



August 11-13, 2010, Tenth IQSA Conference:

Retrospective and Prospects: Reflections on the Study of the Qajar Era

In co-operation with St Antony's College, University of Oxford, UK
Conference Location:

Mary Ogilvie Lecture Theatre, St Anne's College,
Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6JF



Prof. Dr. Hafez Farmayan (sitting), with standing from left to right: Amir Farman Farma, Cyrus Samii, Ferydoun Barjesteh van Waalwijk van Doorn and Manoutchehr M. Eskandari-Qajar, August 12, 2010

Conference programme:

Wednesday, August 11

8.30 Registration/Book Tables/Coffee/Tea.

9.30 Welcome, *Homa Katouzian*, MEC, St. Antony's College.

9.50 Introductory Remarks, *Ferydoun Barjesteh van Waalwijk van Doorn*, *Manoutchehr Eskandari-Qajar*, IQSA and Qajar Studies: Progress and Prospects.

10.30 Morning Session, The Arts:

Jennifer Scarce, Attitudes and Reactions to Persian Art of the 19th Century: A Retrospective and Hopes for the Future;

Lale Uluc, Preliminary Thoughts on an Illustrated Copy of the Divan of Mohammad Khan Dashti from the 1270s (1853-1863);

Discussant/Moderator: *Layla Diba*.

- 12.00 Lunch.
- 13.30 Afternoon Session, Synthesis and Creativity:
Ali Miransari, Qajar Travel Narratives and the Institution of European Style Plays in Iran (1798-1906);
Kamran Safamanesh, Public and Private Spaces in the Qajar Era;
Cyrus Samii, Beyond Baroque, the Appropriation and Re-interpretation of European Architectural Forms in the Qajar Era;
 Discussant/Moderator: *Houchang Chehabi*.
- 15.30 Coffee/Tea.
- 16.00 Roundtable, Qajar Era Archives and The Qajar Studies and Documentation Center
 Discussants/Presenters: *Touraj Atabaki*, *Ferydoun Barjesteh van Waalwijk van Doorn*,
Manoutchehr Eskandari-Qajar.

Thursday, August 12

- 9.00 Registration/Book Tables/Coffee/Tea.
- 9.45 Welcome.
- 10.00 Morning Session, The Qajar Era Viewed Anew:
Vanessa Martin, The Qajar Period on its Own Terms: Qajar History, the Historian and the Anthropological Approach of Bronislaw Malinowsky.
Joanna de Groot, Re-examining the Notion of Qajar 'Decline';
 Discussant/Moderator: *Ferydoun Barjesteh van Waalwijk van Doorn*.
- 11.30 Lunch.
- 13.30 Afternoon Session, The Written Word:
Bahram Bayani, The Calligraphy of Mirza Gholamreza;
Homa Katouzian, Bazgasht-e Adabi in the Nineteenth Century and the Emergence of Journalism, Translation and Modern Fiction;
 Discussant/Moderator: *Dominic Brookshaw*.
- 15.30 Coffee/Tea.
- 16.00 Roundtable 2, The Harvard Digital Qajar Project: Women's Worlds in Qajar Iran,
 Discussants/Presenters: *Afsaneh Najmabadi*, *Nahid Mozaffari*, *Ramyar Rossoukh*,
Naghmeh Sohrabi.
- 17.00 Conference Gala Dinner. Location: Ruth Deech Hall, St Anne's College.
 Keynote Address: *Hafez Farmayan*, Myth and Reality in Qajar Historiography.

Friday, August 13

- 9.00 Registration/Book Tables/Coffee/Tea.
- 9.45 Welcome.
- 10.00 Morning Session, Persons and Personalities:
Mansoureh Ettehadieh, Abdol-Hosseini Mirza Farman Farma, Governor of Fars 1916-1920;
Heidi Walcher, Villains, Sources, and (Hi)stories: The Case of Kamran Mirza 'Nayeb os-Saltaneh'.
 Discussant/Moderator: *Hans Timmermans*.
- 11.30 Lunch.
- 12.30 Afternoon Session, Persons and Personalities II: *Firuz Abdullaeva*, Two Garrousis or One?;
John Malcolm, Cross Cultural Understanding – and Misunderstanding: John Malcolm and Persia;
 Discussant/Moderator: *Manoutchehr Eskandari-Qajar*.
- 14.00 Coffee/Tea.
- 14.30 Roundtable 3, Photographs and Photographic Archives of the Qajar Era.
 Discussants/Presenters: *Corien Vuurman*, *Mohammad-Reza Tahmasbpour*,
Ferydoun Barjesteh van Waalwijk van Doorn.
- 15.30 Concluding Remarks and Vote of Thanks, *Homa Katouzian*, MEC, St Antony's College;
Manoutchehr Eskandari-Qajar, President, IQSA.
- 16.00 End of Conference.

Some abstracts

Two Garroussi or One?

Firza Abdullaeva is Lecturer in Persian Literature at the University of Oxford and Fellow and Keeper of the Ferdowsi Library of Wadham College

On 2 May 1829 a large delegation, carrying royal gifts and led by 16-year-old prince Khosrow Mirza, crossed the Irano-Russian border heading for St. Petersburg to the court of Nicholas I with a special mission to apologize for the murder of the Russian plenipotentiary minister Alexander Griboyedov. The prince's entourage of more than a hundred people consisted of several most prominent members of the Qajar court, among whom there were Mirza Mohammad Khan Zangene (Amir Nezam), Mirza Massoud Ansari Garmroudi (future Foreign minister), Mirza Taghi Khan Farahani (future Amir Kabir), Mirza Mohammad Saleh Shirazi, Mirza Haji Baba. One of the members of the embassy was Fazel Khan Garroussi, court poet of Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza. Garroussi is famous for being the author of the large anthology *Anjoman-e Khaqan*, in which he included more than 120 poets, among whom were fifteen sons and grandsons of Fath 'Ali Shah. His journey to St. Petersburg seems to have become a turning point in his life. This paper will focus on two different versions of his biography after his Russian trip according to Persian and Russian sources, which allowed some scholars to think that there were two Qajar poets called Garroussi. Such a 'solution' has been offered for several Persian poets in the past, like Assadi Tusi or Omar Khayyam, when the facts of their biographies suggested a hardly imaginable incompatibility in their personality. It seems that the case of Garroussi is one of them.

The Aesthetics of Mirza Gholamreza's Calligraphic Art

Bahram Bayani is an independent scholar residing in Tehran

This paper is an attempt to investigate the aesthetics of Mirza Gholamreza's calligraphic art through an analysis of some of his calligraphic pieces, and show that he was a great and eminent innovator. Mirza Gholamreza Isfahani (1246-1304 A. H.) was a great master of *Nastaliq* and *Shekaste*, the distinct Persian calligraphic styles which were developed in the 8th century and established by such great masters of the Persian art of calligraphy as Mirali. He was an original and creative artist who developed the *Nastaliq* art beyond the established classical limits laid by the old masters. Yahya Dolatabadi, a close disciple of Mirza Gholamreza, has pointed to his unique style which he believes to be distinctly different from that of the old masters such as the great seventeenth century calligrapher Miremad. Both his art and his personality were highly praised by some of his contemporaries. For example, Samuel Benjamin, the first US envoy to Iran wrote of him and his art: "The most celebrated living calligraphist of Persia is Mirza Gholamreza, who lives in Tehran. His is a refined and thoughtful character . . . he is not only a calligraphist, but likewise a poet and philosopher of wide repute." Yet, in our time, Mirza Gholamreza has been highly neglected, at times deliberately, both in Iran and abroad. Some critics have even called him the '*siyah-mashq nevis*' (one who practices *siyah-mashq*, that is, calligraphic exercises), because many of his pieces are close in appearance to *siyah-mashq*, and at first look they may be mistaken for such. It will be shown that these works are not *siyah-mashq* in the ordinary sense. Far from it, these pieces are perfect examples of art-work, demonstrating Mirza's full understanding and use of the intrinsic features of *Nastaliq*.

Abdol-Hossein Mirza Farman Farma, Governor of Fars 1916-1920

Mansoureh Ettehadieh is an independent scholar residing in Tehran. She is the editor and publisher of Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran

Abdol-Hossein Mirza Farman Farma's political career followed the vicissitude of all government officials of the late Qajar era and the fact that he was closely related to the Qajar reigning family did not give him immunity from the same fate as other statesmen. He held various ministerial posts and was Prime Minister once. He served as governor in Azarbaijan, twice in Kerman and Baluchestan and twice in Kermanshah. His longest and last appointment was the governorship of Fars during the years 1916-1920.

The government of Fars was always difficult as the province was mostly in upheaval and there was wide spread lawlessness every where. The rivalry of Sowlat al-Doleh the Ilkhan of the Qashqai tribe and Qavam al-Molk the chief of the Khamseh confederacy and the presence of other minor tribes and the kaleidoscopic relationship with the central government and the governor was a constant source of turmoil. The growth of British influence since mid nineteenth century complicated the existing conditions. World War I and the advent of Germany was a further source of anarchy. Germany had many adherents amongst the tribes which endangered British interests. In May 1916 Farman Farma who was reputed to be an Anglophile, in fact he claimed to be the greatest Anglophile of Iran, was appointed governor with the approval of the British representative Sir Charles Marling. He was a strong and able administrator a trouble shooter, always pragmatic and resourceful and seemed to be the best choice. A deal was struck between Marling and the government of Vosouq od-Doleh whereby Farman Farma was to receive the sum of 50,000 tomans a month to help his administration as trade had all but ceased due to the war and taxes had fallen behind. The British wanted him to put a stop to German activity, to open the roads to trade, to establish peace and suppress tribal insurrection in favor of Germany. Besides these tasks he had to stabilize Fars, deal with the fate of the German and Austrian prisoners of war, deal with the prevalent famine which had gained disastrous proportions, levy taxes and organize the elections to the Fourth Majles.

The paper discuss both these aspects of Farman Farma's governorship of Fars but the emphasis was on his controversial relationship with the British and the South Persia Rifles a force organised by the British in August 1916 to counter German activity and curb tribal insurrections. Farman Farma's performance in Fars is evaluated in the light of both British and Iranian sources. British sources have always been widely consulted whereas Iranian official documents and Farman Farma's reports are being used in this context for the first time and throw a different light on many aspects of this episode.

Philosophical Interests and Language in late Qajar Iran: Notes on Hajj Mirza Mohammad Tehrani's unpublished Miscellany (Fruits of Gardens)

Ali Gheissari is Professor of History at the University of San Diego, California

This talk introduced a philosophical miscellany written in 1914 in Tehran. Written partly in Arabic and partly in Persian the text contains a broad range of reflections and notes mostly dealing with topics in philosophy and science. There is also some discussion of theology and ethics as well as language and literature. It contains no autobiographical information or any references to the social and political events of the period. The author, Hajj Mirza Mohammad Tehrani (also known as Ketabforush), was a bazaar merchant who dealt mostly in books and also in sugar. Although little is known about the author's educational background and his wider scholarly associations, the text corresponds closely to a number of themes that were prevalent in the School of Tehran, especially in the areas of epistemology and ethics. The text can therefore be viewed as representative of the range of philosophical interests of the time and its examination could contribute to a better understanding of Iran's intellectual landscape and philosophical language in the late Qajar period.

Survival? Struggle? Creativity? Revisiting the Concept of Qajar 'Decline'

Joanna de Groot is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of York, United Kingdom

Fifty years ago historians regularly presented accounts of the period of Qajar rule framed around two narratives of 'decline'. One account juxtaposed the 'failures' of the regime to the reforming energy of its successors in Iran, to the achievements of contemporary European states, or to Ottoman and Egyptian regimes. Its main criteria of comparison were political and material. The other narrative, more cultural in emphasis, emphasised differences between the creative products of the 'Qajar era' and those of earlier periods, comparing the technical and aesthetic qualities of high Safavid applied arts or architecture with what were perceived as lesser equivalents two centuries later. Such depictions of 'decline' were the product both of limited scholarly study of Qajar history, and of a somewhat unreflective adoption of progressivist narrative assumptions and frameworks. Addressing the theme of this conference, this paper reflected on what might now be thought of 'decline' as a tool for analysing the 'Qajar period'. It considered three specific questions; firstly it examined the relationship between the extension of knowledge of, and research about, the period and 'historians' greater reluctance to offer large scale interpretations of developments within it; secondly it looked at the tensions between the very proper emphasis on the distinctive characteristics of polity, society and culture in nineteenth century Iran which underpins current work, and the use of explanatory frameworks which by definition involve a more universal vocabulary, including terms like 'decline'; thirdly it suggested that the growing maturity of 'Qajar studies' should encourage scholars to reconfigure the over-simple narratives of the mid twentieth century, drawing on current knowledge and insights to initiate creative and comparative discussions of nineteenth century Iranian history in its wider setting.

Bazgasht-e Adabi in the Nineteenth Century and the Emergence of Journalism, Translation and Modern Fiction

Homa Katouzian is Director of the Middle East Centre at St. Antony's College, Oxford University

The "Bazgasht" movement was the most important literary change that took place in the early nineteenth century by a sharp and radical break with 'the Indian Style' of poetry and its decline into extreme forms in the eighteenth century. Soon, *qasideh* (and to a lesser extent, *ghazal* and *masnavi*) began to flourish with the usual preludes, followed by a *madieh* or panegyric in the forms used by the old masters with similar figures of speech or literary devices. Fath Ali Khan Kashani, entitled Poet-Laureate Saba (founder of the Saba clan of our time) was one of the first successful poets in this line (both in writing *qasideh* and *masnavi*) followed by Mirza Abolqasem Qa'em-Maqam, and the Movement's later developments through the works of Yaghma-ye Jandaqi, Qa'ani Shirazi, Fathollah Khan Sheybani, Forughi Bastami, Soroush-e Esfahani and so many others. There was however less Bazgasht as such in the development of prose, though one of the major modernizers of Persian prose, Qa'em-Maqam, occasionally employed the *mosajja'* style best represented by Sa'di's *Golestan* among the great classics. Still later developments gave rise to further improvements in prose writing, notably in the works of Mirza Malkam Khan, who may arguably be described as the founder of modern Persian prose. Other important literary developments included historiographies and literary historiographies as in the works of Rezaqoli Khan Hedayat (founder of the Hedayat clan) in works such as *Rozat al-Safa-ye Naseri* and *Majma'al-Fosaha*, and most notably in some of the extensive works of *Vezerat-e Enteba'at* led by Etamad os-Saltaneh, which included translations from European languages. Other translations of European works, notably some novels translated by Mohammad Taher Mirza (Eskandari) also contributed both to the development of prose style and to prose literature.

Cross Cultural Understanding (and Misunderstanding): John Malcolm and Persia

John Malcolm is an independent scholar and researcher

The first challenge any diplomat faces in negotiations is to understand what the other party is thinking. Only then can he fashion a deal likely to be acceptable to both parties. This has always been a major problem in negotiations between Eastern and Western countries and cultures. Apart from the obvious barriers of language, history, religion and customs, there are the more subtle ones of the ingrained prejudices of one party about the other. For Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833), three times envoy of the East India Company to Qajar Iran in 1800, 1808 and 1810, and author of *The History of Persia* (1815) and *Sketches of Persia* (1827), this was a major challenge. This talk discussed how he dealt with it.

The Qajar Period on its Own Terms: Qajar History, the Historian and the Anthropological Approach of Bronislaw Malinowsky

Vanessa Martin, Reader in Middle Eastern History at Royal Holloway, University of London

This paper looked at the influence of anthropology, specifically Bronislaw Malinowski, on historiography with special reference to the Qajar period. It showed how the anthropological vision of engagement with a subject, whilst setting aside the value system of a scholar's own society, may lead to a more objective and constructive understanding of the Qajar period. However, to place this subject within the context of the development of historical method, the paper firstly addressed the issue of what history itself may achieve, and how the discipline lays the ground work for a detached understanding on which the anthropological approach may build. Next the discussion addressed the problems for the writing of Qajar history created by certain existing historiographical accounts, before assessing the primary material itself. These accounts include the dictates of state nationalism, the Whig approach to history, the influence of the accounts of contemporary foreign observers, the persistent emphasis from various perspectives on what was lacking as opposed to what was achieved, and the failure to address the subject in a nuanced fashion. These points provided the basis for discussing Malinowski's rigorous, scientific approach in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), which puts particular emphasis on history as a different past, and asks the scholar to enter the lived experience of human beings in another context. The paper then explored aspects of Malinowski's perspective, such as the significance of tradition, culture and social environment, the ethos of community and institutions, and the need for the historian not to select a single side of a complex and many sided subject, but study dispassionately the full spectrum of human behaviour, and accept it for what it is, not for what it should or might be. It is hoped thereby to create a new, more rounded, complex and less judgemental view of the Qajar period and the grave problems that it faced.

Qajar Travel Narratives and the Institution of European Style Plays in Iran 1213-1323/1799-1906

Ali Miransari, head of Persian literature for the Encyclopedia of Iran (Daneshnameh-ye Iran) at the Centre for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia

Iranians first became acquainted with plays in the Western European sense in the first part of the 13th/19th century. Iranian travellers who visited Europe during this period brought back the first accounts of Western style plays. They were a diverse group and ranged, for instance, from the well known traveller and political activist, Mohammad Ali Mahallati, better known as Hajj Sayyah, to the Qajar shah, Nasser ed-Din Shah. Despite the differences in social class and background of the travellers, they all produced written accounts of their visit for the benefit of their countrymen, in collections with titles like *Makhzan al-Waqai*, *Hayrat-Nameh*, *Badi-i Waqai*, *Rouznameh-ye Khaterat*, and *Safarnameh*. The dissemination of these writings in Iran introduced Iranians to Western innovations such as the railway, telegraph, cinematograph etc, and institutions such as the parliament, cabinet, education system, newspapers etc. but also to new forms of art and culture. For the first time Iranians became aware of a play which was radically different to their own traditional forms of theatre: the passion plays (*taziye*) and comic improvised performances (*siyah-bazi* and *rou-howzi*). This paper examined the descriptions of Western European style plays and their performance contained in thirty two travel narratives. The earliest narrative is dated 1213/1799 and is an account of the travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan to Europe and the last narrative is Zell-e Soltan's trip to Europe in 1323/1906.

Beyond Baroque, the Appropriation and Re-interpretation of European Architectural Forms in the Qajar Era

Cyrus Samii, independent researcher and writer living in the United States

The paper examined the introduction of European architectural motifs during the Qajar era, and their reinterpretation by Iranian patrons and master builders. The notions of Classicism that have formed the basis for the judging of architectural merit will be examined within the context of the evolution of Persian architectural history, and re-evaluated. The designs of the Qajar era were examined, drawing on architectural adventures in the streets of Tehran, as well as similar experiences in Cairo, and Istanbul. Finally, a re-assessment of Qajar architecture was offered, based on Persian notions of plasticity and authenticity, within the continuum of Persian architectural history.

Attitudes and Reactions to Persian Art of the 19th Century: A Retrospective and Hopes for the Future

Jennifer Scarce B.A., F.S.A.(Scot) was Curator of Middle Eastern Cultures, National Museums of Scotland. She is now an Honorary Lecturer, School of Design, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, at the University of Dundee, Scotland

Traditionally the study of Persian art has concentrated on the early and medieval periods broadly spanning the 7th to 15th centuries. Within this timespan coverage has been uneven for good reasons such as survival and ease of access to both primary source material and supporting evidence. Where, for example, the architecture, ceramics, tiles, metalwork, calligraphy and manuscript illustration ranging collectively in date from the 10th to 15th centuries have been justifiably admired and to a certain extent well published there is comparatively little on textiles and dress where substantial pieces no longer exist. Later only the spectacular arts of the Safavid period from the 16th to the early 18th century have been examined in any depth while the achievements of the Zands of Shiraz in the late 18th century and of the Qajars securely based in Tehran from 1785 onwards and in major provincial cities have either been summarily dismissed as tasteless and decadent or at best ignored. Handbooks on Islamic art and more specifically Persian art usually stop abruptly with the Masdresseh-ye Madar-Shah built in Isfahan between 1704 and 1714, and the delicate painted papier-mache penboxes and mirror cases of Shiraz. The neglect of Qajar art as a subject worthy of proper study provokes many questions and as yet a few answers. Scholarly attention has preferred first to concentrate on the political and economic history of Qajar Persia especially where it could be linked with events in contemporary Europe which is a sufficiently complex task involving the management of vast quantities of data. The study of Persian art is a relatively new discipline which was dazzled by the style of Safavid Esfahan. A feasible parallel here is with the architecture and arts of Victorian England which for so long were despised as too lavishly decorated and contaminated by the processes of mass production. Opinion is now regarding them more favourably and objectively. A more practical difficulty is that there is so much Qajar material available for study – surviving religious and civil architecture, quantities of tiles, carved and painted stucco, mirrorwork, the remarkable oil paintings, manuscripts, textiles, garments, jewellery and the objects of

everyday life, plus the new techniques of lithography, printing and photography – which needs to be classified and systematically recorded. Qajar art now, however, is increasingly understood as a subject where continuity of traditional skills and rich imagery is fused with the new techniques of production and illustration and worthy of thoughtful study. Currently research leading to publication has tended to concentrate on specific areas – such as oil painting, lithography, some architecture and tilework. Guidelines for the future should build on this research, create and maintain a classified data base, co-operate with scholars in economic and social history to establish context, and encourage specialist teams to concentrate on specific subjects. This presentation dealt with Major General Sir Robert Murdoch Smith's pioneer work on Persian art which recognised the value of recording the practice of contemporary craftsmen, Basil Robinson's ground-breaking work on Qajar painting, lithograph illustrations and painted papier-mache and enamels, Layla Diba's superb exhibition and publication on Qajar painting, Ulrich Marzolph's volumes on lithographs, Marcus Ritter's book on early Qajar architecture, the work of architects such as Kamran Safamanesh in the conservation of Qajar buildings and Jennifer's own studies of Qajar tilework.

Preliminary Thoughts on an Illustrated Copy of the Divan of Mohammad Khan Dashti from the 1270s (1853-1863)

Lale Uluc is Lecturer in Fina Arts at Bogazici University, Istanbul

Scholars unanimously agree that the first impact of Qajar painting is that of large images, which have generated most of the scholarly writing on Qajar figurative art. This was a natural result of the shift of emphasis from illustrated manuscripts that were the primary channel for the figurative arts of the Safavid era, to life-size paintings that was initiated by the Qajars themselves. As a result, considerably more research is needed to clearly understand the state of the arts of the book under Qajar rule. Sufficient numbers of extant examples convincingly show that the Safavid pictorial tradition was maintained in the Afsharid and Zand periods to be transmitted to the visual arts of the Qajar period. The Safavid artistic legacy is traceable in numerous examples of Qajar 're-productions' of Safavid murals of the Chehel Sotoun in the miniature format of lacquered luxury objects; Qajar coinage displays many instances of Safavid inspiration and Qajar palace architecture reflects Safavid palatine forms. On the other hand, Qajar art also abounds with the use of innovative art modes or a new use for older ones, idiosyncratic to the period. This paper discussed a previously unpublished manuscript of the Divan of Mohammad Khan Dashti dated to the 1270s (1853-1863), which has thirty textual illustrations that can be divided into two distinct groups: the former showing a number of amorous couples, and the latter comprising of images of the Karbala incident inspired by the taziyeh ceremonies. The combination of the usual and the idiosyncratic found in the illustrative cycle of this manuscript sheds further light on the production and consumption of both manuscripts and figurative art during the Qajar rule.

Villains, Sources, and (Hi)stories: The Case of Kamran Mirza Nayeb al-Saltaneh

Heidi Walcher, teacher Middle Eastern and Iranian History, School of Oriental and African Studies in London

The literature, without fail, reckons Kamran Mirza 'Nayeb os-Saltaneh' as Nasser ed-Din Shah's favourite son. Memoirs, histories, and travel books convey him as good looking, perhaps even charming if the situation requires, otherwise as spoiled, incompetent, weak, corrupt, vicious, cruel, tyrannical, reactionary, pro-Russian, greedy, and ineffectual. As governor of Tehran, head of the army and later anti-constitutional supporter of his nephew and son in law, Mohammad Ali Shah, he is known as one of the most prominent figures of the later Qajar family.

A closer search into published materials and accessible sources, shows Kamran Mirza's image and the information on him are drawn from a rather narrow basis of sources, shaped by diplomats and rival courtiers. There exists a remarkable discrepancy between his centrality in the royal family, court politics, the military and the administration of Tehran on the one hand and the actual factual information available on both his personal and political life. Three different dates for his death and different places of burial in three different published Persian sources are symptomatic for the gap between his clear-cut unredeemable image as one of the most despicable Qajar figures and the actual amount of reliable and precise information. This paper covered the most important aspects of Kamran Mirza's personal and political life and in this context aimed to pose a number of historiographical considerations. The discussion also took a critical look at the established narrative, interpretations, and the source bases on which the information, image and understanding of this prince's role are based. The paper argued that even if we maintain the consensus about the unmitigated dishonourable and villainous traits and deeds of Kamran Mirza a critical look at what we know and how this information is transmitted, rather than a simplistic vilification, is necessary to understand crucial figures, mentalities and politics of the later Qajar court.