Mira Xenia Schwerda. « Mirza Riza Kirmani, Prison Portraiture and the Depiction of Public Executions in Qajar Iran »

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- 1 The article analyses a series of photographs depicting Mīrzā Reżā Kermānī, the assassin of Nāser al-Dīn shah, first imprisoned, then executed (on 11 August 1896). These photographs were taken by a number of official photographers from different angles and distances, and widely disseminated in various forms in order to use the imagery as a deterrent by imprinting the face of the regicide and his punishment on collective consciousness. This may have been among the first instances when photographs were employed to influence public sentiment in Iran. As the author demonstrates, the effects of this novel publicity were grossly miscalculated by the state: whereas the photographs were circulated to condemn the perpetrator, some viewers quickly started to regard them as the depictions of a martyr facing oppression. This led to frequent reappearances of the prints in various newspapers and pamphlets during the constitutional period, foretelling 20th-century struggles for control over mass media.

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