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Women's Worlds in Qajar Iran: A Digital Archive and Website at Harvard University



Women's World in Qajar Iran (WWQI) is a comprehensive digital archive and website that preserves, links, and renders accessible primary source materials related to the social and cultural history of women's worlds during the reign of the Qajar dynasty (1796 – 1925) in Iran. The WWQI project addresses a significant gap in the scholarship related to this important time in Iran's history by making available writings and other personal documents created by, and related to the lives of, women during the Qajar era.

Primary source materials -- digitized and rendered accessible to scholars worldwide via a digital archive, www.qajarwomen.org -- include unpublished poetry, essays, and treatises; travelogues; private letters; marriage contracts; photographs and portrait paintings; calligraphies; and legal documents. A number of collections, comprised of similar materials at museums and archives in Iran, have also been added through collaboration with local institutions.

The WWQI project's accomplishments to date include over 20,000 digital facsimiles of such materials; an increasing number of these images are systematically rendered accessible to scholars worldwide via the WWQI project website. The project continues the digitization, cataloging, and integration into the WWQI archive and website collections from private individuals/families and institutions, many of which are located in Iran. The development of new interactive website features aimed at enhancing scholars' ability to navigate the WWQI archive are planned for its next stage of development. The WWQI project website has attracted approx. 3,000 new visitors per month since its latest release in March 2011.

The WWQI project draws upon the Harvard Libraries' robust and stable structure for cataloging, archiving, and maintenance-through-time of digital research collections, thus ensuring long-term access to all materials digitized.

In 2009, Women's World in Qajar Iran received a two-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities that enabled the initial phase of the project. In addition to the National Endowment for the Humanities, WWQI has received funding from the ILEX Foundation, the Flora Family Foundation, and several generous individuals.

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