

Eyes on Persia

Late Nineteenth-Century Persia in the Hotz Photographic Collection

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Introduction

Early photography in Persia — From the beginning of its invention, the advancement of photography in Persia was encouraged by Nasser ed-din Shah (1848-1896) of the Qajar dynasty, who acquired not only its technique in its most early days, but also had a great passion for putting photography into practice. Although photographic experiments started during the reign of Mohammad Shah (1834-1848), the propagation of photography took place during the reign of Nasser ed-din Shah. The first Persian photographers worked for the court at the Golestan Palace, while the first European photographers in Persia were often military men, engineers, doctors and dragomans, who worked at invitation of the Shah at the Dar ol-Fonoun (polytechnic school, founded in 1851) and the Nasserli military academy in Tehran.

Persia in European photo collections — Nineteenth-century photographs of Persia in collections of European libraries and institutes, taken by European photographers, generally present an overview of the Persian landscape, the architecture and the people. Photographs of people from all societal levels are often taken with a so-called Orientalist view. Such photographs often stress the stereotype. Daily activities, crafts, cultural or religious costumes are often staged in studios or outside on the street. Photographs of architecture depict nineteenth-century palaces, mosques, houses and schools. Only a limited number of these photographs reveal ancient monuments at historical sites, such as Persepolis, Naqsh-e Rostam, Tag-e Bostan or Naqsh-e Rostam. A large number of the photographs, which were often carefully collected in beautiful albums, were bought by diplomats, travellers, scholars or businessmen and can be attributed to professional photographers such as Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911) and Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933). Photographs by Persian photographers are unfortunately lacking in photo collections of European libraries and institutes.

Persia in Dutch photo collections — Albert Paulus Hermanus Hotz (1855-1930) was a businessman from Rotterdam who had several trade-offices in nineteenth-century Persia. As such, the Dutch photo archives preserve a strikingly well compounded collection of late nineteenth-century photographs of Persia. At this moment there are approximately 2,725 photographs of Persia mounted in albums kept at seven institutions. In addition to these diverse prints there are glass negatives. Photographs taken by renowned professional photographers such as Antoin Sevruguin and Ernst Hoeltzer can be found next

to photographs and snapshots made by amateurs such as Albert Hotz (1890-1891) and Said-Ruete (1910). Interestingly, in the Dutch photo-collections the work of early European photographers active in Persia, namely Jules Richard, Luigi Pesce, Antonio Giannuzzi and Frances Carlhian, of the researchers Franz Stolze, Jane and Marcel Dieulafoy, Jacques de Morgan and Friedrich Sarre and of brave women travellers such as Isabella Bishop-Bird and Gertrude Bell, are conspicuously absent. The earliest photographs of Persia that are kept in official institutes the Netherlands presently were taken by Luigi Montabone in 1862; the album in question is preserved in the Royal Household Archives (Koninklijk Huisarchief), The Hague.

Albertus Paulus Hermanus Hotz (1855-1930) — Albert Hotz was born in Rotterdam and came from a Dutch family of industrialists. His father, J.C.P. Hotz, was co-owner of a large iron-casting plant in The Hague. In 1874 he founded the Persian Trading Association (Vennootschap Perzische Handelsvereniging J.C.P. Hotz & Zoon). His son, Albert Hotz, was sent by him to Persia to develop commercial activities. In 1873 Nasser ed-din Shah visited Europe for the first time. The news surrounding his visit placed Persia on the minds of businessmen keen to explore new markets. Following this visit, the Dutch consul-general in Boushehr, Mr. Keun van Hoogerwoerd, was convinced of good trading possibilities and promoted Dutch business activities in Persia. Albert Hotz was interested in all forms of Persian trade. He undertook business activities in several fields. Next to his interest for different trade products, such as tapestry and opium, he was the first who drilled for oil in Daliki (southwest of Iran). He was also interested in exploiting coal mines and was involved in establishing the Imperial Bank of Persia. Hotz also sought for irrigation possibilities in some parts of Persia and the development of the Karoun river. As of 1890 Hotz owned different trade offices in Basra, Bousher, Shiraz, Soltanabad and Esfahan. In 1890-1891 Hotz undertook a journey through Persia, the Caucasus and Russia for pleasure, also visiting his trade offices en route. During this journey he took and bought photographs of all those products, and possible trade and business-activities. The photographs (platinum prints) he took were developed by the then well-known English photographer John Thomson (1837-1921). Hotz placed them in several photo albums. Some albums served as public relation material. They contain photographs selected on special themes and have titles such as 'Tapestry', 'Road-making' or 'The personnel of J.C.P. Hotz and Co. in Persia'. These albums, which contain the more 'realistic and objective' images of Persia, were donated to institutions and business partners to

persuade them of the good trade and business opportunities in this country. Hotz's interest in Persia did go further than trade and business. He had a keen interest in the history and culture of Persia. Next to photographs, he collected a large number of books, atlases, geographical works and all kinds of documentation on Persia. In 1903 his commercial activities in Persia ended, but until his death in 1930 he remained very interested in everything that happened in this land of the Lion and the Sun. In 1935, his widow donated most of Hotz's materials to Leiden University and a year later a two-volume catalogue of the entire collection was published.

Inventory of the Hotz photo collection at Leiden University Library — The Hotz photo collection contains ten albums with 657 photographs (platino-types) taken by Hotz during his travel through Persia and the Caucasus in 1890 and 1891 (Hotz Albums No. 1-10).

Next to these, the collection also contains two albums with 141 photographs of Ernst Hoeltzer. The albumen photos in these albums were taken around 1885 (Hotz Albums No. 11 and 12).

A further 176 albumen photographs, collected in three albums, were taken by Antoin Sevruguin in the 1880s (Hotz Albums No. 13, 15 and 16).

Four portfolios contain 131 loose photographs of different techniques and formats, by several photographers, among whom Brogi, Bonfils, Sébah, Sarrafian, Bonfils and Lind. These photographs were not only taken in Persia, but also in other countries of the Middle East and in Europe, Russia and Indonesia (Hotz Albums No. 14, 17, 18, 19 and 20).

One portfolio contains 76 albumen photographs of Constantinople taken by G. Berggren (Hotz Album No. 21)

The rest of the albums or portfolios contain photographs from other parts of Asia, Hotz Albums 22 and 23 containing two identical sets of photographs of Japan by Felice Beato (c 1825-c 1886), and Album 24 photographs of Japan by Stillfried & Andersen. Occasionally, more albums with Hotz photographs are discovered in the closed stacks of the library and reshelfed in the Special Collections department.

Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933) — Antoin Sevruguin was a celebrated photographer of late nineteenth-century Persia. He was born in the late 1830s at the Russian embassy in Tehran and passed his youth in Akoulis and Tbilisi, Georgia. In Tbilisi he met Dmitri Ivanovich Yermakov (1845-1946) who had opened a photographic studio there in 1870. Yermakov's work appealed deeply to Sevruguin and the two photographers exchanged ideas and probably collaborated together. Sevruguin began by making a photographic inventory of the landscape, the archaeological sites and the people of Azarbaijan, Kurdistan and Luristan. Around 1870, Sevruguin – together with his two brothers – travelled to Tehran to start his own photo studio. One of his lifelong obsessions was trying to capture the light in his photographs in a Rembrandt-like fashion. This special interest in light and atmosphere pervaded Sevruguin's work. Soon after establishing himself in Tehran, he was invited to take photographs of the Shah and at the court. Although the majority of his photographs were destroyed during political upheavals in Persia in the early twentieth century, a significant number have been preserved in archives in the West. His photographs appeared in different scientific publications and travel accounts.

Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911) — Ernst Hoeltzer was a German engineer who started working for the Persian Telegraph Service in Persia in 1863. This was the year in which Nasser ed-din Shah granted the English permission to construct telegraph lines in Persia to facilitate communications with their colony India. From 1866 onwards Hoeltzer worked in Esfahan. He married Miriam Kacknazar in 1870 and they both lived together in Julfa, the Armenian quarter of the city. Esfahan was still an important trade centre in the nineteenth century, but although trade was flourishing, the city declined. Hoeltzer felt that through increasing European influence the old Esfahan was vanishing. This motivated him to capture the historical city with his camera. He started to create a systematical photo archive and took many photographs of Esfahan, its people and especially residents of Julfa. After his retirement in 1897 Hoeltzer went back to Berlin for a few years, but in 1908 he decided to return to Persia, remaining there for the rest of his life. In 1969 a thousand of his glass-plates and personal writings were accidentally discovered in the home of one of his grandchildren in Münster, Germany. A personal inventory indicates that there had been no less than three thousand glass-plates. Unfortunately, two thousand glass-plates were used by Hoeltzer's assistants to repair a greenhouse during World War I. Studying his photographs one discovers Hoeltzer's engineering eye. Most of his portraits and his photographs of architecture are restrained, his

compositions objective, static and geometrical. Scenes of people working outdoors nevertheless show a more spontaneous atmosphere.

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Catalogue



Pigeon Tower.

1 | Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911), Pigeon Tower. c. 1880 . Albumen print [18.5 x 21.2cm, No. 35]. [UBL Hotz Album 11: 34]

Beyond the city limits, in the midst of flat agricultural lands, such alien-shaped hole-ridden mud-brick towers could be found strewn systematically across the horizon of mid-nineteenth century Persia. Even today we unexpectedly stumble upon the last remaining samples of this endangered species of such ingenious feat of engineering of a bygone era as we approach cities such as Esfahan.

With the passing of time the city has expanded to the point where this odd shaped monument stands prominently in the middle of a square and cars circulate around it as your guide tells you in a matter of fact way that this is a 'pigeon tower'.

Here, the hand of nature and neglect of man has made a forensic surface incision, and by losing its outer shell the mystery inside is revealed. Our human scale is a friendly farmer with a shovel on his shoulders and rolled-up baggy trousers. He has returned from claiming his share of water, which he has directed through a maze of open-air channels to his piece of land. Thousands of pigeons would lay eggs or rest in this multi-storied, multi-tenanted bird nest year round providing fertilizer to our friendly farmers, eggs for their families, feather for their pillows, while the smart ones would carry messages to their associates in neighboring villages or cities. Pigeon eggs were a sought-after remedy for it was believed that it would help new-born children to start talking earlier. Today that mindset has changed, the simplicity of life has gone astray and pigeons have turned grey and are treated as a pest in most major cities around the world. Yet in this dry land, the farmer is still running after his share of water.



2 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933), La moisson d'opium à Shiraz. c. 1880
. Albumen print [20.5 x 15.5cm, No. 196]. [UBL Hotz Album 13: 40]

Opium was produced on a large scale in Persia by the end of the nineteenth century, to be banned by the 1920s. It was cultivated principally in Yazd and Esfahan, and partly in the districts of Khorassan, Kerman, Fars and Shouster. Annually about 360,000 kilogrammes were exported and probably nearly an equal quantity was consumed in the country. The opium poppy is not difficult to cultivate, but to bring it to a state of maturity to produce opium requires very considerable knowledge and unremitting care and attention. The great difficulty is to know the exact time when the plant arrives at maturity. All the plants will not mature at the same time; each one has to be examined separately. If the incision for extracting the opium is made too early in the plant, nothing but a white sap will exude, and if made too late, the juice will have dried up. The seed is sown in September and October. The flowers will appear in May. When the flower has fallen, an incision is made diagonally across the bulb from top to bottom; and if the juice, of a dark brown colour, exudes, it is certain that the opium is matured. The incision is made in the evening, and the opium which adheres to the stem of the plant is removed before sunrise.



3 | Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911), Cutting -making incisions in- the poppies. c. 1880. Albumen print [18.3 x 11.2 cm]. [UBL Hotz Album 12: 16]

Albert Hotz photographed or bought photos of all kinds of products that were interesting for him to trade. Opium was one of the products that caught his eye. It was a popular item with his launched firms in Rotterdam, Shanghai and Hong Kong and highly in demand on trade markets in China, Formosa and California. Hotz tried to improve the ill-regulated trade and low quality of the Persian opium by tying it down to quality guarantees, by arranging for discounts and engaging the Dutch consulates in Smyrna and Constantinople. By doing so he hoped to compete with the British-Indian suppliers who provided, because of better regulations and arrangements, a much better quality of opium. In Europe opium was mostly used for the production of morphine.

Although Hotz did not personally take photographs of opium fields, he bought photographs of Ernst Hoeltzer and Antoin Sevruguin. The two photographs breathe a totally different atmosphere. The close-up that Hoeltzer took, in which he also pays attention to a piece of architecture, shows a much more 'objective' view than the romantic one of Sevruguin in which a nice panorama of the environment in Shiraz becomes visible.



4 | Albert Hotz (1855-1930), Persepolis. General view taken from the north side of the northern platform. 1890-1891 . Platinum print [20.2 x 11.9cm, No. 260] . [UBL Hotz Album 9: 95]

Persepolis or Tahkt-e Jamshid ('throne of Jamshid'), the centre of the great Persian Empire, ceremonial capital of the Achaemenids, is a historic site in Fars province, about 60 km to the northeast of Shiraz. The palace complex was built during the reign of Darius the Great (521-486 BCE); further architectural developments took place under Xerxes I and Artaxerxes. Persepolis was and still is for travellers one of the most interesting historical attractions to visit.

The ancient monuments of Persepolis were first photographed by the Italian colonel Luigi Pesce in 1858 and later in time by scholars, travellers and professional photographers such as Sevruguin. Although irregular diggings took place in the nineteenth century it was not until 1928 that scientific excavations started under the supervision of Ernst Herzfeld.

Hotz visited Persepolis in 1890 and took as far as known six photographs. This photograph taken from the East shows us parts of the Porch of All Nations, the Apadana, the palaces of Darius and Xerxes and a column of the Hundred Pillar Hall. Another photograph can also be found in his publication *Persepolis* (1899), in which he compares drawings of Persepolis of former travellers and researchers. In this publication Hotz is well aware of the fact that he is the first Dutchman who photographed Persepolis. It is from this perspective that his photographs of Persepolis are unique.



Persepolis.
Palace of Darius.
Combat of king and monster.

5 | Albert Hotz (1855-1930), Persepolis. Palace of Darius. Combat of King and Monster. M. 1890-1891. Platinum print [15 x 20.3 cm, No. 261]. [UBL Hotz Album 9: 100]

Every traveller depended on his guide and dragoman during his travels through Persia. Most of these guides were photographed next to architecture, to show the viewer the actual size of a specific monument.

The Palace of Darius is decorated with several bas-reliefs showing the King's power through his fight against Evil. The bas-reliefs in Persepolis are, because of sun and shade, not easy to photograph. A photographer has to be patient and has to take time to catch the right moment.

Here we see Hotz's guide standing next to a bas-relief of 'the King stabbing a Lion'. As the walls and roofs have disappeared, portals and windows are all that is left in Persepolis. The relief on this photograph is only partly illuminated by the sun. The King and the guide, with his bag and rifle, are hardly visible because of the shadow.



Persepolis.
Group of Kashkai Iliats (nomad tribe) in front of the North-Kings-Tomb behind Persepolis.

6 | Albert Hotz (1855-1930), Persepolis. Group of Kashkai Iliats (nomad tribe) in front of the North-Kings-Tomb behind Persepolis. 1890-1891 . latinum print [20.4 x 15.1cm, No. 264]. [UBL Hotz Album 9: 101]

‘Persepolis lives in the heart of every Persian,’ Eugène Flandin writes in his travelogue. During his stay at Persepolis he met several Persians who visited, each for their own reason, these ancient monuments. Flandin informs that the Illiats, a nomad tribe, arrived at Persepolis to celebrate a marriage. He also states that they re-used the iron of the pillars and used the graves in the mountains as barns to shelter their hay.

Illiats, who lived near Persepolis, are often referred to in travelogues. They are often described as being suspicious people, asking themselves why Europeans make such an effort to come from far away to visit Persepolis. The reason for this European curiosity is according to them the gold that is beneath the throne of Jamshid.

Nomads in travelogues are often described but hardly visually depicted. This photograph of a nomad family in front of one of the graves is therefore unique. The fact that museums were interested in anthropological images might have been the reason for Hotz to take photographs of these people. Not only men, but also women and children are posing in a line, probably arranged by Hotz’s guide or dragoman, as Hotz probably did not speak any Persian. In this composition, which has been purposefully divided into three parts, the eye only focuses on the persons standing in a line, for whom these kingly palaces were their temporary residence. The photographic technique was not particularly advanced. The image of some of the children is blurred, as they do not have the patience to stand still.



*Teheran.
The Five Blind Beggars.*

7 | Albert Hotz (1855-1930), Teheran. The Five Blind Beggars. 1890-1891 .
Platinum print [20 x 15cm, No. 449]. [UBL Hotz Album 10: 55]

Looking at this beautiful image, the painting *The Parable Of The Blind Leading The Blind* (1568) of the Netherlandish Renaissance painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525-1569) immediately comes to our mind. It is only a matter of conjecture as to whether this scene was actually staged or was actually confronted by the photographer in real life. Similar images of this topic have been taken by other photographers, such as Sevruguin. This may be an indication that this way of leading a group of blind people was quite normal in nineteenth-century Persia. Most probably the first man was not completely blind and could guide the others. The positioning of his hand and the state of the clothes of all of them shows that they must be beggars. The five men wear an aba, a typical outer garment of that time, which is open at the front and sleeveless, with large armholes. They also wear a kolah nomadi (felt cap) that was worn normally by labourers, peasants and nomads.



8 | Albert Hotz (1855-1930), Kark Island. Groups of natives (Pilots, boatmen and fishermen). 1890-1891. Platinum print [20.6 x 14.6cm, No. 166]. [UBL Hotz Album 1: 19].

This picture is a close-up of another photograph taken by Hotz on Khark Island, where 80 men pose in a straight line. This is clearly suggested by careful examination of the extremities of the present line of men where other arms and shoulders of men are visible. In this quite unfortunate shot as far as aesthetics are concerned, we see a group of natives wearing different Arab clothes, such as a pirahan (shirt) with an opening down the front of the garment and the zir-e jameh shalvar (trousers) that were loosely cut and normally made of white cotton. Other men wear long cotton gowns.

Hotz traveled from Bandar Abbas in the south to Boushehr and Khark, where he took this picture. Khark Island, a continental island in the Persian Gulf, is located 25 km off the coast of Persia and 485 km northwest of the Strait of Hormuz. The Dutch East India Company ‘Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC)’, founded in 1602, began its trading activities in Persia in 1623. Factories (trading stations) were established in Bandar Abbas and Esfahan after a favourable commercial treaty had been concluded with Shah Abbas I. This was the beginning of a very profitable trade for the VOC, which throughout the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century was Persia’s most important foreign trading partner.

In the first half of the eighteenth century trade between the VOC and Persia concentrated on Basra. Its resident from 1749 onwards, Baron Von Inn- und Kniphausen, founded a kind of free-port on Khark Island under the Company’s flag. Here the fortifications of Hollandabad (‘city of Holland’) were being built and restored by the Persian government at the time Hotz took his photographs. The Dutch presence in the Gulf lasted for 133 years, ending with the closure of the Khark factory and with it the VOC chapter on relations with Persia.



*On the road from Sultanabad to Teheran.
Men of Burujird on their way to Teheran.*

9 | Albert Hotz (1855-1930), On the road from Sultanabad to Teheran. Men of Burujird on their way to Teheran. 1890-1891. Platinum print [18.7 x 13.8cm, No. 449] . [UBL Hotz Album 10: 45]

This image, in contrast with the previous one, is quite interesting as far as composition is concerned and it is, indeed, quite modern for its time. The five men depicted are arranged in a different way as the typical straight line and one of them poses with his back to the camera to reveal his knapsack. The viewer goes from one man to the next following an interesting path and enjoying quite a magical image. The five men wear an aba which is open at the front and it has large armholes. They also wear a kolah nomadi (felt cap) and a walking stick to help them walk on a long journey from Boroujerd to Tehran. In the foreground we can see barren mountains, which remind us of the dryness of this region in Iran. Boroujerd is one of the oldest cities in Iran, reported at least from the ninth century CE and is one of the two main cities of the western province of Luristan.



10 | Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911), Women eating pilav and melon. c. 1880.
Albumen print [23.8 x 17.2cm, No. 27] . [UBL Hotz Album 11: 60]

The patterns of the carpet, veils and printed cotton backdrop seem to be wrapped up in one image with almost no perspective. The way Hoeltzer focuses on materials in this photograph reminds the viewer of early twentieth-century paintings created by Henri Matisse, although it would be ahistorical to compare the work of these two artists with each other.

In a great amount of Hoeltzer's photographs parts of rugs, embroideries, felt and printed textiles can be discovered. Most of the rugs in his photographs appear to be either Kurdish or Southern Persian in origin, like the kilim in weft interlock technique on this photograph. Some seems to be of higher quality and appear to be either Bijar pieces or have the Zell os-Soltan design.

Hoeltzer was able to photograph Armenian and Persian women, although the latter were restricted in their public appearance. The setting of Persian women in this studio photograph, eating the traditional Persian dish and smoking a water-pipe, must have been a revelation for his European customers, whose only contact during his stay in Persia was the Persian man. In European travelogues, diplomats, researchers and businessmen, who had to stay for a longer period, often complain about their boring social situation. Half of the Persian society was excluded from their daily contacts. Persian women were unattainable for them and through the custom of chadors even invisible.



Neghareh Khaneh à Isfahan..

55

11 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933), Neghareh Khaneh à Isfahan. c. 1880 .
Albumen print [16.2 x 20.3cm]. [UBL Hotz Album 15: 55]

There is an old saying in Persian: “If you have money, you could play the neghareh on the king’s moustache”. Looking at this photograph, one could imagine the raucous noise that would be exuding from his Highness’ well-groomed whiskers! This band of two percussionists (neghareh meaning kettle-drum), two clarinet (type) players and two (massive) horn players would literally blast their music from an open room (khaneh meaning house) situated in a tower within the royal palace overlooking the city. They served the purpose of alerting the city dwellers at sunset and, at times, sunrise, on important occasions ranging from festivities (royal or otherwise) to religious ceremonies and the beginning of the New Year on the first day of spring. At times of war, they acted as a siren. Clearly the music that radiated from the top of the Neghareh Khaneh, although rhythmic and loud, served the purpose of an alert system. In other words if you have money you could rock the world and shake it to its foundation from top of the king’s moustache that overlooked his obedient masses!

Last but not least is the non-musician handsome man figured in the photograph who is the representative of his royal highness or the governor, which in the case of Esfahan was the son of the king Zell os-Soltan whose title literally means the ‘Shadow of the Sultan.’ He is toting a staff and humbly gazing at the ground. After all he turned the band on or off.



Dervishes à Téhéran.

12 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933), Dervishes à Téhéran. c. 1880 .
Albumen print [14.4 x 19.1cm, No. 600]. [UBL Hotz Album 15: 54]

Dervishes are wandering souls, Sufis who have chosen wandering and detachment as part of their religious beliefs and way of life. Dervishes dressed in different ways depending on the region of Persia where they came from. The typical Persian dervish dress consisted of a kashkoul (begging bowl), axe or knotted walking stick and club. Clothing included a cap, turban, gown, overgown, cloaks and sandals. The clothes were normally old and patched together, which reveals their modest way of living. Some groups, like the one of the man depicted in this photo, wore animal skins over their shoulders, usually that of a leopard, sheep or lion.

Portraying dervishes was one of Sevruguin's favourite topics. He tried to show their spiritual philosophy and way of life by means of a special aesthetical approach in the line with the pictorialist English photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), paying special attention to the light and pose of the dervishes depicted.



*H.I.H. Masoud Mirza Zil-es-Sultan.
eldest son of the Shah. Governor of Isfahan.*

13 | Albert Hotz (1855-1930), H.I.H. Masoud Mirza Zil-es-Sultan. eldest son of the Shah Governor of Isfahan. 1890-1891. Platinum prints [13.5 x 18.8cm, 14.9 x 20.4cm, Nos. 309-310]. [UBL Hotz Album 10: 2 and 3]

Important travellers who visited Isfahan had the chance of having an audience at the palace of Zell os-Soltan, the eldest son of Nasser ed-Din Shah and Governor of Esfahan. As tradition has it, seeing Esfahan was seeing half the world ('Esfahan nesf-e Jahan'). In that sense, Zell os-Soltan ruled half the world.



*H. S. H. Masoud Mirza Zell os-Sultan.
eldest son of the Shah Governor of Isfahan.*

Hotz was probably invited at the court because of his involvement in business and trade. He might also have been introduced by the German photographer Ernst Hoeltzer who photographed at the court and took several photos of this cunning governor.

Judging from the two photographs of Hotz we see that Zell os-Soltan knew how to pose in front of the camera. He is standing and sitting in full pomp in his palace in front of all his ibex trophies hanging on the wall. In terms of

composition, Hotz's photographs of Zell os-Soltan are comparable with the ones Hoeltzer took. In one of Hoeltzer's photographs we also see Zell os-Soltan standing in the same proud pose, in all his dignity and with all his decorations. Hotz's photograph is a more close-up than the one Hoeltzer took and the meticulously tied sash, which is lacking in Hoeltzer's photograph makes Zell os-Soltan even more the pivot of his universe.



14 | Albert Hotz (1855-1930), Isfahan. Group of natives on the Ali Verdi Khan bridge. 1890-1891 . Platinum print [20.2 x 12cm, No. 288] . [UBL Hotz Album 10: 17]

Ordinary people on one of Esfahan's most important bridge, the Chahar-Bagh Bridge (Si-o-Se Pol) or Bridge of thirty-three arches. The bridge was built in the seventeenth century during the Safavid dynasty and was once known as the

Allahverdi Khan Bridge, mentioned after the name of a general of Shah Abbas I who supervised the construction. The bridge spans about 300 metres across the Zayandeh River and was an important route for caravans coming from Shiraz.

Hotz must have crossed this bridge while visiting Hoeltzer with whom he was acquainted. Hoeltzer lived in Julfa – the Armenian quarter of Esfahan. This bridge connected the southern to the northern part of the city through the main boulevard, the Chahar Bagh.

In Hotz's photograph a mixture of persons, two clergymen, a dervish and just ordinary men and boys have been juxtaposed in his favourite line composition. To make the group more impressive, to capture the architecture and to put the whole composition in a good perspective, he took his photograph from a lower point of view.

Hoeltzer informs us that in 1864 the telegraph lines from India to Europe were laid along this bridge and that it was more widely used than other bridges in Esfahan.



15 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933), Le palais du Kavam à Shiraz. c. 1880. Albumen print [21.9 x 15.8cm]. [UBL Hotz Album 13: 64]

The curtains of the Gavan Mo-Mok, the private residence of a notable of Shiraz under the Qajars, are fully raised up; probably to fall in with the photographers' wish to capture all of its inside interior. The iwan of the main pavilion on the ground and first floor are richly decorated with painted wood and marquetry. The walls are covered with mirrors enhancing the natural decoration by extending the perspective of the gardens towards the interior. Subjects such as lions, soldiers and floral patterns can be found on the outside mosaics and stucco-relief.

The architecture of the residence is in perfect symmetry and its decoration in pure harmony, but something disturbs the whole image. The photograph, in comparison to the opposite photograph in this album is out of balance and does not harmonize at all. The four servants in front of the building seem not to have been correctly posed, they do not follow the perspective lines of the architecture. The rectangular pool at the bottom of this photograph is only partly visible; the palace and the servants don't reflect in the water. Something is disturbing the harmony: did Hotz cut off the photograph too much or was Sevruguin too focused on the interior of this beautiful palace?



16 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933), Finn près de Kashan. c. 1880 .
Albumen print [21 x 15.7cm, No. 114]. [UBL Hotz Album 13: 65]

Hafez sit by the stream And see the passing of life For this sign of the fleeting world is enough for us

The Bagh-e Shah or Royal Garden of Fin, southwest of Kashan. This image invites the viewer to contemplation, like the man depicted in the photograph. He seems to peacefully enjoy the garden that is shown through the arcade of the palace. The man, probably a servant, seems to be in deep contemplation of the garden and listens to the cristal sound of a fountain nearby; water being the most important element of the Persian garden.

At the edge of the arcade at the left of the image, we can see an interesting painting of a palace with a still life. This painting, itself within an arcade, makes a very interesting composition with the big arcade under which the man depicted is sitting. A new genre of still life with landscape was introduced in Persia in the eighteenth century. The finest existing examples were painted in the late eighteenth century by the chief court painter Mirza Baba. Once introduced, the composition of a still life in the foreground with landscapes in the middle ground and far distance evolved very slowly in the following century.

This photograph depicts one such mural within the arch of the vault. The still lifes are set within strapwork bands with arabesque designs and schematic, small-scale landscapes with pavilions, boats, bridges, and lakes in Safavid style, suggesting that the independent genre of still life ultimately evolved from seventeenth-centuries prototypes. A remarkable photograph as far as composition, balance and light are concerned. Sevruguin at his best.



17 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933), [No title]. c. 1880 . Albumen print [22.4 x 16.2cm]. [UBL Hotz Album 13: 32]

Sevruguin is on his way to somewhere. It is not winter. The high mountains are partly covered in snow. Long shadows suggest early morning or late afternoon. There is a chill, cold enough for Sevruguin's travel assistants to wrap themselves in felt robes. More than ten horses can be counted grazing on this elevated plateau. Before he settled in the capital city to become a high class studio photographer in his middle age, he travelled Iran far and wide. Setting aside the usual knick-knacks any happy camper needs to carry along, a nineteenth century photographer would be accompanied by his rectangular glass negatives, chemicals and field camera tripod set as well.



18 | Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911), Dervish bashi. c. 1880 . Albumen print [20.8 x 17.8cm, No. 19]. [UBL Hotz Album 11: 46]

Leading an ascetic life, living at the mercy of their fellow men, always on the move, eternally reciting verses of the Koran or the mystic poems of Hafiz, had no commitment to work or family, dervishes were humble men of divine love. Their only worldly possessions were a tabarzin (ax), a hand carved kashkul on a chain that serve the purpose of a beggar's bowl in the shape of a boat, a keykom or mantāsheh (club/cudgel) to defend themselves against animals, a pustin (sheep skin) to be used as prayer rug or for warmth, joz (a compact portable water pipe), long prayer beads, wearing a long cloak, a turban or at times conical cap with loosely fitted white robes and trousers.

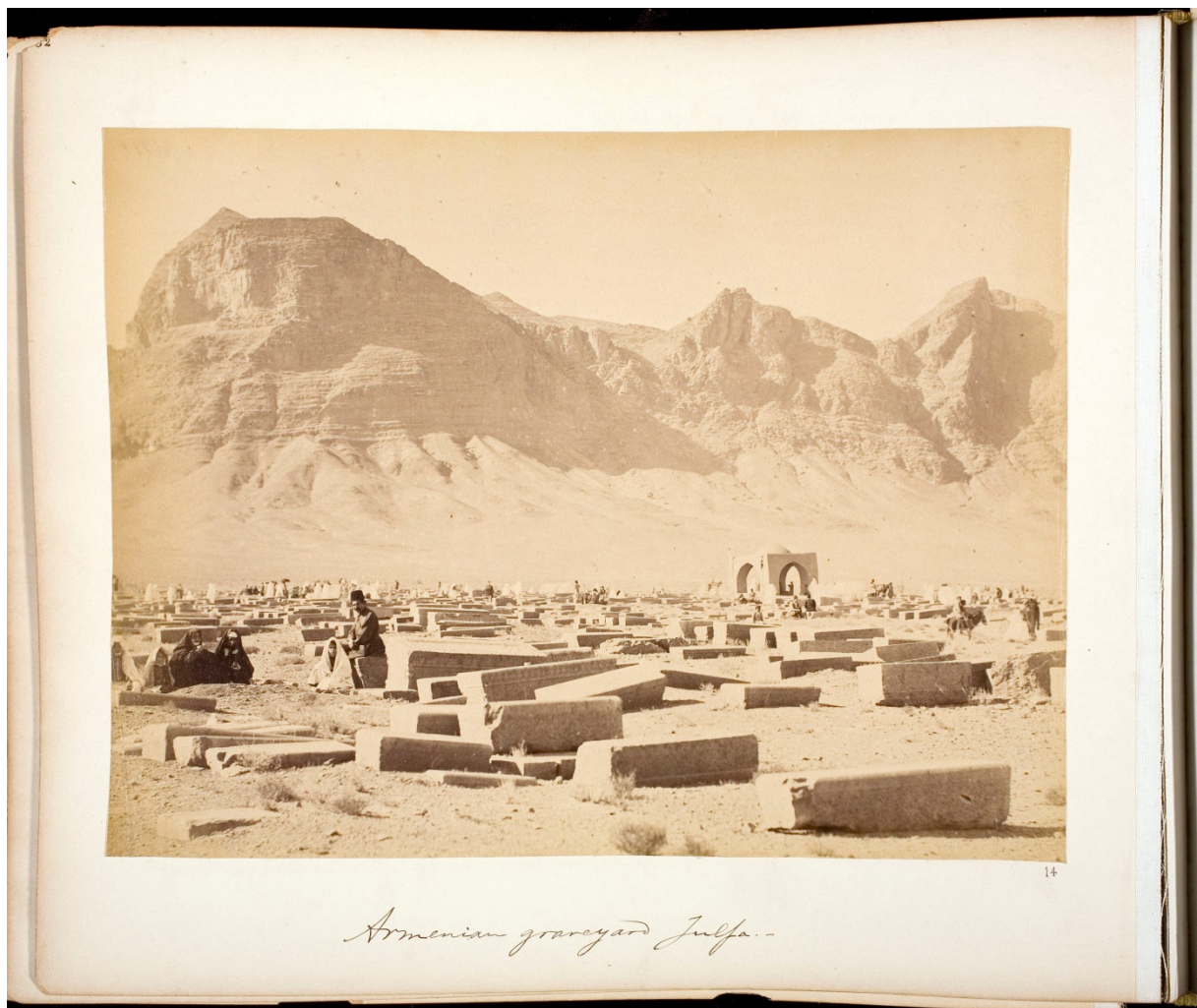
At times the theatrics of it all took prominence and dubious characters, as in all professions, blemished the image of these men of God. The main character of James Morier's novel *Adventures of Haji Baba of Isfahan* (1824) was an unsavoury young man who assumed the role of a wandering dervish, tarnishing their image in the mind of the western audience. In nineteenth-century Persia, where poverty was the way of life for a large majority, being a dervish had become a 'profession'. At times, children were 'placed on the divine path' by their poor parents as well.

As though casting for a play, Hoeltzer has placed the different prototypes of wandering dervishes that caught his eye as they roamed about Isfahan with their varied paraphernalia all in one picture. You can still find wandering dervishes trying to make their way through modern daily life, walking through traffic jams and in between cars, or at flea markets selling all the above symbolic accoutrements. The dervishes of Anatolia have their own world while whirling to a worldly audience, and silent divine lovers abound without all the noise and clamour far from the paparazzi's eyes.



19 | Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911), School. c. 1880. Albumen print [22 x 17cm, No. 294]. [UBL Hotz Album 11: 47]

The modern educational system as we know it today was institutionalized in Persia in the 1920s. Only a few such schools were established in the main cities from the late nineteenth century. While the wealthy benefited from private tutors, the public received a few years of schooling under the tutelage of a local mullah who taught the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetics. Students of all ages, exclusively boys, were placed in the same classroom and were looked after by the mullah and their more advanced classmates. Books were few and were shared in the school. Topics were administered orally and dictated in the classroom. The Koran figured prominently in the curricula. The mullah administered order with the help of a studious student from each level, one being chosen as the main assistant. Physical punishment was an option and practiced often. Here the students are seated with their back to the camera, while the mullah stands in the centre with his assistant seated to his left. Two students are reading to the rest. The crowd of men in the background serves no particular purpose other than setting the mood.



Armenian graveyard Julfa.-

20 | Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911), Armenian graveyard Julfa. c. 1880 . Albumen print [23.5 x 17.8cm, No.14]. [UBL Hotz Album 11: 32]

A prominent Armenian community has been living in Isfahan in the district of Julfa since the sixteenth century. They were encouraged to settle in the Isfahan during the reign of the Safavid Shah Abbas I while the war with the Ottomans was being fought along the northwestern borders. They were skilled craftsmen and their services were sought after in the expanding capital city. The church of Julfa had an archbishop and was considered one of the main centres of orthodox Christianity in the country and the region. Holtzer married into the community and settled in Julfa. The vastness and prominence of the graveyard as depicted in this photograph with its multitude of sarcophagi testifies to the historical presence of this community in Iran.



21 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933), *Femme Kourde en Kourdistan*. c. 1880. Albumen print [14.6 x 20cm, No. 363 ?]. [UBL Hotz Album 13: 48]

Kurdistan, 'land of the Kurds', is mentioned by European travellers from the fifteenth century onward : a mountainous, wild land of ill-defined extent between Persia in the east and Asia Minor and Syria in the west. Kurdistan

never was a state by itself, and in fact at most times it was divided between two or more neighbouring states. It was recognized as a distinct region because its most conspicuous inhabitants, the Kurds, appeared so different from their neighbours.

Sevruguin was a master in taking portraits. His special interest in light and atmosphere, his desire to capture the light in his photographs the way he so admired in Rembrandt's paintings, pervaded his work. This portrait of this Kurdish woman shows all the masterly qualities of Sevruguin as a photographer.

Sevruguin took several photographs of this Kurdish woman who is dressed in an urban style clothing. The garments depicted consist of a blouse (pirahan). The headdress consists of headscarves with small tassels along the edges, which have been folded and then wrapped around the head. The chain under the chin suggest that she is wearing a small cap under the turban. The mantle worn by the woman is fastened around the neck. One end of the mantle has been wrapped around itself and is coiled around the neck.



La tonsure Persane - Teheran. -

22 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933), La tonsure Persane – Teheran. c. 1880. Albumen print [14.5 x 18.5cm, No. 590 . [UBL Hotz Album 15: 32]

Taken around 1880, the composition of this image is no doubt very avant-garde for its time and it is totally different from the archetypical Victorian portrait: frontal, hieratic and still. Seen from the back, it shows a perfect balance of light and composition, a perfect diagonal and a turning movement of the body that recalls the paintings of Ingres, all of which helps to create an atmosphere of harmony. To make it even more interesting the eyes of the sitter, which are turned away from the observer, are reflected in the mirror in front of him. This element is very modern for its time and only a few pictures can be found where a mirror is being held in the same way.

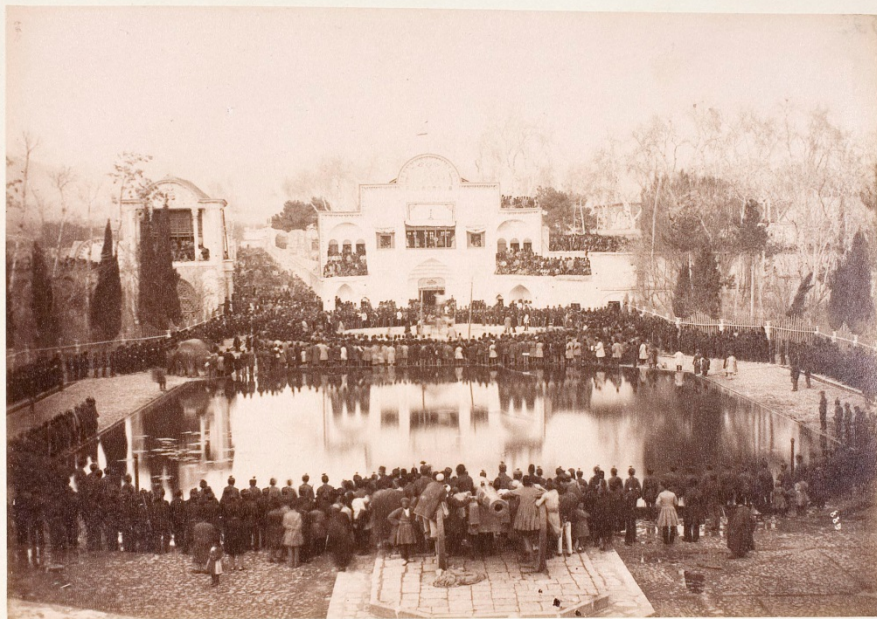
A large part of the beauty of this picture lies in its inherent magic. Only people who are familiar with Persian culture will recognise the person depicted in the picture as a luti, a member of a traditional Persian wrestling and athletic club known as Zurkhaneh. Apparently, lutis shave their heads when preparing for the annual passion play to commemorate the Shi'i Imam Hussein, who died a martyr's death at the hands of the Sunni caliph Yazid in 680 CE. In an act of self-mutilation known as ghame zani or tigh zani they inflict heavily bleeding wounds on their shaved heads, re-enacting the sufferings of imam Hussein.

Nevertheless, one of the questions that remained unanswered was why the man was cutting his hair in this particular fashion? There are other pictures of the same object, showing men with different hair styles of haircut. Since the Zurkhaneh is a hierarchical society, and since it is well established that the rank and the position of the members are reflected in their garments, it occurred to us that the same might apply to the hairstyle. To this day, however, it remains something of a mystery to us.



23 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933) [in pencil:] Arménienne à Ghanadaghe. c. 1880 . Albumen print [12.4 x 20cm, No. 471]. [UBL Hotz Album 15: 17].

The Armenian community in Persia revived in the second half of the nineteenth century, thanks to commercial ties with Armenian merchants in Russia and to the benevolence of the Qajar shahs. New Julfa re-emerged as well. The first Armenian periodical and a history of the Armenians of New Julfa were published in 1880. The Armenian school in New Julfa received a state subsidy, Armenian clergy and churches were exempted from taxes, and confiscated Church property was returned. Armenian merchants opened new trading houses in the Caspian and Persian Gulf regions and traded with Russia, India, and Europe. Dried fruit, leather, and carpets were exported, and machinery, glassware, and cloth were imported. Royal sponsorship brought Armenians to Tehran, where, taking advantage of their linguistic abilities and foreign contacts, Nasser el-din Shah (1848-1896) used them as envoys to Europe. Some of them, like Mirza Malkom Khan, David Khan Melik Shahnazar, and Hovhannes Khan Maschian were responsible for the introduction of Freemasonry, Western political thought, and technological innovations into Persia. Armenian tailors and jewellers introduced European fashions, and Armenian photographers were among the first in that profession. Armenians were also among the first Western-style painters and musicians. By the end of the nineteenth-century there were some 100,000 Armenians living in a dozen cities in Persia. In the photograph we can see a typical Armenian headwear worn by women in nineteenth- century Persia.



Salam du Shah le jour de l'an - Nôrouz. -

24 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933) Salam du Shah le jour de l'an – Nôrouz. c. 1880 . Albumen print [20.7 x 14.3cm, No. 885]. [UBL Hotz Album 13: 35]

Street life was a favourite subject of Sevruguin. On this street-photo people have gathered in front of one of the southern entries into the royal palace in Tehran known as the Arg Square to pay tribute to the Shah and to celebrate the annual festivity of the New Year, the so-called No Rouz. No Rouz marks the first day of spring and the beginning of the Iranian year. It is celebrated on the day of the astronomical vernal equinox, the start of spring, which usually occurs on March 21st. It is till today the most cherished of all the Iranian festivals and is celebrated by all.

Sevruguin must have positioned himself beforehand in order to take a good photograph. From out of a building or from a rooftop he took this photograph of the Persian crowd assembled together around a large pool in front of the royal citadel, in order to capture its reflection in the pool along with that of the crowd.



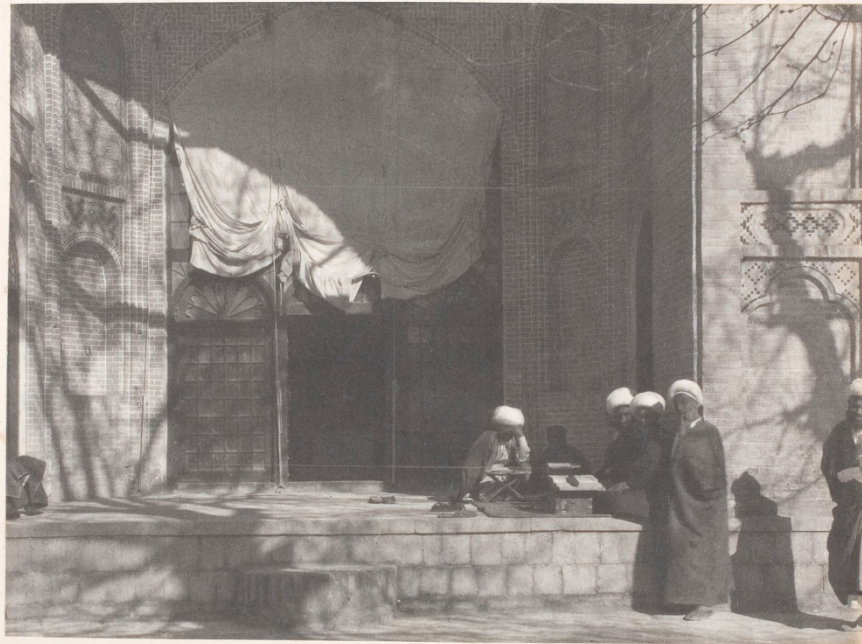
25 | Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911), Talar. c. 1880. Albumen print [23.7 x 19.3cm, No. 15]. [UBL Hotz Album 11: 36]

Hotz gave this photo just the title 'Talar', which is an architectural term given to the throne of a Persian monarch. A nineteenth-century Talar is centrally placed under the main iwan, a vaulted hall, which is walled on three sides with one side entirely open.

This building in Esfahan is the hall of the Sheikh ol-Eslam, one of the chief dignitaries of Islam. The wooden works and plaster ornaments are reminders of Qajar art, though for its features this building can be considered as one of the exemplary works for the study of housing in the Savafid period.

Next to this photograph Hoeltzer took several other photographs of the hall and of the Sheikh himself. The people in all these photographs are carefully arranged by the photographer. Here we meet Hoeltzer's geometrical eye. Every person has his place in the composition under the shadow of the magnificent architecture.

The people in this photograph are carefully divided into three groups. The focus on the group in the middle of the composition is achieved not only by the architecture, but also by the cords of the curtains.



Shiraz.
Tahkt-i-Kavam.
Mausoleum of a former governor of Shiraz in the 'Hafizieh'.

26 | Albert Hotz (1855-1930), Shiraz. Tahkt-i-Kavam. Mausoleum of a former governor of Shiraz in the 'Hafizieh'. c. 1880. Platinum print [20 x 14.9cm, No. 240]. [UBL Hotz Album 9: 87]

Hafiz (1324-1391) the greatest master of Persian lyric poetry and literary giant of the fourteenth century was born in Shiraz and buried in the northeast of this city in a garden known after him as the Hafizieh. His tomb is a venerated place and visited by many Iranians and tourists.

In the Hotz photo albums we find several photos of the tomb of Hafiz and also of the tomb of the other famous poet Sa'di (1194-1292). As these tombs were popular tourist venues Hotz probably took these photos for similar reasons.

The mausoleum of the Qavam family is placed in the western corner of the Hafiz mausoleum. It has several decorated arched rooms and a small courtyard on the north of the mausoleum's enclosure. The turbaned men outside the entrance of the mausoleum, sitting and reading from books which lay on book rests of different making must have attracted Hotz's eye. Three of them are distracted from their work and look curiously at the photographer. One of them has temporarily put his penholder as a paper weight on his book to keep it open. Long curtains on the building cast an inward shadow and keep the warmth outside. The photograph must have been taken in the afternoon as depicted by the lengthy shadows of the trees and that of a passing turbaned man cast on the building. Are they studying verses from the Koran? Or would they by request recite verses for the visitor of the mausoleum?



S. A. I. Motamed ed Douleh Prince Gouverneur de Shiraz et son fils

27 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933), S.A.I. Motamed ed Douleh Prince Gouverneur de Shiraz et son fils. c. 1880. Albumen print [12.7 x 20.7cm]. [UBL Hotz Album 15: 31]

Present-day family members of the gentleman whose portrait lies before us have confirmed the suspicions of the author that this may not be Motamed od-Doleh. Yet this is a portrait as good as any other to visually piece together the story of Hotz in Iran. Indeed the setting up of Hotz's trade office in Shiraz coincided with the latter years of the governorship of the gentleman who supposedly is depicted in this picture: Farhad Mirza Motamed od-Doleh (governor of the province of Fars: 1878-83, Shiraz being the capital of the province). Farhad Mirza was an uncle of Nasser ed-Din Shah the reigning king of Persia at the time. He was the fifteenth son of Abbas Mirza, the crown prince who died young before becoming king, spending much of his youth fighting two major wars and suffering defeat at the hands of the Russians. Nasser ed-Din Shah's father thus became king by stroke of fate. Like his father, Farhad Mirza was a well-educated, well-respected and 'worldly' man. As an uncle he had a tenuous and tension-ridden relationship with Nasser ed-Din Shah. He was an author, scholar and a collector of books. His personal library was donated to the state and is accessible to present-day scholars. He clearly deserved his title: Motamed (trusted) od-Doleh (of the court / government), trusted by the royal court and the state. He was in his mid-sixties while in Shiraz and his son, Sultan Oveis Mirza, was about ten years old. He died in his early seventies.



28 | Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911), The Mushir 'l Mulk &c. c. 1880. Albumen print [21.5 x 19cm, No. 22]. [UBL Hotz Album 11: 52]

The man in the centre is the vizier Moshir ol-Molk, minister of Zell os-Soltan. Two other men sitting on chairs, one on each side, have assumed different poses as depicted by the relaxed or stiff placement of their hands. The man at the right is the chief scribe of the military division. The man at the left is Mirza Hassan Qoli Khan.

As Roland Barthes states in *Camera Lucida* “Once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of posing, I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image”. Further, as the art historian Alan Trachtenberg points out “sitters were encouraged to will themselves into the desired self-expression”, thereby creating “a role and a mask”. The fact that they are sitting in chairs, something that could be appreciated as utterly irrelevant, can help us to reflect about the furniture used in the photographer’s studio and how that would affect the pose of the person depicted. After going through a lot of Persian miniatures, Qajar portraits and portrait studio photographs, it is possible to conclude that there is a chronological evolution in the traditional Iranian kneeling pose to a more westernised pose, symbolized, mainly, by the use of chairs in the painter’s studio and, later on, in the photographer’s studio. The horizon of the painting rises from low to high in order to be able to fully depict the person sitting in the chair. This transition happens over a longer period of time than in the case of photography. This difference can be better observed in the work of the Persian photographers, since the Europeans used the chair in the studio from the beginning.



29 | Albert Hotz (1855-1930) Shuster. Son and nephew of the Governor. c. 1880. Platinum print [18.5 x 14.5cm, No. 113] . [UBL Hotz Album 9: 54].

The ornate clothes of the two boys reveal them as children from the higher echelons of society. Both wear the so-called Qajar hat, the smallest is wearing a Qajar coat and the other an European style coat. When analysing portrait photographs of children, we are faced not only with the intention of the photographer, but also with the preferences of the parents of the children whose scent we can feel or even read in the face of the children depicted.

In this photograph, like in many others of children, we can read a quite uncomfortable look in the face of the smallest child. The eldest seem to understand better the intention of the photographer: put one hand under the other one and look in front of you, here...look at this small bird! The two chairs, we might wish to guess, seem to reveal that the picture has been taken during a trip, since they are campaign chairs.



Tisseur à Boroujird.

30 | Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933), Tisseur à Boroujird. c. 1880 .
Albumen print [22.7 x 16.5cm, No. 50]. [UBL Hotz Album 15: 26]

The few photo historians who have tried to paste together the life of Sevruguin can not state with confidence as to when he travelled to the west of Iran – before or after he settled in Tehran in c. 1875. One conjecture is that before he opened his photo studio in Tehran with the help of his brother, he travelled south from Tbilisi into Persian western Azarbayjan, Kurdistan and Luristan, where he photographed the age-old Nestorian Christian communities as well as documenting lives and professions of those he encountered along the way.

Boroujird is one of the two main cities of the western province of Luristan. It is situated along the Zagros mountain range, a feat to reach even today, let alone on packhorses carrying a mobile dark room where glass negatives were made and placed in field cameras on location. Luristan was home to tough warrior clans that played a key role in defending the western frontiers of Persia through the centuries. Setting aside their archaeological sites and the rare inverted tulips, the Lurs like most parts of Iran have contributed their share of fine hand woven textiles. Two weavers with their loom, yarn and tools along with human props to set the mood are depicted in this photograph.



Ice cellar Isfahan.



Icehouse at Rashtan.

31 | Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911), Ice cellar [i.e. seller] Isfahan. c. 1880.
Albumen print [16.1 x 11.2cm, No. 210]. [UBL Hotz Album 12: 13A]

One would imagine that it would be a strange and rather smart profession to choose: to be an 'ice seller' in a land where water is scarce, let alone ice in the days when there was no refrigeration! Your day would begin with a stop by the ice factory, another ingenious feat concocted by these people of this barren land, which would require another picture and another paragraph to explain. For now, imagine an ice-covered pond inside an inverted cone made of adobe. You would enter from a small side door. Ice would be carved out of the surface and you would place big chunks of ice in jute bags and hand them over to your faithful mule companion to truck around town. You quickly head to the adjacent neighbourhood and shout "ICE!!!" Wooden doors would open and your frosty merchandise would be bought on the spot. You would pull out your ice pick and scrape off a chunk of ice and hand it to your customer. Money was not very common in those days, so you would sell on credit with your financial transactions marked on the wooden frame of the door with charcoal. While your customer would be rushing down to the basement to place the ice in a cool spot in a ceramic contraption to be used when needed (after all we all know that ceramic has low heat conductivity), you would move on with your mule shouting "ICE!!!" If all goes well, you may take a few more trips to the ice factory before the end of the day.



Open bazar Isfahan.



Silversmith's shop

32 | Ernst Hoeltzer (1835-1911), Open bazar Isfahan. c. 1880 . Albumen print [18.5 x 11.2cm, No.605]. [UBL Hotz Album 12: 5A]

As opposed to the more affluent covered bazaars, open bazaars were basically a combination of flea markets and fresh produce and vegetable fairs that placed public vending space at the disposal of the less fortunate sellers. Straight from the farm or the craftsmen's atelier, a chicken or rooster, eggs or nuts, textile or espadrilles, were placed into the hand of the willing customer.

Colophon

‘Eyes on Persia. Late Nineteenth-Century Persia in the Hotz Photographic Collection’ was published as an online exhibition (.xml) in the image database of Leiden University Libraries in 2008.

In 2018 the texts and images have been converted from the XML structure and (after some minor adjustments) saved as a PDF document in the new image database.

The original online exhibition is not available anymore.

André Bouwman

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