

Original Research Article

A Study of Mohsen Tajbakhsh's Illustrations in Qajar and Pahlavi Lithographic Books

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Abstract

Introduction: The illustrators of lithographic books are important research components that remain unknown to the audience interested in this field except for limited cases. According to the studies of «Ulrich Marzolph», 46 book illustrators have been identified in the field of the lithographic printing industry of Iran in the Qajar era, 19 of whom are on the list of the most famous ones. Mohsen Tajbakhsh, as one of these distinguished but little-known artists, has made a significant contribution to the expression of the public culture of the Iranian people, and his works have represented the technical and visual qualities of reproduction of pictures through lithography in his time. This study seeks to introduce Mohsen Tajbakhsh as a hard-working and active artist in the late Qajar and early Pahlavi periods. Also, identifying, categorizing and visual analysis of his works is one of the main goals of this research.

Research Method: The present research is descriptive-analytical, and data collection was conducted through direct access and study of manuscripts using library sources and written documents.

Findings: Even though Mohsen Tajbakhsh followed the artists before him in illustrating books, features such as short and large human bodies, round faces with almond-shaped eyes, smiling lips, tall horses with long legs, etc., are the distinctive features of his illustrations which makes it possible to distinguish Tajbakhsh's works from others. Also, comparing his miniature paintings with others makes it possible to realize more simplicity and fewer details in his illustration technique.

Conclusion: Mohsen Tajbakhsh was a hard-working illustrator who lived in Tehran during the era of Ahmad Shah Qajar and Reza Shah Pahlavi and illustrated many books with religious, folk-romantic, and school (Maktabkhaneh) themes. In the illustration, he has adopted the style of artists before him, and despite the trend towards realistic illustration in the mentioned period and access to such miniature paintings, he has chosen traditional Iranian illustration, simplicity in expression, creating flat images without volume and perspective, etc.

Keywords

Mohsen Tajbakhsh, Illustration, Lithographic Books, Qajar, Pahlavi

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Introduction and Problem Definition

The transition era from handwritten manuscripts to printed books led to a decline in quality and the ignorance of many traditional arts. However, lithography could keep some of these arts and the activities of artists related to them alive for several decades so that the old-time bookbinders, calligraphers, and painters were applied again in creating lithographic books. Unfortunately, there is not much information about the background of most of these artists, and there is no trace left of them like their works, except their name and address, because most of the miniature paintings do not include the artist's signature. In general, according to the opinions in some sources, including the book «A brief description of lithography» written by «Majid Gholami Jaliseh», from 1249 A.H., which is the date of publication of the first lithographic work («The Holy Quran» printed in Tabriz) in Iran, to 1366 A.H., when probably the last lithographic book (Tofan al-Baqa by Mohammad Sanei bin Fathullah Khansari) was illustrated, many lithographic images have been obtained, which shows that many artists were active in this field. It is worth noting that some of them and their works are still unknown. According to the list of the names of these artists published by the researcher, «Ulrich Marzolph», 46 active artists can be seen in these years. Nineteen of them were named outstanding painters, and Mohsen Tajbakhsh was introduced as one of these artists in the last period of the lithography profession, who had almost two decades of artistic activity (1923-41/1923-1342). Apart from his artistic works and writings, there are no other documents about his life, date of birth and death from this hard-working artist; however, by examining his remaining works, one can get guesses about his profession, place of residence, and social status. The reason for choosing Mohsen Tajbakhsh among other painters of his time is that most of his works are signed with his own signature, making it easy to distinguish and differentiate them. Also, some of his works are available in the author's private collection, which has not been introduced so far, and their names have not been mentioned in research sources, such as Jangnameh of Imam Hasan (A.S.). To this aim, the present research seeks to answer these questions: «Who was Mohsen Tajbakhsh? What did he write, and what themes did he illustrate? What stylistic and formal qualities did his illustrations have?»

Research Method

Considering the historical nature of this research, data and images have been collected through library sources and written documents. Also, the author had the possibility of direct access to some manuscripts and scans of images. The 20 books in the article's text, which are divided into three subject categories, are the analyzed statistical community, which contains 238 miniature paintings. From each subject, three miniature paintings were purposefully selected for study and review and were analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method. In the end, the results of examining the samples using the scientific induction method were generalized to those of other works by Mohsen Tajbakhsh.

Research Background

The first research on the status of lithographic artists and their style is related to the studies of «Robinson» in English in the late 1970s. One of his valuable articles entitled «Tehran Nizami and other Qajar lithographic books» (1979) is about the lithographic manuscript of «Khamsa of Nizami» illustrated by «Mirza Ali Qoli Khoei», which for the first time introduces this artist as the most hard-working and most fabulous illustrator in this field. In fact, his writings pave the way for researchers after him, including Ulrich Marzolph, to conduct research in this area. In the article entitled «Illustration art in Qajar lithographic

books» (2003) and the famous book entitled «Fictional illustrations in Persian lithographic books» (2014), «Marzolph» gave a brief introduction to artists active in the field of lithography and introduced their works; however, he admitted that this study is not complete and needs more research. In the mentioned works, Marzolph has provided brief information about the period of activity of Mohsen Tajbakhsh and his illustrated manuscripts. In the subsequent studies, Tajbakhsh was not the main target of any research, and only indirect references were made to him as examples of the topics in question. These studies include the articles entitled «One thousand and one nights and lithography» by «Safinejad» (2004), «Examination and introduction of the illustrated manuscript of Khale Suske's Lithograph» by «Alibeigi» (2012), «Examination of the illustration of the life of Hazrat Fatima Zahra (PBUH) in the lithographic manuscripts of Toofan al-Baka» by «Asgari» (2015), «Deformation of Divan in the lithographic images of Iskandarnamēh Naqali» by «Adham and Hosseini» (2017), «Analysis of the illustration of women present in Karbala with an emphasis on the position of Hazrat Zaynab (PBUH) in the lithographic manuscript of Koliat-e Judi» by «Asgari, Shayetsehfar, and Ahmad Panah» (2021), «Comparative study of text and image in the lithographic manuscript of Amir Arslan Namdar from the perspective of cultural identity» by «Shirazi and Hassani» (2022). Since Mohsen Tajbakhsh was an active illustrator and relatively many of his works have been left behind, in the mentioned studies, his works have been used to compare or match with the study cases of the research, and they have never been the main subject of any research. In the book entitled «Forty Storms» by «Bouzari» (2012), the lithographic manuscripts of Toofan al-Baka are also examined. Considering that Tajbakhsh also illustrated some manuscripts of this book, it has been given brief attention along with other artists of this collection. The only point of commonality between the studies mentioned in the background and the present article is the mention of Tajbakhsh's name as an illustrator in the Qajar era and sometimes mentions some manuscripts illustrated by him. Regardless of this commonality, this article is, for the first time precisely, analyzing the works and illustration style of Mohsen Tajbakhsh.

lithography

Lithography is a planographic printing method invented in the late 18th century by «Elois Senefelder» in Austria. Russia made Iranians familiar with this type of printing, and it became known and common in different parts of Iran around 1824/1240 A.H. «Holy Qur'an» is the first book that was printed in this style in 1248-49 A.H./1832-33 A.D. in Dar al-Taba'i Dar al- Saltaneh of Tabriz (Marzolph, 2014, 32). The first lithographic illustrated book was the non-fiction book entitled «Qanun Neshan», published in 1252 A.H. It was most likely published in Tabriz (Bouzari, 2010). During 1260-1270 A.H., lead and stone printing houses were established in many Iranian cities such as Tabriz, Mashhad, Rasht, Isfahan, Shiraz, Urmia, etc.; however, the publication of books in stone form was famous for more than sixty years¹, from 1259 to 1330 A.H. It seems that the people of Iran were more interested in lithography than lead printing (Hashemi Fesharaki, 2011). The lithographic books in the Qajar period were divided into two main categories in terms of subject matter. The first category was books for adults to study, including classical Persian literature, religious literature, folk tales, and scientific and translated books, and the second category included educational books that were usually prepared for the use of school (Maktabkhaneh) children² (Hosseinirad & Khan Salar, 2005). In a general view, the characteristics of the images of lithographic books, which were a reflection of cultural accumulation and included the integration of subjectivism and Western painting, involve breaking away from the visualization of the imaginary space and the visualization of the

space between the imaginary and the real, objectivism, simplification of elements and forms in an artless and artificial way, the effects of Western painting, including creating bright shadows with the help of engraving and dot painting, inspired by gravures imported by Europeans to Iran, on surfaces such as folds of clothes, curtains and objects, and also the design of landscapes in the backgrounds or nature painting inspired by the landscape of European painting, creating a new visual space by using only one visual element called script. In fact, just as the painting of this period goes towards objectivism and naturalism, the style of illustrating lithographic works also goes towards realism (Alibeygi, 2012, 69).

Mohsen Tajbakhsh

Despite the calligraphers or scribes whose names appear in most of the stone books, the names of the painters have been neglected in most of them. It is not clear whether this was due to the reluctance of the painter himself or because of the decision of the publisher or the customs of that time. In more than one hundred lithographic books, only the names of 32 illustrators are mentioned, and the remaining two-thirds remain unknown (Tanavoli, 2014, 57). It seems that at that time, painters did not have the honour of calligraphers, and they showed no concern about his signature³. The situation is slightly better in newspapers, and government newspaper illustrators are better known for the signatures they put under some of their works. Another point that is not clarified is the work history of most of the illustrators. It is not known how they learned this field. Except for the few whose biographies have been written down, the others have left no trace of their records other than their names (Tanavoli, 2014, 57). According to the publication date of the remaining works of lithographic artists, it can be concluded that after Ali Khan⁴, with 33 years of activity in this field, Mohsen Tajbakhsh had one of the most prolonged periods of illustration for lithographic books in Iran. Mohsen Tajbakhsh was one of the most active illustrators of lithographic books in the late Qajar and early Pahlavi periods (Marzolph, 2014, 64). There is little information about his life and status, but based on the recorded details in his illustrated books, it can be guessed that he lived in Tehran for 20 years during 1340-1360 A.H. (1921-1941) and was engaged in illustration for lithographic books. This date is contemporary to the reigns of Ahmad Shah Qajar and Reza Shah Pahlavi. From the large amount of works left by his signature and the number of names of the clients mentioned at the end of the books, it is understood that he was a well-known artist. He is one of the few artists who has signed all his paintings except for a few cases. Tajbakhsh's handwriting has always been consistent when signing his works, and he has not followed any of the common scripts such as Nastaliq, Shikasta Nastaliq, or Thuluth. Not only in choosing the script, but he also did not use common expressions for signature, such as the work of the least, the signature of the least, etc. Figure 1 exemplifies Tajbakhsh's signature in «One Thousand and One Nights» (place of storage, National Library of Iran 1846612).

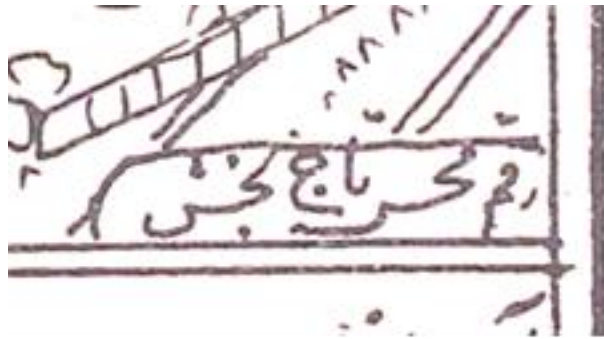


Fig 1. Signature of Mohsen Tajbakhsh.

Source: One thousand and one nights, 1973, 51.

Tajbakhsh's signature style remained the same in all his paintings, as seen in Fig 1, and he rarely made minor changes. Sometimes, in some manuscripts that Tajbakhsh illustrated jointly with another artist, he placed his signature twice on both sides of the image (Fig 2). Perhaps the reason for this was the artist's level of satisfaction with his work, as in some manuscripts, he used «Mohsen Khan Tajbakhsh» instead of his usual writing «Mohsen Tajbakhsh» (Fig 3).



Fig 2. «Battle of Farhang and Mohammad Shirzad» by Mohsen Tajbakhsh. Source: Iskandarnameh, 1975, 50.



Fig 3. «Conversation between the prince and the fabric seller» by Mohsen Tajbakhsh. Source: Badi al-Mulk & Badi al-Jamal, 1974, 96.

The Works Signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh

By searching in accessible libraries such as «Melli of Iran», «Bayaz», and «Vaziri of Yazd» and based on the list provided in the studies of Ulrich Marzolph as well as the author's private collection and by referring to the works of artists with whom Mohsen Tajbakhsh often collaborated, including «Mohammed Sanei» the illustrator and «Mohammed Ali Vaziri» the scribe, a list of signed works signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh has been prepared, which are placed in 3 categories of religious, folk-romantic and school (Maktabkhaneh) books. The names of these books are as follows:

1. Books with religious themes: «Koliat-e Judi» (1342 A.H.), «Jangnameh of Imam Hasan (A.S.)» (1342 A.H.), «Jalaa Al-Ayoun» (no date), «Toofan al-Baka» (1354 A.H.), «Khavarnameh» (1360 A.H.).

2. Books with folk and romantic themes: «Hossein Kord Shabestari» (1348 A.H.), «One Thousand and One Nights» (1352 A.H.), «Badi al-Mulk and Badi al-Jamal» (1353 A.H.), «Qahermannameh» (1353 A.H.), «Amirarслан Namdar» (1354 A.H.), «Noosh Afarin» (1354 A.H.), «Iskandarnameh» (1354-56 A.H.), «Rostamnameh» (no date).

3. School (Maktabkhaneh) books: «Dastoor Farhang» (1340 A.H.), «Khale Suske» (1342 A.H.), «Alm al-Ashiya Mozaffari» (1344 A.H.), «Aq-e Valedayn» (no date), «Stonecarver and Sultan of the Skull» (1342 A.H.), «Wolf and Fox» (no date), «Khurshidafrin and Falaknaz» (1354 A.H.).

It is said that Mohsen Tajbakhsh illustrated many works, and it is assumed that his works are more than what has been mentioned. Therefore, it is possible that Tajbaksh illustrated other subject types as well. Table 1 is a brief description of the introduction of the mentioned works.

Table 1. A brief description of the introduction of illustrated books by Mohsen Tajbakhsh. Source: Author.

Books with religious themes	1. Koliat-e Judi (1342 A.H.): Divan of «Marathi of Abdul Javad Khorasani» nicknamed «Judi», which is in praise, merits, and elegies of Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) about Karbala and the event of Ashura. This book has 130 pages, eight miniature paintings, and is medium octavo size. Source: Tehran, Hosseini Press. Storage location: Library of the Islamic Consultative Assembly.
	2. Jangnameh of Imam Hasan (A.S.) with Basat hadith from Hazrat Amir (A.S.) (1342 A.H.): Description of the bravery of Imam Hassan Mojtaba (A.S.) during his wars with the enemies of Islam. The book contains 32 pages and 13 miniature paintings in crown octavo size. Source: Tehran, Haji Abdul Rahim Publishing House, author's private collection.
	3. Jala al-Ayoun (no date): written by «Mohammed Bagher bin Mohammad Taghi Majlisi». Narrator of the life of the Fourteen Infallibles. It contains 310 pages with only one event depicted. This event is related to the birth of Hazrat Imam Hossein (A.S.). It is in medium octavo size. Source, Tehran, Akhavan Kitabchi Press. Storage location: National Library of Iran.
	4. Toofan al-Baka (1354 A.H.): Written by «Mohammad Ibrahim Johari», it is one of the most famous Persian maqtals, which is fluent in prose and rhyme, and it is among the most famous muqatil used by the public in the 13 th and early 14 th centuries, which was also known as Johari. This book consists of 255 pages in medium octavo size. Mohsen Tajbakhsh has added nine miniature paintings to this book. Source: Tehran. Publisher: No name. Collection: National Library of Iran.
	5. Khavarnameh (1360 A.H.): The most famous Persian elayatnameh written by «Ibn Hesam Khosefi» in the ninth century. In the Velayatnameh, a story is described in a poem and in an epic tone about the heroism of Amir Al-Momenan Ali (A.S.), which is often mixed with legends. This book has 124 pages and 28 miniature paintings in crown octavo size. Source: Tehran, Akhavan Kitabchi Press. Storage location: Library of the Islamic Consultative Assembly.
Books with folk and romantic themes	6. One Thousand and One Nights (1352 A.H.): Translated by «Abdul Latif Tasoji» from Arabic to Persian. The story beginning of One Thousand and One Nights is based on the Sassanid kingdom with the title of Shahryar (King), and the narrator is Shahrazad (Minister's Daughter). It is stated on the identification page of this book that it is expensive and that the number of people seeking it is countless. In this manuscript, «Mohammed Sanei», one of the other active contemporary illustrators of Mohsen Tajbakhsh, collaborated with him in illustrating the book. This manuscript is a collection of 522 pages with 38 miniature paintings in medium octavo size,

	14 of which were illustrated by Mohsen Tajbakhsh. Source: Tehran, Scientific Press. Location: National Library of Iran.
	7. Hossein Kord Shabestari (1348 A.H.): It is a folk tale in Persian, the author of which is unknown. This story tells the stories of Ayaran's heroism and describes legendary battles between right and wrong warriors. This book is a collection of 108 pages with 11 miniature paintings in medium octavo size. Source: Tehran, Press, Mohammad Mahdi Qazi Saeedi, Storage: Vaziri Library of Yazd.
	^ Badi al-Mulk and Badi al-Jamal (1353 A.H.): From the love stories of folk literature written by «Ahmad Bin Ali Ashkvari». During this story, Badi al-Mulk, the Egyptian prince, and Badi al-Jamal, the prince of Halabi, are narrated. This book has 248 pages, of which Tajbakhsh has added 17 miniature paintings. The book is in medium octavo size. Source: Tehran, Scientific Press, Location: National Library of Iran.
	9. Qahernameh (1353 A.H.): It is a work of «Abutahir Tarsusi», an active author of the 6 th century A.H. This story, which is considered among folk literature, reflects the legendary era of Hooshang Shah's kingdom and the bravery of his warriors and companions. It is a book with 124 pages and 21 miniature paintings in Mohsen Tajbakhsh's style in crown octavo size. Source: Tehran, Saadat Press, Storage: National Library of Iran.
	10. Amir Arsalan Namdar (1354 A.H.): It is one of the most famous folk stories in the Persian language. This story was told to him by «Mirza Muhammad Ali Naqib al-Mamalek», the storyteller of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, and at this time, Fakhr al-Dowlah, the daughter of Naser al-Din Shah, sat behind the half-open door of the eunuchs' room and carefully wrote down the stories and drew pictures for them. The story of Amir Arsalan remains like this. This book is a collection of 342 pages with 25 miniature paintings in medium octavo size. Source: Tehran, Haj Abdul Rahim Press. Storage location: National Library of Iran.
	11. Noosh Afarin (1354 A.H.): The story of Jahangir Shah, the king of the seven regions, who, at the age of 90, has a child named Noush Afarin. This book was about the bravery of Noush Afarin. This story is given other names such as Mah Zarafshan, Maimuna Khatun, Daughter of Shah Parian, Adel Shah, King of China, etc. This book has 90 pages and 13 miniature paintings in crown octavo size. Source: Tehran. Printing House: Anonymous. Location: National Library of Iran.
	12. Iskandarnameh (1354-56 A.H.): The fifth Masnavi of the Khamsa of Nizami. In this work, Nizami brings into the poem the story of Iskandar, the son of Philfos, whom Ferdowsi left unsaid. This book consists of 7 volumes, 579 pages, with 82 miniature paintings, 23 of which are illustrated by Mohsen Tajbakhsh and 59 by Mohammad Sanei. It is in medium octavo size. Source: Tehran, Scientific Press. Location: National Library of Iran.
	13. Khurshid Afarin and Falaknaz (1354 A.H.): Author of «Yaqub bin Masoud Taskin». Falaknaz-nameh is a description of the travels and adventures of Falaknaz, a Jewish prince of Egyptian origin. This book has 184 pages and 13 miniature paintings. Source: Tehran, Agha Mohammad Mahdi Ghazi Saeedi Press. Storage location: National Library of Iran.
	14. Rostamnameh (no date): The poetic story of Rostam's conversion to Islam by Hazrat Ali (PBUH), together with the Mojeznameh of Hazrat Ali (PBUH), is a text left from the 11 th century A.H. by an unknown composer. The author wrote the poems of the book using folk legends. The number of pages in this book is 147, along with nine miniature paintings in medium

	octavo size. Source: Tehran, Mohammad Mehdi Ghazi Saeedi Press. Storage: Vaziri Library of Yazd.
School (Maktabkhaneh) books	15. Dastoor Farhang (1340 A.H.): A book of elementary education with the theme of advice and morals, authored by «Ahmed Saadat». It contains 58 pages and 13 miniature paintings in the style of Mohsen Tajbakhsh in crown octavo size. Source: Tehran, Scientific Press. Storage location: National Library of Iran.
	16. Khale Suske (1342 A.H.): The name of an Iranian folk story about a cockroach who has problems travelling to Hamadan. This story has been printed and published in dozens of narratives since the Qajar period. In such a way that it has become one of the most repeated titles of children's books in Iran. This book contains 17 pages and five miniature paintings in crown octavo size. Source: Tehran, Akhavan Ketabchi Press. Storage location: National Library of Iran.
	17. Aq-e Valideyn (no date): Author: «Mohammed Hasan Khansari». A short and instructive story about the meeting of the Messenger of Allah with an old woman who cursed her child. This book contains 16 pages and four miniature paintings in crown octavo size. Source: Tehran, Scientific Press. Storage location: National Library of Iran.
	18. Stoncarver and Sultan of the Skull (1342 A.H.): A collection of poetic stories composed of several stories by an unknown author, 31 pages with eight miniature paintings in crown octavo size. Source: Tehran. Printing House: Anonymous. Storage location: National Library of Iran.
	19. Wolf and Fox (no date): From the collection of poetic stories in Persian, written by «Kazemi Qazvini» in 36 pages with 20 miniature paintings in crown octavo size. Source: Tehran, Scientific Press. Storage location: National Library of Iran.
	20. Elm al-Ashia (Science of objects) (Mozaffari) (1344 A.H.): In this old and rare book, written by «Mirza Mohammad Ali Khan Mozaffari», about the science of zoology, anthropology, botany, body anatomy, etc., interesting content has been quoted. This book contains 154 pages and 93 individual images outside the frame in medium octavo size. Source: Tehran, Akhavan Ketabchi Press. Storage location: National Library of Iran.

In total, there are 238 miniature paintings and 93 individual images⁵ of objects, plants, humans, animals, etc., illustrated by Mohsen Tajbakhsh in the statistical community. It is almost certain that the works illustrated by Tajbakhsh are more than the findings of this research, but by examining these works, one can understand his painting characteristics significantly.

Visual Analysis of Mohsen Tajbakhsh's Paintings

This section discusses the introduction and visual analysis of selected miniature paintings of Mohsen Tajbakhsh's works. The samples were selected based on the value and higher visual quality of one manuscript compared to others. The criterion of higher visual value for the author is the presentation of more visual details by the artist, precision in drawing lines, avoiding precipitancy in drawing shapes and hachures, physical health of the selected pages, and in general, items from which more information can be extracted. This analysis is qualitative and in a formalistic manner, focusing on the principles of layout, perspective and depth, the composition of elements in the frame according to the subject of the painting, how to draw the figures and their arrangement and covering, and paying attention to the architectural, natural, and animal elements.

Visual Analysis of Religious Samples

Figure 4 is a page from the book «Toofan al-Baka» (1354 A.H.), which depicts the martyrdom of Hazrat Qasim (A.S.) in the event of Ashura. The image frame is placed horizontally on a vertical page so that more details can be included. The entire page is dedicated to the image except for three lines of text. The text and the image are perpendicular to each other. The interior space of the frame is also divided into four relatively equal parts, and the figures are placed in these four parts. The narrative's main event, the martyrdom of the Prophet, is in the foreground, and the witnesses are in the background. The composition and arrangement of visual elements, including human figures, the direction of the horses' heads and the lines of the spears, the curvature of the two hills that meet in the center of the page, all direct the gaze to Hazrat Qasim, who is dying, despite the presence of Imam Hossein (A.S.) in the scene. By covering a part of Imam Hossein's body on the back of his horse, the artist has tried to divert attention from him to focus on the young Qasim. The atmosphere on the scene expresses calmness and peace, not war and bloodshed. Only war tools and severed heads on the ground have signs of a war narrative. The sun watching over the scene and the thorn-covered hills evoke a hot day in the desert. All people's faces are in their three-quarter view, and horses are in profile. The two Hazrats have been distinguished from others by the type of headscarf and the light halo around their heads. The illustrator did not make any special effort to induce a sense of depth and perspective in the space of the frame so that the size of the figures in the foreground and background are not different from each other.



Fig 4. Martyrdom of Hazrat Qasim (A.S.), signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh.
Source: Toofan al-Baka, 1354 A.H. (1975), 122.

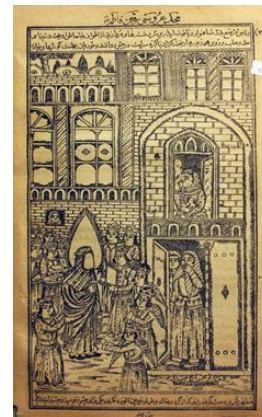


Fig 5. Hazrat Fatimah (PBUH) going to the wedding ceremony, signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh.
Source: Toofan al-Baka, 1354 A.H. (1975), 44.

Figure 5 is from the book «Toofan al-Baka», which depicts Hazrat Fatimah (PBUH) attending a wedding ceremony. The lady is passing through an alley that crosses over tall buildings. Angels with wings and crowns carrying mirrors, candlesticks, and the Quran have come to the Lady of Islam. Some angels also took her clothes up so the earth's soil would not contaminate it. At that time, when she was mourning the death of Hazrat Khadijah, the

purpose of inviting them by the Quraysh women was to hurt Hazrat Fatimah; however, the grandeur of the lady's presence aroused the admiration and astonishment of the women observers, and they stood away in amazement. The image frame is vertical, and like Fig 4, except for a few lines of brief text, it occupies the entire page. The image consists of two almost equal parts. In the lower half, the main event is going on. We see the presence of the figures in this half. The upper half is dedicated to various textures of brick walls and arched windows. It is reminiscent of the urban space of Tehran during the Qajar era. The entire space of the frame is covered with visual elements, and the artist has done this by placing some white surfaces for the door of a house in the foreground, a light halo around the lady's head, and some windows in the middle of the image to create a sense of balance. Except for the lady, who is wearing an Arab dress, the other figures wear the same clothing type seen in most of the Qajar paintings. The expressions of the faces, except for the woman standing on the porch, are all three-quarter views. To create a sense of depth and perspective, the artist has done this by resizing the texture of the rows of bricks and windows at three levels, large, medium and small, and the trees at the end of the left side of the image.



Fig 6. Moses and showing the desert of Karbala, Mohsen Tajbakhsh.
Source: Toofan al-Baka, 1354 A.H. (1975), 150.

Figure 6 is another page from the book «Toofan al-Baka», which narrates as follows: It was revealed to Moses that he should go to a desert person who is in amazement and lamentation about the creation of hell and explain the reason for God's anger towards some of his creatures. Moses also shows a picture of the incident of Karbala and the killers of Imam Hossein and his companions to the desert man through his two fingers in order to express this tragic incident as an example of the necessity of creating hell for the unbelievers. In the center of the image, Imam Hossein (A.S.), with his face hidden under a veil and a halo around his head, is riding a horse and hugging his newborn child. The size of the image frame, its proportion to the text, and placement on the page are the same as the previous images. The composition of the page is not entirely symmetrical. The figures are arranged with a curved axis in the lower half of the frame. The shape of the hills creates another curved axis in the upper half of the frame, which separates the background and foreground space well. The faces are in profile and three-quarter view, and the horses are in profile position. The foreground is decorated with human figures wearing Arab robes and headscarves, and the background is filled with a tent, small thorn bushes, flowers and buds, a burning sun in the sky, and hachure lines. No attempt has been made to induce a sense of depth in the image, and the figures near and far are almost the same size. Only in the middle of the image, in order to focus on Hazrat Hossein (PBUH), his body is depicted slightly larger using the perspective of the body.

Visual Analysis of Folk and Romantic Samples

Figure 7 is a page from the book «One Thousand and One Nights» (1352 A.H.), which depicts the love story of two lovers named «Ali Ibn Bakkar» and «Shams al-Nahar». The illustrator shows the interior of the palace of Ali Ibn Bakkar, where two lovers are on a bed in the center of the image. The way the visual elements are arranged in the frame directs the viewer's attention to the center and the sitting place of the two main figures. A person sitting at the foot of the throne and on a mat, Abul Hasan, the advisor of Ali Ibn Bakkar, and two maidservants of Shams al-Nahar are overseeing this marriage, and they are all preparing for the celebration. The maids welcome the guests. In this image, unlike the previous two figures, the entire page space is not assigned to the image, and a relatively equal space is reserved for the text and the image. The illustrator has put his maximum effort into creating a sense of perspective with the help of the direction of the peripheral lines of the objects; however, not much depth has been created. The empty spaces of the image are also filled with hachure lines, with relatively equal sizes and distances, according to the procedure of illustrations in lithographic books. Figure 8 is a page from the book «Amir Arslan Namdar» in which he, on the order of Iqbal Shah, went to a face-to-face fight with a demon from the enemy's army called Fulad-Zereh. The image and text occupy the same amount of space on this page. The image frame is also a square frame like the other reviewed images and has created a simple page layout in combination with the text. Amir Arslan, depicted in awe of a cheerful and agile youth with a beautiful and smiling face without a mustache, is cutting a demon in half, which evokes the same image pattern of the demon in the Iranian pictorial tradition. The style of dividing the demon into two halves is the same as the tradition of the ancients, like cutting a two-dimensional plane. The people in the image are all wearing armor and helmets and holding flags and spears in two regular rows on both sides of the image, witnessing the bravery of Amir Arslan. The principles of perspective are used in this image by making the horse and the people behind the hills on the left side of the image a little smaller. However, the prevailing atmosphere does not induce depth. As usual, the empty spaces of the background are also filled with hachured lines. Figure 9 is a page from the book «Iskandarnamēh», which depicts the battle of Farhang and Mohammad Shirzad at the same time as another event and has considered the same space for both. In this image, like other folk-romance books, the image frame and the text occupy the same space, and the principle of composition is based on symmetry. The main event, which is in the center of the image, shows Farhang, helmeted and wearing armor, in profile with a tall beard, holding a saber in one hand and a spear in the other, with a furious face, fighting against Muhammad. There are observers, one on a horse and the other in a palace decorated with columns and decorations and a domed ceiling on both sides of the frame. Other bodies also have similar coverage. In the lower half of the frame, another event related to the previous page is taking place, showing pirates on a ship at sea. It seems that in order to include two events in the image frame, the artist has shown the secondary event in a smaller size so that the ship is like a small boat in the blue pond, and the fishes are playing in the water.



Fig 7. «Shindig of Ali Ibn Bakkar and Shams al-Nahar», signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh. Source: One Thousand and One Nights, 1352 A.H. (1973), 118.



Fig 8. «Amir Arslan's face-to-face fight with the demon», signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh. Source: Amir Arslan Namdar, 1354 A.H. (1975), 208.

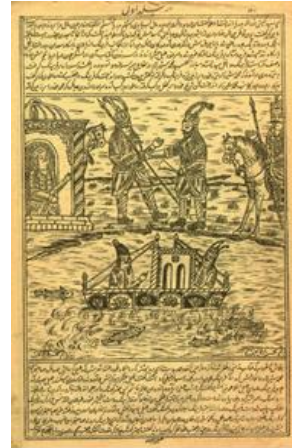


Fig 9. «Battle of Farhang and Mohammad Shirzad», signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh. Source: Iskandarnameh, 1354 A.H. (1975), 50.

Visual Analysis of School (Maktabkhaneh) Samples

Figure 10 is a page from the book «Khale Suske», which shows her talking to the butcher in a butcher's shop. In the illustrations of school books, significant differences can be seen in the composition, page layout, image details, and, in general, the importance of working with other books. It seems that in school books, due to the young age of the audience and the small number of manuscripts, less importance is given to book layout. It should be said that the images of these books do not have special and expressive visual features. What attracts the audience's attention is the signature of Mohsen Tajbakhsh, which is present even in works that cost less time and money. This sample shows that the image occupies much less space than the text. The details of the space have not been paid much attention to, and even in the background, there is no trace of repeating hachure lines. «Kahle Suske» appeared as an Iranian woman wearing a Qajar costume and was finding a suitable wife for herself. In the image frame, it is enough to show only a few objects that indicate a butcher shop, including a cleaver, pegs with hanging cuts of meat, a scale and a large table for chopping meat. The negative space of this image is relatively large, and the illustrator does not insist on expressing depth and perspective.



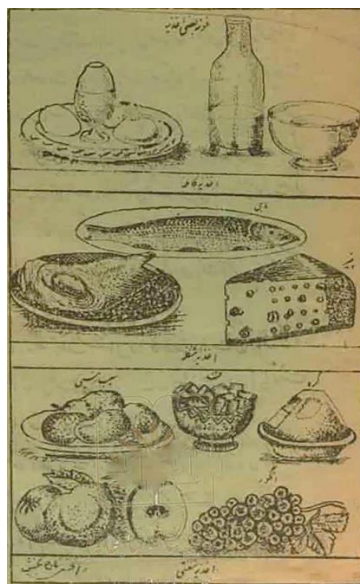
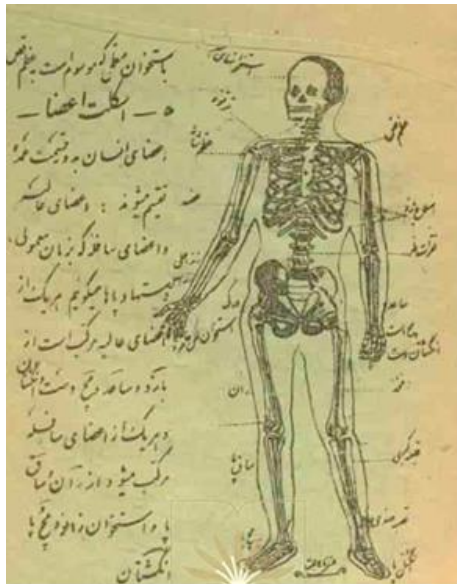
Fig 10. Khale Suske in the butcher shop, signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh. Source: Khale Suske, 1342 A.H. (1963), 16.



Fig 11. Seeking help from the Prophet (PBUH) for a disowned child, signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh. Source: Aq-e Valedayn, no date, 12.

Figure 11 is a page from the book «Aq-e Valedayn» that shows a child suffering from parental disobedience and asking the Prophet (PBUH) for help. This image does not show a particular point in Mohsen Tajbakhsh's grace and acting, and it seems that it was printed

only for educational purposes. The staging and page layout are very simple and do not require special processing. The only point worth mentioning is the way the figures are positioned, their backs to the viewer. This way of representation is unprecedented in Tajbakhsh's works. Also, the illustrator tried to use a little shadowing to induce volume in the clothes, and this could be due to the great cooperation of this illustrator with Mohammad Sanei because the application mentioned above for showing depth has always been shading. Another guess can be that Tajbakhsh considers these books as an arena for trial and error of a new method in his depictions due to the lesser importance of these books. Figures 12 to 14 show the pages of the book «Elm al-Ashiya (Science of Objects)» that clarify the possibility of Tajbakhsh's access to the correct anatomy models, perspective, depth of field, and general realism principles. In this book, 93 objects, from flowers and plants to humans, animals, landscapes, architecture, inanimate objects, etc., are depicted, all of which are illustrated in full compliance with the mentioned points. An important point in illustrating this book is the record of Tajbakhsh's signature next to most of these individual images.



Figs 12 & 13. Anatomy of the human body and food pictures signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh. Source: Elm al-Ashiya (Science of Objects), 1344 A.H. (1965), 12 & 46.



Figs 14. The image of the greenhouse (Garmkhaneh) signed by Mohsen Tajbakhsh.
 Source: Elm al-Ashiya (Science of Objects), 1344 A.H. (1965), 117.

For a better understanding of the characteristics of Mohsen Tajbakhsh's illustrations, Table 2 is presented to visually analyze his works.

Table 2. Visual Analysis of Mohsen Tajbakhsh's Illustrations. Source: Author.

Visual Structure	Composition of pages	In religious books, the dominant surface on the page is dedicated to the image and only a few short lines to the text, while the space dedicated to the image becomes much less in folk-romance books and then in school books. In other words, in religious books, the image frame is dominant on the page of the book, in folk-romance books, the image frame and text are the same size, and in school books, the text is dominant. The image frames are located in the center of the screen as horizontal and vertical rectangles. The composition of the elements inside the frame is often symmetrical and balanced, regardless of the particular complexity, focusing on the center of the frame.
	Space Creation	Simple and intimate spaces, showing minimum depth and perspective in most scenes, and allocating the same space for the foreground and background are the constant features of space design. Usually, each scene narrates a main event in the foreground and sometimes secondary events in the margins or background.
Landscaping	Natural elements and flowers and bushes	Semicircular burning suns with a human face and their gaze direction stare at the audience and outside the frame. Skies and lands are often filled with hachure lines. The hachures are usually of the same size and spacing, repeated similarly in interior and exterior spaces. Hills covered with small thorn bushes, a few small flowers, and a few buds are a set of natural elements that often evoke a desert-like atmosphere.
	Architectural elements and spaces	Suppose an event is taking place in an indoor or urban space. In that case, the details of the architectural elements become very large. From the decoration of walls, windows, curtains, columns, and entrances to the existence of interior objects and elements

		such as chairs, beds, carpets, etc. The entire space is equally filled with architectural elements and objects in such scenes. But suppose an incident is happening in an external space like nature. In that case, it is enough to have a few simple architectural elements, including a humble building with a dome, an arched entrance and a few decorations, usually all in the distance.
Human Figures	Facial composite	The faces of the heroes of the story are often smiling teenagers and young people, who, except for a few cases, are without beards and mustaches and in a three-quarter view, and others are depicted with mustaches stretched up to the ears. Sometimes, tall beards are used to show the faces of older people. The height of people, both men and women, is usually tall and short. The faces of round people with almond eyes and the faces of saints are also covered with a veil, according to ancient customs. Usually, the mental state of the faces is not indicative of the situation they are in.
	Figures' covering	In religious subjects, the figures of the saints wear robes and headdresses related to Arabs, and others are depicted with Iranian-Qajar costumes. So, on the battlefield, they wear armor and helmets; sometimes, they wear crowns and cloaks in shindig scenes. Women in the interior also wear a three-eared flowered scarf on the head and a short skirt and pants. Sometimes, long skirts have been used to show older women, and they are shown in outdoor spaces with black tents and white veils.
Animals	Horses	The horses are all repeated in a similar position in all the paintings without exception so that all of them are shown in profile, sometimes running and sometimes standing. The distinguishing feature of Tajbakhsh horses from other artists' horses is their height and stretched legs.
Imaginary Creatures	Angels and demons	The angels have round, smiling, young faces and costumes like those of Qajar women, which the wings and crowns can recognize on their heads. Like the Akvan demons of the Shahnameh, the demons are depicted with a large, naked body with spotted skin, a short skirt, a long tail on the back, and two horns.

By examining Fig. 4 to 11 and from the results of Table 2, it can be concluded that most of the books he illustrated had religious, folk-romantic, and school (Maktabkhaneh) themes. Religious and folk-romantic books have the same importance regarding images and page layout. Although the level dedicated to religious images is wider than the levels of folk-romantic images, school books are illustrated with simpler page layouts and less paid images due to the smaller number of manuscripts and the age characteristics of the target audience of these books, mostly children and teenagers. It is possible that the amount of space allocated to the image on each page was derived from the publisher's policies and was not simply the illustrator's preference. In general, simplicity, sincerity, and frankness in expressing the subject, creating flat images with relatively dull and monotonous lines, maintaining balance by creating symmetry in the scene design, smiling faces with three-quarter and profile poses, young men and women who mostly look young even in old age,

angels and demons who follow the image patterns before them, inducing a sense of silence and stillness even in the battle scenes, the existence of brick buildings with dome-shaped roofs, hills covered with scrub and low-volume bushes, burning suns staring at the viewer, which are reminiscent of a desert landscape, using hachures to fill the empty parts of the page in the old fashion, including images in rectangular boxes that are placed horizontally and sometimes vertically in the middle of the book page and... are of the prominent characteristics of Mohsen Tajbakhsh's illustrations that, except for a few cases, all of them are the continuation of the tradition of Iranian illustrations in the lithographic books of the Qajar period. The artistic value of Mohsen Tajbakhsh's works is neither in innovation nor in the development of the original style of Iranian illustration, but in preserving and repeating the tradition of the predecessors because in an era when visual arts have become oriented towards Western art and dealing with western principles and style is considered one of the skills of an artist, despite the availability of samples of this type, he has avoided such a trend and intentionally or unintentionally led to the preservation of Iranian visual heritage for several decades.

Conclusion

Mohsen Tajbakhsh was one of the most active illustrators of the late Qajar and early Pahlavi eras, and he spent his years in Tehran. The exact dates of his birth and death are unknown, but to some extent, his years of activity can be estimated between 1340 and 1360 A.H. based on the paintings compiled by him. During the two decades of his artistic activity, many books were illustrated, which often had diverse subjects, but the artist had a relatively uniform approach to these subjects in terms of images. Mohsen Tajbakhsh's pictorial models for depicting the narratives of the books were often based on the illustration tradition of his predecessors. This patterning appears in all dimensions of the images, from depicting human and animal figures to creating interior and exterior architectural spaces and other items. Several characteristics in Tajbakhsh's illustrations can be used as a criterion to distinguish his works from other illustrators, including the short and large bodies of people, the almond-shaped and formless eyes of people, tall horses with long legs, background hachures, all of which are repeated in the same size and shape in the space of the frame. All shapes are drawn with relatively thick lines. From the comparison of Tajbakhsh's paintings with others, one can get more simplicity and fewer details in his illustration technique. The important point is the artist's adherence to preserving the public culture of the people of his time in terms of covering people and showing the customs of local people. This is despite the fact that the wave of westernization had become very widespread in the late Qajar and early Pahlavi periods, and this phenomenon had also entered the field of book illustration and other press. Although Tajbakhsh's drawings were somewhat superior to some of his contemporaries and competitors, what cannot be ignored is his relatively hasty and slightly artless illustrations, which seem to announce the decline and the end of the era of lithographic book illustration.

Author Contributions

This article is extracted from Author 1's doctoral dissertation entitled «Intertextual reading of the role of the sun text in the art of the Seljuks of Iran», supervised by Authors 2 and 3 and reviewed by Author 4 at Tabriz University of Islamic Arts.

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Appendix

1. In the article entitled «Comparative study of the lithographic images of the Shahnameh in the Qajar period and similar Indian manuscripts» published in 2011, Art Quarterly, Ms. Hashemi Fesharaki mentioned the duration of the lithographic era for more than 60 years from 1259 to 1330 A.H., while the remaining works, including the works of Tajbakhsh and Sanei, show a few decades after this date.
2. Schools (Maktabkhaneh) are one of the circles of education in Iran. School texts are a special type of literature called «school(Maktabkhaneh) literature».Iranian school literature includes textbooks and stories in the Qajar era, which are divided into two groups: poetry and prose, each group includes a collection with educational, religious, humorous, moral, and entertainment content. It should be mentioned that the literary movement of simple writing in the last century owes to these school books (Zulfaqari & Heydari, 2016, 13). Mohsen Tajbakhsh spent most of his professional years illustrating these books.
3. The signature of a work of art actually means that the work belongs to the artist who created it (Adams, 2013, 152); however, it is said that this issue does not apply to Iranian lithographic works, because due to several reasons, sometimes the artist did not mention his name in his work or someone else signed instead of him (Rafiei Vardanjani & Sharifi Mehrjardi, 2017, 33). Regarding the authenticity of Mohsen Tajbakhsh's signature in his works, by comparing the signatures and the technical specifications and also the stylistics of his works, we can almost certainly guess that the signed works all belong to the named artist.
4. In order to study the list of names and records of lithographic artists in the field of lithography, refer to the book «Qajar lithography from the perspective of orientalists», compiled by Shahrooz Mohajer, Paykareh Publishing.
5. Individual images were visual elements, including people, objects or plants, which were placed in the middle of the text; without a frame, without a specified space, and without a narrative.

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