



Cinema Iranica
A Research Compendium

Wandering through Film Clips: Iran in the Eyes of Others

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Figure 1: St. Petersburg, awaiting the arrival of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shah in 1902.

In addition to the films of Mirza Ibrāhīm Khan ‘Akkāsbāshī, created before the Constitutional Revolution of 1905, and Georges Ismā‘īluf’s news report from the final days of the Qājār period in October 1925—each representing distinct cinematic functions—there exists a significant body of work by foreign filmmakers. These films collectively document key moments in Iran’s cultural, historical, and political life.¹ The films under study are film rushes or stock shots whose nature is not obscure, complex or difficult; however, their real time might have been lost in the vortex of time and the discovery of some of their characteristics might require deeper research. Not surprisingly, some of them have been edited, dubbed and interpreted by

unreliable narrators in the recent years. It is the contention of the researcher that by searching through the remaining films, omitting the attachments and manipulations, and finding some of the missing timeframes, we can help in organizing the visual memory of the Iranian contemporary history and experience the past by wandering through them. But the question is how reality is represented in these films.

Theoretical Framework

Although one cannot interrogate the picture, one can decode its mysteries by referring to the metatext as well as paying attention to the elements inside the frame.² In other words, the film clips are explainable by index relationships and representation theory.³ Therefore, this can be considered a qualitative study which points toward the registration and the construction of reality in representations in an interpretative paradigm. In other words, the aim is to introduce the living and meaningful social behavior (inside the frame, the form of the film and the producer organization) in its specific time and place.

Review of Literature

While making the film *Sinimā-yi Irān: az Mashrūtīyyat tā Si-pantā* (Iranian Cinema: From Constitutionalism to Sepanta, 1970) with filmic documents found in every corner of the city, and also the film *Yādī az Duktur Fātimī* (Dr. Hossein Fatemi, 1980) with film clips hidden for years inside a house, and studying film compilations and discovering tens of film reports and documentaries in a gunny sack in Zahedan for archiving, I was encountered during my youth with the real condition of news reports, documentaries, stock films and film rushes or unedited footages. This also guided me toward a definition of historical authenticity of filmic documents (film as representation). In August 1993, I published an article entitled “*Sāl-hā-yi Farāmūsh Shudah-yi Sīnimā dar Irān: Sīnimā va Afkār-i ‘Umūmī-sāzī dar*

¹The ethnographical film, *Grass: A Nation’s Battle for Life*, directed by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack (1925) also belongs to the end of this period.

²With an eye to Neo-formalism and rejecting too much reliance on symbolism

³As Bill Nichols in *Introduction to Documentary* (Indiana University Press, 2001) argues, “we will see the world we share as filtered through a particular perception of it” (xiv).

⁴Hāshim Khiradmand was one of the three senior members of Iranian National Cinematheque. The other two were Hākūpiyān and Farrukh Ghaffārī.

⁵Mitrā Mu'tazid, *Īrān dar Āstānah-yi Qarn-i Bīstum: Safamāmah-yi Hay'at-i Nivīsandigān va Muhaqqiqīn-i Māhnāmāh-yi National Geographic az Īrān dar Sāl-i 1300 (Iran at the Threshold of the 20th Century: Travel Writings on Iran by the Writers of National Geographic Monthly)*, with an introduction by Khusraw Mu'tazid, (Tehran: Alburz, 1997).

Sāl-hā-yi 1316 tā 1327” (Forgotten Years of Cinema in Iran: Cinema and Generalizing Thoughts in the Years 1937 to 1948), in the summer special edition of *Sīnimā* weekly magazine. An expanded version of the article was published in *Fārābī Quarterly* in winter 2001. The main purpose of the article was to explain some moments of Iranian contemporary history through cinema and with the help of these film clips from the eyes of the others. My researches were organized with the research on “Visual Remaking of Tehran” which was published by Iranian National Cinematheque. Later on, an expanded article entitled “Yaksad Sāl Tasvīr-i Shahr [Tīhrān]” (A Hundred Years of the Picture of the City [of Tehran]) was published in *Andīshah-yi Īrānshahr Quarterly* (nos. 4-5, summer and fall 2005). I then concentrated on two types of films, film rushes and stock shots in 2004 following my three contracts with Iranian National Cinematheque for “identifying five thousand unknown Iranian film reels [in addition to a collection of film rushes] and preparing review sheets and finding information about them.” Film Rushes, unedited shots and stock shots (which in this article are called film clips) are shots or scenes extracted from edited films which are sold separately. Some of these film clips were kept as “Khiradmand Films,”⁴ since 1970s and because of this name, their origin was unknown. In August 2004, at the bottom of a film box, I found a printed and signed paper with the logo of David Paradine Films company which showed that the copyright for these film clips was purchased from this company by the Iranian Film Archive. Thrilled by finding this document, I was persuaded to search for the history of that institute.

Khusraw Mu'tazid told me that in the beginning of the 1970s he went to England and Germany to select and purchase films. There was no success in England, but he managed to select and purchase 300 film clips from Chronos Films in West Germany. From this collection, whose list is published in the introduction to his book, *Īrān dar Āstānah-yi Qarn-i Bīstum (Iran at the Threshold of the Twentieth Century)*,⁵ he mentions two unseen films, Muzaffar-al-Dīn Shah in Saint Petersburg and



Sattārkhān. Hamid Naficy also mentions some of these films, including Ahmad Shah Qājār's Journey to England, in his *Iran Media Index* (1984). Shāhrukh Gulistān gained access to some stock films in Europe, too, and purchased them for the television. The collection expanded gradually. The most recent films are the film rushes that are taken by the videographers of Pate institute as well as Tsarist Russia from Iran.



Figure 2: Official ceremony for the Shah's farewell in front of the Persian Embassy in St. Petersburg.



Figure 3: A picture of official welcoming ceremony of Muzaffar al-Din Shah in Saint Petersburg.

6Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, transl. Naomi Greene (Wayne State University Press, 1988), 16.

Marc Ferro points out an important argument which is helpful in understanding the film clips from Iran: “the cinema can become an even more active agent of social or cultural awareness,”⁶ while every nation understands cinema as a contingent of its own culture. By mentioning a number of instances, Ferro delineates how a film has motivated the audiences’ emotion to take action. But the films discussed in this article do not belong to us and are not made by Iranians. Therefore, in such representations, the picture reveals a different meaning, too.

Muhammad ‘Alī Shah and the Time of the Event



Figure 4: A portrait of Muhammad ‘Alī Shah Qājār in formal attire on the cover of a Russian newspaper.

Years ago, I heard from Hūshang Kāvūsī that there was a film about Muhammad ‘Alī Shah Qājār in the archives of Russia and perhaps France. Later on, he insisted that,

In addition to Lumière filmmakers who took films from Iran on their way to China, the Russian filmmakers have also recorded an 11-minute-long film of Muhammad 'Alī Shah in the year 1909 when he took refuge in Russia, in Odessa port, when Russian soldiers were marching in front of them. I have come across this information in a catalogue in France. Years ago, I asked the Russian cinema representative in Iran to bring a copy of the film to Iran, but my request was not answered.

I made the same request about films from Qajar period from Sergei Miroshnichenko, the president of Russian Documentary Filmmakers Association, during the Documentary Film Week of Iran and the World in Tehran. He promised to look for them and if he found them, we would make a film jointly. After a while, he sent a message via Muhammad 'Alī Qāsimī, the documentary filmmaker who had gone to Russia to participate in a festival, saying that he has not found any film about the Qajar period in Iran in the governmental archives accessible to him.

But there is a footage of Muhammad 'Alī Shah which seems to be taken by a military cameraman. The king is sitting on a chair in a porch, wearing a royal jiqqah [a decorative item on the hat or the crown] on his hat, holding with his two hands a sword whose blade is touching the ground. A number of people are standing in absolute reverence in a yard whose walls are covered with flowery curtains. A guard officer, wearing the woolen hat of the royal guard, is standing in front of the king, his back to the camera, and is most likely giving him a report. In the second shot, Russian Cossacks come forward and salute the king. It is obvious that the camera has tilted a little to the left because the king is not in the frame but the angle has not changed. Colonel Liakhov (the commander of the Cossack Brigade) wearing a short beard, is in the first line accompanied by a small boy and the Cossacks are behind them. A photography camera is by the wall. A few Iranians are standing at the door and another group of Iranian Cossacks enter. Now the Iranian photographer is standing between the two groups of Cossacks. But who is the small boy standing to the

⁷This short scene and three shots of 1 minute and 55 seconds long are used in a film by Chronos Films in West Germany with the subtitle "The Heirs of Cyrus the Great".

⁸Ahmad Kasravī, *Tārīkh-i Mashrūtah-yi Īrān* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1968), 579.

⁹Ahmad Kasravī, *Tārīkh-i Mashrūtah-yi Īrān* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1968), 579.

right of Colonel Liakhov in front of the king? What time does the film belong to? I suggest that these pictures belong to June 1998, the period known as Minor Tyranny in Iran.⁷ We find the picture of the same boy with the same outfit next to Colonel Liakhov in Ahmad Kasravī's *Tārīkh-i Mashrūtah-yi Īrān* (The History of Iranian Constitutional Revolution)⁸ too. Kasravī writes, "he seems to be Muhammad Hasan Mirza, one of Muhammad 'Alī Mirza's sons." Although Kasravī makes no reference to the geography of the picture, it is published on the same page where the subject of "Mohammad 'Alī Mirza's going out of Tehran" and his trip to Bāgh-i-Shāh is narrated: "Shah wanted to leave the city and think about his battle strategies in Bāgh-i-Shāh and fight with Constitutionalists in the comfort of his garden. In the afternoon, a written note was issued by Shah saying: "Dear Sir, Mr. Mushīr-al-Dawlah, since the weather of Tehran is hot and unbearable to us, we decided to leave." (Thursday, [June 1908], Bāgh-i-Shāh Palace"); and this is only a few days before the bombardment of the parliament.

The Caravan of the Camels

Some footages entitled "A native man leads a large herd of camels loaded with material past ancient Persia"⁹ are published by Critical Past film archive and is dated 1908. The archive explains its project is these words: "Valuable footages in this video are uploaded for research purposes and presented without editing." However, it seems that this rare and very important film is edited in order to suggest the presence of camels in Persepolis. In explaining the date of this film, which cannot be called a film clip because of its being edited, it is mentioned that it is produced by the oil drilling group in Iran under the supervision of Geroge B. Reynolds who was working for an English company managed by William Knox D'Arcy.

"Iran's ancient buildings and monuments in ruins. There are statutes and king engravings, horses and half flying horse half man figures on building walls. Place: Iran. Date: 1908."



Wandering in the Pictures of the City of Tehran



Figure 5: Fath-i Tihraan (The Conquest of Tehran) Painting: The parliament and the national commanders are in the center.[mfh]The oil painting of Fath-i Tihraan (The Conquest of Tehran), Sāhibqārānīyyah Palace.[mfh]

Recently, a very short clip (32 seconds) goes from hand to hand by the title *Old Pictures of the Conquest of Tehran*, with the intention of time-framing the most direct historical documents, i.e. the film footages and unedited rushes. But these days very few people believe it to be a true picture of the conquest of Tehran because it actually belongs to five years later. However, I personally was amazed by these historical pictures for a long time and was looking for other historical evidence to understand its timeframe. The first shot of this film (the cavalry entering the city through the gate) is similar to the *Conquest of Tehran* painting; and its final shot of Bakhtiyārī chieftains is meant to suggest that we are witnessing the conquest of Tehran and the moment of Bakhtiyārī chieftains' entering into the city. The people who found the original film and selected some parts of it were so excited that they added some signs to it, too; including the very title which at first was "The Conquest of Tehran" but then the phrase "by Bakhtiyārīs" was added to it with a different typeset.



Figure 6: A very short 32-second clip titled *Film-i qadīmī az fath-i Tihṙān* (Old Footage of the Conquest of Tehran).

In the second scene (11 seconds) the camera is low and fixed. Obviously, there is a celebration going on, which I assume to be on Friday afternoon, July 16th, 1909, in Bahāristān courtyard, which is the same day that Muhammad 'Alī Shah Qājār was deposed and he took refuge in the Russian embassy in Zargandah. I assume that the people walking in the courtyard with white hats and swords must be the guards of the parliament.

These silent frames are edited with Bakhtīyārī Tushmāl music by an unknown person, with vocals by another person, and then animated by zooming several times on the picture with the rapid rhythm of Lurī music by yet another person.

In another version, before the scene of the cavalry entering through the gate of Tehran, a clip of Bakhtīyārī horse-riders is inserted. This clip is taken out of a documentary titled *Women of Persia: The Lure of the East*, which is 3 minutes and 21 seconds long, belonging to Pathé company (1931). The camera goes among the nomads' black tents of Bāsīrī tribe located three miles outside of Shiraz and produces a rather ethnographical work. Women are baking bread or weaving rugs. In the last shot, after emphasizing the burnt faces of the armed men of the



tribe, tens of them ride on horses from right side of the frame to the left and the camera skillfully travels with them. This shot from Bāsirī tribe is anachronistically added to the two shots of the film *The Conquest of Tehran* in order to make “an edited package.”¹⁰

Original Films

Further research revealed to me that the edited package of *The Conquest of Tehran* is made up of a few seconds of other rushes (unedited footages) with 29 shots entitled “Coronation of Sultan Ahmad Shah Qajar – 1914.”¹¹ There is no sign of an official archive in it. However, by superimposing the TC (Time Code) at the bottom of the frame, I found out that the time is 9 minutes and 17 seconds and each second is divided into 24 frames. Although a few shots extracted from this silent film, without the Time Code and with excellent quality, are seen in Iran from a long time ago, the video version of these films are highly important from a quantitative aspect. We have no information about how many cameras were used for shooting and how and by whom these pictures were edited. There are a number of other versions of these films, too, which are different in their lengths and the type of music and labels attached to every corner of the film.

A Historical Survey of the Picture of the City

These unedited footages provide the opportunity to observe the environment and the relations and behaviors of the people of Tehran. Visual anthropology presents a double method for the historical study of these important documents about the urban life and culture:¹² on the one hand, they are representations of the city-scape, of people with various clothes and behavior during a cultural shift, public and private places in the city, the need for observing personal and physical distances (Proxemics), and on

¹⁰In the original film, Parvīz Khan Zarghāmī Bāsirī, the sheriff of the tribe (Muhammad Khan’s father) is also seen with a gun.

¹¹It is January 1914, a few days before the beginning of the First World War: “On Friday, Ramadan 7th, January 31st, 1914, and Asad 8th, 1333 Hijri, the Austrian heir presumptive to the throne (Archduke Franz Ferdinand) who had gone to Sarajevo in Bosnia was murdered,” see ‘Ayn al-Saltanah, *Rūznāmah-yi Khātīrāt-i ‘Ayn al-Saltanah*, ed. Mas’ūd Sālūr and Īraj Afshār (Tehran: Asātīr, 1999), 4162.

¹²Marcus Banks, “Visual Research Methods,” Surrey University. 1995, accessed 22/12/2024, <https://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU11/SRU11.html>

¹³This was the third parliament; however, the third national parliament was officially inaugurated after a three-year gap in December 1914.

¹⁴Ayn al-Saltanah, Rūznāmah-yi Khātīrāt-i 'Ayn al-Saltanah, 4154.

the whole, part of a collective representation for doing a single day performance and clear documents on the signs and manifestations of the presence of the political power in the city. On the other hand, due to the lack of information about the organization responsible for the production of the picture, the content dominates over the production conditions and the motivations of the producers makes many of its aspects hidden from us.

In all these films, although we are dealing with a filmic history which is coming out of the dark room of the time, we have to compensate for the lack of historical information in the unedited silent film with library research as much as possible.

According to the article 39 of the amendment to the constitution, no king was allowed to sit on the throne unless he stood in the parliament before his coronation, took an oath on God and the Holy Quran; and this was predicated on holding elections and forming the parliament.¹³ Therefore, it can be said that the shooting essentially starts with the inauguration (oath-taking) ceremony in the national parliament. It means that in the opening shots, Ahmad Shah is taken from the court to the parliament for the inauguration.

In Rūznāmah-yi Khātīrāt-i 'Ayn al-Saltanah ('Ayn al-Saltanah Diary) we read: "The king taking the oath: 27th of Sha'bān; Today the king goes to the parliament. It is a pity I am not in Tehran. They have formed a parliament with former and ineligible representatives to at least keep countenance".¹⁴

The king is coronated and takes the oath. The newspapers rejoiced in this from three months ago as an end to this national crisis. They make a thousand promises to the oppressed people of Iran that His Majesty, with the help of the parliament, would put everything in order. They will get rid of Nāsir al-Mulk, too, and we will no longer hear these statements from Nāyib al-Saltanah, 'I am not responsible' and 'the law does not allow me' which are the highest achievements of that Hamedani man.



On page 16 of the introduction to the same 6th volume, we see a photo with the caption: “Sultan Ahmad Shah Qājār exiting the national parliament after the inauguration (the author has cut this picture from a foreign magazine and attached it to his notebook).”



Figure 7: Ahmad Shah Qājār leaving the National Consultative Assembly after the oath ceremony (Rūznāmah-yi Khātirāt-i ‘Ayn al-Saltanah, vol. 6, 16).

This photo is a very important document that makes the frames 18 and 29 meaningful and makes it clear that we are seeing the two ceremonies of “inauguration and coronation”.

It should be noted in the beginning that Tehran had two sets of gates, the gates surrounding the city and the gates inside the city. George N. Curzon, Viceroy of India (1899–1905), writes in *Persia and the Persian Question*, “these consist of lofty archways, adorned with pinnacles and towers, and presenting from a distance a showy appearance, which has caused to some incom-

¹⁵George Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, vol. 1 (Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966), 306.

ing travellers paroxysms of delight".¹⁵ However, Curzon mistakenly uses the photo of an inside wall (the Arch of Almasieh street) instead of a gate surrounding the city.

The characteristics of these black and white and silent films, which are divided into 29 shots in this article, are as follows:

1. It begins with a general shot of a city gate in distance. It is my assumption that what we see in the film is Dawlat gate with its pinnacles.¹⁶ The cavalry comes forward. It seems to be early morning because the shadows are long. It is obvious that there is no military discipline in appearance but an inner order determines the distance with the king. The camera is located high, overlooking the vast opening in front of the gate. The street is decorated with colorful (?) small papers. The ceremonial carriage with eight horses (carrying the 18-year-old Ahmad Shah) comes forward between the two rows of the cavalry. The sign of the presence of Shah in the carriage is the person with a banner that rides behind the carriage. Three footmen are running on the two sides of the carriage. The carriage goes by, and hundreds of horsemen get behind the carriage. The camera tilts down slowly. The cavalry pass from beneath the camera. This shot is taken in two shoots with a short interval and from the same angle.
2. (min. 1, sec. 4) in several frames, the cavalry is seen from behind.
3. Public demonstration (without women?) on a holiday: (min. 1, sec. 5) A closer frame. Somewhere like a shop. The walls are decorated and the colorful papers are sewn with a thread and installed above. Men and young boys are standing on the two sides of a full-length mirror and a candlestick and lighted lamps facing the camera. The first person on the left is holding a bowl. It seems that a man with a big drum is standing on the right. We do not know how the recording of the event is made possible but we can assume that it has been with the help of the police.
4. (min. 1, sec. 17, long shot, about 1 second) Under an awning



in the street, there is another decorated shop.¹⁷

5. (min. 1, sec. 18; to min. 1, sec. 34) the camera is placed high. The cavalry is going behind the carriage. People are watching, standing on the left of the street. The right side of the street is filled with military men.

6. (about 1 second) A few people wearing ties are standing around a closed door. There is something happening in the left side of the frame but it is not visible because the picture is blurred (the beginning of frame number 11). Notably, there are one or two men in ties in the streets among people of the city.

7. (min. 1, sec. 36; to min. 1, sec. 48) The two-floor building of Royal Bank. On the top of the gate of this building, there are two flags of Iran and Britain. This is the bank that printed bank notes for Iran and from which Nāsir al-Mulk got a loan of one hundred thousand pounds to cover the expenses of that day.

8. (min. 1, sec. 49) The picture is taken from below. Ahmad Shah Qājār, holding a sword, is sitting on Marmar throne in Gulistān Palace (until min. 2, sec. 1).

9. (until min. 2, sec. 40) A corner of the street. The carriage is in front of the door. Ahmad Shah comes out. The picture is suddenly cut (it is related to shot 15 and the same place. Obviously, it is taken out of that shot because it has created a jump in shot 15).

10. (min. 2, sec. 5; to min. 2, sec. 42) Six Qājār noblemen, in the national parliament courtyard, are exchanging newspapers or writings beside the pool. The picture is distorted. It is obvious that this shot is designed for a cinematic project but the details are not remembered (so far).

11. (blurry picture, continuation of scene 6). Ahmad Shah comes out of a room into a lighted place where a few men in suits are standing on the left of the frame. The camera is in the end of the room. One man approaches to welcome the king. On the right side, we can see a round circle which seems to be a doll (or a dwarf) which is moved by someone from above (I hope in clearer versions or by referring to other sources, the details of this scene would be recognized more.)

¹⁸The description of this stamp (dated 1914/1332) in *Asār-i 'Ajam* [History of the Persians] by Fursat al-Dawlah (1896) (no. 23 following pages 178 and 179): “A king is sitting on the chair, with a cane in one hand and a flower in the other hand, and a small stool is under his feet and a fly-net is held over his head.”

12. The continuation of the scene 4, the streets and shops and clothes.

13. (min. 2, sec. 59; to min. 3, sec. 27) in Gulistān Palace (medium shot). Ahmad Shah comes up two steps on the stairs. A wide white baldric passes from right to left through the epaulette of his long, collared coat. Holding a sword, he sits on the throne known as Soleimani and salutes with his right hand. A tassel is attached on the end of his white baldric. In this scene, we see Ahmad Shah “sitting on the throne” but we do not see the moment he takes off his Hashtarkhānī hat and puts the crown on. There is a picture of Fath-‘Alī Shah wearing the crown. Similar pictures exist of Nāser-al-Dīn Shah, Mufazzar al-Dīn Shah and Muhammad ‘Alī Shah. But the question is why in all the photos taken from Ahmad Shah, he is not wearing the crown. Even the stamps issued by Iran government’s post for this day only show the crown or some pictures of Persepolis.¹⁸



Figure 8: Stamps issued by the “Post of the Exalted Government (Dawlat-i ‘Allīyyah) of Iran,” featuring the crown and images of Persepolis.

Ahmad Shah’s picture is not recorded most probably because of the lighting situation and the low sensitivity of negative films in that age which necessitated the use of artificial light and wiring. However, the fact that there is no photo of this ceremony is probably due to the circumstances in Audience Hall (Tālār-i

Salām) at the time of coronation. Hasan Arfa', who claims to have been working in "the throne-room," describes the ceremony in this way:

¹⁹Hassan Arfa, *Under Five Shahs* (London: John Murray, 1964), 55-56.

The audience consisted of the Cabinet Ministers, the heads of missions, a few Olema, a few generals and the top foreign advisers, altogether not more than some 120 persons. I was on duty in the throne-room and saw the ceremony which was far from sumptuous. When all the persons present had taken their places, the Shah appeared and after acknowledging the greetings of the audience, he who bowed, went straight to the throne and sat down on it. The military band which was in the garden played the National Anthem. Then two religious dignitaries approached, one from each side, and a Court official tendered to them the Imperial Crown on a velvet cushion. The Qajar crown was rather high, entirely covered with pearls and surmounted by a diamond aigrette. The two Olema took the crown together and put it on the Shah's head after he had removed his black astrakhan cap with the big diamond in front and a more modest aigrette, and had handed it to a Court dignitary. The crown was heavy, and when the Olema removed their hands it nearly fell off, the Shah being obliged to seize it and to hold it for a few minutes until protocol allowed him to remove it and give it back to the courtier. After that he again put on his black cap and listened to speeches and poems recited by Court dignitaries, the cannon firing 101 shots. The whole ceremony lasted about forty minutes, after which the Shah came down from his throne and disappeared through the small door, while the military band played again the National Anthem.¹⁹



Figure 9: A still from Ahmad Shah Qājār's coronation at Gulistān Palace.

14. (min. 3, sec. 27) The carriage passes under the triumphal arch in a decorated street which is crowded with the cavalry and the police.

15. (min. 4, sec. 44) The camera is in a high position and the carriage enters from below. The horsemen who are riding the horses on the left, turn the horses and the carriage in a way that it stops right in front of the door. As we have seen in 'Alī Hātami's film, *Kumītah-yi Mujāzāt* (Punishment Committee), the carriages have cushions and seats for the driver to sit, and it is clear in this shot (min. 3, sec. 56) that eight horses are dragging the carriage in four rows and four horsemen are riding the horses on the left. A chandelier and colorful papers are hanging above the door. Before Ahmad Shah exits the narrow gate of the palace, the soldiers exit. A man holding the royal white flag goes to the other side of the carriage and holds the flag leaning down. A horseman holding a white flag and other soldiers have the situation under control. There are two armed men beside the door. Ahmad Shah comes through the door from among the military men and even the farthest helmeted ceremonial officer visible in the picture bows down. Ahmad Shah goes toward the carriage and as soon as he gets on it, the film cuts off (min. 4, sec. 12). Probably this is the exit from the [oldest] door of the national parliament to go to the Gulistān Palace.

16. In a decorated street, two curious boys stop in front of the camera and then pass on. Here I want to point out the significant difference between this film in the city and the films of Mirza Ibrāhīm Khan 'Akkāsbāshī. Mirza's films are in three categories: Films in the courtyard of the palace, films outside the palace, and the film on the roof (which is fully organized and features a clear *mise-en-scène*). In films in the courtyard, the camera is completely free and works among court officials and gets close to them. But the films outside the court are always taken from above and with a distance from people. The camera never goes into the street. While in the film about Ahmad Shah's coronation, the cameraman and the production group have taken a measure to go into the city. The idea is to use guards, and one can feel it in every moment of the film.

17. Another street. A triumphal arch is built in the distance. It is extremely hot in the summer of Tehran and some of the young men have not fastened *shāl* [a traditional wide belt] on their *qabā* [a traditional long coat], and most of the *qabās* are open; however, all men are wearing *namadī* hats [traditional wool hats] and I did not see anyone without *qabā* except a few kids and a poor man. A man is throwing water in the street with a bucket. A carriage approaches. A woman, wearing a white veil over a black *chador*, enters the frame from the right. In the beginning it is obvious that she has pushed the veil aside to see the filming crew. Then she drops the veil and walks away quickly (to min. 4, sec. 42).

18. (min. 4, sec. 43) After the inauguration [oath-taking] ceremony: In national parliament courtyard. The scene begins with the picture of a few Cossacks with *foutragères* (military awards) in heavy clothes and large white hats who are waiting for someone to enter. Three footmen in suits, wearing ties over their white collared shirts and a wide ribbon on their jackets, over which they are wearing *sardārī* [long overcoats] without buttons, carrying something like long, narrow and ceremonial spears (with an ivory head) come toward the camera. Behind them, we can see Ahmad Shah wearing a hat and a baldric on his right and a sword on his left side. Behind him, Muhammad

Hasan Mirza (heir presumptive) and military men can be seen (min. 5, sec. 13). Ahmad Shah passes in front of the camera without noticing it, contrary to Muzaffar al-Dīn Shah (in Mirza Ibrāhīm Khan 'Akkāsbāshī). The shot number 29 (the last shot) with the building in the background and its atmosphere, exactly belongs to this place. Considering the logical process of filming, and according to the document in 'Ayn al-Saltanah Diary, and also considering the angle of the sun, these shots are taken in the morning.

19. (min. 5, sec. 15; to min. 5, sec. 30) A fixed picture of a full-length mirror and several candlesticks arranged on a long table and 10 young men, wearing new shāl and qabā, standing on both sides. One of them has thrown a scarf over his left shoulder, has a white shirt on, has his namadī hat on, fastened a shāl over his qabā and poses in front of the camera. Another man is wearing his shāl under his qabā. The man wearing a moustache, a white neat suit and collared shirt and standing near the table must be the manager. They are aware of the presence of the camera and each one of them are trying to be seen without blocking the others.

20. (min. 5, sec. 31; to min. 6) A crowded square on the corner of which a triumphal arch is built. Colorful papers in the shape of triangles and rectangles are hanging in a corner of the square. In the middle of the street, everything gets in order: an officer, not very far from the camera, puts his feet together and stands aptly. Suddenly, the passers-by get in a line on his right. In other words, they take military order in front of the camera. After the officer leaves, the people disperse. One or two of them come near the camera, but they are obviously rejected by an officer. On the right side of the square, a large rug is hung from a building roof as decoration, and on the left, lighted candlesticks can be seen. The presence of the camera and the European cameraman has clearly created a spectacle, too. The curious young boys and men in namadī hats looking at the camera and at each other is remarkable in this scene.

21. (min. 6 to min. 6, sec. 45) A general and deep shot: the courtyard of Gulistān Palace is filmed from the south to the



north in a general shot. The shadows of the trees and the people on the right which are cast in the pool reveal that it is still before noon. Above the stand there is a flag of Iran whose white part in the middle, with the sun and lion symbols, is wider than the two other parts of green and red. The camera pans to correct its frame. Various military groups have formed lines with a distance from each other on the two sides of the fountain pool facing Takht-i Marmar. At the end of this shot, the military groups leave the courtyard. The ceremony is over.

22. (min. 6, sec. 43) Ceremony for exiting and getting in the carriage. Ahmad Shah comes forward, answers the greetings of the welcomers, climbs up the carriage steps and gets in. The footman hastily closes the stairs and the carriage door. The welcomers take a bow when the carriage starts to move. From the right side of the frame, a European woman wearing a white wide-brimmed hat and standing in the first line, enters the frame. She looks at the camera (it seems that she is about to be informed if she has entered the frame or not), then she turns her head. The carriage and the cavalry start moving. The lady in white hat makes a curtesy in the European fashion. The flag-bearer runs behind the carriage.

23. (min 7, sec. 5; to min. 7, sec 11) the same shot from another angle. The lady in white hat is not seen.

24. (general view) The ceremonial carriage with the throng of cavalry and the same white flag goes toward a decorated triumphal arch and the camera tilts up slowly. On the right side of the street, military men are standing and join the cavalry behind the carriage. It seems that a black curtain is drawn between the pavement and the street, so that the spectators would stand behind it. It is obvious that extreme security measures are taken in the street (until min. 7, sec. 44).

25. Under a dark shelter, a man is sitting with his back to the camera, and a chandelier is lighted above his head. The sun is shining directly and considering the short shadows, it must be noon. The table is set. What is going on? It is a poor neighborhood. A man in ragged clothes, with bare feet and a child in his arms, his hair cut in front, comes forward carefully and stands

in the line on the left. A poor and bare-footed boy wants to enter, but is hindered by a man holding a kerchief, probably because of the camera. Another man sends him in. It seems that they are receiving something and exiting from the right.

26. (min. 8, sec. 2) Five men in new clothes, wearing ties and vests and looking modern, are standing in a group, their backs to the light. Their faces are not seen clearly. Some people are looking at them or at the camera from a distance. It seems that the second person from the left is 'Alī Qulī Khan Ansārī (Mushāvīr al-Mamālik).

27. (min. 8, sec. 5) Obviously it is filmed in the afternoon because the eastern part of Tūpkhānah square is light. Two-horse carriages pass by quickly. Two large flags of Iran and England are installed over the two-floor building of the Royal Bank. An Iranian family, the mother wearing a veil and the father wearing qabā with their young adult son, go across the square. Then, the same European lady with the white hat and white and short-sleeved blouse, accompanied with a man in a white shirt, go across the street. They are returning from the ceremony (!). This lady is most likely the English ambassador's wife because she is filmed standing under the flag of England and looking at the camera. On the right of the frame, the arch of Chirāgh-Gāz street can be seen.

28. (until min. 8, sec. 27) Again, the two large flags over the Royal Bank in a closer shot. (min. 8, sec. 28) In a surrealist scene, a man carrying a white umbrella and a woman wearing a mask pass in front of the camera. This is the third time the flag of England is emphasized, which strengthens the possibility that the cameraman and the producer are English.

29. (min. 8, sec. 30) It is my assumption that the shot number 29 is only placed in the final part but belongs to the inauguration ceremony and is the continuation of the shot number 18 because the shadows have the same shape as this scene. In other words, in a collection of footages which are apparently not without edit, a scene is cut and divided into two parts. But why? Perhaps to create social distance. In this shot, a few important political and military figures, such as Lieutenant General 'Alī



Qulī Khan Sardār As‘ad, are seen in the parliament courtyard (and going toward the exit?)

Editing, slow-motion and music: The editing of this scene (in an unknown date) has probably taken place for political or social reasons; however, turning it into slow-motion and repeating the scene for three times is certainly carried out in the digital age because it is done after time-coding and the second counter is repeated on 8th minute and 59th second. In other words, the footage is edited, manipulated and covered with music in order to add a new meaning to it.

In addition, one can note that the cameraman or the news cameramen were fully supported for working in the city and inside the palaces as well as for approaching figures. We have no information about how the film was used primarily outside of Iran.

Russian/English Film Footages

The films *Qamah-Zanī* (Shākhisī-Vākhisī), *Qatār-i Tabriz Julfa* (Tabriz-Julfa Railway), *Qarār-dād-i 1921*, (Treaty of 1921), *Mardum-i shahr-i Hamadān* (People of the City of Hamadan) and the film footage *Taymūrtāsh* and deleted or extra shots—which Iranian editors call *outi* (dispensable)—from the film *Kishvar-i Shīr u Khurshīd* (The Land of Lion and Sun, 1935), an old Russian documentary about Iran, directed by Vladimir Alekseevich Erofeev. I introduced these films for the first time in Iran on April ²¹, 2016, at the Iran National Museum during the Fajr Film Festival. A few years earlier, during a conference on the Qājār period at the University of St. Andrews, ‘Alīrizā Qāsimkhān had obtained them from an English Ph.D. student in history, Alexander Fisher. These films are known as the F version. What I presented in that session were mainly the findings of my studies on this F version. All the footages had Russian intertitles. My methodology in that research was understanding the context by trying to read the titles and identifying historical

²⁰This filming company had a military department.

²¹“Sarnivisht-i Tārikhī-i Rāh-āhan-i Julfā-Tabriz,” *Tin-News*, September 23, 2014. accessed 22/12/2024, <https://shorturl.at/zxxsW>.

²²Now, it is a border city in Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, part of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

²³The date is mentioned as May 6, 1916, see the official website of Shanb-i Ghāzān: <http://www.shanbeghazan.ir/>

figures, and then referring to written documents and information and metatextual analyses. Finally, each film was placed in its historical context.

The Inauguration of Tabriz-Julfa Railway (1916)

The film is produced by a news filming company, Skobelev Committee,²⁰ in Petrograd, 1916, one year before the October Revolution and two years after Ahmad Shah Qajar’s coronation. The agreement for building the railway was signed by Vusūq al-Dawlah, the minister of foreign affairs, on 25th of February 1913. “This railroad was made by a contract with the Russian Loan Bank with a 75-year concession. The right for discovery and exploring of mines on the two sides of the railroad up to 40 kilometers was also granted to the concessioner and the government of Iran received half of the net interest income of the railway. With this agreement, the two railroads of Tabriz-Julfa and Sūfīyān-Sharafkhānah were quickly built and were used by the Russians during the First World War to transfer troops and military equipment.”²¹

The train started its journey from the border city of Julfa,²² received a military welcome at its stations along the way in the USSR, passed the Aras River (the border between Iran and Russia), and continued toward Tabriz. On its way and on the iron bridges over Aras, colorful papers and the flags of Iran and Russian Empire were installed.²³ The train passes over rivers and through the plains and reaches Shanb-i Ghāzān in Tabriz and is received warmly by people and the heads of Qājār government. The engineers of the train and the representatives of the Tsarist Russian government are welcomed with horse-riding shows.

Hamadan and the Cannon Facing the City

The title of the film is written in Russian as “General View of Hamadan” and starts with a cannon on a hill facing the city.





Figure 10: (Left): A frame of the film *The Cannon Aimed at the City*.
Figure 11 (Right): The film clip is titled in Russian: *A View of Hamadan*.

In *Views of the City*²⁴ (40th second), after a high stone wall, we see some kids standing over the castle and waving to the camera. A man is sitting in front of a soil-colored mosque whose gate is whitened with plaster only. A few people enter the frame with their donkeys. The camera pans over the city. A river is flowing down below. (min. 1, sec. 50): A few women wearing veils are coming forward in a narrow alley. Only two of them approach the camera and say hello by nodding their heads. (min. 2, sec. 10) A woman in chador (without veil) is walking in a square. She shows her face a little, bows in front of the camera and exits the frame quickly.

(min. 2, sec. 45) Close by, an officer who is standing in front of a few people starts walking toward the camera and waves to others to get moving. His pith helmet and clothes show that his is English. Therefore, I assume that the Russian intertitles are not proofs that the film is also a Russian film. The cannon facing the city can be a sign that the film most likely belongs to the period of the occupation of Hamedan by English forces in the First World War. (sec. 10) After seeing a man smoking a water pipe or qalyān [a traditional smoking device], we see a 10- to 12-year-old boy wrestling with a bear cub in the square.

Signing the Treaty of 1921 and the Trade Agreement of 1927

In F version, I came across an unedited film which was placed after the film *The Land of Lion and Sun*. We deal with two events in it, whose main parts take place in the Russian ministry of foreign affairs and Iranian Consulate in Moscow. I assume that the film that is placed first belongs to 1927 and the trade agreement; and the next film belongs to the treaty of 1921. In the film showing the trade agreement, the Russian minister of foreign affairs and Lev Karakhan are both older; Karakhan has white hair and the minister has a cane in his hands. In the second collection, Minister Georgy Chicherin does not have a cane and Karakhan is very young. The agreement papers and the staff who seal them are not the same, either. A metatextual research showed that we are dealing with two films showing two historical meetings in Moscow:

Signing the Treaty of 1921: This is a visual document of an important historical moment. ‘Alī Qulī Khan Mas‘ūd Ansārī is sent to Russia by Ahmad Shah three years after the October Revolution to discuss the issues between the two countries with the officials of the new government. ‘Alī Qulī Khan Mas‘ūd Ansārī’s diplomatic trip to Russia took place in 1920 and lasted for more than five months. The film *Signing the Treaty* is very thorough and very close. In the first scene, we see the Iranian embassy in Russia. A map of Iran is on the wall. Mushāvīr al-Mamālīk is sitting behind his desk and reading some papers or conversing with the staff. The film gives a complete picture of the working place environment of the Iranians. The Iranian representative is taken to the ministry of foreign affairs by car. “The two great parties” agreed on mutual commitments in 26 articles. By Treaty of 1921, the imperialistic treaty of 1907 was annulled.





Figure 12: Mushāvir al-Mamālik signing the Treaty of 1921 (a frame of the film).

In a scene of the film, Chicherin and ‘Alī Qulī Khan both give a speech while sitting at a table and then the treaty is signed by Karakhan, ‘Alī Qulī Khan Mas‘ūd Ansārī and then Russian minister of foreign affairs on February 26th, 1921, five days after the 1921 coup d’etat in Moscow. We can clearly see that the two copies of the signed treaty are sealed with a lighted candle by the staff. The Treaty of 1921 was endorsed by Ahmad Shah on January 24, 1922. The important point in this film is that Mushāvir al-Mamālik was accompanied by a team whose names are never mentioned anywhere.²⁵

The First News Report

The nitrate film entitled Georges Ismaloff & Cie Tehran (Perse) is the last moving picture of the Qājār period and represents the transition to a new age of news-reporting and news films by Iranians. Before this, there is no internal report on officials visiting governmental and military institutions. Only Tabriz Newspaper on April 8, 1925, announces the screening of the likeness of Ra’īs al-Vuzarā in Tabriz cinemas with the permission of the screening committee. The meaning of “likeness” is not clear, but I personally have seen this oldest news film by George Ismā‘īluf frame by frame. It has three intertitles: a) the gradua-

²⁵Two other film footages, Qamah-zanī [with no evident date] and Signing the Trade Agreement of 1927 in 8 articles, are also seen in this collection, which belong to the first years of Pahlavi government.

²⁶Brigadier General Nakhjavān (Amīr Muvassaq) was the principal of Nizām School at that time.

²⁷Mohammad Tahaminejad, dir., *Sinimā-yi Irān: az Mashrūṭīyyat tā Sipantā* (documentary, Iran, 1970).

tion ceremony of the third year of the School for Civil Service Officials and the allocation of offices on October 12, 1925; b) Brigadier General Muhammad Khan Nakhjavān visiting the students of Military School;²⁶ c) entrance of his excellency Mr. Pahlavi, the prime minister, into the school. The film ends with this intertitle: “This is the first time a film is made in Iran and developed in Iran.” Khānbābā Mu’tazidī also ended his oldest experimental film with a similar remark.²⁷ Obviously, both of them were unaware of the development of Mirza Ibrāhīm Khan ‘Akkāsbāshī’s films and Mubārakah photo studio in Gulistān Palace. It is likely that George Ismā’īluf showed his first news report in his own cinemas.

