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An Analytical Study of Military Painting of the Mashgh Square by Mohammad Hassan Afshar in the Qajar Period

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Original Research Article

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«مطالعه تحلیلی نقاشی نظامی میدان مشق اثر محمدحسن افشار در دوره قاجار»

## An Analytical Study of Military Painting of the Mashgh Square by Mohammad Hassan Afshar in the Qajar Period\*

### Abstract

**Problem Definition:** The display of power in the Qajar period was the focus of court paintings; moreover, images commissioned by military centers were the basis for this theme. Accordingly, The Main question of this research is as follows: How was military power depicted in the paintings of this period and what was the visual and structural feature of the display of power in the painting of Afshar Square by the artist?

**Objective:** The aim of this research is to study the military paintings of the reign of Nasreddin Shah's period and the structural and visual features of the Mashgh field.

**Research Method:** This research is presented with a historical approach and descriptive-analytical method data is collected via library (documentary) research.

**Results:** The results of this study indicate that the display of power in Qajar art has constantly had a special place in military images and in the painting of Mashgh Square by Mohammad Hassan Afshar.

**Keywords:** Qajar, military painting, Nasser al-Din Shah, Mashgh Square, Mohammad Hassan Afshar, power.

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### Introduction

By observing the paintings of the early Qajar period, most paintings involve the depiction of the power of the Shah. One of the tools to display this supremacy is military and combat images, which in the Qajar era, such illustrations spectacle the Iranian army in European clothes and this was considered a kind of modernity and an essential achievement. From the time of "Fath Ali Shah", connections with the Europeans and their visits influenced the Iranian army and the scenes of the visit of the Shah and the Crown Prince in the paintings have been in this direction. At the beginning of the Nasserite period, images of "Nasser al-Din Shah" in a military uniform with a European uniform, along with cannons, men and soldiers, can be seen. Based on this, the main focus of this research is on the study of military iconography during the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah and with emphasis on the "Mashgh field" attributed to "Mohammad Hassan Afshar" known as the "Silent Painter". This painting is one of the main military paintings of the Nasserite Qajar period and the Mashgh field is a place for military exercises. The present article visually examines Fermi features and details in the practice field painting. In this research, the effort in this research will be to try to understand the visual features of this work. The purpose of this study is to study the study of power and its meaning in the military paintings of the Nasserite Qajar period and the painting of Mashgh square as the main example of the display of power in the time of Nasser al-Din Shah. How is military power research portrayed in the Mashgh field painting? What was the visual and structural feature of the display of power in the painting of Afshar Mashgh Square by the artist? The necessity and importance of research is to study the characteristics and composition and placement of the three main figures to show power that are significant in painting and express the cultural characteristics and power display in Mashgh field painting. This issue, despite its importance in the field of military iconography of the Qajar period, has not been studied so far and shows the necessity of this research. This painting is the scene of Nasser al-Din Shah's weekly visit to Mashgh Square.

### Research Method

This research has been done with historical approach and descriptive-analytical method using library resources and taking notes. The statistical population of this research is Mashgh field painting which is analyzed by related criteria in a logical and deductive way. The method of analyzing the works is based on the study of visual principles and rules used in the Mashgh field table, the characteristics of which are studied.

### Research Background

So far, a number of art scholars have dealt with the subject of military iconography or the court iconography of the Qajar period. However, these studies have dealt with historical matters or other issues such as historical, political and military

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Iconography and have not studied the painting of the Mashgh field in terms of art and visuals and its characteristics. This issue shows the necessity of this research and its innovative aspect. In the following, the mentioned researches will be introduced. "Panjehbashi" (2021) in his article as a comparative study of military iconography in the period of Fath Ali Shah and Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar has adapted the military iconography of the first and second Qajar period and has determined the characteristics of painting of each period. "Rangchian" (2014) in his article under the title of "Silence, Stillness and Movement in the Mashgh field", has studied the evolutionary periods of the Mashgh field. "Akbari et al." (2017) in their article entitled "Recognition of Attitudes Towards the Background in the Buildings of Tehran's Mashgh Square in the First Pahlavi Period" have examined the buildings constructed of Mashgh Square. "Fani and Shirazdi" (2017) in their article entitled "Analysis of effective factors on the regeneration of historical spaces of the city (Case study of Tehran Mashk Square, the reconstruction of historical spaces around Mashk Square)" "Pourmand and Davari" (2011) in their article entitled "The royal image and representation of power in the Qajar period 17" Ejtihadi(1992) have represented the depiction of power in the images of the Qajar period. In his article entitled "The Problem of Succession, Political Distrust and Its Reflections in the Ministry of the Ministry in the Qajar Period", "Dehghannejad and Varghinejad" (2012) has referred to the issue of succession in the Qajar period in his article "Asnaashari and Ashuri" (2017). In his article entitled "Fath Ali Shah's use of the language of images in exponential power", he has used the language of images and the issue of power in the paintings of the first Qajar period. Dehghannejad and Varaghinejad 2013. "Adamova" (2008) in the book of Iranian paintings, the treasure of the 15th century Hermitage, The Russian complex, which houses most of Iran's military artifacts, has been examined. "Pakbaz" (2000) in his book has studied Iranian painting from a long time until today in the final part of the painting of this period. "Afshar Mohajer" (2012) in his book "Iranian artist and modernism" has studied Qajar painting and "Jalali Jafari" (2003) in his book "Qajar painting" Aesthetic critique which is part of his doctoral dissertation in Paris. "Khalili" (2003) Tendency to the West in Ottoman Art, Qajar, India, "Flora. et al" (2002) in his book Painting and painters of the Qajar period has studied Qajar painting and painters well. "Keshmirshakan" (2014) In contemporary Iranian art, at the beginning of his book, he examines Qajar painting and considers it as the beginning of the history of contemporary painting. In general, it can be concluded that the articles and books related to this field are few despite its artistic and historical importance; hence this topic has been neglected and the painting of Mashgh Square as a brilliant military example of the Qajar period has not been addressed. Therefore, in this article, we try to use scientific related sources to study and analyze this issue.

### **Military Painting in the Period of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar**

It began with the death of Mohammad Shah (Shah Ghazi) on the sixth of Shawwal 1264 AH and with the coronation of the crown prince "Nasser al-Din Mirza", the Nasrid era or the second half of the Qajar dynasty. During this period, with the exception of the early years, the fundamental problem of the last half century, namely the question of the institutionalization of central government power, remained unresolved. Asnaseri "can be generally divided into two periods of power, the first period is the period of Amir Kabir's presidency or the period of concentration of state power and state reforms to strengthen Tehran's central power and the second period is after the removal of Amir Kabir from the position or the period of bureaucratic inflation in Tehran. In the first period, Amir Kabir recognized that the military force of the Tehran court was the basis of the power of the central government, and for this reason he did his best to strengthen this military force in proportion to the size of Iranian territory and organize it into a regular and armed army. The second period of power in the Nasserite era begins with the removal of Amir Kabir and the presidency of Mirza Aga Khan Nouri. The power of the central government of Tehran in this period, similar to the period of Fath Ali Shah, was neither endangered by the claimants of the monarchy at home nor by its neighbors abroad. The Nasserite era was relatively politically relatively calm, regardless of the two wars, the Sarakhs and Herat, at the beginning of Nasser al-Din Shah's reign, and the Tobacco Movement. However, Amir Kabir's achievements were not only cultivated, but their influence was diminished day by day" (Ejtihadi, 1992, P. 17). The Qajar Shah was considered as the main actor of power, the custodian of the political and economic power of the Qajar tribe and the manifestation of stability and order in society. According to the power structure of the Nasserite era, official political culture had elements and components such as absolute obedience to the government, sanctity of the government and the ruler, inheritance of power (Rabanizadeh & Lotafi, 2015, p. 60). Since Amir Kabir was well versed in military training, he formed a new army with the help of Western trainers, which was unparalleled in terms of order until then. It cut off the Russian and British ambassadors from interfering in the internal affairs of Iran and removed the embassies and houses of Olema and Rijals from the local status of seating Olema and Rijals (Rezaei, 2002, P. 129). At the time of Amir Kabir's arrival in Tehran, the Iranian military corps, although apparently 4,000, did not actually exceed 300 in number. Amir Kabir, who was the commander-in-chief of the Iranian regime, namely Amir Nezam, and Abbas Mirza's dream in Azerbaijan, who was fully acquainted with various military techniques, quickly paid attention to reforming the military corps. In addition, he made the manufacture of rifles and some other military equipment and supplies common in Iran, and encouraged Iranian masters by providing assistance and encouragement to European imitators in this field (Ravandi, 2536, pp. 506-508).

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The field of military painting is more prominent during the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah than during the reign of Fath Ali Shah. Nasser al-Din Shah's images of the cannon independently, which were ordered by the court to the "painters", show that the Shah considered this a reason for power. Also, the images of soldiers with guns, cannons and infantry at the gates, baths, palaces and houses of the court acquaint us with the clothes and military makeup of the time of Nasser al-Din Shah. In (See Figure. 1), Nasser al-Din Shah is seen as a young man on the battlefield. This image differs from other paintings by him and shows the idealistic state of the young king. In this work, the young king puts his hand on a military cannon, a single figure of Nasser al-Din Shah with a military theme and military uniform that was not common before. This work is painted with matte watercolor on paper and the inscription on the top of the ball reads "Sultan Naser al-Din Shah Qajar" and at the bottom of Naser al-Din Shah's foot is written "the lowest number of Mirzaba Baba Hosseini Imami". This work is housed in the Oriental Studies Center of the London Library (Raby. 1999. p. 65). In this work, the young king stares into the distance, in a black military uniform and gold embroidery, and wears military boots and armbands typical of the Safavid period. Due to the presence of a cannon, this painting is considered one of the military paintings of the beginning of the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah. The ball in these paintings is a symbol of military power and authority and shows the reliance of the king on power.



**Figure 1.** Young Nasser al-Din standing next to a military cannon, The work of Mirzababahosseini, Iran, Tehran 1850. Source: Raby, 1999, p. 65.



**Figure 2.** Nasser al-Din Shah and a military cannon and a monocular camera Jeweler, attributed to the Ottoman Hacop of Tbilisi or Tabriz 1860-1870 AD, oil paint on cardboard. Source: Diba & Ekhtiar, 1999, p. 246.

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In [Figure 2](#) Nasser al-Din Shah is depicted in later years that he was standing next to the cannon again. The artist of this work is attributed to "Akop Otanian" and the painting of the king has been used in a more formal way than the previous painting. The painting was sent to Vienna as a gift to King Francis Joseph of Austria when Nasser al-Din Shah was in Austria for a few weeks as a guest of the Emperor in 1873 ([Raby, 1999, p. 65](#)). In this painting, Nasser al-Din Shah is depicted in full stature, with a headdress, embroidered trousers, a furry cashmere rug, a long hat and a jeweler, and an embroidered emblem in the shape of the sun and a statue of Imam Ali (as), while holding a military monocular camera on his arm. With water cycles ([Ghaziha, 2016, p. 241](#)). This painting dates back to Nasser al-Din Shah's first trip to Europe. The Ottomans show Nasser al-Din Shah standing with binoculars, standing next to a military cannon. In Nasser al-Din Shah's painting, he emphasizes royal power by the color of his clothes and the splendor of his royal ornaments. This military painting is a combination of the youth and royal glory of Nasser al-Din Shah ([Raby, 1999, p. 71](#)). This painting was made in Tabriz, Tbilisi and shows the artistic order of a foreign painter by the Shah. In the distant landscape behind the king, there is a mountainous landscape influenced by 19th century royal paintings in Europe. The military cannon and binoculars refer to the Shah's ideals and aspirations in reforming and modernizing the Iranian army during the Qajar period and are reminiscent of the military paintings of the early Qajar period during the reign of Fath Ali Shah. This work shows the connection between Iranian, Russian and Georgian painting in the late 19th century ([Raby, 1999, p. 247](#)). In this work, Nasser al-Din's Shah's outfit is painted with traditional Iranian motifs, he distances himself from the youth of the crown prince and a more mature face of the king is depicted. Next to him, a cannon can be seen, which is a symbol of Iran's military power and the Shah's eyepiece shows his accuracy and mastery of the situation. In all the paintings that belong to the first period of Nasser al-Din Shah's reign, military paintings with cannons were seen, which, like in the early period of the Shah, are mostly depicted as a single body and next to him a part of a military cannon is seen as a symbol of power. The subject of military paintings changed during the second reign of Nasser al-Din Shah, and due to the training of European soldiers to the Iranians, more details are given in the clothes, arrangement and order of the soldiers in their picture.

### Mashgh Field During the Qajar Period

Tehran Mashgh Square (National Garden) with a large area that is a relic of the Qajar period had a good location near the government center ([Kiani, 2013, p. 249](#)). Around 1185 AH, when the first war between Iran and Russia took place, Fath Ali Shah and "Abbas Mirza" joined the British and French forces to confront the organized and equipped Russian army. France sent a 70-member delegation headed by General Gardan to Iran. One of the tasks the delegation did to strengthen the Iranian system was to train Iranian army infantry, so a land

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measuring approximately 430 feet by 540 feet (about 25 hectares) outside The city and along the northern moat were dedicated to teaching regular movements (Mashghs). This field was considered a part of its shooting range before the formation of the training field, and the reason for choosing that field for the training of soldiers was close to "Artillery Square" and "Citadel Building". In 1241 A.D., "Mohammad Khan Sepahsalar", the Minister of War, rebuilt and expanded there and built a wall consisting of brick maps on the Mashgh field. As "Etemad-ol-Saltaneh" writes in this regard, "Development and renovation of the Dar-e-Khalafah Mashgh Square in Tehran and the wall building containing brick planks around the entire Mashgh Square in the form of a Square were done by Mirza Mohammad Khan Sepahsalar in the year one thousand two hundred and seventy-eight from (Motamedi, 2002, p. 241). Also in issue 14 of Dhi Al-Hijjah 1278 in the newspaper against Iran, this news was written about Mashgh Square. "By doing so, they make it wider and enlarge it, and build an arch around it with a walled wall, and when it is finished, they drain the front of the arch and plant a willow tree so that people can practice with ease." This expansion of the Mashgh field takes place on days when the expansion of Tehran has not yet been discussed. At the beginning of the 14th century AH, the area of Mashgh Square was located almost in the center of the city and next to the citadel. During this period, military buildings around the Square were expanded and buildings such as stables, carriage houses, gunpowder houses, detonators were built on its eastern and northern sides. The available evidence all shows the interest of the Nasserite corps leaders in the military service of the soldiers in this field and they say that every day the high-ranking military leaders of that day such as Mirza Mohammad Khan Qajar, General Hamza Mirza Heshmat al-Dawla and others who were in high command and Nasser al-Din Shah himself visited the barracks once a week. In those days, in addition to practicing shooting with a gun, gunfire with a cannon was also performed in Mashgh Square (Noorbakhsh, 2002, pp. 380-381). Bagh Shah was built in 1307 AH and in 1312 AH. with the construction of the buildings of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Museum of Ancient Iran, only the name of the area remains, which to this day is called the Garden (Shahrivar, 2004, p. 23). It is close to the Shah's palace and was visited by Nasser al-Din Shah on a weekly basis.

### Mohammad Hassan Afshar and the Sign of Mashgh Square.

Mohammad Hassan Khan Afshar is an Iranian painter, sect and pen writer of the thirteenth century AH. He lived during the reign of Fath Ali Shah, Mohammad Shah and Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar and received the title of "painter" from the court. The year of his birth is unknown and little is known about how he lived. He belonged to the famous Afshar tribe in Urmia. Most of the members of this family were engaged in the army, the army, and other government services, and a few, like Mohammad Hassan Khan, brought cars of their choice. Some scholars consider this painter to be one with "Abolhassan Afshar Orumi" who according to the research

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and opinion of "Karimzadeh Tabrizi" (1988) are different people. Mohammad Hassan Khan was silent, but in his works he never mentioned this defect and signed his works under the name of painter Bashi Afshar, but in one of his works, his son, Aghabiguller, mentioned the defect of his father's organ and wrote: Mohammad Hassan Mr. Naghashbashi Lal Afshar in Shahr Shawal 1263 " In Jalayer's writings, it is mentioned that the pen left by the silent painter and the rest was completed by Jalayr in 1296 AH. The French envoys also mentioned in their notes, during their stay of several days in Tabriz, that the painter was deaf and dumb, a 40-year-old man who was very skilled in painting. His oldest work, which has the figure of a painter, was painted in 1234 AH and during the reign of Mohammad Shah Qajar, which indicates that he received the title of painter from this king in the middle of the year. In most of his works, he introduced himself as Mohammad Khan Naghash Bashi Afshar and mentioned the name of his family as a sign of family pride. He is one of the most successful painters of the time of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar, who was capable in various painting techniques and has left lasting works in this stage of this art. This artist, in addition to competing with large paintings of Nasser al-Din Shah's general and barracks and artillery ceremonies, as well as the image of royal buildings, etc., competed best with Abolhassan Khan Ghaffari in watercolor simulation and also had a strong hand in pen painting. "Mu'ayyir al-Malik" writes in his book "Rijal Asr Naseri" that "Lal had written the pen of the warlord of Khorasan, on which a thousand warriors were counted." Mohammad Hassan Afshar has also worked in the school of icon-making from a young age and has painted icons of Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH), Hazrat Ali (AS) and Hassan and Hasnain (AS)"(Karimzadeh Tabrizi, 1988, pp. 1004-1005) (See Figures 3-5). Examples of other works are Afshar. The plaque of Mashgh Square shows the visit of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar together with Crown Prince Muzaffar al-Din Mirza and Mirza Mohammad Khan Sape Salar. The image of these three characters is very large, and in front of them the troops and other divisions of the army are drawn in a smaller proportion. Infantry groups, artillery and marching bands can be seen in various sections. All three characters in the work wear military uniforms and swords with military medals. The Qajar king wears a royal hat and wears a belt and a sword. The Crown Prince's dress, however, is quite similar to the Sepahsalar's dress. The painting of Mashgh square is attributed to Mohammad Hassan Afshar, nicknamed Naghashbashi and Lalobashi. This unique painting is painted in a very large size with a length of 4 meters and 50 meters and a width of 2 meters and 20 centimeters. The plaque in the Mashgh Square shows a view from outside the gates of Tehran in the early days of the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar. Lady Ezzat al-Muluk Malek, the eldest daughter of Haj Hussein Agha Malek, the originator and founder of the Malek National Library and Museum, donated this beautiful and unique painting to the treasure of King Astan Quds Razavi in September 2001 ([www.malekmuseum.org](http://www.malekmuseum.org)) In this work, they are dressed in military clothes, embroidered swords, insignia with military medals and special



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shields. In the corner of the army, the colors of the army are seen in military uniforms with white shields (Razipour, 2014, p. 76).



**Figure 3.** Portrait of Nasser al-Din Shah, Sotheby's auction, Mohammad Hassan Afshar, 1800-1899 AD, 25.4 by 21.2 cm. Source: Ghaziha, 2016, p. 235.



**Figure 4.** Sliding chickpea colored pencil, Shah of Iran and European representatives, Mohammad Hassan Afshar Orumi, 1294 AH. Source: www.malekmuseum.org.



**Picture 5.** Statue of Nasser al-Din Shah with winged celestial angels, artist Mohammad Hassan (dumb) Life 1818-78, watercolor on gold leaf, 3.8 x 5.1 cm with frame, signed by Mohammad Hassan Afshar, 1271 AH Collection Personal commanders. Source: Raby, 1999, p. 31.

There are many and numerous figures, many of which are small in size and quite obvious. The reason for the artist's skill in placing all these small figures in a limited space can be attributed to the habit of working small and arts such as "papier-maché". The painting of the Mashgh Square is painted in very large dimensions and the artist's skill in composition, characterization, military order and showing the movement on the page by the military and placing this volume of statues is commendable. In examining this work, it is unfortunate to add the name of the donor to the Malek Museum "Lady Malek", which is written on the Qajar painting, and the damage to the work of art in the contemporary period in the museum is surprising and very unfortunate. This could be installed on a notice next to the billboard.



**Figure 6.** Maidane Mashq, Mohammad Hassan Afshar Orumi, Rang-o-Roghan, attributed to Mohammad Hassan Afshar, 4/50 on 2/20. Source: www.malekmuseum.org.

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In this picture, the king is depicted in a rich dress with a royal hat and turban with a jeweled sword on his waist. The dress is influenced by the French general's dress and has a royal emblem in blue with a badge on it and white gloves on the sleeves. The beginning of wearing military uniforms dates back to the time of Mohammad Shah and can be seen in court paintings. The crown prince's dress is similar to the king's dress, and its blue emblem is the same as the king, and a dagger is hung around his waist. The crown prince's hat is simple and without a cloak. On the left is the image of a general with a simple hat, in a lowly dress, resembling a crown prince, with a green shield and three insignia on his chest, and his sword is simple and without jewels. The sword is on the back of his body, but it is used on the body for the king and the crown prince. This painting to show the power of the Shah and the military forces of the Iranian army, is the image of the Crown Prince and Sepahsalar, which is a symbol of the Shah's approval to hand over power to these two travelers to France. In the distance, the military training of well-dressed European soldiers can be seen in a very regular parade. None of the soldiers have the same facial expressions, and each has a different face. In the distance, the blue sky can be seen above the Mashgh field. Unfortunately, in the restoration of the work, raw and very clear colors have been used, which is clearly in contradiction with the previous colors of the original painting. This section deals with the visual structure, pictorial elements and composition of the Mashgh field painting.

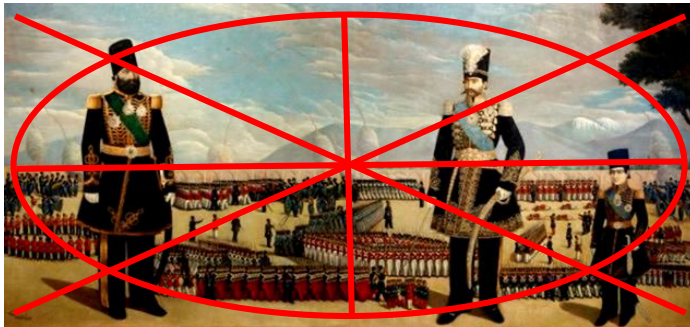


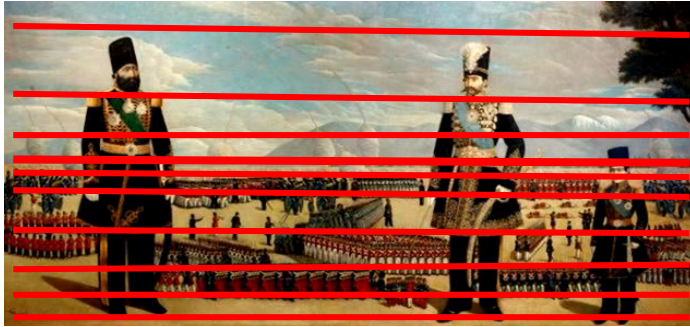
Figure 7. Specifying the main diameters on the Mashgh field board. [www.malekmuseum.org](http://www.malekmuseum.org)

What can be seen in [Figure.7](#) the main diameters show that the painting has details in all parts of the work. In the lower part of the work, the largest number of military figures can be seen. In the upper part of the work, only the two main figures and the crown prince's hat can be seen. The center of the image is between two smokes. According to the ellipse, it is shown that the location of Nasser al-Din Shah and the Crown Prince is in the ellipse, but the commander-in-chief is out of the picture.

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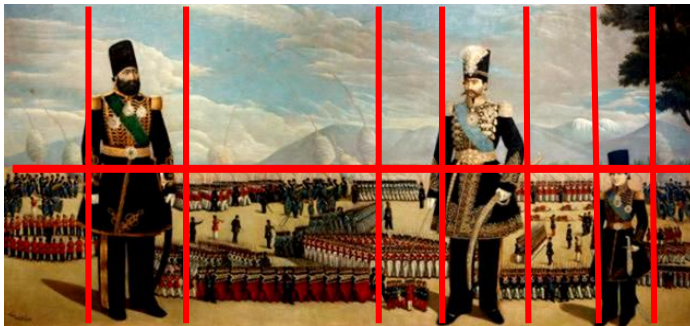
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**Figure 8.** Identifying horizontal lines on the Mashgh field board. Source: [www.malekmuseum.org](http://www.malekmuseum.org)

The **Figure 8** Horizontal lines are very imperative in this painting and show the geometric order and location of the figures well. The closest statue to the Shah's audience can be seen a short distance from the Crown Prince, a little behind the Sepahsalar, and in the distance the soldiers in military uniform. As can be seen in this picture, the order of the troops is on certain lines. In large dimensions such as this painting, the placement of the figures is certainly not accidental at all and is mixed with the artist's thinking, mathematics, geometry and skill. The head, belt and hat of the king, the general and the crown prince show that the light blue sky and the dark clothes of these people were not accidental and the artist has used the light space to emphasize these statues to accentuate more.



**Figure 9.** Defining the borders of the main figures on the Mashgh field board. Source: [www.malekmuseum.org](http://www.malekmuseum.org)

In **Figure 9** it is clear that the two main figures are seen on the right, the effect of a tree is shown in the corner. Since this artist has been painting in the court throughout his Qajar period with his long life, the influences of the early Qajar period and the type of military arrangement can also be seen in the military paintings of Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza. According to the main diameters in the picture, it is clear that the empty space between the king and the crown prince is almost equal to the empty space of the king with the vertical diameter of the image and the empty space between the crown prince and the end of the frame. There is much space between the king and the general, which shows the distance between the general and the superior and the lower rank. To balance the power in the image, the artist has placed the volume of small figures on the left to balance the weight of the work, and this is not felt at all.

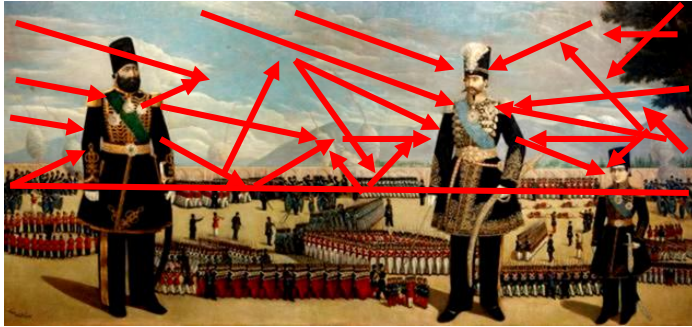
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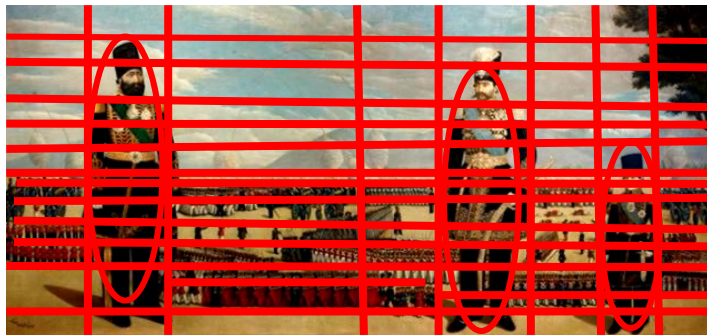
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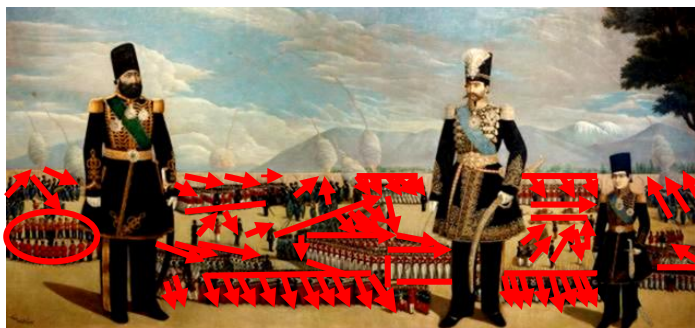
**Figure 10.** Determining the direction of the clouds and the high geometry of the effect. Source: [www.malekmuseum.org](http://www.malekmuseum.org).

The **Figures 10-14** In the upper part of the work and in the sky, the artist has used the direction of clouds, military fire smoke and mountains to emphasize the statues, especially the statue of the king, which is indicated by the direction of the arrows in the image. These arrows show that while using the artist's muted colors at the top of the work to emphasize the three main figures in black, the clouds in the distant mountain sky point to the three main figures, and movement can be seen at the top of the work.



**Figure 11.** Main dots, horizontal and vertical main lines on the main painting. Source: [www.malekmuseum.org](http://www.malekmuseum.org).

Geometric order and the use of horizontal and vertical lines on the main painting show that this painting has a very high geometric order and the three main figures are in a clear division in the painting frame and soldiers in military uniform are located on the horizontal lines and are very regular and orderly representing the army. The main vertical figures are placed on horizontal lines and display the distance, space, and spatial dimension of the image.



**Figure 12.** Geometry and orientation of the lower half of the work. Source: [www.malekmuseum.org](http://www.malekmuseum.org).

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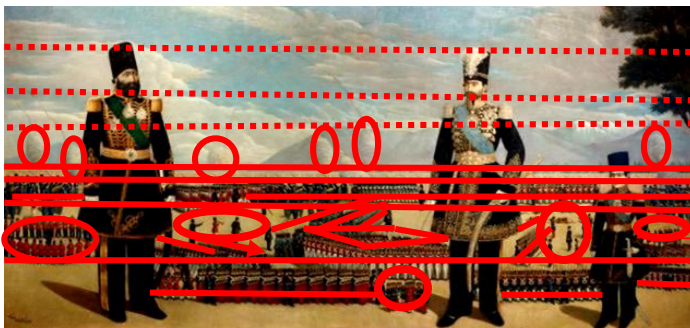
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In this part, there is movement in a painting that is completely seen in the bodies of soldiers and is in contrast to the three main large figures in the foreground. The movement and step of the soldiers are shown with red arrows. All parts of the painting have movement, and no part of the painting is in motion. Due to the very large dimensions of the painting of this visual geometry, ordering and creating very regular movement has been a very difficult task that the artist has managed well. At the top of the image is the blue sky and calm atmosphere, and at the bottom is the image of the soldiers and their movement.



**Figure 13.** To move in the Mashgh Square painting and to look at the three main figures. [www.malekmuseum.org](http://www.malekmuseum.org).

In this painting, the whole direction of the painting is in motion, and the military forces, as indicated by the red arrows, guide the path of the eye to the lower part of the painting. The painting part in the center of the figure on the wall of the Mashgh field has mathematical equations below and is arranged in a very regular way. Military forces arranged like dominoes. What is important in this regard is the direction of the eye of the three main figures, which are marked with black arrows. The direction of Sepahsalar's gaze is towards Nasser al-Din Shah and the direction of Nasser al-Din Shah's and Crown Prince's eyes is towards the face of Sepahsalar.



**Figure 14.** Identifying circles and ellipses in the main image. Source: [www.malekmuseum.org](http://www.malekmuseum.org).

Identifying the circles of smoke and circles of people in the painting shows that these circles played a role in the hidden geometry of the image. The smoke is at a certain diameter from the main diameter, and the small circles of people who are probably in a higher position are in a line in the lower third of the work. The lower part of the work is very modern and its visual order and the shape of the lines in the background are reminiscent of European paintings.

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**Figure 15.** The three main triangles of power and the relationship of the three main bodies together. Source: [www.malekmuseum.org](http://www.malekmuseum.org).

In this painting, we are faced with two main plans: the first plan of the Shah, the Crown Prince and the Sepahsalar, and the second plan in the distance of the soldiers in the training field. The three figures that the painter emphasizes and are in front of the painting and the foreground point to each other, which can be seen in (See Figure 15) the head of the lieutenant general points to the king and the king's sword to the crown prince.

**Table 1.** Study of military images of Nasser al-Din Shah during the Qajar period. Source: Author.

Image	Feature	King / Crown Prince	Type of painting	Military issue in the second period of Qajar
	The king in his youth in military uniform Rely on the cannon	Naser al-Din Shah during the Crown Prince	Matte watercolor painting on paper	Royal
	Shah in Persian clothes Leaning on the cannon of their jeweled monocular camera	Naser al-Din Shah at the beginning of the reign	Painting on canvas	Royal
	Demonstration of military power, toughness of the king, introduction of the crown prince, approval of the minister	King Crown Prince Minister	Painting on canvas	Royal

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In [Table 1](#) the military images are examined and the difference with the drawing of the Mashgh field is determined. The study of these images shows that the Shah's age is more mature, he is painted in a busy military uniform and no war cannon can be seen next to him, but he himself is in a military training field or training field and 4 cannons can be seen in the distance. This painting is not a single figure and is combined with two other figures. For the first time, the crown prince and his presence are introduced and emphasized in the painting as the heir of the kingdom after the king. Opposite the Shah and the Crown Prince Sepahsalar, which plays a role in the Crown Prince's rise to power and the legitimacy of his reign after the Shah. He visited the training field and the military parade. None of this is seen in Nasser al-Din Shah's previous military paintings as observed till today. This painting is by far the best example of military painting of the Nasserite period in Iran.

### Analysis of Power in Mashgh Field Painting

The issue of power in the realm of the history of philosophical thought has always been one of the most important and thought-provoking categories. The multidimensionality of this concept has made it difficult to easily recognize and measure. Controversial about this concept has caused intellectual debates and different definitions of the concept of power have been proposed "([Nazari, 2007, p. 124](#)). "Power relations are purposeful and directional, and the cause of engagement with the actor of power should never be neglected in function and manner of action. There is no power that does not have direction and course" ([Foucault, 2005, p. 158](#)). Power in the Qajar period has a close relationship with art and in the art of the Qajar period is due to the discovery of the value of the image by the Qajar kings. The political and social conditions of the Qajar period led to the use of art as a powerful medium. "Linking power and knowledge with each other has the consequence for knowledge that power is closely related to discourse" ([Jurgens & Phillips, 2013, p. 37](#)). "One of the issues that Iran's history has been facing for a long time has been the issue of succession. In fact, the issue of succession is as old as the history of Iran" ([Curzon, 1968, p. 97](#)). Thus, one can guess how serious the issue of succession and its consequences could be in the history of Iran. The Qajar government, as the successor to previous governments, was no exception. Since the acquisition of power was also legitimate during this period, and because there were basically no coherent rules for succession, after the death of the Shah, various claimants emerged from different parts of the country, challenging the process of establishing the power of the legal crown prince and the new king. In this ambiguous political situation, the role of the institution of the ministry was very decisive. During the Qajar period, this institution, as an effective force, helped the Shah in removing the obstacles to succession and overcoming the claimants of power, and in practice helped to stabilize the political system" ([Mosalinezhad, 2009, p. 169](#)). In the paintings of the Qajar period, power is usually to show a influential emperor, and this can be seen in the military paintings of this

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period of Nasser al-Din Shah in different years of the monarchy. In his youth and the beginning of his reign, in the middle years of his reign. Military images have always been painted in Iran since the beginning of the Qajar period, and it is a kind of painting to propagate the power of the Shah, to introduce the military power and the awareness and awakening of the Shah against internal and external enemies. The painting of Mashgh Square is one of the most complete military images of the Qajar period, which has been created in large dimensions by combining military painting and Qajar court iconography. In front of this image, the statue of Nasser al-Din Shah and the Crown Prince can be seen together, and in front of the image of the general, which is important considering the issue of succession in the Qajar period, the image of the crown prince next to the king. This is the only military image that the king and the crown prince can be seen together. In the back of the picture are soldiers training. The figures in this image are perfectly preserved in the portraits of the soldiers, portraiture and photography, and appear to have been painted on real figures because none of the figures are alike. In the analysis of the painting of Mashgh Square, the subject of which is centered on Nasser al-Din Shah, is a view of the military power of Iran in the Qajar period. In these images, the king is a symbol of power and authority, because by focusing on the main body, a view of order, power and authority is conveyed to the audience. Painting during the Qajar period is one of these mechanisms to show the power of the Shah, which in the visual culture of that time was a propaganda aspect to legitimize the government and was a means to show the Shah and his military power in the region and his world. For this reason, unlike previous periods, it has been painted in a very large size. Nasser al-Din Shah is introduced differently from other military images in his painting of the Square of Mashgh. In this image, he indirectly imposes a symbolic form of power structure on the painting. Painting in the Qajar period is the most important art from a cultural point of view and painting is used as a tool to expand the dominion and power of the Shah and then the court. What can be seen at first glance in the Mashgh board are the three main elements of the image. To the right of the image is the background of a tree and four balls. If we consider the image behind the three main figures and the triangle of three people as a factor of image division, five series of combat battalions can be seen in the image, all of which have distinct and different faces. In the right part, next to the four balls, six lying figures are depicted. Seven white smokes of fire and gunpowder can be seen in the sky. Twelve series of soldiers are recruited. In the left part of the image, behind the crown, two series of white smoke can be seen in the sky. In the central part of the Square, the four handles of the ball can be seen. Five series of battalion units can be seen, and behind the commander-in-chief, four cannons and one battalion unit can be seen. In the space between the king and the minister and the crown prince, there are six figures who are training soldiers. Eight single statues can be seen between the king and the general. The smoke in the image space is divided as follows. One smoke behind the sergeant, four in the



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center and one behind the minister. The maximum red color division is between the king and the minister, followed by the cane, which can be seen in the hands of both the instructors and the king. Red, white, and blue rotations are seen between the soldiers and the image space, showing them marching and moving. In general, ten battalions can be seen in this painting. The sky is blue and there are snow spots on the two mountains, and in general, there is an atmosphere of peace and stability of the government in the image. This sign does not have a signature; it is attributed to Abolhassan Lal. All of Abolhassan Lal's paintings are kept in the Churchill Museum, most of his works have erotic scenes and are not comparable to this work; but the common point of this painting with other works is the order of the figures and placing a large number of figures in the picture, which is probably the artist's skill in the field of lacquer works and has benefited well. On the right side of the board is written a gift from Ezzat Al-Muluk, the approving supervisor of the Queen's endowments, according to the museum documents, this board has been given to her. This painting has the property number of the work "00063" and was renovated in 2016. According to the museum restoration expert, the most important damages of this painting were paint cracking and slight spillage on the paint surface. This painting has been doubled at the time of donation (i.e. the lining is glued to the main canvas throughout the work). In this reconstruction, the rupture of the repair work and the parts have been balanced and repainted. This painting is probably related to Nasser al-Din Shah's first trip in terms of time. This trip took place after the concession of exploitation of Iranian mines to Julius Doriter in 1290 AH / 1837 AD Nasser al-Din Shah was 43 years old at the time and had ruled Iran for 25 years. Since leaving the country at that time posed some political dangers, it is possible that this painting order was made to depict the power and rule of the Shah of Iran, the legitimacy of political power, the legitimacy of the Crown Prince and Mirza Sepahsalar against the Shah. The use of European space, blue sky, green trees and calm space can be seen in the image next to the main body of the image. Magham's perspective is seen in this painting, and the three main figures are much larger than the rest of the painted figures, and their power and importance are emphasized in the foreground. The troops and armies and marching bands are very regular and smaller in size than three figures and in the distance and are drawn in the rear plan. The Shah's dress is different from Mirza Mohammad Khan Sepahsalar and the Crown Prince and is depicted with more decorations. The king has a belt and a jeweler's sword, his hat has many feathers and a royal dome, and the blue robe is the same between the king and the crown prince, but the robe of the general is painted green. The king's portico and his jeweled sword emphasize the king's power in the image. The discourse of power runs between the three main figures in the painting, although Nasser al-Din Shah is portrayed a little earlier than the others. First, the king, a little later, the crown prince, the commander-in-chief, and the troops are shown at great distances. The image of an empty sky with a calm view and a simple atmosphere makes more

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emphasis on the main figures of the image, especially the king. It is deeply rooted in society and can be seen in all areas and human relations. The king in the field of painting is a subject who is introduced as a power in the discourse space of the image. What can be seen in the painting of the training ground is the kind of standing proudly and conceitedly of the king, taking the sword of the royal jeweler from the robe, emphasizing the power and readiness of the king and behind his military command. What can be seen in relation to the pattern of power in this painting is the painting as a tool to show the power of the king and the modern military army. The main power is in the image of the king, followed by his crown prince and finally the general. This painting was painted after Amir Kabir's death, and the image of the king and his minister somehow legitimizes the general, supports him, and cleanses the king of the guilt of killing Amir Kabir. This sign refers to the training ground, a place for training and the strength of the Iranian military. The soldiers and artillerymen are depicted in this very neat and precise painting in the military order of European clothes. In appearance they are the main subject; But inside this painting is a discourse about the power of the three statues of the king, the crown prince and his minister, which are painted in large dimensions in dark clothes on a light space and much in front of the other statues. This painting shows the Shah, the Crown Prince's minister, using military power to show his military power in this picture, making good use of the discourse of power. This painting is painted with all the details and precision and becomes one of the best paintings of the artist, which is the most expensive and original work of art in the Malek Museum and is one of the best examples of Iranian military painting during the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah.

### Conclusion

Paintings in the Qajar period are related to power and its display, these paintings are a display of pride, honor and power for the king, and in its structure can be seen a kind of military display, makeup and clothing of soldiers, and so on. In the study of military painting in Maidan-e-Mashgh, it can be seen that the aspect of nationalism and display of power is the work of the artist and as one of the most brilliant examples of Qajar court military icon painting in the time of Nasser al-Din Shah, the king, crown prince and Shows Sepahsalar on a weekly visit to the military Mashgh field. This painting shows the crown prince next to the king to show the legitimacy of the monarchy. This painting is related to the subject of showing military power and is a pictorial document of the training of Qajar soldiers. The image of the three main figures and the king is the main power in the image, and the soldiers and the military battalion play a marginal role. In the geometric study of this painting, the exact geometric and mathematical order of the species can be seen, and in placing different forms, the forms in the geometric frame of the work have been used. Appropriate use of visual elements can be seen in this work and relationships can be seen between the three main figures. This painting was

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commissioned by the court and is a painting to show the national and military power of Iran and is the largest painting of military iconography in the Qajar period.

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