 × 7.5 cm

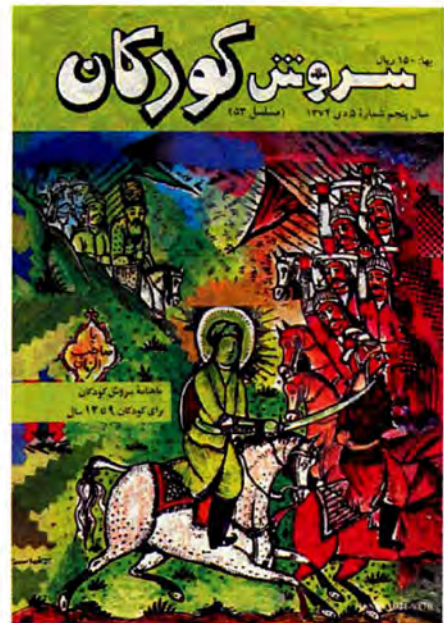


Young Adults in November 1967 (Figure 4). In a series of illustrations to the 1356/1977 edition of Mahdokht Kashkouli's book *Afsāneh-i āfarīnīsh dar Īrān*, he made particular use of mythological subjects, such as *dīvs* and dragons as they frequently appear in the lithographed editions of Persian epic literature. The characters in the example shown here are extracted from two different images contained in the 1317-18/1899-1900 edition of *Hezār dāstān*, a versified Persian translation of the Arabian Nights prepared by Seiyf al-Shu'arā' Mīrzā Abu'l Fath Dihghānī Sāmānī and illustrated by 'Ali-Khān¹³ (Figure 5).

Whether or not the Iranian Revolution of 1978/79 resulted in a different attitude towards lithographic illustrations by Iranian artists is hard to tell, as evidence for the early years of that period is not available to me. Most of the specimens I have seen from after the Revolution concern the use of lithographic illustrations for the covers of books or magazines, the earliest ones dating from as late as 1995. Mohammad Ali Baniasadi (b1955) practiced a peculiar collage of clippings from lithographic illustrations, sometimes coloured, together with what appears to be cuttings of coloured cloth and, sometimes, his own drawings. The front cover of the *Diy* 1374/ (December) 1995 issue of the children's magazine *Surūsh-i Kūdakān* renders a coloured illustration from an unidentified book of *rawzeh-khānī*. Judging from iconographical details, the scene depicted is fairly similar to the one showing 'Ali-Akbar joining the battle at Karbalā such as rendered in various editions of both *Āsrār al-shahāda* and *Tūufān al-būkā'* (Figure 6). The cover of the Iranian edition of popular tales told by the Iranian nurse Mashdī Galīn and collected by British Orientalist L P Elwell-Sutton¹⁴ is particularly interesting, as the iconographical details of some of the clippings used here indicate their origin from a scene of the *Shahnameh* (Figure 7). On the front cover, one can recognize the pit in which Rostam and his horse have been trapped, and the back cover depicts the scene of Rostam's treacherous half-brother Shaghād being shot to death by Rostam. This scene belongs to the standard set of illustrations included in the lithographed editions of Ferdawsi's *Shahnameh*.¹⁵ The model used here, to be exact, is not an illustration from one of the *Shahnameh*'s numerous lithographed editions but an illustration from the 1829 Calcutta edition of the separately edited story of *Roostum Zabooloc and Soohrab* by William T Robertson.

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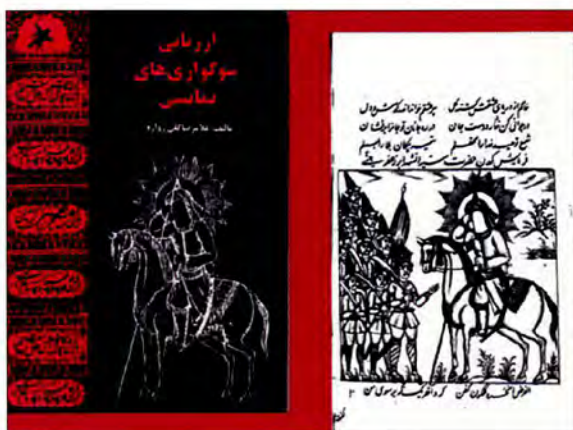
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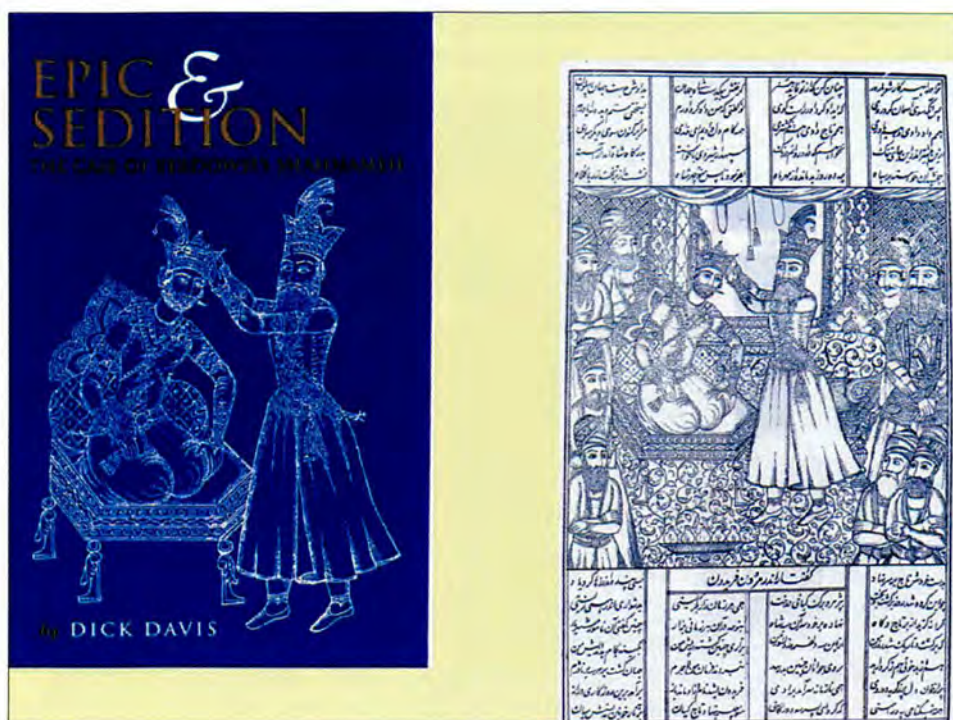


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Other examples for the use of lithographic illustrations on book covers include the 1375/1996 edition of Gholam-Reza Goli Zavareh's book about the *ta'ziyeh*, entitled '*Arz-yābī-i sūgvārī-hāy-i namāyishī*' (An Assessment of Mourning in Drama), and making use of an illustration of Imam Hossein from the 1268/1851 edition of Sarbāz Burūjirdī's *Asrār al-Shuhādā* as illustrated by Mīrzā 'Ali-Quli Khū'ī (Figure 8); the 1377/1998 edition of Khosro Salehī's collection of Persian fairytales titled *Bāgh-hāy-i bulūrīn-i khīyāl* (Crystal gardens of fantasy), depicting the fire ordeal of Sīyāvush from the 1272/1855 Bombay edition of Ferdawsi's *Shahnameh* that is famed for its calligrapher Ouliyā' Samī'; the 1378/1999 edition of Mahin Javaheriyān's *Tārīkhcheh-i anīmiyshin dar Īrān* (A history of animation in Iran), using Shahrazad Shushtariyan's multiplied adaptation of an illustration from the 1264/1847 edition of Qazvini's *Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*, also by Mīrzā 'Ali-Quli Khū'ī (Figure 9); and Dick Davis's book *Epic and Sedition: The Case of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh*, published by the US publisher Mage, employing an extracted and inverted version of an illustration from the 1265-67/1848-1850 edition of the *Shahnameh*, again by the same artist (Figure 10).

Besides book covers, lithographic illustrations have recently been used for the interior adornment of books. The examples shown here are from the third volume of the *Tārīkh-i adabīyāt-i kūdakān-i Īrān* (A history of children's literature in Iran) (Figure 11), published by Mohammad Hadi Mohammadi and Zohreh Qaeni in 1380/2002, profiting from illustrations reproduced in my monograph study *Narrative Illustration in Persian Lithographed Books* (2001) and other sources, and from Jaber Anaseri's coffee-table book *Sultān-i Karbalāa* (1382/2003) (Figure 12). Anaseri, himself an avid collector of



10. left: Front cover of Dick Davis, *Epic & Sedition* (1992); right: Mīrzā 'Ali Quli Khū'ī, *Fīrīdūn crowns Maūchīhr*, in Ferdawsi's *Shahnameh*, 1265-67/1848-50, fol. 71a, 15 × 15.5 cm

11. (left) **Mohammad Hadi Mohammadi and Zohreh Qaeni, Tārikh-i adabiyāt-i kūdakān-i irān**, vol. 3, 1380/2002: 409, 27.5 × 20.5 cm; original illustrations by Mirzā 'Alī Qulī Khū'ī (from the 1272/1858 edition of *Hizār va yik shab*)



12. (right) **Jaber Anasari, Sultān-i Karbalā**, 1382/2003: 49, 23.5 × 33 cm; original illustrations by Mirzā 'Alī Qulī Khū'ī (from the 1268/1851 edition of *Āsrār al-Shahāda*)

lithographed books, has most extracted the lithographic illustrations from the already mentioned 1268/1851 edition of *Āsrār al-Shahāda* as illustrated by Mirzā 'Alī-Qulī Khū'ī.

Yet another use of lithographic illustration can be witnessed in modern advertising. A full-page illustration published in the Persian journal *San'at-i chāp* (no 152, 1372/1993) advertises an electronic colour printer (Figure 13). The illustration is constructed of two halves mirroring each other against a central vertical line. Each half is made up of a group of angels adorning an unrepresented character supposedly placed in the illustra-

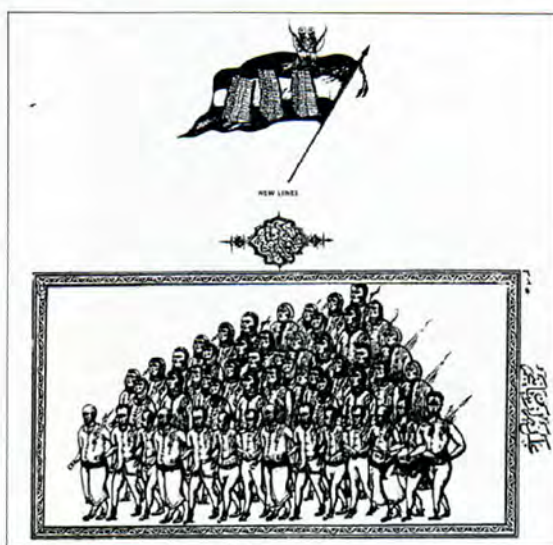
13. left: **Journal *San'at-i chāp***, clii, 1372/1993, un-paginated advertisement following: 8, 27.5 × 20.5 cm; right: **unknown artist, *The Adoration of Fātima Before Her Marriage to 'Alī***, in Mullā Bimān-'Alī's *Hamleh-i Hiydarī* (1270/1853): 39, 16 × 16.5 cm





tion's centre. The iconographical details of the scene enable its identification as extracted from the depiction of the prophet Mohammad's daughter Fātima being adored by angels before her marriage to Imam 'Ali. While the scene in a similar manner is also presented in lithographed editions of Jouhari's *Tūfān al-bukā*, in the peculiar design used here it belongs to the standard illustrative programme of Mullā Bimān-'Ali's *Hamleh-i Hiydarī*. The illustration's right half, clipped from the original, is coloured in tones of brown, blue, and violet, and the left half is executed in shades of grey corresponding to the colours of the mirrored right half. The caption of the advertisement reads *tanhā rang beh zindigī vāqe'yyat mībakhshad* (Only colour shows true life).

Probably the most prominent artist who used lithographic illustrations in his work was the US-based Ardeshir Mohasses (1938-2009).¹⁶ Born in 1938 in the northern city of Rasht, Mohasses went to law school and was for some time employed as a librarian in the Ministry of Housing and Construction. He gained a reputation as an artist around 1963, had his first exhibition in 1967 and published a first anthology of his drawings in 1971. Besides exhibitions in Iran, his work was on display in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Paris, Basel, and Tokyo, and his drawings were published in various international magazines, including *Graphis* (Zurich), *Graphic Design* (Tokyo), *Jeune Afrique* (Paris) and *Graphic* (Munich). When Mohasses during the later years of the Pahlavi regime had difficulty in having his work published, he chose to leave the country and lived in the United States since 1977 (until his death). His work has been praised internationally as being both inspiring and provoking, though difficult to understand in the multiplicity of implied allusions. As the sole point here is the relation of his work to



14. (left) Ardeshir Mohasses, left: *The Waiting Room*, *Closed Circuit History*, 1989: 138, approx 22 × 11.5 cm; right: *Mirzā Hassan, Zajājak and Amīr Hamza in the Silver Garden*, in *Rumūz-i Hamza*, 1273-76/1857-59, fol. 468 b, 20 × 16.5 cm

15. (right) Ardeshir Mohasses, *In Mēemory of the Last Battle in Which the Unknown Commander Was Killed*, *Closed Circuit History*, 1989: 212, appr. 6 × 9 cm; *Mirzā Nasrullāh, 'Ali kills 'Amr ibn 'Abduh*, in *Mustafā b. Mirzā Mohammad-Hassan āshūyānī's Ifūkhar-nāmeḥ-i Hiydirāyeh*, 1310/1892: 113, 15 × 21.5 cm

16. Ardeshir Mohasses, *What's Gunfire to a Heart Already Aflame*, *Closed Circuit History*, 1989: 151, approx 13.5 × 22 cm; original frame from Mohammad b. 'Ali Mohammad 'Bādil Kirmānshāhānī's *Tuḥfat al-Zākīrīn* (1280/1863), p385

my topic, I am not concerned with the meaning and intention of his work, challenging as it may be.

In interviews, Mohasses has repeatedly confessed to being influenced by 'folk art and primitive art, illustration from nineteenth-century books, old paintings, wall paintings'¹⁷ and other similar sources. The examples discussed in the following are taken from his 1989 anthology *Closed Circuit History*. The inspiration from Persian books of the Qajar period can already be sensed in some of his original drawings that closely follows the older models, such as the drawing *Endgame* depicting a juggler or 'ayyār with his peculiar headgear leading a somewhat mentally deranged ruler by pulling his long beard. Other instances of this kind of receptive integration are harder to discern, such as the bird's cages in the *Waiting Room* that probably derive from an illustration in the 1273-1276/1857-1859 edition of the *Rumūz-i Hamza*. While in that scene, the hero and his 'ayyār are pictured in front of a tree in which women in cages are placed, Mohasses has filled the cages of his *Waiting Room* with soldiers whose arms are tied together behind their back (Figure 14).

17. (left) **Ardeshir Mohasses**, *Victory Anniversary Celebration*, *Closed Circuit History*, 1989: 220, appr. 13.5 × 16.5 cm; unknown artist, *Jugglers with a Monkey and a Dancing Bear*, In Rizā Qulī Khan Hidāyat's *Riyāz al-Muhibbīn*, 1270/1853, fol. 32 a, 8.5 × 10 cm

18. (right) **Ardeshir Mohasses**, *Man and Moon*, *Closed Circuit History*, 1989: 192, appr. 19 × 19 cm; original illustration by Ustād Bahrām Kirmānshāhāni, *The Arrival of the Caravan of the Captured ahl-i biyt to Damascus*, in 'Bādīl' Kirmānshāhāni's *Tuhfat al-Zākīrīn*, 1280/1863: 264, 16.5 × 30.5 cm

In addition to these instances, Mohasses published a large number of works produced in a peculiar mixture of clippings from lithographed books of the Qajar period combined with his own black-and-white drawings. In this collage work, Mohasses employs lithographic illustrations in various ways. The simplest way is to use a complete illustration more or less unchanged. This is the case in the pictures entitled *The Beginning of the Academic Year* and *In Memory of the Last Battle in Which the Unknown Commander Was Killed*. While the former depicts a group of devils from the 1278-80/1861-63 edition of Sa'di's *Kulliyāt*, in the latter (Figure 15), Mohasses has implemented the scene of the killing of 'Amr ibn 'Abdudh from the 1310/1892 edition of the *Ifūkhār-nāmeḥ-i Hiydarī*. Besides a few touches that may or may not already have been affected in the copy Mohasses used, the only discernable change is the elimination of the scene's denomination contained in the original.

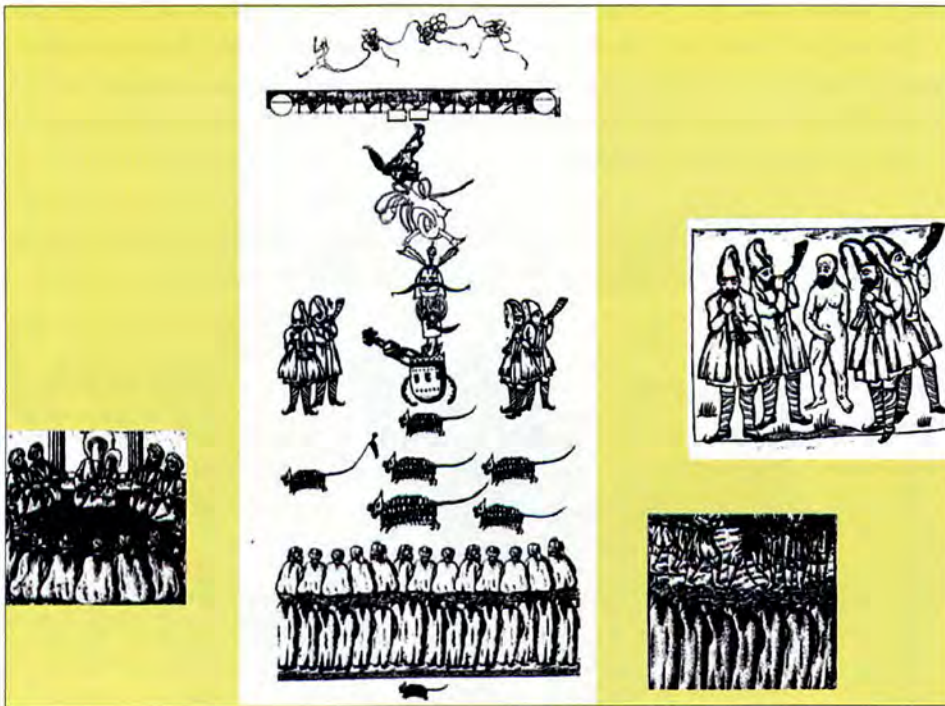
Frequently, Mohasses would extract single items from larger lithographic illustrations and combine them with his drawing, often in ways that make it hard to discern the origin of





19. Ardeshir Mohasses, *Moving Target, Closed Circuit History*, 1989: 199, approx 18 × 23.5 cm; Seyyid Mīrzā Mohammad b. Mīrzā Kāzīm al-Hosseini al-Shirāzī, *Rustam slays Shaghāhād*, In Ferdawsi *Shahnameh*, 1272/1855, vol. 3: 53, ill. 14 × 16 cm; The battle of Khosraw Parviz and Bahram Chūbīn, *ibid*, vol. 4: 95, ill. 14 × 20 cm

the integrated elements. In *What's Gunfire to a Heart Already Aflame*, the only element taken from a lithographed book is the frame and related captions (Figure 16). The texts given there make it possible to identify the model as page 385 from the 1280/1863 edition of *Tuhfat al-Zākīrīn*, the only published edition of a book of early Islamic history by Mohammad ibn 'Ali-Mohammad 'Bīdil' Kirmānshāhāni, whose illustrations Mohasses incidentally used quite frequently. In this case the original page whose frame he employed only contained a written text. Another example of this way of integrating elements of



20. Ardeshir Mohasses, *The Parade Ceremony of Defeated Enemy Soldiers, Closed Circuit History*, 1989: 197, approx 24 × 11 cm; Right, above: Mīrzā Hassan, 'Ayyārān Surrounding a Nude Man, in *Iskandar-nāme*, 1273-74/1856-57, fol. 162a, ca 13.5 × 16 cm; Right, below: clippings from Ustād Bahram Kirmānshāhāni's illustrations to Bādīl' Kirmānshāhāni's *Tuhfat al-Zākīrīn*, 1280/1863

21. left: Ardeshir Mohasses, *Explosion in the Theatre, Closed Circuit History*, 1989: 75, approx 13 × 15 cm; right: Mirzā 'Ali Quli Khu'i, *The wedding of Ma'rūf, In Hizār va yik shab*, 1272/1855, fol. 304a, 16.5 × 2 cm



lithographic illustration is the picture *Victory Anniversary Celebration* (Figure 17), in which an army of soldiers in Qajar uniforms parades on top of a gallows where four soldiers have been hung. The image's aspect of 'celebration' is expressed by a group of two jugglers with a bear and a monkey, a scene extracted from an illustration of the 1270/1853 edition of *Riyāz al-muhibbīn*, a collection of moralizing and martyrological tales by Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat. *Man and Moon* (Figure 18) essentially presents the drawing of a supposedly blind man (whose blindness has to be guessed from the fact that he uses a walking stick, wears dark glasses and is accompanied by a dog—whose front legs and head are here portrayed in lieu of the man's head). Placed in a right angle across this image is the scene of a caravan of prisoners on camels in the company of soldiers riding horses. While most of the prisoners are women, there is a single male person in the lower centre. Due to its iconographical details, the caravan can be identified as the caravan of survivors from the battle of Karbalā, when Imam Ziyān al-'Ābidīn' was Hossein's only male offspring to survive the tragedy. The image is a clipping from the *Tuhfat al-Zākiriin* depicting the arrival of the caravan of the captured *ahl-i biyt* to Damascus.

Yet another group of images combines various illustrations from a single lithographed book, in this case the *Shahnameh*. *Moving Target* presents an angle of warriors on horseback situated below a cloud filled with calligraphic exercises. Exposed on the angle's tip is Rustam, clearly identifiable by his characteristic helmet, adorned with the severed head of the White Div. The circle that is around Rustam's waist with the head of his horse Rakhsh barely recognisable in the left corner again relates to Rustam's final deed, the slaying of Shaghād (Figure 19). This clipping is taken from the 1272/1855 Bombay edition of the *Shahnameh* as illustrated by a certain Seyyid Mirzā Mohammad b. Mirzā Kāzim al-Hosseinī al-Shirāzī. The other fighting characters constitute a multiplied extraction from a scene of the battle of Khosraw Parvīz and Bahrām Chūbīn in the

same edition. *Face the Wall* contains fragmentary versions of the *Shahnameh*-scenes of Rustam rescuing Bīzhan from the pit and Rustam roasting an onager. While the scenes here rendered are highly fragmentary, it remains unclear whether the artist introduced the fragmentary state on purpose or whether he already met with it in the worn and fragmentary copy at his disposal.¹⁸

At times, the combination of various lithographic illustrations is even more complex. *The Parade Ceremony of Defeated Enemy Soldiers* (Figure 20) combines two couples of 'ayyār characters, originally from one and the same image in the 1273/1856 edition of the *Iskandar-nāmeḥ*, with two groups of men, one seated and one standing, from two distinct images in the *Toḥfat al-zākīrīn*. *Explosion in the Theatre* (Figure 21) essentially renders the final illustration of the 1272/1855 edition of *Hezār va yik shab*, portraying the wedding party of Ma'rūf; but the faces of all characters are either obliterated, covered up with other elements or hidden behind a female dancer introduced from another illustration.

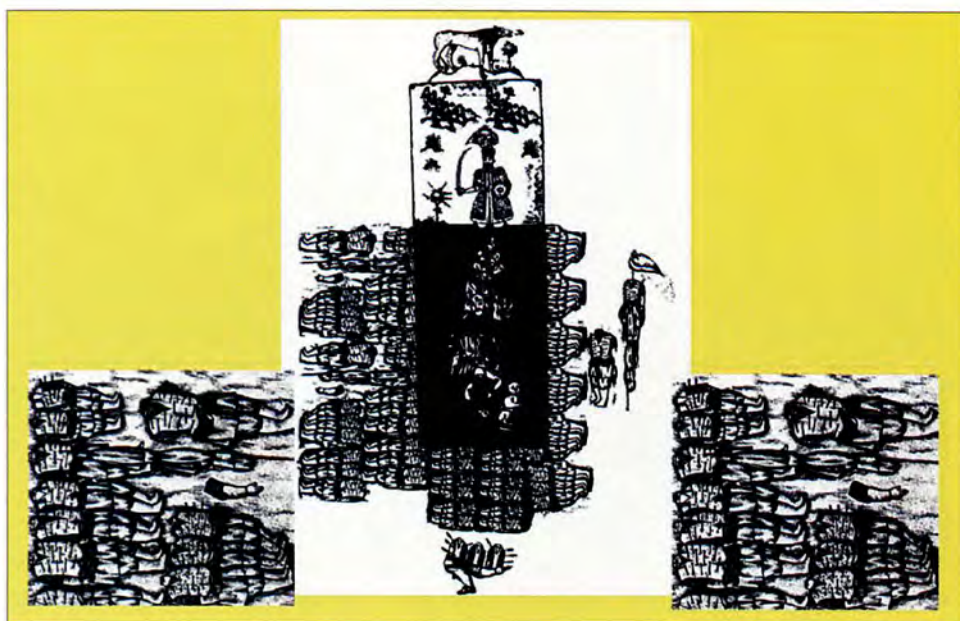
Occasionally, Mohasses reduces the elements extracted from lithographic illustrations to the status of mere ornament, such as a mountainous background, supposedly from the *Shahnameh* in *Eventually, the Honoured Avatar also Got His Punishment* (Figure 22), or the pierced and beheaded bodies of the victims of Karbalā from the *Tuḥfat al-Zākīrīn* in *Victor's Day* (Figure 23).

For most of the above quoted images, whether book-cover s or cartoon-style drawings, the relationship between the meaning of the lithographic illustration in its original context and its message in secondary use is extremely hard if not impossible to discern. In some cases it might be obvious, or even superficial, such as when Mohasses depicts men in a cage in his *Waiting Room*, jugglers in *Victory Anniversary Celebration*, or fighting horsemen in *Moving Target*. In other cases, spectators are tempted to imagine a hidden message, such as when the veiled prisoners of Karbalā are placed before the image of a blind man: Is this to imply the blindness of the Umayyad troops who were not able to 'see' what they had

▼ 22. Ardeshir Mohasses, *Eventually, the Honoured Avatar also Got His Punishment, Closed Circuit History*, 1989: 177, approx 15 × 24 cm; multiplied clippings, supposedly from a copy of the *Shahnameh*



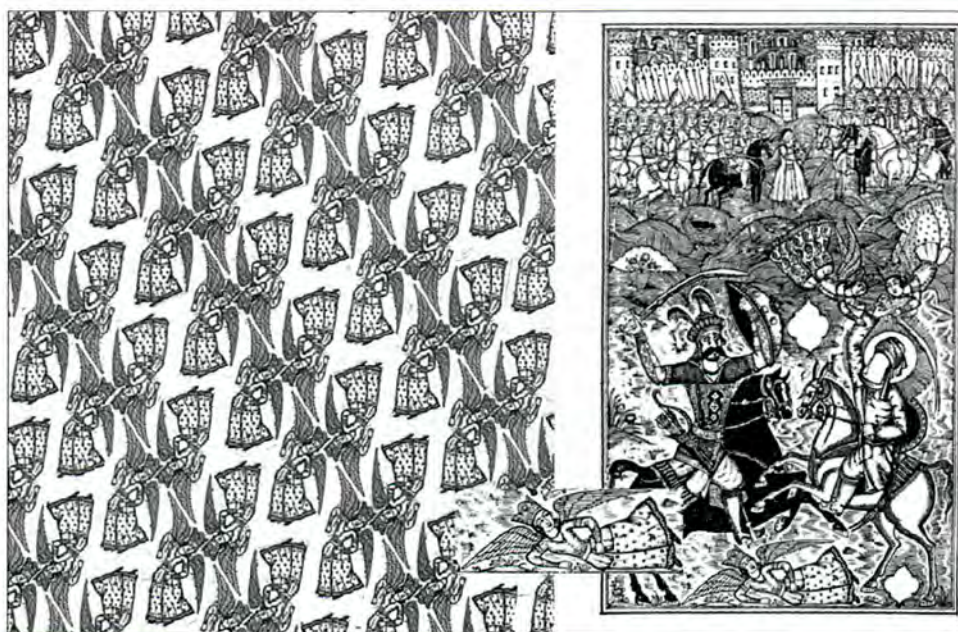
23. Ardeshir Mohasses, *Victor's Day*, Closed Circuit History, 1989: 193, approx 16 × 24 cm; multiplied clipping from Ustād Bahrām Kirmānshāhāni, *The Banu Asad Decide to Have the Women Bury the Lined up Dead After the Battle at Karbalā*, In 'Bādil' Kirmānshāhāni's *Tuhtāt al-Zākirān*, 1280/1863: 281



done to the Muslim, and particularly to the Shiite community? Definite answers to these questions could be given by the artist alone. On the other hand one wonders whether he would be inclined to give any definite comments to his work. The strong appeal of Mohasses's artwork at least partly lies in its enigmatic character, leaving the illustrations open to a variety of approaches and a multiplicity of interpretations. In my opinion, one should not put too much emphasis on the previous meaning of the lithographic illustrations used by Mohasses. Rather one should regard the images as triggering some kind of wonder and awe whose fascination is not necessarily related to their original context.

In conclusion, I would like to mention the artwork of a young Iranian artist and scholar of the history of art by the name of Ali Buzari. While Buzari's work has not been published, his interest in lithographic illustration as a traditional Iranian art form is fascinating, and his work that I have seen promises a new and fresh 'post-modern' encounter with the art of lithographic illustration. The only example I am permitted to show here is Buzari's ingenious design for a silk tie depicting an angel with spread out wings in an endless series of lined-up reproductions (Figure 24). This angel, notably, represents yet another level of creative adaptation of the original illustrations from the Qajar period that might be termed a tertiary digestion. The angel is clipped from an illustration depicting the battle of *'Ali with Marhab-i Khaybarī* in the 1272/1855 edition of *Tūfān al-bukā'* printed with movable type (as distinct from two other editions of the same year printed by way of lithography). As Buzari did not have access to the original edition, he had recourse to the image's reproduction in my publication on lithographic illustration¹⁹ of which, due to the high price of the original publication, he had himself prepared a complete Xerox copy.

This final example demonstrates that the use of lithographic illustrations in modern



24. left: Ali Buzari, design for a silk tie (size unknown); right: Mirzā 'Alī Qulī Khuṭī, 'Alī Fights Marḥab-i Khaybarī, In Jawhārī's *Tūfān al-bukā'*, 1272/1855, fol. 31b, 16.5 × 27.5 cm

Iranian art does not only depend on inspiration but also on accessibility. While Farshid Mesghali had a microfilm reproduction of lithographed books at his disposal, Ardeshir Mohasses profited on his personal collection. Younger artists, for whom the originals are not easily available, might in the future draw their inspiration from a number of upcoming publications making large amounts of lithographic illustrations accessible to them in faithful reproductions. These publications include the Persian translation of my monograph study, an album of illustrations from a total of six different editions of the *Shahnameh*, and a one-volume edition of Dick Davis's English rendering of the *Shahnameh* that is to be accompanied by numerous illustrations from various lithographed editions of the work. It is to be hoped that publications such as these will contribute to the art of lithographic illustration of the Qajar period being recognised more widely in its own right as an independent and important form of indigenous artistic expression. Maybe, one day, it will also give rise to a renewed and modernised appreciation of this traditional Iranian form of art.

Notes

¹ Mehdi Kia, "Closed Circuit History: Oppressors and oppressed through the eyes of Ardeshir Mohasses" <http://www.iran-bulletin.org/art/Mohasses.html> (accessed January 25, 2005).

² For discussions of the history of printing in Iran on which the following summary relies see Olimpiada P. Shcheglova, *Iranskaya litografirovannaya kniga* (Iranian lithographed books) (Moscow, 1979). Willem Floor, "Châp", *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. 4. (London, New York, 1990): 760-764; id. "Matba'a. 3. In Persia", *Encyclopædia of Islam*, 2nd edition, vol. 6 (Leiden, 1991): 803-804; Shahla Babazadeh, *Tārīkh-i chāp dar Īrān* (The history of printing in Iran), (Tehran, 1378/1999), Hossein Mirza Golpayegani, *Tārīkh-i chāp va chāp-khāneh dar Īrān* (The history of printing and printing houses in Iran) (Tehran, 1999); Ulrich Marzolph, *Narrative Illustration in Persian Lithographed Books* (Leiden, 2001): 21-21; id. "Early Printing History in Iran (1817-ca

1900). 1: Printed Manuscript”, in *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution. A Cross-Cultural Encounter*, eds. Eva Hanebutt-Benz, Dagmar Glass ... (Westhofen, 2002): 249-268, 271-272, 511-517, 538-539, plates 112-121.

³ See Leun Minasiyan, *Avvalīn chāp-khāneh-i Īrān va fihrist-i chāp-khāneh-i Isfahān* (The first Iranian printing house, and a listing of printing houses in Esfahan). (Jolfa, Esfahan, 1379/2000).

⁴ See Ulrich Marzolph, “Persian Incunabula: A Definition and Assessment”, Paper presented at the Second International Symposium History of Printing and Publishing in the Languages and Countries of the Middle East. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 2005.

⁵ See Basil W. Robinson, “The Tehran Nizami of 1848 & other Qajar lithographed books”, in *Islam in the Balkans/Persian Art and Culture in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, ed. Jennifer M. Scarce (Edinburgh, 1979); see also Ulrich Marzolph, “Mirzā ‘Ali-Qoli Xu’i. Master of lithograph illustration”, *Annali* (Istituto Orientale di Napoli), lvii, 1-2 (1997): 183-202, plates I-XV; Marzolph 2001 (as in note 2): 31-34 (no. 3.2).

⁶ For bibliographical references to the various works and editions mentioned in the following see Marzolph 2001 (as in note 2).

⁷ See Javad Safinezhad, “Hizār-u-yik shab va chāp-i sangī” (The [Persian translation of the] Thousand and One Nights and lithographic printing), *Farhang-i mardum*, vol. 3, xi, xii (1383/2004): 17-27.

⁸ Homa (February 1971), caption on the inside of the front cover.

⁹ Homa (February 1971), caption on the inside of the back cover.

¹⁰ Roger Cooper, “The Shiraz Festival of Arts”, *Homa* (February 1971): 29.

¹¹ See Marzolph 2001 (as in note 2): 40-41 (no. 3.12).

¹² I owe the following references to the kindness of Ali Buzari, who has also supplied scanned images of the artwork by Farshid Mesghali. As I have not been able to check the original publications, I lack information about the size.

¹³ See Marzolph 2001 (as in note 2): 42-43 (no. 3.15).

¹⁴ Ulrich Marzolph, *Qissehāy-i Mashdī Galīn Khānum* (The tales of Mashdī Galīn Khānum). ed. Ulrich Marzolph, Azar Amirhosseini-Nithammer... (Tehran, 1374/1995); second ed. (1376/1997); third ed. (1381/2002).

¹⁵ See Ulrich Marzolph, and Mohammad Hadi Mohammadi, *Ālbum-i Shahnameh* (An album of *Shahnameh* illustrations) (Tehran, 1384/2005); Ulrich Marzolph, “Illustrated Persian lithographic editions of the *Shahnameh*”, *Adabīyyāt*, vol. 2, xiii (2003): 177-198.

¹⁶ For the following, see Ali Banuazizi, “Ardešhir Mohasses and His Images of the Revolution”, *Iranian Studies*, vol. 17, ii-iii (1984): 279-283; Ardešhir Mohasses, *Closed Circuit History*, Foreword by Ramsey Clark, Introduction by Ali Banuazizi, Designed by R. D. Scudellari (Washington, D. C., 1989).

¹⁷ Banuazizi 1984 (as in note 16): 282; see also “Un artiste qui nous vient d’Iran”, Interview published in *Jeune Afrique*, dclxxii (1973): 12.

¹⁸ See Mohasses (as in note 16), p. 140.

¹⁹ Marzolph (as in note 2), p. 75, fig. 11.