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The Royal Harem of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–96): The Literary Portrayal of Women's Lives by Taj al-Saltana and Anonymous 'Lady from Kerman'

PIOTR BACHTIN*

In recent times, the era of the Qajar dynasty reign in Iran (1796–1925) has been gaining significant attention among scholars of different disciplines. It applies in particular to the challenging realities of the nineteenth century: the time of profound and irreversible changes in the area of social, political and cultural life. These changes were, to a large extent, caused and informed by development of multifarious contacts between Qajar Persia and the West, mainly with England and Russia – both penetrating the country with the intention of expanding their sphere of imperial domination – and France, back then the most influential cultural power, with French in the role of international language. Women's lives – balancing between the old, traditional values and the new, though heavily impacting, ideas, vogues and tendencies – were changing as well. Nonetheless, the social structures established to exert control over women in the framework of a strongly patriarchal system, did not, obviously, transform from day to day. The base and main principle of this structure was seclusion of women, particularly within the urban sphere. In the rural areas women participated in work more actively – also polygyny, directly linked to wealth and power, was much less frequent. As Mehrdad Kia observes:

Urban life in nineteenth-century Iran was based on a strict division between men's and women's roles. It was a world divided into two separate and distinct spheres; the public domain belonged to men while women remained in the domestic sphere, displaying obedience and faithfulness.¹

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The most distinctive manifestation of women's 'segregation, isolation, and confinement'² was keeping them within the harem (Persian *andarun* or *andaran*), or 'prohibited quarter' of the house.³ The meaning of the harem should not be limited simply to a particular *place*, but ought to be understood as an *institution* founded, justified and sustained by the patriarchal social system which included the practice of polygamy, '...as a system that permits males sexual access to more than one female'.⁴

In this paper, I am trying to compare the image of the royal harem rendered by two women personally connected with the court of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–96). First of them is Taj al-Saltana (1884–1936), a daughter of Naser al-Din. In the initial parts of her famous memoirs she depicts her childhood at her father's court, minutely describing the realities of the harem life. The second source I am examining is a diary penned by an anonymous, high-born woman from Kerman who, after coming back to Persia from the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) and 'atabat, holy Shia cities in today's southern Iraq, between 1892 and 1894 spent over eighteen months in Tehran, being also a frequent guest in the royal harem. At that time she became acquainted with Taj al-Saltana, and some of the characters and events Taj mentioned in her memoirs are also covered in her account.⁵ In this paper, both works are juxtaposed with an aim of providing a more complete portrayal of life in the royal harem during the late Naseri period. The accounts constitute the only known sources about women's courtly life at the end of the nineteenth century in Persia written by the female insiders of the harem.

Representation of the royal harem of Naser al-Din Shah in the memoirs of Taj al-Saltana

Zahra Khanom Taj al-Saltana (Taj al-Saltana) was born in 1884⁶ as a daughter of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar and Maryam Turan al-Saltana, Naser al-Din's cousin and one of his numerous temporary wives (*sighe*). In 1893 Taj officially signed a marriage contract with Hassan Khan Sardar Shoja' al-Saltana, albeit in fact they became husband and wife in 1897. She divorced Hassan in 1907 and, as far as is known, was afterwards married twice. Little is known about Taj's later life, which is the years between 1914 – the last moment when her memoirs cover her life – and her death.⁷ She died in Tehran in 1936, 'an obese and impoverished woman'.⁸

Taj al-Saltana was one of the prominent figures of the Iranian intelligentsia in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–7. Her aristocratic background did not determine her political and social viewpoints: she sympathized with the constitutionalists and was a promoter of democracy in her homeland. Because of her modernist views on marriage, gender equality and role of women in the society, she is regarded as one of the first Iranian feminists. As formulated by Shireen Mahdavi, 'she was a rebel both in spirit and deed'.⁹

Taj al-Saltana wrote her memoirs in 1914.¹⁰ The exceptionality of her work lies in the fact that, as Abbas Amanat noted, 'she was the only royal woman known to us who has left an account of her life'.¹¹ Apart from being a unique example of women's life writing authored by a representative of the royal family, it is also unusual in terms of form and language. Her work does not share features typical for autobiographies of her times: counter to the literary tendencies still dominating her epoch, Taj's memoirs are overflowing with introspection and are, to quote Amanat again,

‘unusually self-revealing’.¹² Her account is practically deprived of any kind of self-censorship. Such openness and latitude in depicting herself and others makes that ‘both in style and content, her memoirs stand apart from other Qajar memoirs’¹³ – to such an extent that they had even become the subject of speculations about their alleged falsification.¹⁴ Taj’s work is unfinished and covers her life from her birth in 1884 until 1914, when she was 30 years old.

In the opening of her account, Taj focuses her attention on her mother, imperial father and other people participating in the process of her upbringing. She relates that as a child – as it was common in the case of royal offspring – she did not live with her mother, but – ‘in view of the dictates of royal protocol and requirements of space’¹⁵ – in a separate residence. She was given permission to see her mother twice a day and her father only once a day in the afternoon.¹⁶ The girl was thus brought up by *daye*, a wet-nurse, *dade*, a black nanny, and *nane*, a white nanny.¹⁷ Aside from them, she had also ‘a female cradle rocker, a valet, a chamberlain, and a washer-woman’¹⁸ appointed to her service. All of them were black slaves, or so called ‘bond servants’.¹⁹ Despite such special treatment her childhood was marked, as she states, by the lack of love and tenderness from her mother’s side – Turan al-Saltana is once bitterly called ‘this heartless mother of mine’.²⁰ On the other hand, it was characterized by strong bonds of affection with her black ‘Matron Nanny’²¹ (‘How I wish I could have felt the same tenderness for my venerable mother that I did for my nanny...!’²²) and, by extension, with her kinsfolks.²³ She mentions that at the time of writing down her memoirs she was still able to communicate fluently in black slaves’ Pidgin Persian that she had learnt with her *dade*.²⁴ It is an interesting remark confirming the cultural distinctiveness of Afro-Iranians at the end of the nineteenth century.

Dissatisfaction with frigid and harsh mother was accompanied by Taj’s deep attachment and love for her imperial father.²⁵ Nonetheless, in spite of expressing profound and unconditional affection for him, she dared to criticize him as a ruler – mainly for his fatal fondness for women, which was, in her eyes, one of the chief reasons of the weakness of the state:

... [T]his omnipotent Sultan whom we consider the most well-favored man of his time was, in fact, exceptionally unfortunate, for he had succumbed to a weakness for women, accumulating a large number of them in his harem. ... So overcome was he by his passions and carnal desires, and so absorbed in his worldly delights, that he had even forgotten his regal privileges.²⁶

Indeed, Naser al-Din’s love for women was a well-known fact and many deemed it one of his most serious vices.²⁷ For example, Hajj Sayyah (Mirza Mohammad ‘Ali; 1836–1925), one of the major political activists involved in the Constitutional movement, was among those who blamed the Shah for his exaggerated passion for women in combination with superficial religiosity.²⁸ It must be said, however, that Naser al-Din’s harem was not as huge as his ancestor’s, Fath-‘Ali Shah’s (r. 1797–1834), albeit significantly larger than his father’s, Mohammad Shah’s (r. 1834–48) seraglio.²⁹ Depicting the structure of royal *andarun*, Taj mentions 80 wives and concubines³⁰ (obtaining the status of temporary wives) of her monarch father – majority of them childless³¹ – living within or visiting the royal residence. She notes that,

apart from having their own quarters in the harem, the ladies were given mansions and houses outside the citadel. Consistent with her assessment, the total number of women in the royal *andarun* is estimated to be around 500–600.³²

According to Taj, the numerous wives and concubines of her imperial father constantly participated in a group competition, striving for attention of their ‘master’:

Each tried to outdo the others in dressing up, primping and trying to appear extraordinary so as to attract the attention of the Shah. Every evening, without fail, they would spend two or three hours on their colorful clothes and toilette, turn themselves into goddesses, and appear in His Majesty’s presence.³³

Picturing this incessant competition, Taj does not refrain from representing some peculiar amusements of her imperial father. Describing his child-like games³⁴ she seems to condemn him for (ab)using the women of the harem, who were frequently falling victims of his strange, childish-cruel fantasy. One of the most striking passages in her account is devoted to the ‘switch-off-the-lights’ game:

The game consisted of turning out the lights. In the darkness the women had absolute freedom and license to kiss each other, beat each other, bite each other, blind each other, or break each others’ heads and limbs. At the beginning of the game the ladies would all sit in the middle of the hall, talking among themselves. My father would sit on a chair near the light switch. As they were busy in their conversation, he would turn out the light. Suddenly all hell would break loose. Screams, cries for help, oaths, curses and wailing would be heard everywhere. Everyone was up to something. The dignified ones crept into corners or hid under a bench, a table or a chair to find safety. The wild ones doled out and received their beatings. Of course, as you know, it is the wicked who form the majority. Amid this pandemonium of keening and wailing whose effect was heightened by the absolute darkness ... the lights would suddenly come back on, catching everybody in some act. Usually the clothes would be ripped to shreds, the faces and cheeks bloody, the bodies obscenely exposed; the beatings had been so severe that the largest stitch of clothing on anyone was no bigger than a quarter meter. The women’s faces were grotesque, their hair dishevelled, their eyes bloodshot and filled with rage. As for those who had preferred caution, they were a strange sight to behold, hiding under tables and chairs with their arms and legs thrust out.³⁵

This extremely interesting relation, though quite frightening at the same time, shows just how high the level of jealousy and hatred among the inhabitants of the harem was. It testifies that the *andaruni* women were in constant competition with each other – the fact Naser al-Din Shah was perfectly aware of deciding to allow his wives and concubines to manifest all their frustrations and more or less hidden reluctance in the most direct way. It also tells a lot about Taj’s pessimistic worldview, as she notes with sadness that ‘...it is the wicked who form the majority’.

Apart from wives, concubines and female servants or slaves, the eunuchs constituted another indispensable group of harem residents. While the female inhabitants of the *andarun* were kept within its walls to satisfy sexual desires of their ‘master’, the

eunuch's role was to supervise them and constantly monitor their behaviour. According to Taj al-Saltana, at the time of her childhood the control over the royal *andarun* was assigned to 'chief eunuch and assistant to the harem custodian',³⁶ Agha Nuri Khan, also of African descent.³⁷ Apart from being entrusted with general care over the harem, he was also a key-turn to its doors and to the living quarters of the Shah.³⁸ His authority over the *andarun* was practically unlimited, for he supervised the movement of people inside and outside the harem.³⁹

Taj describes Agha Nuri as 'exceptionally cruel and fearless',⁴⁰ and reports on him demanding total devotion and homage for her, from the very day she was born: 'If by chance someone was remiss in observing this duty, the chief eunuch was instructed to beat him with a cane'.⁴¹ Her portraiture of Agha Nuri brings to mind the omnipotent, ruthless eunuchs of the Oriental seraglios taken from the romantic-orientalist European imagery. It also informs about special position of Taj and confirms that she 'was considered part of the collective "royal honour" and as such jealously guarded by an army of castrati'.⁴²

In spite of what Taj stated about Agha Nuri Khan strictly controlling the *andarun*, his authority, however, was not absolute. The royal women often participated in diverse pastimes organized inside the royal palace, like, for example, watching firework shows usually accompanying the most important feasts at the times of Naser al-Din's reign.⁴³ Some of them also partook in trips and hunting excursions of the Shah, famous for his fondness for voyaging.⁴⁴ Furthermore – as the example of 'Lady from Kerman' teaches us – they could host their relatives and friends at the court. They were also allowed to go out and visit other women outside the walls of the royal residence.⁴⁵ The liberty of entering and leaving the *andarun*, as well as the frequency and character of its entertainments, fully depended, however, on a Shah ruling at a time. Criticizing the reign of her brother, Mozaffar al-Din Shah (r. 1896–1906) who seized power after her father's tragic death, Taj pointed: 'One of the differences was that this palace never saw the same kind of freedom of association that had reigned in my father's time'.⁴⁶

Recalling her childhood in the harem, Taj considered the royal women's lives totally carefree and unconcerned: 'It is impossible for man to conjure up in the realm of his imagination a sweeter, easier life. In the course of the year they were not visited by any grief, difficulty, pain or bitterness'.⁴⁷ She noted that they were passing most of their time on various amusements, such as *laskana* ('... playing with colorful and ludicrous masks cut out of cardboard'⁴⁸), 'talking and laughing together'⁴⁹ and caring about their looks and clothes. They were also characterized by deep piety and 'all of them ... dutifully observed the prayers and the fast'.⁵⁰ In Taj's eyes, women of *andarun* were so detached from reality that they would not have been able to answer, or even comprehend, a question 'what is suffering?'.⁵¹ Formulating this clearly exaggerated opinion Taj emphasized their total dependence and lack of personal autonomy. That is why, as she concluded coming back to the sudden end of her father's reign and dismissal of his harem, '... when the sun of their fortunes set, and they were expelled from the palace after the assassination of the king, most of them died in a very short time and little remained of them'.⁵² Here, Taj's remarks testify not only to her modernist attitude of an early feminist who acted as an advocate of women's independence. They are also a sad testimony of what was often happening to women bereft of care and livelihood after the death of their 'male protectors'.

At the time of Taj's childhood the most powerful and influential figures of the royal *andarun* were Fateme-soltan Anis al-Doula (c. 1842–97) and Zobeyde Khanom Amine-ye Aqdas (Amine[-ye] Aqdas or Amin-e Aqdas; hereafter: Amina Aqdas, c. 1840–93). Both women were involved in unceasing competition for supremacy in the Naseri *andarun*, to such extent that, as Kia points referring to E'temad al-Saltana's account, '...when Anis od-Dowleh [Anis al-Doula] fell ill, Amin Aqdas [Amina Aqdas] and her servants celebrated'.⁵³

Anis al-Doula was 'the most important wife of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar',⁵⁴ recognized by her contemporaries as an informal queen. Until the end of her life she wished to retain her status of a *sighe*, in spite of Shah's repeated offers to become his 'aqdi, a permanent wife.⁵⁵ Since 1873 she was honoured with the position of the royal harem's head.⁵⁶ Taj praises her wisdom, gentleness and rectitude. She calls her a 'great, well-respected lady' and 'spiritual mother of mine', emphasizing that childless Anis al-Doula was especially fond of her and treated her like her own daughter.⁵⁷ Taj's favourable opinion on Anis al-Doula is compatible with what other contemporaries stated about her virtues and grandeur. On the occasion of her severe illness in 1891, E'temad al-Saltana wrote: 'The shah's harem is limited to this woman. If she dies, woe on Iran'.⁵⁸ Her special position as the 'queen of Iran' is reflected in Taj's words when she writes:

All the wives of foreign ambassadors were received at her house where they were admitted into His Majesty's presence on festive and formal occasions. ... All the influential and noble families and all the wives of ministers and other functionaries were also received at her house. Most petitions were submitted through her because when she presented them to the sovereign they were accepted.⁵⁹

Amina Aqdas was the second most influential and respected wife (*sighe* too) of Naser al-Din Shah. As Amanat notes, 'though not of the same status as Anis al-Dawla [Anis al-Doula], she was highly influential in the politics of the court ...'.⁶⁰ In Taj's memoirs, she is mentioned mostly in the context of her nephew, Malijak (corruption of Kurdish *melîçak*: 'little sparrow'. Actually: Malijak II; Gholam 'Ali 'Aziz al-Soltan; 'Aziz al-Soltan; 1879–1940), the favourite page boy of Naser al-Din.⁶¹

Naser al-Din was criticized and ridiculed by many of his contemporaries for his incomprehensible fondness for Malijak, widely despised because of his repulsive looks⁶² and peculiar behaviour.⁶³ Accordingly to her father's will, Taj had to be originally betrothed and married to his beloved favourite boy. It did not, however, come into effect because of Taj's mother's protest⁶⁴ and, ultimately, Malijak was engaged to one of her half-sisters, Akhtar al-Doula.⁶⁵

Finally, in 1893, at the age of nine, Taj al-Saltana was betrothed to Hassan Khan Sardar Shoja' al-Saltana. The course of the betrothal ceremony is thoroughly narrated in her memoir.⁶⁶ Recalling it, Taj focuses on expressing the deep sadness and anger she was feeling at that moment. Her sorrowful thoughts are being contrasted with the joy of her kinfolk: 'While the members of my family were busy enjoying themselves and having a grand time – I was dumbfounded, turning this way and that like a drunkard'.⁶⁷ She notes that the real reason for her melancholic mood, or even suffering, as she puts it, was unknown even for herself.⁶⁸

Afterwards, apart from mentioning a group of dancers and musicians, numerous platters of sweets and abundant number of guests of status,⁶⁹ she recalls one of her father's wives, Delbar Khanom ('Lady Coquette'⁷⁰), responsible for preparing all the courtly brides, cladding her and doing her make-up: 'Every bride that she dressed up was honoured by the sovereign with an expensive piece of gold cloth. I distinctly remember feeling that I was going to die under the weight of the gold cloth and jewellery and constantly cursing that unpropitious day'.⁷¹ She also evokes her reaction while looking at her face in the mirror after all the necessary beauty treatments she underwent that day:

A face so naturally pretty had been painted with rouge and ceruse and been transformed completely from its likeness. My eyebrows had been reduced by half, the hairs painstakingly and painfully removed with tweezers. Using mascara, they had shaped them into perfectly smooth arcs. So thick was the coat of paint on my face that all the natural contrasts of my complexion had disappeared. In addition, they had applied a thick layer of rouge to my lips. I was quite a sight.⁷²

The princess, who was among the first Iranian women to refuse the hijab and in her later days dressed in a European fashion, by uttering these words manifested her negative attitude towards the principles of traditional female appearance. Interestingly, her approach was in line with judgments formulated by several nineteenth-century Western female travellers to the East. As Shirley Foster observes, the Middle Eastern garments and ways of embellishment incited two antagonistic reactions in them: '... directly negative criticism and enthusiastic admiration'.⁷³ In the former case, the European visitors were particularly astonished by 'the habit of pulling the eyebrows and painting lines or patches on the face'.⁷⁴

The nuptials (not as pompous as the betrothal, as Taj observed⁷⁵), which took place few months after the engagement ceremony, also incited deep sorrow and regret in her. Writing about her own experience, Taj openly opposed the custom of arranging marriages and the 'trade' in women, so substantial for gaining economic benefits and establishing or developing social and political connections among the Iranian aristocracy. In her bitter remarks, she contrasted the Iranian realities with liberty of European women who, in her opinion, were in measure to freely choose husbands on their own instead of being 'sold off'⁷⁶: 'Here the Europeans are right – but then they surpass us in all areas of learning and progress'.⁷⁷ As Najmabadi observed: 'Taj al-Saltana's reflections on her first marriage are expressive of the reformist discourse on marriage ... during the 1910s'.⁷⁸ As we will see in the example of 'Lady from Kerman' and her diary, practices related to marriage – such as betrothals, espousals and matchmaking – constituted an extremely significant part of women's life in nineteenth-century Iran.

Representation of the royal harem of Naser al-Din Shah in *Ruzname-ye safar-e hajj-e banu-ye 'alaviyye-ye kermani* (1309--1312 q.)⁷⁹

Little, virtually nothing, is known about the identity of the author of *Ruzname-ye safar-e hajj*... Her name is not mentioned in her account, either by herself, or in

other protagonist's quotation. Rasul Ja'farian, the editor of the travelogue, proposes to name her 'Hajjiyye-ye Khanom-e 'Alaviyye-ye Kermani' – 'the Hajja⁸⁰ Alaviyah⁸¹ Lady from Kerman'.⁸² For the sake of conciseness I decided to abbreviate it to Lady from Kerman (starting from now with no quotation marks). Indisputably, the woman originated from Kerman and had broad connections with the Qajar nobility, both in her family city and in Tehran. Nothing is known, however, about her marital status at the time of writing down the diary (although we may suppose that she was widowed⁸³) or her offspring, except for one remark about her sons, Aqamirza Gholamhosseyn, Mirza 'Abdallah and Mirza 'Ali, mentioned on the occasion of their mother's departure for *hajj*.⁸⁴ Her age cannot be specified as well; we may only assume that she was not young, for her children were already full-grown and once she calls herself 'old' (*qadim*).⁸⁵

After coming back from *hajj* to Persia, she left Qom for Tehran instead of heading to her hometown. There she was received by Gholamhosseyn Khan⁸⁶ and Hazrat-e Vala [His Highness] Hashmat al-Saltana.⁸⁷ One of Hashmat al-Saltana's daughters, a temporary wife of Naser al-Din Shah, 'acted as an intermediary who invited our Hajjiyye Khanom to the [royal] *andarun*'.⁸⁸

As Ja'farian noted in his introduction to the account – concluding it on the basis of quite a considerable number of orthographic errors occurring on the pages of the original manuscript – Lady from Kerman was educated, 'albeit not thoroughly'.⁸⁹ In spite of some grammatical shortcomings and evident simplicity of language, her diary shares, in some measure, the distinctive features of Taj's memoirs: the lack of self-censorship⁹⁰ and unusual frankness, precision and minuteness in depiction of various events and practices. The author writes quite a lot about her inner feelings, though her work is not, certainly, 'inspired by the spirit of European romanticism'⁹¹ – as Taj's memoirs are – so that their author's 'individuality comes through effortlessly'.⁹²

One of the first observations made by Lady from Kerman on the pages of her account – apart from information about the layout of rooms and courtyards in Golestan palace⁹³ – was a detailed description of a daily schedule of Naser al-Din Shah. As she noted, each morning the Shah would wake up around one hour after the sunrise, or two and a half to three hours after the sunrise during the summer months. The first thing he did was to play the piano.⁹⁴ Then, he used to pay a call to his favourite wife, Amina Aqdas, and go to the baths (*hammam*). Lady from Kerman also noticed his dietary habits: each morning he ate three apples and then drank a cup of tea or hot water. Afterwards, the servants brought him bread (*nan*) with cheese (*panir*) or some chicken kebab. During the day he would spend his time admiring the royal gems⁹⁵ or riding a horse.⁹⁶ In the evening Naser al-Din used to eat his suppers alone at the court or in the harem. In the latter case, he was accompanied by his favourite wife, Anis al-Doula, and the chief eunuch, Agha Mohammad Khan – the same Taj al-Saltana mentioned in her memoirs with such disdain and revulsion. The anonymous lady was not so elaborate in her comments about his physique and behaviour, limiting herself to note that he was 'very short'.⁹⁷ Furthermore, she observed that both Anis al-Doula and Agha Mohammad Khan did not participate in the consumption of food,⁹⁸ although their presence at that time was necessarily required. The last important person accompanying the ruler during the supper was Malijak. The repasts gathered, thus, the most significant figures of the royal *andarun*:

the beloved wife, the favourite page boy – the only male member of the court given full, unlimited access to the inside quarters – and the chief eunuch exerting control over the seraglio. Aside from them, the coffeehouse servants were at Naser al-Din's disposal, 'with water and kebab' to serve when needed.⁹⁹

At that point all the wives of the Shah would be dismissed to eat their meals in their private quarters. Later, they would spend their time praying, changing their clothes and doing make-up. Once the supper ended, the wives would head upstairs, to the Qasr, that is the Shah's sleeping chambers. Then, after the usual amusements with dance and music, the king would choose the women he wanted to spend night with:

Some of the servants, with whom he concluded a temporary marriage, sing and play various instruments. The Shah himself plays the piano. 'Aziz al-Soltan [Malijak] is dancing while the temporary wives are playing the instruments. The other wives are also present. Some of them are sitting and some are standing. When the sixth hour after the sunset passes they are being released with the words: 'Go now, go!' Then they head to their quarters. A male slave visits the one chosen by the Shah to say: 'The Shah wants you.' And this person goes to the Shah. Afterwards she comes back to her room, unless it is the beloved [wife of the Shah], Anis al-Doula. Then two girls from the coffeehouse servants, majority of them wives of the Shah, sit down and caress him until dawn.¹⁰⁰

Her remarks about Naser al-Din Shah's erotic life are in line with observations of her contemporaries – to mention Taj al-Saltana's depiction of her imperial father's exaggerated fondness for women and his mania of 'collecting' new wives and concubines. In accordance with the information provided by Taj, the author mentions about eighty wives of Naser al-Din residing inside the walls of the royal *andarun*.¹⁰¹ While Taj's brief observation on her father's new female companions being 'chosen from villages in the vicinity'¹⁰² was not very revealing, Lady from Kerman shares more information about various ways in which the new 'resources' of the harem were 'accumulated'. One of them consisted of the 'beauty contests', during which young women were brought to the Shah's presence by their relatives, in order to 'sell' them to the royal harem. Lady from Kerman narrates about this custom on the occasion of *ta'zie* spectacles at the Takie[-ye] Doulat – a royal theatre established by Naser al-Din to hold the traditional Shia passion plays: 'The Shah stays [here] day and night with his wives. ... He is watching the girls brought along by people and he is giving them money. And these shameless people are bringing their daughters along to show them [to the Shah]. Since last night they brought six or seven girls, but the Shah did not like any of them'.¹⁰³

Calling the people 'shameless',¹⁰⁴ the woman opposes the custom and seems to sympathize with the girls, involuntarily reduced to objects of trade transactions. Furthermore, she takes note about another way in which Naser al-Din increased the number of his wives and concubines: it meant entering into a temporary marriage with the female workers and servants of the *andarun*. In her diary Lady from Kerman mentions one of these cases: 'There is a servant called Zeynab working for Amina Aqdas. The Shah has been wanting her for long. Today she got married to the Shah as his temporary wife. In the evening they did her makeup and took her to the Shah. Tonight the Shah took her with him'.¹⁰⁵

Apparently, Lady from Kerman was astonished by such great number of women gathered in the harem and by the Shah's methods of continuous enlargement of it. The fact that she decided to share these remarks in her account witnesses her surprise and, as one may assume, disapproval *vis-à-vis* those exaggerated practices. Moreover, the woman focused her attention on other aspects of the Shah's behaviour deemed by her uncommon or strange. Albeit that she did not decide to avowedly condemn the emperor – probably in part of fear that her account could be read by someone from the Shah's entourage – her remarks are quite explicit. This is how she relates, for instance, a situation which took place in the vicinity of Masjed-e Sepahsalar in Tehran¹⁰⁶:

The Shah came there [to the mosque] as well. He visited the nearby shops and bought some things worth 22 thousands *tumans*. He threw around hundred *tups* [ca. 3000–4000 meters!¹⁰⁷] of starched and gold woven textiles and scarves among his wives. They jumped one on another, taking off their chadors and kerchiefs, bareheaded among the men! And the Shah was laughing. After that he went away and the purchases were taken as the gifts for his wives.¹⁰⁸

This peculiar, childish amusement of the Shah brings to mind the 'switch-off-the-lights' games narrated by Taj on the pages of her memoirs. Apart from revealing Naser al-Din's easiness in spending large sums of money, it shows, again, his particular attitude towards *his* womenfolk: in both cases the wives were reduced to the role of 'actresses' in the 'spectacle' intended to reveal their alleged 'feminine vices' – such as jealousy, hidden hatred to each other, concentration on clothes and physical appearance – to the delight of their 'master'. The anonymous author of *Ruzname*... was seemingly embarrassed by this scene and by inappropriate reaction of the 'actresses', for she reproaches the women of taking off their clothes in male presence – a shocking fact for the lady attached to the traditional requirements of women's conduct and strict rules of female appearance in the public sphere.

Another example of Naser al-Din's peculiar character was witnessed by Lady from Kerman after the death of one of his daughters, Fakhr al-Doula, on 21 Rabi al-Sani 1311 (1 November 1893).¹⁰⁹ On this sad occasion, the women of the harem – who were the first to learn about Fakhr al-Doula's decease, but initially did not want to inform Naser al-Din about it, probably not to sadden the king¹¹⁰ – put on the dark, mourning attires. The Shah's reaction was quite unforeseen: he ordered his wives to change their outfits and wear back their normal, colourful dresses: 'Annoyed, he [Naser al-Din] came to the courtyard of Amina Aqdas. He saw that all [women] were wearing black clothes. He quarrelled with all, saying that they should take off these black clothes. So all [women] took them off, except the daughters of the Shah who were wearing purple and brown clothes'.¹¹¹

In her depictions of the harem life, Lady from Kerman often focuses on the physical appearance of *andaruni* women. On the occasion of *rouze* gatherings – traditional Shia rituals commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussayn – held by the royal women shortly before Fakhr al-Doula's death during the month of Rabi' al-Sani 1311 (October 1893) – the author shares her impression at the sight of women participating in these religious assemblies:

The wives of the Shah who come [to the rouze] are applying makeup on their faces and come like the ta'zie angels to sit around. ... Oh, there is something to look at about their clothes! They tie their prayer chadors around their waists or put them on their heads. Each of them does it in a different fashion.¹¹²

While noting that during the Shah's supper the women went to their own chambers and, after eating, prepared themselves for the evening amusements in the company of the king, the author points out that 'each of them tries to appear better than the rest, hoping that, perhaps, that night the Shah would take her to his bedroom'.¹¹³ This is almost the same remark Taj al-Saltana made in her memoir,¹¹⁴ which again testifies that for the competing inhabitants of the harem caring about their looks and constantly desiring the king's attention constituted an essential part of their lives.

The testimonies of piety of the *andaruni* ladies and quotidian religious practices of women constitute another considerable part of the account. Lady from Kerman repeatedly participated in the visitations (*ziarats*) of sacred places, accompanying some of *andaruni* residents.¹¹⁵ One of the most popular pilgrimage destinations for royal womenfolk (but, understandably, not only for them) was Shah 'Abd al-'Azim shrine in the city of Rey.¹¹⁶ The abovementioned *rouze* gatherings, organized mainly during the sacred month of Muharram, were also falling within the most important and common religious observances, widely held by women (albeit the male gatherings were organized as well). In her diary, Lady from Kerman mentions that there was a kind of rotation of leaders of the gatherings, or *rouze-khans*, the narrators: each woman led the series of *rouze* meetings during ten days; then, another woman took up the baton.¹¹⁷ On the occasion of Muharram observances – with their culminating point on the day of 'Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in the battlefield of Karbala – Lady from Kerman sheds light on some aspects of 'popular religiosity' among the inhabitants of the royal court. She writes about a folk belief in the sacredness – or blessing, spiritual power – emanating from the two trees in the Golestan palace; the belief characteristic for unorthodox or 'popular' Islam:

On the royal courtyard there is a plane-tree, known as The Plane-Tree of 'Abbas 'Ali. On the Friday nights people light candles under it. ... On the courtyard of Anis al-Doule there is another plane-tree, which is in turn called The Plane-Tree of Ja'far Sadeq. These plane-trees are here for a very long time and they are really big. We took our [Muharram] pennants and stuck them to the ground around the plane-trees. Everyone was beating their chests.¹¹⁸

Lady from Kerman, who visited the royal *andarun* repetitively over her sojourn in the capital, had a chance to form her own opinions on the most prominent courtiers residing within or frequently visiting the prohibited quarters. Therefore, Amina Aqdas and her nephew Malijak, the two highly influential figures of that time mentioned, as we remember, in the memoirs of Taj al-Saltana, appear also on the pages of her diary. Commenting on the Shah's *sighe* wife, Lady from Kerman does not refrain from sharing an unflattering opinion about her:

Amina Aqdas is totally blind. They say it is glaucoma¹¹⁹ and there is no cure for it. But she lies to the Shah. She says: 'I see so badly, I merely distinguish light and shade.' But she is lying. The European doctors also have learnt that she is lying.¹²⁰

Although the author does not elaborate on what the reasons of her antipathy toward Amina Aqdas were, it seems legitimate to assume that she considered her political power in the harem illegitimate and dangerous. Accusing her of lying to the Shah, she insinuates a negative impact she had on the politics of the country. Most probably, her opinion was influenced by what she heard from her hosts in Tehran: Hashmat al-Saltana and his daughter, the Shah's wife. Apparently, the princess was among the antagonists of Amina Aqdas's 'party', as many other members of the royal court. In the fragment quoted above Lady from Kerman refers to Amina Aqdas's voyage to Europe undertaken shortly before, in 1891. Suffering from ocular disease, Amina Aqdas set off for treatment to Vienna and underwent surgery there.¹²¹ It was the first journey to Europe held by a royal Persian woman, and for this reason it was vastly criticized by many contemporaries in the country, mainly by the Shia clergy accusing her for dishonouring Islam.¹²² It is highly improbable that Amina Aqdas was only simulating her illness. The author's words indicate, however, that such theory was present among her opponents – for it is very unlikely that it was merely her own, isolated opinion.

It is probable that the criticism towards Amina Aqdas was informed by author's dislike *vis-à-vis* her (in)famous nephew, 'Aziz al-Soltan (Malijak). In the course of her narrative Malijak is mentioned a couple of times, mostly with the intention of condemning his bizarre, improper behaviour.¹²³ The author emphasizes his extraordinary role at the royal court and particular fondness the Shah had for him, openly opposing and disapproving it: 'He has neither decent father or mother, nor nobility. Now the Shah is the first [of rank] and 'Aziz al-Soltan the second. None of his [i.e. the Shah's] offspring has the same position'.¹²⁴ The woman's remarks correspond to numerous criticisms and condemnations of the relationship between the Shah and his page boy, uttered by many contemporaries.¹²⁵

It is however Taj al-Saltana who appears as one of the most frequently mentioned harem figures within the analysed text. The anonymous woman became acquainted with the princess during the celebrations held on the occasion of birthday of Fatima Zahra, daughter of Prophet Muhammad, on 20 Jumada al-Thani 1310 (9 January 1893).¹²⁶ Soon after, on 14 and 15 Sha'ban 1310 (3–4 March 1893) she participated in the ceremony of betrothal of Taj to her future husband, an event narrated, as we know, by Taj herself.¹²⁷ At the very beginning the author noticed her outstanding beauty, confirming the words of Taj who immodestly highlighted her extraordinarily good looks in her memoirs¹²⁸: 'By God, she is beautiful like the moon! None of the daughters and wives of the Shah matches her in terms of prettiness. She is nine years old'.¹²⁹

Depicting the events accompanying the first day of the ceremony, namely the obligatory visit of the future bride to the baths (*hammam*), the author mentions being chosen from among other women to pin up the veil on the girl's head. Her hand was believed to give beatitude, as she was the one who came back from pilgrimage to Mecca and holy cities in Iraq:

We depilated the bride, with thousand tears and cries. I took the bride to the baths to tie up the veil by myself. I want to say by this that my hand is thought to give blessing.¹³⁰ Each hour the entertainers were coming to the baths, and some of the Shah's wives were also coming and going in groups.¹³¹

On the second day, once all the entertainers and guests were already gathered on site, Taj was taken to her imperial father. Then, the author, accompanied by a girl's nanny (*daye*), took her to the courtyard of Anis al-Doula, empty at the moment, where '... one of the Shah's wives responsible of doing make-up to all the brides...' ¹³² came as well. At that point, according to her account, they put on make-up on bride's face together.¹³³ Clearly, Lady from Kerman referred here to Delbar Khanom, 'Lady Coquette', mentioned by Taj in her memoirs as the one who did her maquillage on that day. However, Taj does not recall the presence of Lady from Kerman during these preparations.¹³⁴

The woman pictured the pomp and grandeur of the ceremony, mentioning tremendous number of guests, musicians, soldiers and food exposed on numerous tables. According to her testimony, about four hundred *khanches* – sumptuous tablecloths with sweets, fruits, delicacies and refreshments, traditionally set on the occasion of betrothals or nuptials – were brought inside five hours before sunset. One soldier stood on both sides of each *khanche*, and for every twenty *khanches* there was a different band of musicians appointed. Each set of twenty *khanches* was additionally accompanied by 200–300 servants in rows on both sides, holding silver maces in their hands. According to author's estimation, the total number of guests reached about two hundred people. Apart from music and dance, a circus show with European, presumably Russian, acrobats was organized too. Here again, similarly to the show during the celebrations of birthday of Fatima few days earlier, Lady from Kerman confesses her inaptitude of describing their performance: 'I cannot express the things they have been doing. One cannot understand it, unless they see it in person'.¹³⁵

One may find striking how much space in the account of Lady from Kerman is devoted to describe various events and practices related to marriage. From her arrival to the capital up until her trip back to Kerman, the woman visited numerous weddings (*'arusi'*), leading to both temporary and 'normal' marriages, and betrothals (*namzadi*). Her help in preparations to these ceremonies consisted mainly of traditional 'female' chores, like cooking or preparing sweets, sewing or weaving, and purchasing food, fabrics, metal or ceramics in the bazar. The woman notes also that she was often 'hired' as the bride stylist and used to do their make-up (as she did in case of Taj, accompanying 'Lady Coquette'), for her hand was believed to give blessing and bring good fortune to the newly married. The ceremonies were very engaging, both in terms of time and money the concerned families, and guests, had to spend on them. One may notice, however, that as long as the aristocratic nuptials were considered an excuse for organizing sumptuous feasts with abundant numbers of guests and plenty of food, the temporary marriages, along with the *'aqdis* of the members of lower social strata, constituted, in contrast, quickly arranged procedures with modest, symbolic celebration.

Beside numerous weddings and engagement ceremonies, Lady from Kerman willingly involved herself in matchmaking. Here, too, her desirability as a matchmaker

was due to the fact that she possessed a special status of *hajji khanom*. It is interesting to observe, how on the occasion of one of the *sighe* marriages between an orphan girl and a man called 'Abdolvaheb Mirza, Lady from Kerman demonstrated a kind of 'female solidarity' with the bride. The girl, who, as she stated, was '...indeed very ugly'¹³⁶ faced the risk of an immediate divorce with her newly married husband who wished to dismiss her because of her unattractive looks. The woman sympathized with the girl and tried to prevent the divorce: '... Poor orphan with no father! I went to His Highness [Hashmat al-Saltana] and told him: "There is nothing we can do now. It is impossible to divorce her for this reason!"'¹³⁷ Finally, as a result of her intervention, the bridegroom abandoned the idea of divorcing the girl. Lady from Kerman acted thus as a defender of the rights of the girl who – as an orphan deprived of legal protection of her father, or any other male *mahram*¹³⁸ member of family – was at risk of serious instability and deep financial problems, not to mention the inferior social status of a single woman who did not contribute to the society as a mother of children. As M. Kia pointed: 'Society [in nineteenth-century Iran] valued women according to their capacity to bear children and to maintain their households. The principal duty of women was to perpetuate the family by producing children'.¹³⁹ For a woman, to remain single and childless was to break the social order. The abovementioned passage attests how Lady from Kerman was using her position and esteem she enjoyed being a *hajji* with the intention of providing decent life for women bereft of 'male guidance' – but at the same time her actions remained in the framework of patriarchal system and reinforced it.

Conclusion

Both the memoirs of Taj al-Saltana and the diary of Lady from Kerman constitute valuable sources of information about Iranian women's lives in the final years of the nineteenth century for a couple of reasons. As has already been underlined, they represent the only known narratives about the harem life during the late reign of Naser al-Din Shah written by the 'directly involved' individuals. The other recognized sources were penned either by the male members of the court (like E'temad al-Saltana), or by European travellers visiting Iran at that time, for instance, Jean-Baptiste Feuvrier, personal physician to the Shah. They do not constitute, then, testimonies of women's direct experience. Furthermore, the relations of the Westerners were often coloured by the orientalist clichés and stereotypes, echoing the 'ethnopornographic' images of lustful, lecherous seraglios, and presented the harems as the most suggestive evidences of the East being '... a region of exoticism and promiscuous sexuality'.¹⁴⁰ Even when written on the basis of direct observations, these travelogues and diaries were not free of simplifying or condemnatory *idées reçues* imported by the Western travellers and unconsciously employed by them in their judgments, or even 'objective' descriptions.¹⁴¹ In addition, the male travellers were not allowed to enter the restricted female areas, so they based their judgments on indirect information, with few exceptions only (*vide* aforementioned J.-B. Feuvrier who, as a physician, had access to the royal womenfolk).

With respect to their form, a noteworthy aspect of the analysed accounts is their straightforwardness and lack of self-censorship. Though both works differ significantly (Taj's memoir is much more complex and sophisticated than the account of

Lady from Kerman), they announce important changes which occurred in the framework of the Iranian autobiographical writing. In place of a 'journalistic', 'reporting' style according to which the events, objects and people had to be described 'as they were', a new model of relating about one's self and the outside world was proposed. Both authors – though in a different fashion and not to the same degree – managed to render their inner feelings, thoughts and ideas, beginning with describing the realities 'as they were'.

It is particularly noticeable in the account of Taj al-Saltana, where the introspection (virtually 'prohibited' in the traditional Iranian writing which required 'modesty'¹⁴²) emerged as a central feature, making her memoirs '... striking for their deep-seated tensions and intense contradictions, apparent on virtually every page'.¹⁴³ Taj treated her life as a 'starting material', exposed in literary form in order to present, in her own example, a multi-threaded social criticism. Her description of the royal harem was aimed at definitely rejecting the world in opposition to which she constructed her worldview of a 'conscious woman', liberated from the bonds of barbaric, obscurantist traditions. Interestingly, certainly in part on account of being a 'westernized' feminist, Taj echoed many judgments and condemnations uttered by her Western contemporaries. In her view the (royal) harem equalled a prison where women lived their idle lives reduced to the position of slaves (even if they did not realize what their actual position was). Idealizing the alleged freedom of rural women, cooperating in work and sharing their lives with husbands as equal partners, she formulated an opinion similar to the one shared by The Honourable Mrs William Grey who, travelling in the East during the late 1860s, wrote that 'in spite of all this finery and luxury [of the harem], I would rather be the poorest peasant woman working for my bread than one of these miserable creatures'.¹⁴⁴

A. Najmabadi observes yet that the princess's judgments were not always coherent and exhaustive, for example with regard to polygamy. She notes that '[Taj] makes sharp observations about the harem life of her father, without even mentioning the polygamous situation as a cause of the troubles. Her own advocacy of marriage based on love assumes monogamy'.¹⁴⁵ According to Najmabadi, one of the reasons of omitting the issue of polygamy was Taj's unconditional fondness for her father, ... making her unwilling to criticize his main mode of relating to women.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, one has to agree with a general conclusion drawn by the scholar: certainly, Taj understood marriage as a union in which both spouses were entering owing to reciprocal love, retaining their personal integrity and dignity of human beings, able to decide in their own name and to act in accordance with their will. One has to agree as well that Taj did not criticize polygamy directly; the word 'polygamy' itself does not appear on the pages of her memoir. It is also true that Taj's fondness *vis-à-vis* her father definitely coloured her opinions and blunted her criticism. It does not mean, however, that her narrative is totally devoid of it.

On the contrary, Taj was perfectly aware that her father's behaviour toward women and the sheer size of his harem were serious problems which influenced, in a bad fashion, the lives of its residents. She described herself as a victim of *andarun*, deprived of education and care on her mother's side. She also blamed her father for wasting his time on strange, useless plays and amusements. Her depiction of 'switch-off-the-lights' games was very emotional and condemning in tone. Mentioning the fearsome destiny of the royal wives deprived of Naser al-Din's protection after his

death she sympathized with them as victims of a patriarchal system which ‘enslaved’ and objectified women not giving them anything in return. Last but not least, she avowedly confessed: ‘So overcome was he [Naser al-Din] by his passions and carnal desires, and so absorbed in his worldly delights, that he had even forgotten his regal privileges’.¹⁴⁷ In these remarks both sides seem to be viewed as sufferers: Naser al-Din who, instead of acting as a serious ruler, was losing himself for child-like games and overpowering lust, and his wives and concubines – treated as toys, bereft of education and totally dependent on ‘protection’.

The work of Lady from Kerman does not share similar profoundness of social-feminist criticism. Its author’s societal and cultural background was diverse in many aspects: firstly, she did not come from the royal capital; secondly, while being a member of nobility, she did not belong to the highest ranks of the Qajar aristocracy; and, finally, she was a representative of another generation. Certainly, she did not have much, if any, contact with European literature, French language and foreign visitors or temporary dwellers of the royal court – the conditions which significantly shaped Taj’s worldview and personality. One may say that she was a part of the ‘old order’: she was religious, devoted to ‘typically feminine’ household tasks, raised children awaiting her in her homeland Kerman, and was acting as a matchmaker in favour of women bereft of male ‘protection’ and ‘guidance’. Nonetheless, her diary testifies that she was a strong person who occasionally dared to demand independence from men in her entourage. Remaining within the patriarchal system – which she did not question – she was opposing men who tried to limit her in her liberty of socializing with other women and restrict her freedom of mobility. She repeatedly argued with her Tehrani host, Hashmat al-Saltana, when he attempted to restrain her from visiting the mosque or the royal harem.¹⁴⁸ Even if he wanted her to stay at his place, she did not let to be involuntarily locked behind her host’s walls, and was finally managing to visit her acquaintances and friends on her own. It was the religious sphere – both in temporal and spacious dimension, for instance, the mosques, the *ziarats* or the *rouzes* – and the ‘prohibited’ zone inside the walls of the *andarun* where she was free to socialize with other women, shaping the intensity, duration and actual character of these contacts. This important feature of harem life (rooted in a traditional segregation of sexes) needs to be particularly emphasized. As argued by Leila Ahmed, the harem constituted and still constitutes, in fact, ‘... a system whereby the female relatives of a man – wives, sisters, mother, aunts, daughters – share much of their time and their living space, and further, which enables women to have frequent and easy access to other women in their community, vertically, across class lines, as well as horizontally’.¹⁴⁹

The woman’s observations on quotidian, ‘popular’ religiosity is particularly remarkable – bearing in mind that the religious sphere is, interestingly, virtually absent in the memoir of Taj al-Saltana. Her account shows that women socialized, chiefly, accordingly to the cycle of religious feasts or other events of communal importance, like weddings, engagement ceremonies or funerals. The numerous visits and revisits were also highly conventionalized rites of, at bottom, religious meaning: visiting and revisiting each other and giving/receiving gifts was believed to provide health, good fortune and success.¹⁵⁰

The very fact that the author of *Ruzname*... undertook *hajj* bears witness to her profound piety – which is quite obvious – but it also reaffirms her unusual

independence and strength – both in literal, physical, and figurative, psychological, sense. As one may assume, she was a widow and her children were full-grown, thus she was freer to leave home for such a long period of time. At these times it was still rare for common people to set off for *hajj* to remote Mecca and the ‘fifth pillar of Islam’ remained inaccessible for almost everyone, except for a small group of wealthy, privileged men. Women were additionally limited by the fact that they did not administer their assets and in practice were totally reliant on husbands. While the main duty of women was to give birth to children and raise them, they were not supposed to partake in long, dangerous journeys to distant lands. It was, thus, very unlikely for them to go to Mecca during their lifetime, unless they were accompanying their husbands, who were commonly reluctant to take them along.¹⁵¹

The significance of Lady from Kerman’s opus lies also in the fact that it provides substantial data concerning the various facets of Iranians’ quotidian life, regardless of their gender or social class. For instance, she shares information about illnesses that herself and people in her entourage were suffering from. During her sojourn in Tehran, in 1892, she was witness to one of numerous epidemics of cholera affecting Persia throughout the nineteenth century, and the panic it caused among the Tehrani gentry.¹⁵² The descriptions of various diseases, more or less severe, intertwine with remarks on treatment methods – in this respect, too, the diary constitutes a very interesting document of an epoch in which the innovations of occidental medicine were finding their way to Persia and coexisted with the traditional means of cure.¹⁵³ However, the contributions to the history of Iranian medicine, as to many other spheres and phenomena pictured on the pages of *Ruzname*..., go beyond the scope of this paper. One may hope that they will soon become the subject of a detailed study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. M. Kia, ‘Inside the Court of Naser od-Din Shah Qajar, 1881–96: The Life and Diary of Mohamad Hasan Khan E’tamad os-Saltaneh’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Jan. 2001), pp. 101–41, p.124.
2. Ibid.
3. Arabic word for harem, *ḥaram*, literally means ‘forbidden, prohibited, interdicted; taboo; holy, sacred, sacrosanct; s.th. sacred, sacred object; sacred possession; wife; sanctum, sanctuary, sacred precinct’ and is related to: *ḥarām* ‘forbidden, interdicted, prohibited, unlawful; s.th. forbidden, offense, sin; inviolable, taboo; sacred, sacrosanct; cursed, accursed’ and *ḥarīm* ‘a sacred, inviolable place, sanctum, sanctuary, sacred precinct; harem; female members of the family, women; wife’. Cf. H. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976), pp.171–2.
4. L. Ahmed, ‘Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem’, *Feminist Studies*, Vol.8, No.3 (Autumn, 1982), pp.521–534, p.524.
5. The first to note this was Afsaneh Najmabadi. Cf. A. Najmabadi, TĀJ-al-SALTĀNA, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* [digital edition], <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/taj-al-saltana> (accessed on 8 May 2014).

6. There is a discrepancy regarding Taj's date of birth, because, according to some authors, she was born in 1883. Cf. F.: Milani, 'The Memoir of Taj-O Saltaneh', *Iranian Studies*, Vol.19, No.2 (Spring, 1986), pp.189–192, p.190; Sh. Mahdavi, 'Taj al-Saltaneh, an Emancipated Qajar Princess', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.23, No.2 (Apr., 1987), pp.188–93, p.188. In the preface to the Iranian edition of Taj's memoirs, Mansure-ye Ettehadie states, however, that she was born in 1301 A.H., corresponding to 1884 in Gregorian calendar. Cf. Taj al-Saltane, *Khaterat-e Taj al-Saltane*, ed. M. Ettehadie (Nezam Mafi) (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran 1371 [1982]), p.I. Also Abbas Amanat, in his introduction to the English translation of Taj's memoirs, notes that she was born in 1884. Cf. A. Amanat: *The Changing World of Taj al-Saltana*, introduction to: Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish – Memoirs of a Persian Princess: From the Harem to Modernity, 1884–1914*, by Anna Vanzan and Amin Neshati, ed. Abbas Amanat (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 1993), p.11. The information provided by Taj herself that she was born 'towards the end of 1301' (Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.109) indicates that it was actually in 1884: accordingly to the Islamic lunar calendar, 1 Rabi al-Awwal 1301, the third Hijri month, equals with 31 December 1883. Finally, A. Najmabadi provides an exact date of Taj's birth: 5 or 6 Rabi' II 1301, corresponding to 3 or 4 February 1884. She does not, however, specify her reference. Cf. A. Najmabadi, TĀJ-al-SALTĀNA.
7. A. Najmabadi, TĀJ-al-SALTĀNA.
8. A. Amanat, *Postscript* to Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.313.
9. Sh. Mahdavi, 'Taj al-Saltaneh', p.188.
10. Cf. for instance A. Najmabadi, TĀJ-al-SALTĀNA. The first, partial publication of Taj al-Saltana's memoirs in Iran dates back to 1969. Cf. E. Kazamieh, 'Qatl-e Naser al-Din Shah az khaterat-e Taj al-Saltane', *Ruzname-ye ketab*, Vol.12, No.7–8 (1348 [1969]), pp.340–54. The full version of the memoirs appeared in Iran in 1982. Cf. Taj al-Saltane, *Khaterat* (see footnote 2). Afterwards, in 1993, the memoirs, translated to English, were published in the United States. Cf. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish* (see footnote 2). In the present article I am leaning upon the American edition and all quotations are from this release. Occasionally, I am making use of the Iranian edition, for the sake of clarification of some specific Persian terms and expressions.
11. A. Amanat, *The Changing World*, p.12.
12. Ibid.
13. A. Najmabadi, TĀJ-al-SALTĀNA.
14. Ibid.
15. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.113.
16. Ibid., pp.113 and 156.
17. Ibid., p.112.
18. Ibid., p.113.
19. In Persian original: *zar-kharid*, literally: 'purchased with gold'. Cf. Taj al-Saltane, *Khaterat*, p.8.
20. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.200. Recalling complicated relationship with her mother, who 'lacked the qualities required for motherhood' (Ibid., p.110), Taj constantly emphasizes importance of motherly love and warmth for a proper mental and emotional growth of children. This issue comes back as a leitmotiv in her memoirs. She underlines the irreplaceable role of a biological mother who should not place her children under the care of wet-nurses and nannies. Her bitter remarks about her mother's coldness lead her to criticize the traditional methods of upbringing and education (see, for instance, Ibid., p.116). Expressing her criticism, she tries to find reason for such state of things, underlining the devastating consequences of isolating women from education: 'Heaven forbid if it seems that I am disavowing my mother, for whom I hold a devout reverence! No, she was not to blame. But I must reproach the traditions and ethos of a nation that barred the way toward happiness to all women and held them, wretched and unenlightened, in a world of utmost ignorance. All moral defects or evils in this country have originated and spread from the absence of education for women.' Cf. Ibid., p.110.
21. Ibid., p.114.
22. Ibid., p.115.
23. Ibid. Before depicting her deep affection for her black 'Matron Nanny' – a title granted to her after years of service (she also took care of Taj's father when he was a child) – Taj expresses her solidarity with black slaves. Her words testify high level of consciousness in terms of racial equality – a rare case at her times: 'The nanny specifically had to be a negress, since honor and grandeur at that time

- were measured by ownership of creatures whom God has made no differently from others, except for the color of their skin — a distinction that in all honesty does not exist at the divine threshold. These poor people were kept in captivity and abject submission, made the instruments of their owners' greatness, and called "bond servants". They were bought and sold like so much cattle'. Cf. *Ibid.*, p.113.
24. *Ibid.*, p.115.
 25. Recalling her father kissing her forehead while informing her about her imminent marriage, her ardent words remind a love confession for a paramour: 'My tongue was speechless, my eyes could not see, my ears heard nothing. Love — a pure, grand, majestic love — severed my lifeline at that moment.' Cf. *Ibid.*, p.204.
 26. *Ibid.*, p.125.
 27. On this subject see, for instance, H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha-ye haramsara* (Orumiyye: Entesharat-e Anzali, 1364 [1985]), p.361 and consecutive.
 28. Hajj Mohammad-'Ali Sayyah, *Khaterat-e Hajj Sayyah ya doure-ye khouf va vahshat* (ed. H. Sayyah, rev. S. Golkar) (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1359), p.687, after: H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha*, pp.361–2.
 29. 'Naser al-Din Shah's harem could not hope to match in size that of his great-grandfather, Fath 'Ali Shah. The earlier monarch, facing an oversupply of wives and concubines, had instituted a division of labor in the harem that allowed him to indulge himself with as many as eighteen wives, who tended to his bedtime needs in rotating shifts.' Cf. A. Amanat, *The Changing World*, p.16. More on Fath 'Ali Shah's harem Cf. H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha*, pp.341–51. The author recapitulates that '... as testified by historical sources, Fath 'Ali Shah bred a family that cannot be found at any other time or in any other country in history'. Cf. *Ibid.*, p.343. On Fath 'Ali Shah's attitude toward women H. Azad writes: '... In Fath 'Ali Shah's view woman was just a toy used for mere entertainment and constituted a suitable means to stimulate certain thrills he preferred over other kinds of excitement'. Cf. *Ibid.*, p.349. On rather modest, at least for Qajar standards, harem of Mohammad Shah Qajar Cf. *Ibid.*, pp.359–61.
 30. According to Guity Nashat their number was 85 at the moment of the ruler's death in 1896. Cf. G. Nashat, ANIS-AL-DAWLA, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol.II, Fasc.1, pp.74–6, p.74.
 31. 'Among all these ladies only seven or eight had children, the rest remaining childless.' Cf. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.124.
 32. *Ibid.* Other sources provide similar data: 'In an 1886 entry to his diary E'temad os-Saltaneh [E'temad al-Saltana] claimed that the Shah had 81 children and grandchildren. He also quoted a harem insider sometime later that there were 700 women, maids and slave girls served and guarded by 750 male servants and 38 eunuchs.' Cf. M. Kia, 'Inside the Court of Naser od-Din Shah Qajar', pp.121–2. Kia refers to: E'temad al-Saltane, *Ruzname-ye khaterat E'temad al-Saltane*, pp.460, 644.
 33. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, pp.132 and 134.
 34. 'My father at this time had become completely like a child. So great was his joy that he found a fresh amusement or cause for celebration every moment.' *Ibid.*, p.195.
 35. *Ibid.*, pp.196 and 198.
 36. *Ibid.*, pp.121–2.
 37. *Ibid.*, p.113. More on Agha Nuri Khan (Agha Nur Mohammad Khan) Cf. Dust'ali Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek, *Yaddashthai az zendegani-e khosusi-e Naser al-Din Shah*, pp.20 and consecutive, after: H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha*, p.329. In the quoted passage the author mentions another eunuch, Agha Behram, emphasizing that he was a powerful and respected figure at the court. On the importance of castratos at the time of Naser al-Din Shah's reign, Cf. *ibid.*, pp.329–30.
 38. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.122.
 39. *Ibid.*
 40. *Ibid.*
 41. *Ibid.*, p.113.
 42. A. Amanat, *The Changing World*, p.15. Taj complains about having been exceptionally treated as a child: 'Among my father's wives and other occupants of the royal palace I enjoyed a special regard which was almost a source of trouble and annoyance.' Cf. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.119. She mentions the ladies whose 'kisses and caresses resulted in delay and cost me precious play time'. Cf. *Ibid.* In her portrayal of herself as a little girl she finds reason for that 'special regard': it was her extreme smartness ('I was exceptionally intelligent and clever; it seemed God had spread open the wings of his bounty over me'; *Ibid.*) and beauty: 'In the royal

palace, which was the gathering spot for the choicest of lovely women, there was no face prettier or lovelier than mine.' Cf. Ibid.

43. On this custom Cf. M. Kia, 'Inside the Court of Naser od-Din Shah Qajar', pp.119–20.
44. A. Amanat, *The Changing World*, p.17. This is how Taj al-Saltana writes about her father's passion for travel: 'Every year, from the first month in spring His Majesty my father would set off on his trips, spending the better part of spring, summer, and autumn traveling. He was especially attached to hunting and horse riding.' Cf. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.130. See also: M. Kia, 'Inside the Court of Naser od-Din Shah Qajar', pp.118–19.
45. A. Amanat, *The Changing World*, p.17.
46. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.234.
47. Ibid., p.132.
48. Ibid. In original: *lāskane*. Cf. Taj al-Saltane, *Khaterat*, p.19.
49. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.132.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. E'temad al-Saltane, *Ruzname*, p.842, after: M. Kia, 'Inside the Court of Naser od-Din Shah Qajar', p.123.
54. G. Nashat, ANĪS-AL-DAWLA, p.74 (with changes in transcription system).
55. Ibid.; A. Amanat, *Historical Biographies*, appendix to: Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.321.
56. A. Amanat, *Historical Biographies*, p.321.
57. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.144.
58. E'temad al-Saltane, *Ruzname*, p.841, after: G. Nashat, ANĪS-AL-DAWLA, p.75.
59. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.144.
60. A. Amanat, *Historical Biographies*, p.321. More on Amina Aqdas, see, for instance, G. Nashat, AMĪNA(-YE) AQDAS, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol.I, Fasc.9, pp.954–5; H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha*, pp.371–6.
61. More on Malijak, see, for instance, A. Amanat, 'AZĪZ-AL-SOLTĀN, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. III, Fasc.3, pp.263–5; H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha*, pp.418–25.
62. 'This child seemed almost blind; that is to say, he suffered so much pain in his eyes that they were chronically red and ugly. Despite his finery and his closeness to the royal person, he was excessively dirty. He was sallow-complexioned, unpleasant to look at, and uncommonly short.' Cf. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.129.
63. 'Day and night he was occupied in mischief, running all over the courtyard and pestering the ladies and guests. No one had the authority to question his behavior or call him to account. He pelted the ladies with dirt and stones, rather than with flowers, in the summer and with snowballs in the winter. He was not averse to any manner of wild, uncouth behavior and had a mean streak in him, even to the point of attempting murder. One day, for instance, he fired a gun at a eunuch named 'Abdallah and wounded him in the leg for fun; the unfortunate man still carries that souvenir of the boy's childhood and walks with a limp.' Cf. Ibid., pp.129–30.
64. Quoted by Taj on her memoir's pages: 'Oh, I would sooner poison my daughter and end her life than consent to such a son-in-law. Isn't it a pity to give my darling, sweet girl to this child whose parentage is well known and whose appearance is so repulsive?' Cf. Ibid., p.141.
65. Their marriage ceremony was narrated by Taj. Cf. Ibid., pp.173–6.
66. Ibid., pp.147–152.
67. Ibid., p.147.
68. Ibid., p.148.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., p.152.
73. Sh. Foster, 'Colonialism and Gender in the East: Representations of the Harem in the Writings of Women Travellers', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol.34 (2004), pp.6–17, p.11.
74. Ibid., p.12.
75. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.157.
76. Ibid., p.148.

77. Ibid., p.150.
78. A. Najmabadi, TĀJ-al-SALTĀNA.
79. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname-ye safar-e hajj-e banu-ye 'alaviyye-ye kermani (1309–1312 q.)* (Qom, 2007). In this article I am analysing the final part of the account of Lady from Kerman, constituting more than half of the volume, and dedicated to her sojourn in Tehran between Jumada al-Ula of 1310 (December of 1892) until Safar of 1312 (June of 1894).
80. Hajja (Fem. of Ar. *hajji*) – woman who performed *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca.
81. Alawiyah (Fem. of Ar. *'alawi*) – woman who is descendant of Prophet Muhammad; *sayyida*.
82. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.9.
83. Her husband is not mentioned in the text. Furthermore, widowed women were much freer and were not compelled to receive their husbands' permission to set off on a pilgrimage.
84. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.10.
85. Ibid., p.139.
86. Gholamhosseyn Khan – son of Ebrahim Khan Zahir al-Doula, governor of Kerman in 1801–25. Cf. Ibid., p.117, after: *Tarikh-e Kerman-e vaziri*, p.796 and others.
87. Hazrat-e Vala Hashmat al-Saltana – most probably refers to Mohammad Hassan Mirza Hashmat al-Doula, warlord of governor of Kerman, Naser al-Doule, and governor of Baluchistan. Cf. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.117.
88. Ibid., p.10.
89. Ibid., p.13.
90. Ibid.
91. A. Amanat, *The Changing World*, p.12.
92. Ibid.
93. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.119.
94. Back then, the piano was a real rarity in Iran: 'At these times there were five or six pianos in Tehran, and hardly anyone could play it.' Cf. Dust'ali Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek, *Yaddashthai*, p.28, after: H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha*, p.405. According to Dust'ali Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek, the royal piano was located on the upper floor of Anis al-Doula's residence. In the following sentences the author writes about 'Esmat al-Doula who knew how to play the piano and was entertaining the Shah who also played with her. Cf. Ibid.
95. On Shah's fondness for precious stones Cf. M. Kia, 'Inside the Court of Naser od-Din Shah Qajar', p.120.
96. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.120. Thanks to her acquaintance with the Shah's wife, Lady from Kerman was able to participate in various amusements intended for the inhabitants of the court. On one of these occasions, during her first, fifteen-day sojourn in the harem, she was introduced to the ruler by Hashmat al-Saltana's daughter: 'Tonight there was a show with the singers and actors performing. I was standing among the spectators as well. The Shah was walking about and finally he reached me. The Lady Princess said: "Shah, this is the hajji Lady from Kerman who arrived from Mecca and wishes to pay a visit to the Shah. Please wait so she can see you". He replied: "So be it". He stepped toward me, took off his glasses, loosened his foulard and approached his head to my face. I burned with shame. He said swiftly: "Look at me and say whether I am handsome, or not". Finally I looked at him. Then he said: "Well?". I replied: "By God, you are very handsome and beautiful!". He said then: "You are a liar, there is no beauty in me!". And then he went to the singers for an hour. When he came back, he gave a five-thousand note to some man, and he gave one to me too.' Cf. Ibid., pp.121–2.
97. Ibid., p.120.
98. Although, according to Moayyer al-Mamalek's testimony, '... it happened sometimes [to the Shah] to tell: "Anis al-Doule, eat!". He also observed that one of the Shah's daughters, Fakhr od-Doule, was sometimes given permission to accompany her imperial father during his repasts, 'in order to prepare or pluck the food'. Cf. Dust'ali Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek, *Yaddashthai*, p.31 and consecutive, after: H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha*, p.406.
99. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.120.
100. Ibid. These words – as the earlier remark about the meals of the Shah – correspond to Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek's testimony, who noticed that Anis al-Doula '... was the only wife to take meals with Naser-al-din and to join him regularly at bedtime after he received visits from other wives...'. Cf. G. Nashat, ANĪS-AL-DAWLA. Nashat refers to: Dust'ali Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek, *Yaddashthai*, pp.32,

34. Also Jean-Baptiste Feuvrier, Naser al-Din Shah's private physician from 1889 until 1892, wrote in his travelogue: 'On the outside there are two male waiters, and inside – two female servants whose duty is to rub gently the arms and legs of the Shah, in order to make it clear that they do not forget to care [about him].' Cf. Doktor-e Fuvrie [J.-B. Feuvrier], *Se sal dar darbar-e Iran*, p.143, after: H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha*, p.390.
101. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.119. Sharing this observation, she does not omit to refer to their look, apparently amazed by the vivid colours of their clothes and impressiveness of their maquillage: 'All days long the wives of the Shah would come incessantly and I would watch them. During the evenings we used to go to the royal courtyard; all the eighty wives of the Shah were wearing makeup, yellow, red, or blue, and the colourful, thin scarves, resembling the *ta'zie* angels.' Cf. *Ibid.*
102. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.124.
103. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.135.
104. *mardom-e bi 'ār*. Cf. *Ibid.*
105. *Ibid.*, p.144.
106. Masjed-e Sepahsalar – the largest mosque in Tehran, belonging to the Qajar era.
107. One *tup* equalled ca. 30–40 meters of fabric. Cf. H. Anvari, *Farhang-e feshorde-ye sokhan* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Sokhan, 1390 [2011/12]), Vol.1, p.679.
108. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.136.
109. *Ibid.*, p.162.
110. *Ibid.*, pp.162–3.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
112. *Ibid.*, p.162.
113. *Ibid.*, p.120.
114. 'Each tried to outdo the others in dressing up, primping and trying to appear extraordinary so as to attract the attention of the Shah. Every evening, without fail, they would spend two or three hours on their colorful clothes and toilette, turn themselves into goddesses, and appear in His Majesty's presence.' See note 33.
115. See, for instance, 'Today is Thursday, 17[Shawwal 1310 / 4 May 1893]. Some of the Shah's wives were guests of the lady [i.e. Hashmat al-Saltana's daughter] in the mosque of *hazrat-e 'Abd al-'Azim*. We went on *ziarat* to Bibi Zobeyde, *emamzade* of 'Abdallah and to *hazrat-e 'Abd al-'Azim*. Around sunset we came back home.' R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.140.
116. Shah 'Abd al-'Azim – a shrine in Rey (Shahr-e Rey), nowadays on the southern outskirts of Tehran. The shrine contains a tomb of 'Abd al-'Azim ibn 'Abdullah al-Hassani, descendant of Hassan ibn 'Ali, the second imam according to the Twelver Shia denomination.
117. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.151.
118. *Ibid.*, p.152. Also Dust'ali Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek referred to these trees, witnessing that The Plane-Tree of 'Abbas 'Ali in particular was of significant religious importance for *andaruni* women: 'There used to be two big, old plane-trees in the harem which were later cut down. One of them was known as The Plane-Tree of 'Abbas 'Ali and it had been surrounded by a green fence with one door on one of the sides. The visitation prayers (*ziarat-nameha*) were put on there too, and each night people used to light the candles [under it] and, according to the belief, they were tying rags to the fence and to the branches of the tree.' Cf. Dust'ali Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek, *Yaddashthai*, p.43, after: H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha*, pp.397–8.
119. In original: *āb-e siāh*. Cf. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.148. The other sources claim that Amina Aqdas was suffering from cataracts. Cf. A. Amanat, *Historical Biographies*, p.321; G. Nashat, AMĪNA(-YE) AQDAS, p.955.
120. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.148.
121. A. Amanat, *Historical Biographies*, p.321; G. Nashat, AMĪNA(-YE) AQDAS, p.955.
122. A. Amanat, *Historical Biographies*, p.321.
123. Cf. for instance the following passage: "Sometimes these days 'Aziz al-Soltan [Malijak] mingles with the musicians to play the *sanj*, sometimes he rides a horse and picks up the flute. At times, in turn, he takes a wooden rod and hits people with it. By God, is he out of his mind? Oh Lord, have mercy!" R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.135.
124. *Ibid.*, p.186.
125. See, for instance, H. Azad, *Posht-e pardeha*, pp.418–25.

126. 'We went to the house of Nayeab al-Saltana in the company of Her Highness Taj al-Saltana and Her Highness Lady Princess. ... I have seen all the wives of the statesmen, the sisters and daughters of the Shah—I have seen many, many people.' Cf. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.122.
127. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, pp.147–52 (see note 66).
128. 'In the royal palace, which was the gathering spot for the choicest of lovely women, there was no face prettier or lovelier than mine.' Cf. *Ibid.*, p.119 (see note 42).
129. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, p.127.
130. *Be in ma'ni ke dast-e marā shogun kardand*. Cf. *Ibid.*
131. *Ibid.*
132. *Ibid.*
133. *Ibid.*
134. As stated by the anonymous author, she was accompanying Taj during the following part of the ceremony as well: 'Me and one or two wives of the Shah took the bride upstairs, then we seated her on a chair. Mother and sisters of the bridegroom stood up and came to the chair to bow to the bride and kiss her. They unfolded a shawl which was then given to me and I put it on the bride's head. Anis al-Doula put the rings on the bride's fingers. Groom's mother also gave her a ring with a tiny diamond.' Cf. *Ibid.*, p.128.
135. *Ibid.*
136. *Ibid.*, p.146.
137. *Ibid.*
138. *Mahram* — according to in Islamic law: unmarried family member with whom sexual intercourse is incestuous.
139. M. Kia, 'Inside the Court of Naser od-Din Shah Qajar', p.124.
140. Sh. Foster, 'Colonialism and Gender in the East', p.6.
141. On this issue see, for instance, Irvin Cemil Schick, *The Erotic Margin, Sexuality and Spatiality in Alteritist Discourse* (London; New York: Verso, 1999).
142. In this context see, for instance, a remark of F. Milani: 'In Iran, where not only has art been mainly impersonal but also where an individual's identity is closely tied to the community and where use of the first-person-singular pronoun is still hard for people and is often diffused a bit by *we*, writing an *I*-book is not an easy task. A most popular explanation offered for not writing autobiographies is a certain sense of humility, a shyness about one's own importance and accomplishments.' F. Milani, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), p.206, after: N. Rahimieh, *Missing Persians. Discovering Voices in Iranian Cultural History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), p.14.
143. A. Najmabadi, 'A Different Voice: Taj os-Saltaneh', in A. Najmabadi (ed.), *Women's Autobiographies in Contemporary Iran*, (Harvard, 1990), p.29.
144. *Journal of a Visit to Egypt, Constantinople, The Crimea, Greece etc. in the Suite of the Prince and Princess of Wales*, (London: Smith&Elder, 1869), p.36, after: Sh. Foster, 'Colonialism and Gender in the East', p.10.
145. A. Najmabadi, 'A Different Voice', p.28.
146. *Ibid.*
147. Taj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish*, p.125 (see note 26).
148. See, for instance, R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, pp. 146, 154, 162.
149. L. Ahmed, 'Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem', *Feminist Studies*, Vol.8, No.3 (Autumn, 1982), pp.521–534, p.524.
150. Zahra Kamalkhani, examining the role of the religious 'acts of merit' for the contemporary Iranian women, emphasizes that 'Acts of *savab* are thought to open a channel of blessing between oneself and close family members. The economy of a *savab* act and its concomitant merit raises the question of ritual themes and gift-giving as a moral economy of exchange.' Z. Kamalkhani, *Women's Islam: Religious practice among women in today's Iran* (London/New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998), p.46.
151. See, for instance, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's remark: 'The pilgrimage to Mecca is a duty for men and women alike. A precondition for a woman is that she must be chaperoned either by her spouse or one of the members of her family whose marriage with her is unlawful on account of the

close blood relation. Actually the spouse is obliged to enable his wife to perform the *hajj* once in her lifetime, but anyone who has the least idea of Oriental social conditions realizes immediately that this regulation is mostly a dead letter since it is extreme rare that a woman is in a position to obtain the means for the journey from her spouse against his will.' Ch. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Mecca Festival* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2012), p.9.

152. R. Ja'farian (ed.), *Ruzname*, pp.159 and consecutive.

153. Lady from Kerman referred to the visits paid at the royal court on Shah's demand by the European and Iranian medics. See, for instance, *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 144.