

## **Dancing Girls in the Early Nineteenth Century Iranian Paintings**

### **Abstract**

After canvases of male figures, women figures are the second largest and probably the most important category of the human figures in Qajar paintings. These paintings include princesses and noble women sometimes accompanied by their attendants and maids, mothers and children, women with lovers, and musicians and dancers.

Musicians and dancing girls are among the most common subjects in the early nineteenth century. The figures are dressed in traditional Iranian-style clothes of the Qajar period. In the early Qajar period, dancing girls in sheer dresses showing their breasts and sometimes even their abdomens are on the one hand noteworthy examples of Fath Ali Shah's fantasy about women and his taste as probably the only Qajar ruler who commissioned such paintings, and, on the other hand, the symbol of the shah distancing himself from religious beliefs.

This group of paintings has some exclusive qualities that are discussed in this article.