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TA'ZIYEH

RITUAL AND DRAMA IN IRAN

Edited by

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Foreword

It would be commonplace to say that tradition, both good and bad, is being swept away by the onslaught of technology and modernism. We need not concern ourselves here with the reasons except to inquire: is this because of a hatred for the impoverished conditions of yesteryear's living, or because of an eagerness to embrace new Western ways, or because of an inherent weakness of the traditions themselves—or possibly a combination of the three? What is definite is that the third world, with the exception of miraculous Japan (these monks that brew modern electronics) and to a certain extent India, is giving up its traditions.

I am certain that if students of anthropology had turned to Ta'ziyeh forty-eight years ago when it was banned by the Iranian Government for sociopolitical reasons, a major share of the Iranian National Theatre today would be plays (with or without religious subject-matter) directly derived from Ta'ziyeh: but much to our regret, this was not the case. Ta'ziyeh had almost been isolated in certain distant villages when individual Iranian scholars such as Bahram Baizai (1965), Mayel Baktash and myself (1971) began to turn their attention to it.

In the autumn of 1959 a Ta'ziyeh fragment was included in Parviz

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The Ta'ziyeh and Related Arts

SAMUEL R. PETERSON

Whether in the field of calligraphy, manuscript illumination, architecture or minor arts, the Iranian artist has continually revised conventional norms of Islamic art to enhance and to revive them with a clearly definable Iranian character. Occasionally his innovation is so original that the result is not at all a revision of a general norm but an independent and indigenous creation, one which properly qualifies as an Iranian phenomenon. Certainly a spectacular case in point is the religious theatre of Shi'a Iran, the Ta'ziyeh. Within the Islamic tradition which generally opposes human representation, simply as theatre, the Ta'ziyeh is a unique development for any Islamic nation; that it should evolve in Iran, however, is consistent with the country's history of artistic innovations. Our concern here is not in the institution of the Ta'ziyeh theatre itself but in the curious impact it had on Persian architecture and painting, an impact which is no less amazing than the theatre's own development.

THE TAKIYEH

The term *takiyeh,* as used in Iran to refer to sites used for Shi'a communal mourning ceremonies, is applied to any site used for such

purposes, whether it be a simple arena at the crossroads of a town or an elaborate building to accommodate an audience of thousands. However, to survey the history of the *takiyeh* (or *husseiniyeh* as it also is commonly known), it is advantageous to distinguish between the various sites traditionally used for mourning ceremonies in general and the permanent theatres built in the late nineteenth century primarily for housing Ta'ziyeh dramas.

TAKIYEH SITES AND EARLY TAKIYEH THEATRES, CA. 1770-1840

Ibn al-Athir's comment that in the tenth century coarse cloth tents were erected in Baghdad for Muharram ceremonies basically defines what were, until the advent of the Ta'ziyeh dramas, the essential needs for a mourning ceremony site: an open space with shelter for those participating.[1] Even after Ta'ziyeh dramas were introduced and then established as a standard part of the mourning ceremony program, the *maidans,* mosques, private residences, and other sites which customarily had been used for ceremonies were simply adapted to accommodate Ta'ziyeh productions by providing provisional stages. Each had its separate advantages. Royal *maidans* such as that outside the Gulestan Palace in Tehran and the Maidan-e Shah in Isfahan were suitable for the large audiences attracted by ceremonies sponsored by the court, whereas an advantage of smaller sites such as a mosque or a private residence was the *houz* which, customarily a feature of the courtyard, could easily be converted into a stage by covering it with wooden planks. Additional advantages of the private residence were the convenience of a kitchen for the preparation of tea, sherbets, and refreshments for the audience, and the separate sections of the house which were used for differentiated seating: rooms looking onto the court served as loges for honored guests, the court for the general public and, if attendance was large, the roof for women and children (Ill.1). Besides these makeshift adaptations of established architectural settings, occasionally, even during the Safavid period, there were provisional buildings erected specifically for mourning ceremonies. For ceremonies held in 1636 to commemorate the death of Ali, Olearius states that a "maison" was built outside Samankha in the province of Shirvan; subsequently in the early eighteenth century de Bruins reports that eulogies were delivered "... upon theatres erected for that purpose." However, Olearius' description and drawing of the building indicate it was a simple structure built to provide seating for local dignitaries, whereas the "theatres" of de Bruins were little more than a scaffolding.[2] Neither can qualify as architecture, or even as a prototype for the later *takiyeh* theatres.

The earliest recorded evidence which at least suggests a permanent building dedicated to the use of mourning ceremonies is an inscription which, according to Henri Massé, is dated 1202/1786 and is in a building in

Astarabad he identifies as "a Darvish monastery *(tekye)*." The inscription as translated in his publication is as follows:

> It is the azured castle which speaks of paradise, the day that the Sultan of Kerbela was killed. It is the *tekyeh* which creates a stir even unto the divine throne, because of the plaintive cries of the devotees of Kerbela. The vault of its portal, like unto the sky, is so black because of the smoke of the nightly sighs of the captives of Kerbela. This place all gilded which had become so black, it is by the fire of the accursed Yazid, that dog of an imposter, on a day when, like a cypress, the body of the Knight of the faith (Husayn) fell in the middle of the plain of Kerbela. From that day until now, all the world weeps in the edifice of the *ta'zyeh* hall of the martyrs of Kerbela. This *tekye* also starts the tears of its builder, for he is himself a [humble] atom protected by the Sultan of Kerbela. Oh Lord! The sons of Sadiq the unhappy and of his father, pardon them for the love of the prince of martyrs of Kerbela.

Rowzeh-khani in courtyard of private residence.
From C. J. Wills, *Land of the Lion and the Sun* (London, 1893).

> Intelligence instructs me to inscribe the date 1201 [1786] for the *tekye* of the Sultan of saints.[3]

Although *takiyeh* is defined by Massé as "a Darvish monastery" (i.e., the abode or quarters of Sufis and dervishes) and the Astarabad building perhaps was used as such, the inscription quoted above clearly identifies the site as a place where mourning ceremonies are held. "The edifice of the *ta'zyeh* hall" in which all the world weeps for the martyrs of Kerbela may have been in reference to only a section of the Sufi *takiyeh* or perhaps referred to the entire *"takyeh"* building. In either case, the significance of the inscription is that a *"ta'zyeh* hall" for mourning ceremonies was identified, according to information recorded by Massé, as early as 1786.

As indicated thus far, the term *takiyeh* defines different types of buildings—a Sufi quarters and a Ta'ziyeh theatre. The two meanings are not contradictory and in fact illuminate certain aspects in the history of the development of *takiyeh* architecture. Throughout the Safavid, Zand, and Qajar periods, the program for mourning ceremonies traditionally was divided into two activities, a distinction emphasized by Chardin and subsequently repeated by others.[4] In summary, the *rowzeh-khani* (i.e., the reading of eulogies) was attended by all the populace but generally was the only devotion participated in by the elite and more orthodox; the more public processions, particularly popular with the lower classes, were performed either separately or after public *rowzeh-khani* gatherings. The processions proceeded through streets, bazaars, and *maidans* of towns, and the route often included a tomb, one which frequently was located on the outskirts of the community. The reason for such a station was, of course, that the procession was to simulate a pilgrimage to Alid tombs, particularly to Imam Hussein's tomb in Kerbela.[5] However, another reason for such stations was that tombs—or else buildings immediately in their vicinity—frequently were the *takiyeh* quarters where Sufis, serving as tomb custodians, resided.[6] Because Sufis played a conspicuous and vital role in the ceremonies and particularly in processions,[7] their *takiyeh* with substitutes for Alid shrines naturally became major stations in the routing of processions.

Because definitive dating for the earliest dramatizations of the histories of the Kerbela martyrs remains somewhat controversial, for purposes of convenience here the beginning of Ta'ziyeh dramas is assigned to the 1770s—that is, to the decade before William Francklin's account of the rather complete staging of several Ta'ziyeh *majles* he witnessed in Shiraz in 1787.[8] Although the Astarabad *takiyeh,* which is dated a year later than Francklin's account, included a *"ta'zyeh* hall," it is identified—by the only source, unfortunately, available here—as a Sufi *takiyeh.* By 1808 Ta'ziyeh dramas had become so popular and successful a part of the program for mourning periods that Tancoigne remarks that "the last five representa-

tions" of the Kerbela story were performed "on a theatre erected opposite the king's kiosk in the court of the Gulestan Palace." [9] When James Fraser in 1833 and William Holmes in 1844 separately mention being lodged during their travels in the northern provinces in a *takiyeh* for want of a more suitable hostel, each describes the building as "a shed" yet defines the *takiyeh* as a building used for the "ceremonies" or "solemnities" of Muharram.[10] To none of the other *takiyeh* which the two travelers encounter is ascribed any architectural merit. In describing Muharram celebrations in Astarabad, Holmes reports that the actors' pay is included in the expenses of the *takiyeh* [11] and that "in every mahal of the town, one of more large buildings, called *takiyehs,* had been prepared at the expense of the inhabitants, or by some rich individual, as an act of devotion for the various performances of the season." [12] Notwithstanding, then, the inscription in the Astarabad *takiyeh,* the practice of establishing permanent theatres would seem to date from a somewhat earlier period than these reports—that is, from the 1820s.

If the *takiyeh* which was a Sufi quarters was the namesake of the theatres finally built for housing ceremonies and particularly the Ta'ziyeh dramas, such quarters had little impact on the type of theatre architecture which did evolve. Even before the practice of building theatres was established, the term *takiyeh* had already been adapted to designate any site used for ceremonies, including such primitive locations as crossroads fitted with only a rudimentary stage. Once its general meaning no longer referred so specifically to Sufi quarters or tombs but designated sites for ceremonies as well, the term increasingly was applied to the new theatres which steadily were becoming a conspicuous element of the architecture of Iranian communities. Indeed, the only significant links between the Sufi/tomb *takiyeh* and theatre architecture were first, a theatre occasionally was built adjacent to an extant tomb, in which case the whole became a *takiyeh* complex; and second, the Sufi/tomb *takiyeh* suggested to individual founders the practice of having their remains buried on the premises of their private theatres. In summary, although provisional sites continued to be used throughout the history of the Ta'ziyeh, the earliest examples of theatres erected specifically for housing ceremonies and Ta'ziyeh productions seem to date after the first two decades of the nineteenth century and to occur mainly in the Caspian provinces, an area which traditionally was, of course, a stronghold of Shi'a forces.

Takiyeh Theatres, 1840-1933

A *takiyeh* finally credited with some magnificence and which qualifies among the more grand theatres of the last six decades of the nineteenth century is one that was attended by Lady Sheil in Tehran in 1849. She mentions that the founder of the *takiyeh* was "the Prime Minister" and

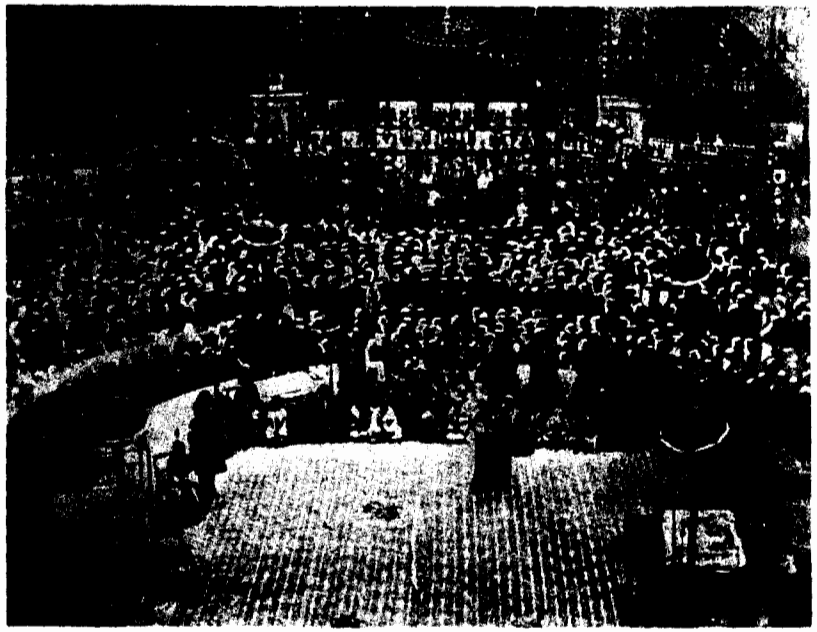
describes the building as "immense, holding several thousand persons" and having two tiers of boxes surrounding the central arena which were reserved for the Shah, his relatives and wives, and Iranian and foreign ministers. Yet her comment that "the stage ... was formed of a large elevated platform in the middle of the pit ... revealing, to the entire destruction of all exercise of the imagination, mysteries which ought to pass behind the curtain" [13] suggests that neither production techniques nor the traditional arrangements of earlier, provisional sites was greatly altered.

In his elaborate accounts of the Ta'ziyeh made during two extended stays in Iran between 1855 and 1863, Comte de Gobineau mentions that each *mahal* in Tehran maintains a *takiyeh* and that since no state funds are spent on the Ta'ziyeh, several ministers as well as the Shah himself are to be included among patrons of the more prestigious theatres.[14]

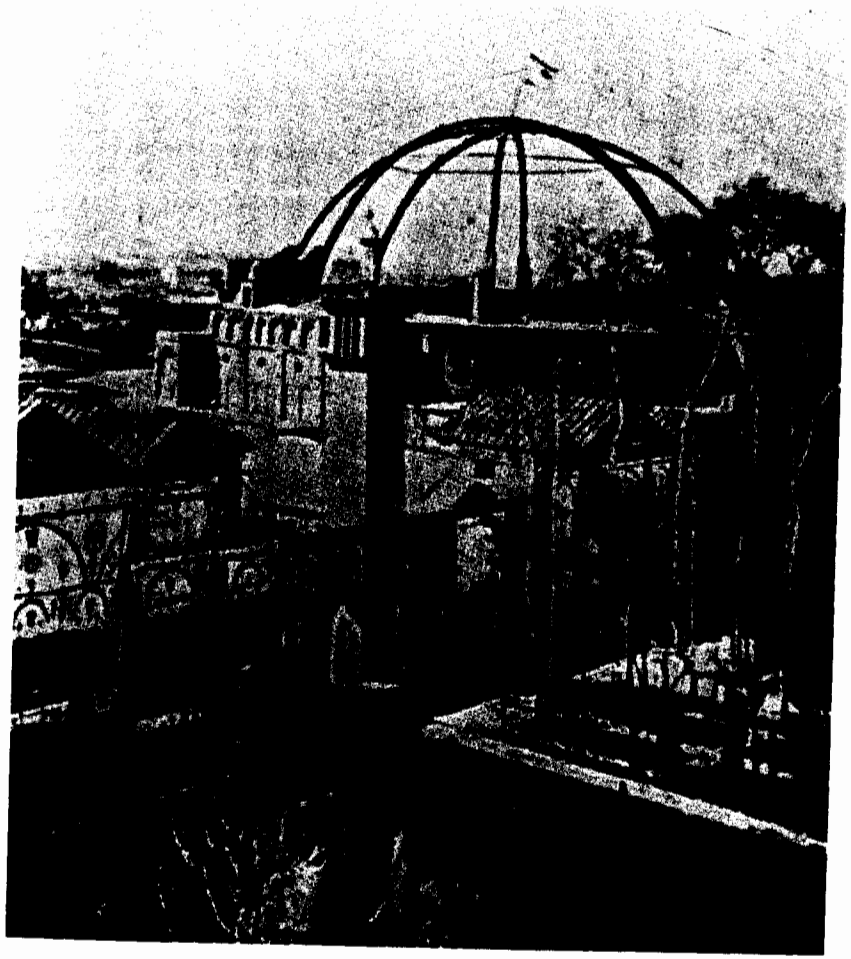
When Naser al-Din Shah traveled to England in 1873, he attended a concert at Albert Hall and was so impressed that when he returned to Tehran he required his engineers to build a similar monument beside the Gulestan Palace to serve as a royal *takiyeh* (Ills. 2 and 3).[15] Although one traveler remarks that the Takiyeh Dawlat in fact bore little resemblance to its London prototype, the immense circular brick building which was built was somewhat a marvel of Qajar engineering (e.g., walls were estimated to be approximately 24.4 meters in height and 15.0 meters in thickness at ground level; the hall supposedly could accommodate two to three thousand persons). The central arena, surrounded by three tiers of arched loges entered from a vaulted hall, featured two stages (the *saku* in the center and the *taqnama* at the side) which were used separately or simultaneously during a single performance. The only other architectural provision for performers was a large white marble *minbar* from which *rowzeh-khani* was read. Compensation for the immoderate costs to the crown in erecting such a monumental building was partly realized through annual revenues from subscriptions for loges sold to the rising nobility and elite, a sum which one year amounted to 16,250 *qeran* (488 pounds sterling).[16] After the early 1880s the interior walls, previously neither whitewashed nor plastered, were covered with faïence revetments. To light the hall, besides candles once estimated to number five thousand, four electric lights were added to the large central chandelier suspended from ceiling arches, but by 1890 the project to install electric lighting was abandoned. The decoration of the exterior consisted of occasional faïence tile towers crowning the cornice and a typical Qajar portal of faïence-faced bricks and *'ayineh kari* covering *muqarnas* niches, the effect of which was ornate enough so that it was described as having "the geegaw, pretentious, vulgar and ephemeral style" of an English amusement palace.[17] So colossal was the structure of the building that engineers were unable to erect the dome the Shah considered worthy of his project. In its place a system was devised by which canvas awnings were stretched across a framework of wooden arches reinforced by

iron braces, a feature which so annoyed the Shah that members of the foreign community intervened to convince him that the dome he had envisioned was physically impossible with the materials available to the Persian builders. When the Shah died, the royal *takiyeh* was used as the site where his body lay in state; [18] that "chained beasts" were kept in the *takiyeh* implies it was also used temporarily to house part of the royal menagerie. Sometime during the second decade of the twentieth century the Takiyeh Dowlat was considered too unsafe to be used for Muharram ceremonies [19] and in the 1950s it was demolished for new construction on the site.

As early as the seventeenth century mourning ceremonies had attracted single gatherings as large as two thousand persons,[20] yet it was not until almost two centuries later—that is, seven decades after the advent of Ta'ziyeh dramas—that a proper theatre on a significant scale was finally built to accommodate, according to Lady Sheil, such numbers. No matter which vizier it was whom Lady Sheil mentions as its patron,[21] his sig-



Ta'ziyeh production at the Takiyeh Dowlat, Tehran.
From Docteur Feuvrier, *Trois ans à la cour de Perse* (Paris, 1906).

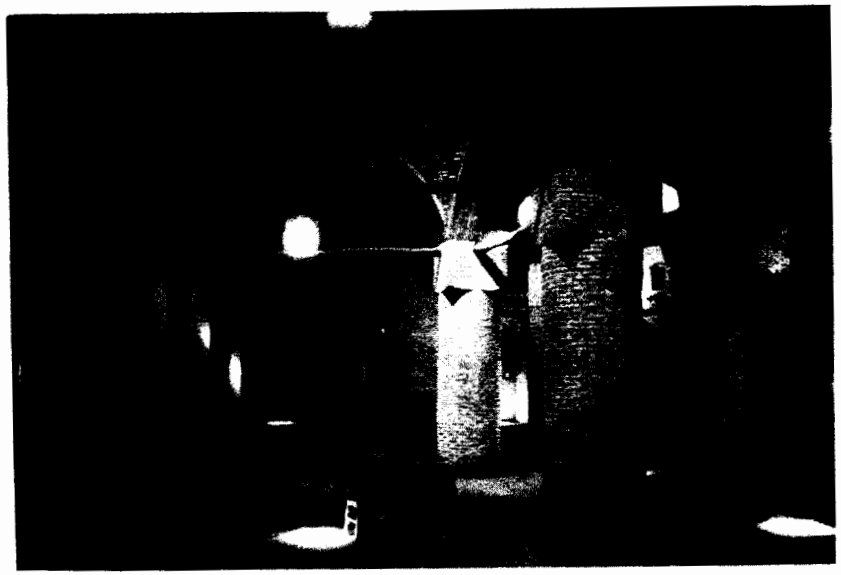


Takiyeh Dowlat and surrounding buildings in foreground, Tehran.
From Docteur Feuvrier, *Trois ans à la cour de Perse* (Paris, 1906).

nificance is that as a representative of the court he established the practice of erecting monumental theatres for housing Ta'ziyeh dramas. Built about twenty-five years later, the apogee of *takiyeh* architecture was, of course, the Takiyeh Dowlat of Naser al-Din Shah. Such official endorsement—in spite of the criticism leveled by the conservative, orthodox segments of the community at additional sanctioning of drama itself being put to Shi'a

use—only encouraged the practice of erecting and supporting *takiyeh* theatres which were emulated in capital cities and provinces alike. Evidence of their emergence in the Qajar townscape is an 1860 topographical report of communities in the Caspian provinces. Of the "numerous takiyeh (holy buildings) on almost every street in which people gather to listen to the narrative of the tragic fate of 'Ali's sons," [22] G. Melgunof reports that in Shahrud there are four *takiyeh,* only one less than the separate number of mosques, baths, and caravanserais, and in Rasht, thirty-six in contrast to twenty-two mosques and thirty-four *madraseh.*[23] Indeed, during the last half of the nineteenth century, the pride of any Iranian community was its *takiyeh,* whether it were an unadorned structure belonging to the community at large (Ill. 4)—and its halls perhaps also used for funerary orations for deceased dignitaries and its open arena for a public *maidan*—or, as in some instances, the symbol of piety and of status for a wealthy individual who, somewhat ironically, in memory of the Kerbela martyrs filled his *takiyeh* with furnishings as lavish as those for which the villain Calif Yazid and his court were cursed by the Ta'ziyeh audiences (Ill. 5).

With its basic requirements being as simple as an arena and accommodation for an audience, the *takiyeh* acquired a variety of forms. Of the various early and provisional sites, it was the plan of the private residence which the majority of *takiyeh* resembled most. Because of the varied



Covered arena of Husseiniyeh Kuchak, Zavāreh, c. 1905.

Takiyeh hall of Takiyeh Baiglarbaigī, Kermanshah, first quarter of twentieth century.

seasonal weather in which performances were staged throughout the year, both an open and a covered arena frequently were provided. Additional features with which a *takiyeh* might be equipped were a *saqqa khaneh* (i.e., a public fountain) in memory of the martyrs' thirst [24] and, if the founder was a private citizen, a *maqbareh* for his burial.

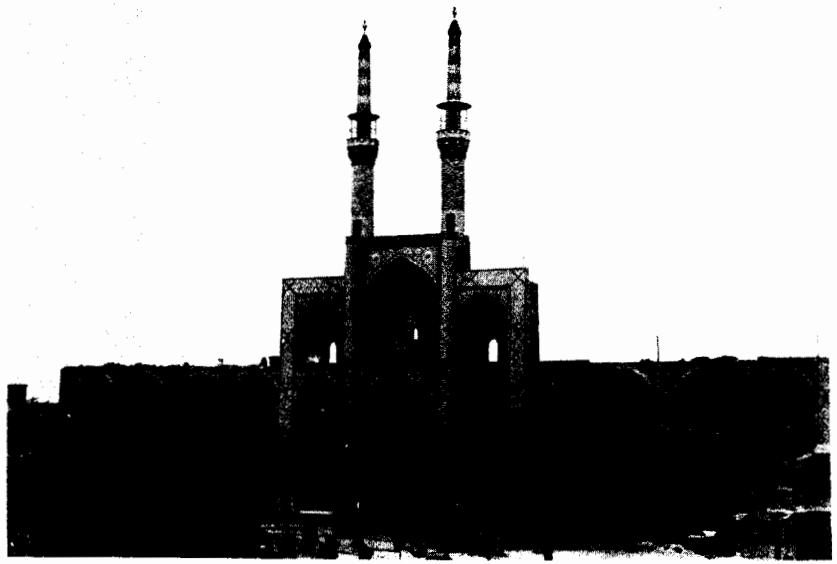
Regional differences also occur. In the district of Yazd the majority of *takiyeh* repeat a type most impressively represented by the huge, portal structure (38.0 meters in height) which served as seating for distinguished witnesses of ceremonies held in the principal *maidan* of the city, Maidan-e Mir Chakhmaq (Ill. 6). Used as a receptacle for fires burned during ceremonies and revealing the Zoroastrian traditions of the region was the altar-like, usually octagonal *kalak* in the center of the arena. The more conventional *saku* generally was omitted since ceremonies in Yazd traditionally featured *rowzeh-khani* and processions (particularly the carrying of the *naql,* the mock bier of Hussein) and not the Ta'ziyeh dramas themselves. In Nayin several of six *takiyeh,* most of which date from the early twentieth century, repeat a plan traditionally used for the *zur khaneh:* an enclosed building with seating alcoves on a platform surrounding an octagonal arena.

Takiyeh architecture, which began on a monumental scale sometime during the 1840s, came to an end when mourning ceremonies officially were

curtailed in 1928 and finally were forbidden in 1935.[25] Thus, its entire history encompasses a single century. When it first did appear out of a need for more appropriate and monumental housing for Ta'ziyeh productions, among the types of architecture which had evolved in Iran over the centuries there was none which properly might serve as a model for theatres. Indicative of the situation was that the grandest *takiyeh* ever built in Iran was inspired by Albert Hall in London. Throughout its brief history, the *takiyeh* was constantly in experimental stages in different regions for various patrons with the result that few final solutions were ever found. In contrast to the Ta'ziyeh drama itself, which evolved out of ancient practices of communal worship, the *takiyeh* was essentially without traditions and evolved into a variety of forms. Accordingly, it is its diversity which is one of its most characteristic features, a feature which is only the more remarkable in a country in which art forms traditionally were more certainly defined and generally codified.

The Ta'ziyeh and Religious Painting

Since the beginning of Islam orthodox opinion has held representation of an animate form to be somewhat a sacrilege. Yet in spite of such censure the walls of some of the earliest preserved palaces in Islam (e.g., Qusayr 'Amra) were decorated with innumerable representations of humans. Subsequently, when Islamic histories were written and then illuminated by Persian artists in the fourteenth century and later, it was not unusual that they included representations of Muhammad, his family, and his companions. Even so, there is no evidence that representation of the human figure was widely accepted by the general populace who followed the interpretation given their religion by orthodox leaders. Indeed, examples such as those just mentioned were generally confined, in the one case, to palaces limited to the viewing of a privileged few and, in the other, to private manuscripts which as treasures were guarded within private domains.



Takiyeh Mīr Chakhmāq, Yazd, late nineteenth century.

Because of this background, the impact which the Ta'ziyeh dramas had on the visual arts is one of the most curious developments in the history of Islamic art. After hundreds of years of censure, during the nineteenth century there appear paintings of religious subjects which specifically were intended for the Iranian public at large. Basically a folk art, these representations are included in the popular school generally known as *qahveh khaneh* painting, but since the major theme of those dealing with religious subjects is the martyrdom of Hussein and his followers at Kerbela, a more apt and specific term for the particular genre is Kerbela painting.[26]

After ten centuries of censure, what effected such a dramatic change in the attitudes of the general public was not the religious painting of earlier periods, which did not include illustration of the Kerbela tragedy and was, besides, the prerogative of the elite and was rarely viewed by the populace, but instead was the ubiquitous and popular productions of Ta'ziyeh dramas. Once it had been publicly accepted, to the dismay of the orthodox, that the roles of the martyrs and their adversaries were enacted by devout Muslims, the step toward the public's acceptance of religious paintings depicting the same narratives had already been made. To illustrate how these Kerbela paintings were essentially the translation of the Ta'ziyeh theatre into the visual arts, one need only compare the paintings with Ta'ziyeh productions and texts of the plays.

Of the many examples of such paintings which could be used to illustrate this point, those discussed here are the painted tile panels decorating walls of the Takiyeh Mu'aven al-Mulk in Kermanshah.[27] As decoration considered suitable for a *takiyeh*, the Kermanshah panels demonstrate yet another feature of *takiyeh* architecture: that in spite of the fact that the *takiyeh* was a religious building, the rigid strictures which forbade human representation in a mosque were in some instances completely ignored in order that the Ta'ziyeh to which the *takiyeh* was dedicated might be represented in paintings as well as in dramas.

To introduce a *majles* relating an event in the last days of the Kerbela martyrs, there occasionally were staged, as a prelude, incidents in the life of one of the early prophets of the Koran. As in the case of the *majles* which relates the story of Yusef, the five individual scenes of the large Yusef panel at Kermanshah are taken from the Koranic version of the story.[28] Why the Yusef story should be the subject of a Ta'ziyeh drama and thereby serve as

appropriate decoration for a *takiyeh* is its message as repeated throughout the drama: the compassion the woeful tale of Imam Hussein's martyrdom evokes from Yusef and his father Yaqub, a message which the latter sums up at the end of the drama by saying, "O, may a thousand ones like me and my Yusef be a ransom for Hussein! May a thousand Yusefs be the dust of his feet. . . . Come, O Gabriel! show me the plain of Kerbela, for the sake of God." The subject of another prelude is the wedding of King Sulaiman and Belqis. While lamenting in the play the fate of the Kerbela martyrs which his vision of all events past and present enable him to see, Sulaiman interrupts his own marriage to introduce the celebrations for the marriage of Hussein's nephew Qasem to his daughter Fatemeh: but these end with a dirge for the groom when he returns from battle mortally wounded.

The Kermanshah representation of Sulaiman (Ill. 7) depicts the enthroned ruler attended by his counselors, *divs,* and various representatives of the animal kingdom, including the fantastic *simurgh* and Sulaiman's special messengers the *hudhud* (Hoopoe) above and at the sides of his head. Such a legendary audience with its inclusion of such royal animals as the elephant and the lion was not likely to have been inspired by productions staged in provinces such as Kermanshah, but instead was probably suggested to the Tehran tilemakers by the spectacular Sulaiman productions in the capital which featured a parade of magnificent beasts through the royal theatre.[29] Nevertheless, if the subject of the panel in fact was suggested by the Sulaiman drama, its iconography and composition repeat a formula which had been used for centuries by Persian artists to depict Sulaiman enthroned. Such tested formulas also are evident in several of the five scenes represented in the Yusef panel, particularly in the scene in which Yusef is serving Zulaikha in front of her guests distraught by the youth's beauty (Ill. 8).[30] Although such manifestations of earlier painting traditions occasionally appear in the Kermanshah panels, their subjects, like the Ta'ziyeh stories which they represent, are intended to portray persons of all ages mourning the Kerbela tragedy.

More typical of the Kermanshah panels are representations of the Kerbela story itself which not only in subject matter but also in iconography are modeled directly after Ta'ziyeh productions. Certainly a case in point is one of the most standard subjects of the Kerbela genre: Imam Hussein's survivors held as captives in Yazid's court in Damascus (Ill. 9). The veiled and haloed supplicants stand in the foreground facing members of the Syrian army and court. In the upper register Yazid is seated on a throne typical of those which Qajar artists modeled after the famous Peacock Throne. To the left of the ruler are a *farangi* ambassador and his private counselor seated in chairs with which European guests traditionally were provided at Qajar receptions. At the foot of the throne stands the new Imam, Zain al-'Abedin, followed by Hussein's sister Zainab. Among the small figures in the foreground are Hussein's daughters Sukaineh,

Sulaiman panel, Takiyeh Mu'āvin al-Mulk, Kermanshah, ca. 1917.

Yusef serving Zulaikha (detail), Yusef panel, Takiyeh Mu'āvin al-Mulk, Kermanshah, ca. 1917.

Zubaidah, and Fatemeh, the latter now the widow of the martyred Qasem. In accordance with the Ta'ziyeh characterization of the caliph Yazid which was intended to instill in the audience violent repudiation of the arch villain, Yazid is dressed in bejeweled clothes and surrounded by such symbols of luxury and vileness as bottles of wine and game boards, all mocking the tragic and miserable condition of Hussein at the time of his death and now the plight of his survivors (Ill. 10).[31] Yazid's daughter, who in the Ta'ziyeh boasts of her father's and her own material well-being, stands beside the caliph. Radiating from a gold plate placed on the throne is a multi-colored flame to represent the halo for the Imam's head which is presented at court as the prize trophy of the Syrian troops. After dabbing wine on the Imam's lips, Yazid with the cane in his hand strikes the mouth of the Imam and knocks out the teeth in a single blow. To this most horrendous deed, Zain al-'Abedin laments, "Dost thou with thy cane, Tyrant, strike the very lips that the Prophet himself did kiss?"

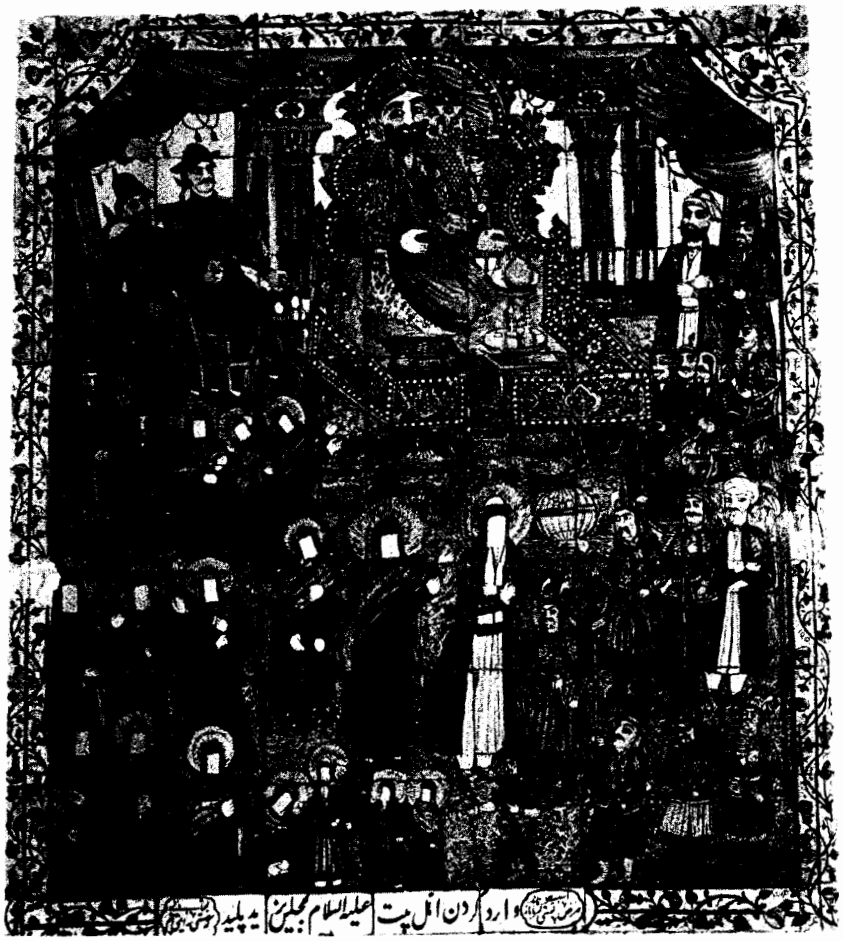
After the humiliation scene of the Alids in Damascus, Yazid repents of his evil, releases the Alids from captivity, and commands his attendant Bashir to conduct the holy family to Medina. In the panel representing the caravan on its approach to the sacred city (Ill. 11), Bashir and a second Syrian guide escort the procession of Zain al-'Abedin and his entourage of women survivors in *takht-e ravan* (litters) which in accordance with Yazid's orders are draped in black cloth.

The influence of the Ta'ziyeh on the four panels discussed here is apparent in that each illustrates a specific Ta'ziyeh play and, more particularly, that certain details of the Damascus and Medina panels are only to be explained as copies of Ta'ziyeh productions. The cane of Yazid, the chairs and clothing of the European envoys (which traditionally were lent by the foreign community), and the veils of the Alid women (which disguised the fact that their roles were enacted by men) are all stage devices which have been reproduced literally by the artists. Even for a detail depicted in the panel representing the deaths of martyrs on the Kerbela plain (Ill. 12), the gesture of Hussein holding his youngest son, Ali Asghar, up to the Syrian troops as a plea for water for the women and children in his camp and which is answered by an arrow to the parched throat of the child is directly borrowed from the theatre.

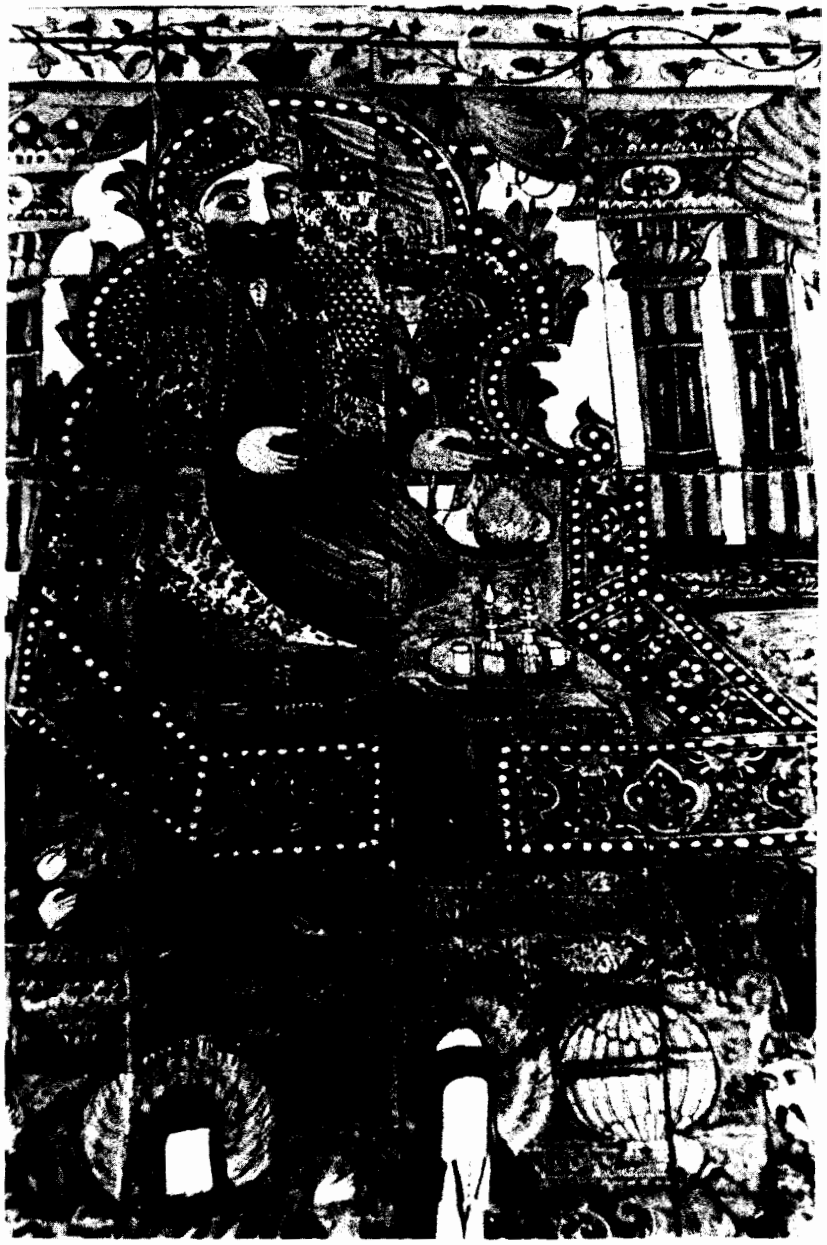
A more general influence which the Ta'ziyeh had on religious painting is demonstrated by the use of the veil. During the last half of the fifteenth century and until the Qajar period, the veil was an exclusive attribute of holy personages and was not used to cover the faces of women. However, once it became in Ta'ziyeh productions a standard part of the costume of women—as a sign of their modesty but also, as mentioned, as a practical theatrical device to disguise the men enacting female roles—it becomes in Kerbela paintings a standard feature of Alid women. No longer used so consistently as the sacred symbol it formerly had been, in Qajar religious

painting the veil is ascribed only somewhat arbitrarily to holy figures; thus the faces of the Shi'a Imams appear either veiled or unveiled. In contrast to the veil is the halo which, while not a device in Ta'ziyeh productions, is retained from earlier painting conventions as their sacred symbol.

The relatively recent and brief histories of *takiyeh* architecture and popular religious painting have not attracted the attention of the historian concerned with Iranian subjects having a more ancient and prolonged

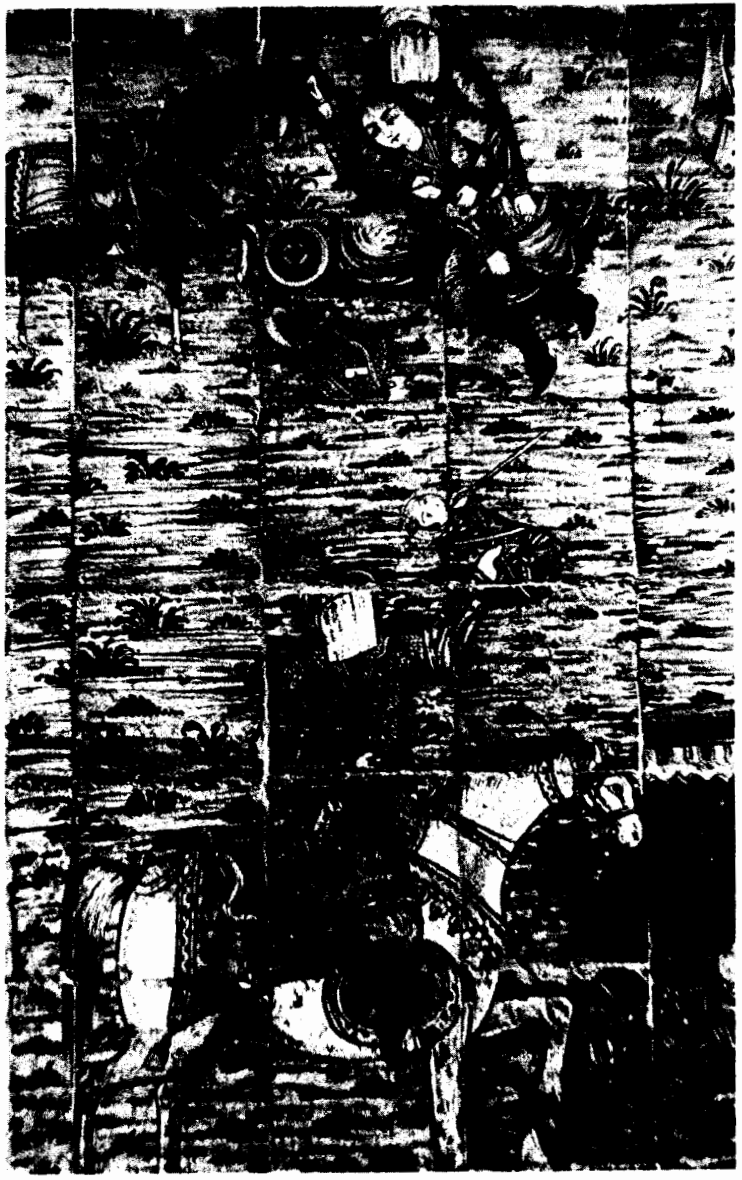


Alids as captives at Yazid's court in Damascus, Takiyeh Mu'āvin al-Mulk, Kermanshah, ca. 1917.



Yazid enthroned, detail of Ill. 9.

Zain al-Abedin and entourage on approach to Medina, by Hasan Tihrānī, Takiyeh Mu'āvin al-Mulk, Kermanshah, ca. 1917.



Imam Hussein with Ali Asghar (below) and with Hazrat-e Abbas (above), detail of Kerbela plain panel, Takiyeh Mu'āvin al-Mulk, Kermanshah, ca. 1917.

sequence. Yet judging by the number of *takiyeh* throughout Iran and such royal, monumental instances as the Takiyeh Dowlat, the *takiyeh* is one of the most phenomenal architectural developments of Qajar Persia. No less remarkable is the appearance of the innumerable Qajar representations of the Kerbela tragedy with no precedent in painting. It is indeed difficult to imagine either evolving as it did, even existing perhaps, if it had not been for the advent of the Ta'ziyeh in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the Ta'ziyeh affected popular attitudes toward human representation so profoundly that it was to inspire entirely new developments in Persian art, both the *takiyeh* and Kerbela paintings were natural and innocent evolutions of more ancient forms of Shi'a worship. Thus, what seems to be somewhat revolutionary for the arts is only a sequence in the expression of grief for the martyrs and, ultimately, in the Shi'a community's profession of faith.

Notes

1. Vladimir Minorsky, *La domination des Daylamites* (Paris, 1932), p. 19.

2. Adam Olearius, *Voyages* (Leide, 1719), pp. 580-81. In the original version of de Bruins' *Reizen* (1714) the relevant passage reads, ". . . daer zekere soort van een toneel was opgericht." In the English edition (1737) translated from the French edition (1718), the original *toneel* is translated as "theatres," but "stages" or "scaffolding" would be more accurate. Cf. Cornelius de Bruins, *Reizen over Muskovie door Persie en Indie* (Amsterdam, 1714), p. 168; Cornelius Le Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia and Part of the East-Indies* (London, 1737), I, 215.

3. Henri Massé, "Epigraphy. B. Persian Inscriptions," tr. Phylis Ackermann, *A Survey of Persian Art,* ed. A. U. Pope (Oxford, 1939), II, 1797-98. The only recorded version of the original Persian text evidently is the one in Massé's article quoted in the text here.

4. Jean Chardin, *Voyages* (Paris, 1811), IX, 50-56.

5. In 1665, according to de Thevénot's account of Muharram ceremonies in Shiraz, the "procession having passed by the Governor's Gate, went out of town to consummate the festival at a mosque, where Khatoun, the daughter of Aly, is interred; there they had a sermon. . . ." Monsieur de Thevénot, *Travels* (London, 1687), p. 108. The "mosque" is the tomb in the southeastern section of Shiraz which is known as Khatun-i Quyāmat but more generally as Abish Khatun in reference to the Salghurid queen reputedly buried there; that the monument was identified for de Thevénot as an Alid tomb would define its function for the procession. It is also reported that in 1637 in Ardabil ceremonies were held in the court of the *mazār* of Shaikh Safi (Olearius, 624) and that in the nineteenth century in India *tabuts* of processions were carried to Muslim cemeteries. Lewis Pelly, *The Miracle Plays of Hasan and Husain* (London, 1879), I, xxiii. For discussion of Abish Khatun dated from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, see 'Alī Naqī Bihrūzī, *Julgih-yi Shīrāz* (Shiraz, 1354 A.H.); Nusratullah Mechkati, *Monuments et sites historique de l'Iran* (Tehran, n.d.), p. 126; 'Alī Samī, *Shīrāz* (Shiraz, 1958), pp. 79-80; Laurence Lockhart, *Persian Cities* (London, 1960), p. 50; William Ouseley, *Travels in the East* (London, 1819), II, 20.

6. For examples of *takiyehs* which were tombs and/or Sufi quarters, see, *inter alia,* Engelbert Kaempfer, *Amoenitatum Exoticarum* (Lemgoviae, 1712), p. 112; Chardin, VII, 473; James Morier, *A Second Journey through Persia* (London, 1818), p. 151; and Ouseley, pp. 19-20.

7. See, *inter alia,* Chardin, IX, 53; Thomas Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels* (London 1677), p. 268; Comte de Sercey, *La Perse en 1839-40* (Paris, 1928), p. 208; Comte de Gobineau, *Religions et philosophies dans l'Asie centrale* (Paris, 1957), p. 352; Arminius Vambery, *Life and Adventures* (London, 1914), p. 68; C. J. Wills, *Persia as it Is* (London, 1887), pp. 205ff.; and, Percy M. Sykes, *The Glory of the Shia World* (London, 1910), p. 197.

8. William Francklin, *Observations Made on a Tour from Bengal to Persia* (London, 1790), pp. 240-51.

9. M. Tancoigne, *A Narrative of a Journey into Persia* (London, 1820), p. 198.

10. James Fraser, *A Winter's Journey* (London, 1838), II, 462; William Richard Holmes, *Sketches of the Shores of the Caspian* (London, 1845), p. 326. E. G. Browne also mentions being "... assigned quarters ... in [a] *takyé* consecrated to the Muharram passion-plays." Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (London, 1959), p. 273. A similar use made of Sufi *takiyehs* was that traditionally they were hostels for Sufi travelers and persons who periodically retired from public life for private devotions.

11. Holmes, p. 302.

12. *Ibid.,* p. 296.

13. Lady Sheil, *Life and Manners in Persia* (London, 1856), pp. 126.27.

14. Gobineau, pp. 339-41. For additional comments on mid-nineteenth century patronage, see Robert Grant Watson, *A History of Persia* (London, 1866), pp. 20-23, and Jean Calmard's article, "Le patronage des Ta'zīyeh ..." published in this collection.

15. Unless otherwise noted, the description of the Takiyeh Dowlat in the text here is drawn from accounts by Carla Serena, *Hommes et choses en Perse* (Paris, 1883), pp. 172-76; Agnate Laessøe, *Fra Persien* (Copenhagen, 1881), pp. 214-21; Browne, pp. 602-3; James Bassett, *Persia the Land of the Imams* (London, 1887), p. 106; S. G. W. Benjamin, *Persia and the Persians* (Boston, 1887), pp. 382-86; Henry Binder, *Au Kurdistan* (Paris, 1887), pp. 406-9; George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question* (London, 1966), I, 327-28; and Pierre Ponafine, *Life in the Moslem East* (London, 1911), p. 347. For further discussion of the building, see Calmard's article, "Le patronage des Ta'ziyeh."

16. Curzon, II, 481.

17. Arthur Arnold, *Through Persia by Caravan* (London, 1877), I, 206-7.

18. Ella C. Sykes, *Through Persia on a Side-Saddle* (London, 1898), p. 346.

19. Eustache de Lorey and Doublas Saladin, *Queer Things about Persia* (London, 1907), p. 282.

20. In 1667 Chardin estimates that more than 2,000 attend ceremonies held at the Tālār-i Ṭavīlih (i.e., Tālār Ashraf) in Isfahan. Chardin, IX, 57.

21. Lady Sheil, according to her dated entries, only arrived in Tehran shortly before attending the Ta'ziyeh performances she describes. She mentions that "the Prime Minister" built the *takiyeh* and sent invitations to foreign ministers but does not identify him by name. It is doubtful, however, if the founder was the vizier at the time, Mīrzā Ṭāqī Khān Amīr-i Kabīr, since he probably was too preoccupied

during his first year in office with more urgent matters than building the "immense" *takiyeh,* and also was known to view the Ta'ziyeh with disdain. Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran:* 1785-1906 (Berkeley, 1969), p. 135. It is more probable that the founder was his predecessor, Hajjī Mīrzā Agāsī, the vizier of Muhammad Shah, and that the *takiyeh* was built toward the end of his twelve years in office, 1836-48.

22. G. Melgunof, *Das Südliche Ufer des Kaspischen Meeres* (Leipzig, 1868), p. 39.

23. *Ibid.,* pp. 130, 242. About fifty years later H. L. Rabino notes the same number of *takiyehs* in Rasht. Rabino, *Les Provinces caspiennes de la Perse: La Guilan* (Paris, 1917), pp. 72, 86-88.

24. An early precedent for the *takiyeh saqqā khānih* was the public cistern such as one in Astarabad which, according to Massé (1798), bears the Shi'a inscription, "May they drink and curse the miserable Shimr and the impure Yazīd, 1010 (1601)." Massé cites H. L. Rabino, *Mazandaran and Asterabad* (London, 1928), Persian text, p. 40, as his source.

25. Elgin Groseclose, *Introduction to Iran* (New York, 1947), p. 104; Peter Avery, *Modern Iran* (London, 1965), pp. 290-91.

26. Instances of representation of holy figures displayed publicly are noted by J. M. Rogers in his article, "The Genesis of Safawid Painting," *Iran,* VIII (1970): 125-39 (or in the re-published copy, Michael J. Rogers, "The genesis of Safavid painting," *Memorial Volume of the Vth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology* (Tehran, 1972), II, 167-88). To be added to those Rogers cites is a representation of Ali reported on the portal of the state mint in Isfahan in the seventeenth century. Chardin, VII, 359. Representations of the Kerbela tragedy on the walls of the Imāmzadeh Zaid in Isfahan were published in 1937 as contemporary with the date 1097/1685-86 indicated in a restoration inscription for the building. Yedda A. Godard, "L'Imamzāde Zaid d'Isfahān," *Athār-i Irān,* 2/2 (1937; 341-48). Such dating for the paintings also is argued by Rogers who states that they are "the first dated religious wall paintings known to us." See Rogers, pp. 127-28, 138; 169-70, 181. However, the veiled Alid women, the prominence given to Ḥaḍrat-i 'Abbās, the representation of a Kerbela shrine in the background, gestures, and most iconographic details are entirely consistent with Qajar Kerbela paintings which were modeled after Ta'ziyeh productions. Accordingly, because the Ta'ziyeh itself did not evolve until the last half of the eighteenth century, the Imamzadeh Zaid paintings are dated here to mid-nineteenth century, about 175 years later than the restoration date for the building. For further discussion of the Imamzadeh Zaid paintings and of Ta'ziyeh influences on Qajar religious painting, see S. R. Peterson, "Painted Tiles at the Takieh Mu'āvin al-Mulk (Kermanshah)," in the *Memorial Volume of the VIIth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology,* in press.

27. The original *takiyeh* on the Kermanshah site was built during the last decades of the nineteenth century, but after being damaged during the Constitutional Revolution by cannon shot and fires, it was restored and enlarged sometime between 1914 and 1925. It was during the period of restoration that the Mu'āvin al-Mulk family commissioned Hasan Ṭihiranī and several assistants to come from Tehran to decorate nearly every wall of the three-building complex with painted tile panels. For additional photographs and discussion of the Takiyeh Mu'āvin al-Mulk, see *ibid.,* and Roloff Beny and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Persia: Bridge of Turquoise* (Boston, 1975), Pls. 154, 157, p. 346.

28. For texts of the Yusef story and the Kerbela stories compared to paintings discussed here, see Pelley, vols. I-II.

29. Benjamin, pp. 402-3.

30. A feature usually illustrated in the scene in which Yusef attends Zulaikha but omitted in the Kermanshah example is that the women, so distracted by Yusef's beauty, cut their hands with knives with which they peel fruit. For illustration in manuscript illuminations, see, *inter alia, The Chester Beatty Library Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts and Miniatures,* ed. A. J. Arberry (Dublin, 1960), II, Pl. 43 (b); Ivan Stchoukine, *Les Peintures des Manuscrits Safavis de 1502 a 1587* (Paris, 1959), Pls. LXIII, LXXI, LXXI: Grace Dunham Guest, *Shiraz Painting in the Sixteenth Century* (Washington, D.C., 1949), Pl. 44; and in pictorial carpets, *Southeby's Catalogue of Fine Oriental Carpets and Rugs (Sale of 6 May 1977)* (London), p. 138.

31. In some versions of the Damascus court *majles,* the bottles beside Yazid are for medicine for the ailing caliph who is not revived until he sees the severed head of the Imam.