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FROM NADIR SHAH TO THE  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

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When Nādir moved tribes from the grounds with which they were historically associated, he seems to have had four main motives. Strengthening the frontiers, generally taken as one of the Safavid rulers' motives for transplanting tribes,<sup>43</sup> does not seem to have been of first importance to Nādir, whose settlements did not always comprise people from other Iranian regions; he settled captives from Khiva in Khurāsān, for example. One motive was certainly related to means of preserving his power. By moving rebellious Bakhtiariis from their traditional strongholds in the fastnesses of the Zarda Kūh, he dissociated them from their traditional power-bases. That such movements were predominantly to Khurāsān reveals two other possible motives: the desire to make his home province more prosperous by increasing its pastoral population; and perhaps the calculation that, infiltrated by groups lacking strategically useful local knowledge and contacts, potentially troublesome tribes already established in Khurāsān would find it harder to confederate against him. In the first context it has to be said that like Rīzā Shāh (1925–41) Nādir never forgot whence he originated. Similarly Rīzā Shāh paid special attention to the prosperity of his native Māzandarān. In the second context, Nādir, with a sense of shifting tribal allegiances as astute as in his circumstances it was necessary, no doubt considered the introduction of captive diluting elements attractive.

Speculation about his possible fourth motive arises from the tribesmen's need and regard for urban centres, to which to purvey pastoral products and whence to obtain manufactured goods, not least arms and accoutrements; and whence to Nādir's own concern to acquire the wealth concentrated in cities as commercial and manufacturing emporia. At Qandahar he constructed Nādirābād. A city was planned for Kalāt. The Khivan captives were to be settled in the new township of Khivaqābād.

Acquisition of wealth was requisite for the retention of power. No loyalty was given freely. So completely did Nādir submit to and promote the mercenary principle that, while the rumour as well as the reality of his hoarded treasure caused Khurāsān years of distraction following his death, the habit of freely given patriotic service in Iran tended to become the exception rather than the rule. This legacy, in the absence of any dynasty capable of inspiring the loyalty

once given to the Safavids, remained in the 19th century to be deplored by Europeans as much as to be exploited by them; although it must be said that once Iran's status as a "buffer state" became an Anglo-Russian aim, efforts were made by both these powers to ensure a stable succession to its throne.

As for the Safavid aura, its pervasiveness and habitation in men's minds made its latent threat to Nādir's dominion difficult to eliminate, especially when it manifested itself in fictitious pretenders used by Nādir's enemies to embarrass him. A device he tried against conservative clinging to a power which many saw as the only legitimate sovereignty, was that of demanding, on the eve of his coronation, signed and sealed declarations of fealty to himself and his descendants. Of the latter, the one who continued a greatly reduced and weakened Afshtarid rule for some forty-six years owed the possibility of doing so not least to Safavid descent through his mother. Nādir, with no such advantage, needed recourse to countering fears of his subjects' lack of loyalty by making them more afraid of him than he was of them. As his reign of terror worsened, desertions from his army, which no one dared report to him, increased. Contemporary analysts marvelled at how a régime founded on such a scheme of terror and so degraded could endure as long as it did. There are, however, other examples in modern Iranian history of the Iranians' capacity for patient endurance of prolonged periods of harsh rule. From Nādir's excesses one man in his camp, Ahmad Khān Sadūzai Abdāī, appears to have learnt a lesson. As Ahmad Shāh (1747–73), the founder of the Durānī dynasty of Afghanistan, he exercised a policy of often sorely tried but seldom withheld clemency.

It is the historian of Ahmad Shāh Durānī, Mahmūd al-Ḥusainī, who emphasizes that, afraid of the influence of men who might have been seen as legitimate leaders, Nādir conferred leadership on members of tribes of low standing.<sup>44</sup> He promoted those who, recognizing in him the sole source of their advancement, would be least likely to defect. Yet such men were among those who plotted his assassination.

Nādir gave ample evidence of being too shrewd not to perceive the failure of his stratagems to secure perfect hegemony. Mirzā Mahdi Khān and particularly Mūhammad Kāzīm attribute his later, as they saw it, mental disorder to anguish after he had ordered the blinding of his first-born son. Mahmūd al-Ḥusainī, the servant of Ahmad Shāh Durānī, Shāhrukh Shāh Afshar's protector, ascribes what he terms Nādir's melancholia (*mālikhāliyyā*) and distempered humour (*zandā*) to a different cause: his failure to subdue the Lezgīs of Dāghīstān who

<sup>43</sup> See further, Perry's discussion of forced tribal movements in *Iranian Studies* VIII no. 4 (1975), pp. 199–215. The observations made in this section should be read in conjunction with the information on the migratory population of Iran at this period given by Richard Tappert, see pp. 107–15.

<sup>44</sup> Mahmūd al-Ḥusainī al-Munshī, *Tārīkh-i Ahmad Shāhī*, vol. 1, fol. 13b (p. 34).

had slain his brother, Ibrāhīm. No doubt all these three observers of the horrors of Nādir's last years felt compelled to explain his conduct as insanity: the mind of a great man had become unhinged.

Yet when the barrenness of the efforts of a life-time of unremitting service is considered, it is perhaps not surprising that the increasing violence and cruelty of Nādir's later conduct were such that people attributed them to madness. If, towards the end, he realized how his vast ambitions had foundered, despair enough to induce madness might have gripped him. His endeavours had proved unavailing. Baghdad and Erzerum had eluded his grasp. Ottoman pashas were still entrenched there. Predators from Turkistan still raided Khurāsān. Iranians, among them some of those who had been most in his confidence, found courage to rebel against him. He had gained no lasting dominion in either the Caucasus or Transcaspia, both the scenes of some of his most extraordinary as well as gruelling marches. In Iran he had once been welcomed by the mercantile and sedentary elements of the population as a guarantor of safety from invaders and marauders. In the end, these people must have found it hard to distinguish between Afshārs and the Ghilzais from Afghanistan whom Nādir had expelled. Nādir failed to establish Afsharid, just as Tīmūr had failed to consolidate Timurid rule.

One indication of Nādir's failure was the need forty-eight years later for Āghā Muhammad Khān Qājār to reconquer the Caucasian cities which Nādir had regarded as focal centres in Iran's north-western defences: Tiflis, Ganja and Erivan. Nādir also saw Marv as the key to the north-eastern defences. Beyond Marv he tried, as he played on a fancied common Mughul-Timurid ancestry, to secure as his vassal the ruler of Bukhārā, and as his ally in the pacification of those Türkmen raiders so familiar to Nādir from his early youth and later as supporters of the Qājārs of Astarābād. More than this, his, and after him, Āghā Muhammad Khān Qājār's attitude towards Bukhārā was irredentist. At the end of the First World War what was considered the repossession of Bukhārā was an aspiration expressed by Iranian diplomats at the time of the Versailles Conference. Nādir may even have thought that, if only the Ottoman power in the west could be contained, he might make Bukhārā a base for conquests further afield in Central Asia. His immediate successor, 'Ādil Shāh, entertained the idea of embarking on campaigns across the Āmū-Daryā, the River Oxus, in spite of complete inability to undertake them. Mirzā Mahdi's mention of envoys from Khotan has already been alluded to,<sup>45</sup> and Muhammad Kāzīm reports rumours,

brought by merchants, that China viewed Nādir's power with apprehension. Muhammad Kāzīm was concerned with Central Asian affairs because he originated from the city of Marv. He goes into more detail than Mirzā Mahdi Khān about Nādir's despatch of artisans to Marv to prepare for a campaign into Kashgaria. Such an expedition did not materialize, but Nādir frequently sent men and money to Marv in efforts to restore its prosperity and reconstruct its dam, a task which defied all his engineers' endeavours. Marv did not become prosperous and Khiva was still a prison for captive labourers from Iran in the middle of the 19th century, when a mission went from Teĥan to negotiate their repatriation.<sup>46</sup> The Russians eventually achieved the pacification which Nādir, saddled with an economy ruined under the later Safavids and their Afghan supplanters, and not ultimately bettered by him, was unable to accomplish.

He tried to obviate the consequences of the Safavid-Uzbek conflict that had arisen under the Shāhs Tahmāsp I and 'Abbās the Great. Had he succeeded in obscuring the sectarian difference between the two sides of the border which Safavid espousal of Shi'ism had brought into prominence, he might have accomplished more in Transoxiana, but this is doubtful. The problem of general economic recession in Central Asia, Iran and Asia Minor was deep-seated, and it was coeval with Europe's maritime-based expansion. Nevertheless, the border on which he had received his early training might have become less contentious but for two factors he was unable to control. His ambition to create an Iranian empire with its fulcrum in the northeast was frustrated by Iran's ultimate refusal to accept him, and by the presence in the west of the Ottoman Empire, which it seems to have been Nādir's intention either to balance with an equally imposing Iranian imperialism or at least to neutralize. There was an irony, which does not appear to have escaped Nādir's notice, in his and the Ottomans' shared language and ethnic origins; but his apparent distrust of his Persian-speaking subjects surely stemmed from more than a sense of ethnic difference. The cases of Ḥasan Khān, the Mu'ayyir Bāshī, and Muhammad Taqī Khān Shirāzī stand out as examples of his readiness to trust Iranians when he was convinced, not so much of their loyalty, for that was a characteristic in which he had little cause to place his faith, but of their competence and energy.<sup>47</sup> Inefficiency and febleness were not pleasing to this stern man.

Another frustrating factor for Nādir Shāh lay in regional differences which his policies, although in some instances aimed at diminishing them, combined to promote. Safavid religious policy had been a unifying force. Nādir chose to

<sup>45</sup> See Schefet, *Relation de l'Ambassade au Khorézm de Riza Qouly Khan*.

<sup>47</sup> Maqmu'd al-Husaini, vol. 1, fol. 7a (p. 21), concerning the talents of Taqī Khān Shirāzī.

show contempt for it; the events in Iran of 1979 may serve as reminders of the danger inherent in flouting religious sensibilities. Meanwhile, the tribesmen whom he had transplanted did not forget homelands which they returned to as soon as they could. Iranians in the central and southern regions nurtured resentment at what seemed a Khurāsān régime supported by Uzbeks and Afghans. It was also unpopular among the people on the shores of the Persian Gulf and in Āzarbāijān. The people of Shīrāz, and of Shūshar in Khūzistān, never wanted Nādir. The merchants of Tābrīz, who once had, no doubt became disillusioned. Isfāhān and other cities paid a terrible price for his Indian campaign. The response of the regions to Nādir's career developed into the recrudescence of a regionalism that has frequently broken out on the removal of strong rule and which in this instance was encouraged by contention among Nādir's heirs and former officers.

There is, however, a paradox here. Nādir could not accomplish the restoration of Timūr's ephemeral Central-Asian-Khurāsānian imperium, of which a significant effect had been the splitting of Iran into a western and eastern division that was eventually healed by the Safavids. This chapter will conclude with Āghā Muḥammad Khān Qājār's restoration of the province of Khurāsān to an Iran which it had been his task again to reunify after the collapse of Nādir's dominion had once more splintered it. Yet, notwithstanding Nādir's failure to achieve unified and enduring sovereignty, and in spite of Iran's exhaustion and disintegration after and before him, his expulsion of the Ghilzai Afghans and the Ottoman Turks contributed a great deal to the final separate identity of Iran as a modern national state. After Nādir and the interregnum which followed his death, the Qājār revival of the unity which the Safavids had achieved again became feasible: Central Asia had been lost, Afghanistan had become a national entity on its own, Nādir had raided India but not retained it, and the Caucasus was soon to be forfeited once and for all. These were all areas which Nādir believed should render Iran allegiance and tribute. His inability to keep them in tutelage made the eventual refashioning of a distinct Iranian state possible in a manner which his preoccupation with trans-frontier campaigns might have appeared to preclude.

Although some of the Safavid symbols that haunted Nādir were spurious, toys exploited by unscrupulous leaders for purposes other than what they might have stood for in the eyes of an oppressed and pious population, they should not be overlooked. Nādir's annalists, not least those contemporary with him, paid these phenomena a degree of attention which reveals more than personal

predilection or, in the instance of Mar'ashī, ancestral respect. As men who belonged to the non-tribal and non-martial classes, these authors conferred on real and false Safavid pretenders a place in history as the representatives of an Iranian need for unity, continuity, hierarchy and well-ordered government sanctified by tradition.

At first Nādir won gratitude among many for appearing to have restored the Safavid state and cleared Iran of invaders. Gratitude turned into dismay when he tried to obfuscate the religious differences on which Iran's identity had come to rest, and when his "Timurid" ambitions and consequent craving for conquest blinded him to the country's need for peace and stability. Shaikh Ḥazīn describes an economy already ruined at the very time when Nādir extended his internal conquest of the usurping Afghans into a programme of costly foreign expeditions. India produced a weight of plunder, but forays into Dāghīstān and against Bāghdad, Mosul and Kirkuk were a drain without any tangible compensation. It was his resumption of campaigns in these regions that put the finishing touches to the picture of Nādir, not as his country's benefactor, but as a ruler who demanded increasingly excessive rewards for services in which many of his disillusioned subjects must have been unable to see any purpose save Nādir's own aggrandizement.

If to some he ultimately presented the image of, after all, simply a freebooter from a remote part of Khurāsān, the falseness of such an image only makes it more tragic. Not everyone failed to benefit from a career which it is impossible to treat with contempt: Ahmad Shāh Durrānī was shrewd enough to avoid Nādir's mistakes. He did not embark on wars far from home which were beyond the capacity of his economic base. But he followed Nādir's example in tapping India to strengthen that base. Moreover, he was judicious enough to use Iranians whom Nādir's occupation of Afghanistan had afforded a home there while Nādir's tyranny made them prefer exile. It is significant that during his brief reign in Khurāsān in 1750, Sulaimān II excused his inability to repel Ahmad Shāh Durrānī's influence on the grounds that to do so might have embarrassed an Iranian colony of "scribes and soldiers" in Kabul.<sup>48</sup> Nādir had sent Taqī Khān Shirāzī to Kabul as revenue collector after he had suppressed this same official's rebellion in Fārs. After Nādir's assassination, until he died some eight or nine years later, Taqī Khān continued in the service of Ahmad Shāh Durrānī. He assisted him as an intermediary in Khurāsān and later resumed

<sup>48</sup> Mar'ashī, p. 126.

charge of the Kabul revenues. He died in disgrace, but the Durrānī showed compassion to his descendants in a family whose financial expertise made condoning their faults expedient.

Muḥammad Taqī Khān Shīrāzī quarrelled with Nādir's kinsman, Kalb 'Alī Khān, when the latter had been sent to collect Nādir's share of the commerce of the Persian Gulf and, in particular, of the Bahārain pearl fisheries. Profits were accruing which Taqī Khān had no desire to relinquish. As master of Shīrāz he could intercept the southern riches before they reached his powerful patron, but it was under the latter's aegis that Taqī Khān enjoyed control over the southern seaboard's economy. He was certainly a beneficiary of Nādir's rule. That he was not alone in this appears evident from the time and energy Nādir devoted to extracting from his subjects the capital which they doubtless became the more adept in concealing the more demanding Nādir's agents became. After the Indian expedition, in spite of the searching of the baggage of the returning troops, coins and precious objects must have found their way into private hoards.<sup>49</sup> Servants of Nādir must have known this, otherwise not even the most sadistic and those most in awe of Nādir would have unremotely continued to try and extort what did not exist. Unfortunately, in reaction to Nādir's extortion, the tendency on the part of Iranians who possessed capital to withhold knowledge of it from the government was strengthened, to persist, to the detriment of Iran's economy, to modern times.

The revolts against Nādir were due to other factors besides disenchantment with him. Notably, those least vulnerable to attack from Central Asia or Asia Minor wanted to conserve their gains on a regional basis. Nādir's awareness of this may explain the route he chose for his last journey from Iṣfahān to Mashhad. It may explain, if it does not justify, his ruthless revenue demands on the southern eastern cities of Yazd and Kirmān. Various parts of Iran refused to repeat sacrifices for whatever schemes Nādir might have had for the safety and well-being of the whole. His crown lacked the legitimacy to which an appeal might have elicited extremes of sacrifice further to those he had already been able to compel. In any case, the belief spread that Nādir was practising extortion for his own and his family's enrichment and to retain the loyalty of alien tribal contingents from outside the pale of the Shī'a faith: Türkmens from over the border, Afghans and Uzbeks.

Withdrawal of his Iranian subjects' trust forced him to rely more on these people than he was probably inclined to anyway. His preference for them was

<sup>49</sup> See above, p. 41. Cf. Avery and Simmons, "Persia on a Cross of Silver", pp. 267-8, reprinted in Kedourie and Haim, *Towards a Modern Iran*, pp. 11-12.

‘ĀDIL SHĀH: SHĀHRUKH SHĀH: SULAIMĀN II: SHĀHRUKH SHĀH not new, but it became so obvious that his death seems certainly to have been precipitated by apprehensions among the Iranians in his camp. Of some move on the part of his favoured forces against them. It also seems likely that the rumour of his plan secretly to retire from the camp enlarged apprehensions of his conduct. As soon as news of Nādir's murder was known in the camp, the Afghans and Uzbeks took the offensive under Ahmad Khān Sadūzai Abdālī, the future Ahmad Shāh Durrānī. When the latter perceived that escape was his best course, he led off his men with as much ordnance as he could acquire. Units of Nādir's army stationed elsewhere dispersed, as did those which had been with him near Khabūshān. This dispersal of the formidable Afsharid host augmented the sufferings of the Iranian people which were their principal legacy from "the last great Asiatic conqueror".

‘ĀDIL SHĀH (1747-8): SHĀHRUKH SHĀH (1748-50): SULAIMĀN II (1750): SHĀHRUKH SHĀH (1750-96)

Immediately after Nādir's death, with celerity pointing to the possibility that he might have been implicated in the murder, his nephew ‘Alī Qulī Khān reached Mashhad from Herat. Nādir's surviving sons were put to death, but of his grandsons Shahrūkh, aged 13, was spared and imprisoned in Mashhad. Nādir's eldest son, Rizā Qulī's offspring, Shahrūkh, had for his mother Fātima Sulṭān Begum, a daughter of Shāh Sulṭān Husain. Shahrūkh's cousin, ‘Alī Qulī Khān, is credited with the perception that the people might reject his sovereignty in favour of that of an Afsharid of Sāfavid descent. Hence he spared Shahrūkh's life. ‘Alī Qulī was in fact proclaimed as ‘Ādil Shāh two weeks after Nādir's death. Besides the still rebellious Kurds of Khabūshān, he had famine to contend with in Khurāsān. The hostile moves in Māzandarān of Ḥasan Khān Qājār and his Gökten and Yamūt Türkmens allies afforded ‘Ādil Shāh a pretext to march out of the famine-stricken province into Māzandarān after a brief interlude of festivity in Mashhad and boast of undertaking conquests further afield that he would never be able to realize. His operations against Ḥasan Khān ended in the Qājār's return to the *juvts* of his Türkmens allies, but Ḥasan Khān's young son, Muḥammad, was captured and owed to ‘Ādil Shāh the castration whereby the future Muḥammad Shāh Qājār became known as *Agāz*, the eunuch.

‘Ādil Shāh had sent his brother, Ibrāhīm Khān, to secure Iṣfahān. This was a mistake. He had thus endowed his brother with a base whence Ibrāhīm Khān could compete with him for power. ‘Ādil Shāh sent a Georgian *ghulām*, Suhṛāb, to poison Ibrāhīm, but the latter was apprised of the plot and had Suhṛāb put to



death. Units of Nādir's army, from the Garmsīrā in the far south and Kurdistan in the west, on their way to 'Ādil Shāh found a new master in Ibrāhīm Khān before they reached Mashhad. Assured of these forces, Ibrāhīm Khān captured Kirmanšāh, which was looted, and colluded with Nādir's governor in Āzarbāijān, Amīr Aṣḡān Khān Qirīqlū, against 'Ādil Shāh. 'Ādil Shāh met their combined forces between Sulḡāniya and Zanjan and was pur to flight, later to be taken prisoner and blinded: his brief reign ended before the year of Nādir's death had expired. Aṣḡān Khān was allowed to take the fallen Shah with him on his return to Āzarbāijān. Ibrāhīm later repented of this when he began to suspect that with 'Ādil Shāh Aṣḡān Khān might have gained access to a quantity of the Afsḡarid treasure. Ibrāhīm therefore turned against his ally and defeated him near Marāgḡa. He had Aṣḡān Khān put to death, but his profession that for him the only legitimate sovereign was Shāhrukh was not credited in Khurāsān, which Ibrāhīm now hoped to dominate. There the authorities refused to send him Shāhrukh, to whom he expressed the desire to offer fealty in person, but without distancing himself from his central Iranian base.

Instead, a combination of Kurdish, Türkmén and Bayāt chiefs with the notables of Khurāsān enthroned Shāhrukh at Mashhad in early October 1748. The exercise of government was chiefly in the hands of these chiefs. By December Ibrāhīm Khān declared himself Shah. A situation developed in which Uzbeks, Afghans and Qājārs based west of Khurāsān were at war with the Kurds and Türkmén based within it. Shāhrukh was generous with treasure. The appeal of his Safavid descent no doubt played a part in attracting deserters from Ibrāhīm's army. Defeated near Simmān, Ibrāhīm became a fugitive whom Sayyid Muḡammad, the *mutawallī* (custodian) of the shrine of the eighth Imām, 'Alī Rizā, at Mashhad, refused admission to the shrine city of Qum.

Sayyid Muḡammad's mother was a daughter of the Safavid Shah, Sulaimān I (1666-1694). He had succeeded his father as mutawallī of the Mashhad shrine and had co-operated in 'Ādil Shāh's accession, but the latter had chosen not to leave him behind in Mashhad and he had been present at Ibrāhīm Khān's defeat of 'Ādil Shāh and had remained in central Iran. Shāhrukh meanwhile was in the hands of those chiefs who had been his original supporters, and their rivals in Khurāsān, who included 'Alam Khān Khuzaima, and also Ḥasan Khān Qājār. The latter had deserted Ibrāhīm Khān and joined Shāhrukh under whom he received high office. 'Ādil Shāh had eventually been brought to Mashhad where he had been put to death at the behest of Nādir Shah's widow, in revenge for his murder of her sons, Naṣr-Allāh and Imām Qulī, in the holocaust of Nādir's male descendants at Kalāt which preceded 'Ādil Shāh's assumption of sovereignty.

'ĀDIL SHĀH: SHĀHRUKH SHĀH: SULAIMĀN II: SHĀHRUKH SHĀH  
Ibrāhīm Khān was made captive and died, or was slain, when being brought to Mashhad during Shāhrukh's brief period of deposition in 1750.

Shāhrukh's deposition resulted from a temporary alliance between 'Alam Khān 'Arab Khuzaima, who had succeeded in acquiring influence over the Shah, and certain Kurdish and Jalāriyd chiefs. These men conspired to assume control of Khurāsān, a project which they considered other chiefs in the Shah's confidence, for example, Ḥasan Khān Qājār, would certainly obstruct. Two of the latter, Qurbān 'Alī Khān Qājār and Qāsim Khān Qājār, became aware of the conspiracy but failed in their attempts to win Shāhrukh. For the conspirators had determined to establish Sayyid Muḡammad as their own puppet sovereign, in spite of Ḥasan Khān Qājār's admonition that if Shāhrukh's government were to be rendered ineffective, Ahmad Shāh Durrānī would enter Khurāsān from Afghanistan and perhaps threaten the whole of Iran. Sayyid Muḡammad reigned for a few months as Sulaimān II before he in his turn was deposed as a result of the machinations of the chiefs and possibly because of his assiduity in attempting to revive the revenues of Khurāsān and improve their administration in order to ameliorate the depressed economy. He was allowed to live out the rest of his life near the shrine in Mashhad and died some thirteen years later. He had not been held responsible for the blinding of Shāhrukh, which occurred, probably when someone had attempted to release Shāhrukh from prison, while Sayyid Muḡammad, Sulaimān II, was absent from Mashhad.

Sayyid Muḡammad was also blinded, but when opponents of 'Alam Khān 'Arab Khuzaima removed him, Shāhrukh's recent blinding did not hinder their restoration of the latter to the throne. For his public audiences arrangements were made whereby his infirmity was concealed. Shāhrukh became dependent on the support of the principal architect of his restoration, Yūsuf 'Alī Khān Jalāyir, a kinsman of Nādir Shāh's once faithful henchman, Tahmāsp Khān the Vakil. 'Alam Khān 'Arab Khuzaima fled to his home-base in Qā'in. Once he had lost the support of his fellow conspirators among the Kurdish khāns, he was powerless. He had recourse to Ahmad Shāh Durrānī, whom he visited when Ahmad was investing Shāhrukh's governor in Herat. Ahmad Shāh Durrānī entered Khurāsān and, whether or not on this occasion he thought of taking advantage of the situation that was troubled by rival khāns and their conflicting tribal allegiances, this, the first of his three interventions, terminated in the decision not to linger in Khurāsān, during what was only the third year since he had crowned himself in 1747 as Ahmad Shāh, *Durr-i-Durrānī*, "The Pearl of Pearls", exchanging the cognomen Abdālī for Durrānī.

Ahmad Shāh Durrānī's policy towards Khurāsān seems to have developed

into one of keeping that province of Iran under Shāhrukh as his protectorate, and as a buffer state between his newly fashioned Afghan dominion and the rest of Iran. With Khurāsān, where on his first intervention he had succeeded in finding an appreciable number of Nādir Shāh's jewels in Khabūshān, subservient to him, he was free to pillage Delhi in 1756, as a punishment for the Mughul 'Ālamgīr II's recapture of Lahore. While he thus resisted the temptation to penetrate deeper into Iran, he made it his purpose to prevent incursions from central Iran into Khurāsān, where he steadfastly guaranteed Shāhrukh's throne.

It is a final irony of the Afsarid legacy that this former officer of Nādir's army should have been able to form the Durrānī kingdom of Afghanistan out of the eastern vestiges of Nādir's conquests, and maintain the rule in Mashhad of Nādir's grandson: the Afghan was loyal to the last to his former master's heir.

Ahmad Shāh's son, Timūr Shāh (1773-93) and his grandson, Zamān Shāh (1793-1800) had their concerns in India and Kashmir to occupy them, while under Zamān Shāh's short reign the Durrānī monarchy was precipitated into decline. Thus there was no help from that quarter when in 1796 Āghā Muḥammad Qājār took Mashhad without a battle and had Shāhrukh tortured so that he might reveal where, to the last gem, the remains of Nādir's treasures were concealed. At Simmān, where his reign had opened with Ibrāhīm Khān's defeat in 1750, the blind Shāhrukh expired as he was being led away a captive. At last the Qājār was master of an Iran once more united under one paramount power, for the other dynasty which might have stood in the way of complete Qājār ascendancy over Iran, that of the Zands, had already been eliminated.

## CHAPTER 2

## THE ZAND DYNASTY

## THE POWER STRUGGLE IN POST-NĀDIR IRAN

Scarcely any of the great conquerors of history can have destroyed his life's work quite so completely as Nādir Shāh did in the months before his death. His unreasonable exactions and barbarous suppression of the ensuing provincial revolts spread disaffection to every corner of his realms, and finally brought his own nephew, 'Alī Qulī Khān, at the head of a rebel army, to the borders of Khurāsān itself. His short-sighted favouritism towards his new Afghan and Uzbek contingents, over his long-suffering Iranian officers and men, split his own army irreparably and was the immediate cause of his assassination.

The morning after this event (11 Jumādā II 1160/1 July 1747 New Style),<sup>1</sup> his heterogeneous army, encamped at Khabūshān, rapidly disintegrated. The defeated Afghans fought their way clear under Ahmad Khān Abdālī, who, as Ahmad Shāh Durrānī, later seized the eastern half of Nādir's domains; their compatriots in the Mashhad garrison were prudently allowed to retire by the governor and Superintendent (*muzawilī*) of the shrine, Mīr Sayyid Muḥammad, who from now on was to play an important rôle in the troubled politics of the former capital. The bulk of the Iranian contingents, notably the Bakhtiyārī under 'Alī Mardān Khān, struggled back to Mashhad, and initially gave their support to 'Alī Qulī Khān who, with many promises and much largesse, was enthroned as 'Ādil Shāh a few weeks later.

But the new ruler soon disappointed many of his early adherents: he lacked his uncle's imperious magnetism to pull together the surviving elements of a sprawling and exhausted empire. Instead of marching to secure the old Safavid capital of Isfahān, he delegated control of the city to his brother, Ibrāhīm, and remained at Mashhad to make merry, while his large unemployed army reduced city and surroundings to near-famine, murmurs of discontent rising everywhere. Late in 1747, 'Alī Mardān Khān sought permission to lead the Bakhtiyārī home, and was refused. The whole contingent nevertheless set off, routed a pursuit force, and defiantly returned to the Zagros ranges, where Ibrāhīm Mirzā

<sup>1</sup> Christian dates are reckoned by the Gregorian Calendar (New Style); hence Julian Calendar dates from Russian sources, or English sources before 14 September 1752, have been corrected.

was already recruiting support from his Isfahān base to challenge his brother's title.

The Bakhtiārī were already a formidable force in Isfahān itself. Chief among them was Abu'ī-Faḥ Khān of the Hafī Lang, whom Ibrāhīm left as his viceroy in the capital on setting out against 'Ādil Shāh in the spring of 1748.

Another Zagros tribal group which returned from Khurāsān to their home ranges at this time were the Zand. A minor pastoral people wintering on the Hamadān plains, centred on the villages of Parī and Kamāzān in the vicinity of Malāyir, they have been variously classified as Lurs and as Kurds: both Lurī and Kurdish-speaking groups bearing the name of Zand have been noted in recent times, but the bulk of the evidence points to their being one of the northern Lur or Lak tribes, who may originally have been immigrants of Kurdish origin. They are, in any case, distinct from the Falli Lurs of Khurramābād.<sup>2</sup> They first appeared during the anarchy consequent upon the Afghan invasion of the 1720s. The Ottoman Turks had occupied Kimānshāh, but were constantly harassed by a band of 700 marauders based on Parī and Kamāzān, led by Mahdī Khān Zand. Their patriotic guerrilla war declined into brigandage when Nādir expelled the Turks, and in 1732, he sent a force to punish them. Four hundred tribesmen were put to the sword and the tribal leaders and a considerable number of families transported to northern Khurāsān. Here, at Abivard and the valley of Darra Gaz, they remained in exile for the next fifteen years, prey to Türkmen raiders, while their khāns and fighting men had to follow Nādir's train in endless campaigns.

At the time of Nādir's murder, the Zands in Darra Gaz comprised some thirty to forty families, and leadership in this exodus devolved upon Karīm Beg, eldest son of Ināq who, with his younger brother Budāq, had jointly ruled the tribe before their exile. No record survives of the march home, which like that of 'Alī Mardān's Bakhtiārī was most probably forbidden by 'Ādil Shāh; Karīm Beg, now entitled Karīm Khān, is next seen in active competition with the other tribal heads of 'Irāq-i 'Ājam (western central Iran) who were carving out their own principalities with the calculated assistance of the more ambitious Ibrāhīm. Karīm's first major clash came when he rejected an alliance proposed by Mihr 'Alī Khān Tekkelū of Hamadān. Twice defeated by the Zands, Mihr 'Alī called in the help of Hasan 'Alī Khān, the Vālī of Ardalān (as the hereditary governor of Iranian Kurdistan had been styled from Safavid times). For six weeks, the hit-and-run tactics of the Zand cavalry harassed the Kurds until a rebellion at home

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John Malcolm, *History* II, p. 122; Minorovsky, articles "Lak" and "Lur" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st edition.

forced the Vālī to retire. Karīm was now joined by an erstwhile rival, Zakariyā Khān, who held Burejird and Kazzāz, and by 2000 Qarāgūzlū from the Hamadān district. Together they marched south on Gulpāyḡān, a strategic point on the road to Isfahān, which also marked the limit of 'Alī Mardān's expansion towards the former capital since his return from Khurāsān. Karīm defeated a Bakhtiārī force and took over Gulpāyḡān. However, he was forced to hurry back immediately to meet another attack by Mihr 'Alī Khān. This time he decisively defeated the Tekkelū and took Hamadān; but he had lost the initiative in the south to 'Alī Mardān, who now seized Gulpāyḡān and prepared to besiege Isfahān.

By early 1750, the fate of what had been Nādir's empire was largely settled. Ibrāhīm Mirzā had defeated and deposed his brother near Zanjān, in the summer of 1748 and, a year later, had himself been crushed near Simnān by the forces of Nādir's only surviving grandchild, Shāhrukh. Although blinded and temporarily deposed in 1750 in favour of a Safavid claimant, Sayyid Muḥammad, the Superintendent of the shrine, Shāhrukh was maintained on the throne of Khurāsān by various coalitions of self-seeking warlords until his death at the hands of Āghā Muḥammad Khān Qājār in 1796. Neither he nor Sayyid Muḥammad, while briefly in power as Shāh Sulaimān II, made any attempt to restore Afsharid authority in western Iran which, with the return of its tribal manpower from Nādir's army and the resurgence of Isfahān as the political centre, was ready to reassert its position as the heartland of a restored Safavid empire. Nādir's usurpation of the monarchy had outraged all classes except the firebooters — increasingly Sunni Afghans and Uzbeks — upon whom he based his power, and Isfahān, "half the world" to the Safavid Shah, had never reconciled itself to being subordinate to Mashhad. As the centre of gravity shifted, Khurāsān, Nādir's strategic and political centre, found itself automatically relegated to the status of an impoverished province peripheral to the divergent halves of the last great Asiatic empire. To the east lay the expanding realms of the Afghān monarch, Ahmad Shāh, who from January 1751 asserted his military supremacy in Khurāsān itself and preserved the rump Afsharid state as a buffer against the west. The west, which comprised Āzarbāijān and the Caspian littoral, the Zagros, Khūzistān and the Persian Gulf coast and all territory inland as far as the Kavīr and Lūr deserts, was recovered by a coalition of Zagros tribes dominated briefly by the Bakhtiārī then, for the next forty years, by the Zand. The main military prize in this region was the fortress of Kimānshāh, which had been Nādir's base and arsenal in his campaigns against the Turks. Dominating not only the routes through the Zagros to Baghdad, but also that between



the centres of Kurdistan and Luristan, it was, in addition, well stocked with arms and munitions. It was held, nominally for Shahrukh Shah, by Muhammad Taqi Gulistāna and 'Abd al-'Alī Khān Mishmast. With the help of the Vālī of Ardān, they had already repulsed an attack in 1749 by the Zangana tribe, and were determined not to relinquish their charge until it became clear who would prevail in the complex struggle for power.

Gaining the chief political prize, Isfāhān, was also a problem. 'Alī Mardān's first attempt to reduce it, in the spring of 1163/1750, met with a severe check at Mūchakkūr. From Gulpāyghān, he sent messages to his local rivals, including Zakariyā Khān and Karīm, who accepted his proposed alliance and, with their arrival, increased his number to 20,000. Towards the end of May 1750, this force faced the army of Isfāhān on the plain to the west of the town, and completely routed it. After a few days' siege Isfāhān was stormed; Abu'l-Faṭḥ Khān and the other leading citizens prepared to defend the citadel, but 'Alī Mardān's offer of generous terms if they surrendered and co-operated soon brought them out to confer with their new masters.

Abu'l-Faṭḥ enjoyed the support both of the Bakhthiyārī in the city and of the Afsharid loyalists, if indeed any were left. Karīm Khān, though not mentioned by any of the Europeans present at the capture of Isfāhān, had evidently risen to pre-eminence among the ranks of 'Alī Mardān's Lurī lieutenants. These three therefore constituted from the outset an alliance, in which mutual trust came second to expediency. Their first action was to set up a Safavid puppet monarch to gain popular confidence. Two or three of the minor princes of this house were still left in Isfāhān, the sons of a former court official, Mirzā Murtaẓā, by a daughter of the last Safavid Shah, Sulṭān Ḥusain. The younger or youngest of these, a youth of about seventeen by the name of Abū Turāb, was selected as the most suitable for the throne — presumably as the most tractable — and despite his mother's tearful protests was proclaimed Shah, under the name of Ismā'īl, on 29 June. The East India Company's agent in Isfāhān dismissed him as "no more than a conspicuous Name, under which Ally Merdan Caun carries on his Tyranny, with the greater Shew of Justice".<sup>3</sup>

'Alī Mardān assumed the title of *Vakīl al-dawla* as the sovereign's supreme executive. Abu'l-Faṭḥ retained his post as civil governor of the capital, and Karīm Khān was entrusted with the subjugation of the rest of the country as *sardār* (commander) of the army, though 'Alī Mardān retained his Bakhthiyārī

<sup>3</sup> East India Company, *Gambroon Diary* vi, 10 September 1750. See also *Lettres Édifiées de Caricases* iv, pp. 345-6, 356-9; Nānī, *Tarīkh-i Gīf-Gūshāh*, pp. 14-16.

forces. But for the moment, Karīm was in a position to subdue the northern portion of Irāq-i 'Ajam he had already chosen for Zand hegemony. For the third and final time, he defeated Mihr 'Alī Khān Tekkelū and occupied Hamadān. Negotiations at Kimānshāh, though conducted courteously on both sides, failed to secure the fortress, and the Zands set off for a campaign in Kurdistan before the winter should set in. The Vālī, Hasan 'Alī, was ill-prepared and welcomed his new suzerains with diplomatic compliance, but the Zand army sacked and burned Sanandaj and laid waste much of the environs before retiring to winter in their home territory.

Since Karīm had left Isfāhān, 'Alī Mardān had redoubled his extortions, bearing most heavily on Julfa, which Karīm had accorded fair treatment on the fall of the city. More significantly, he had deposed and killed Abu'l-Faṭḥ Khān and replaced him in office by his own uncle. Finally, in contravention of an oath the triumvirate had sworn not to act without consultation, he had marched independently on Shirāz and was subjecting the province of Fārs to systematic looting. Replacing the governor and his lieutenants, the Bakhthiyārī chief began to extort the equivalent of three years' taxes and innumerable "presents", and to requisition all the raw and manufactured materials his army needed. Of the officials and headmen who had not already fled, a dozen were blinded in one eye during this period. However, on his way back from pillaging Kāzartūn, 'Alī Mardān was stopped at the steep and narrow pass known as the Kural-i-Dakhtar by an ambush of local musketeers under Muzāfir 'Alī Khushtī, headman of the nearby village of Khusht. He lost all his booty from Kāzartūn and three hundred men, and had to retreat through the wreckage of Kāzartūn and take the mountain route over the Zarda Kūh range towards Isfāhān, his ranks further thinned by desertion and the mid-winter weather.

Meanwhile, Karīm Khān harangued his lieutenants on the perfidy of 'Alī Mardān, and in January 1751 entered Isfāhān at the head of his augmented army to put an end to extortion and near-anarchy. The following month he met his rival in his own Bakhthiyārī mountains and attacked the depleted and dispirited band. The young Shah, whom 'Alī Mardān had taken with him, fled over to the Zand ranks together with his *vaqir* Zakariyā Khān and other notables, and the Bakhthiyārī were routed. 'Alī Mardān and his henchmen, including the Vālī of Luristān, Ismā'īl Khān Faīlī, fled to Khūzistān. A few of the captured rebel chiefs were blinded or executed, but the Bakhthiyārī soldiery as a whole were

<sup>4</sup> See Kalāntar, *Rūz-nāma*, pp. 41-3.

treated with a generosity which was becoming typical of the Zand Khān's policy.

The early months of 1751 thus mark the beginning of Karīm Khān's rule as viceroy of the nominal king Ismā'īl III, a position to be hotly disputed for twelve more years but never wrested from him. From Iṣfahān he appointed provincial governors and nominated his kinsmen commanders of the armies in the Zand homeland, the Zagros provinces and the approaches to the still unsubdued Kirmānshāh fortress. Local dignitaries came from all over 'Irāq-i 'Ajam to pay their respects to the new Shah and his Vakīl. The myth of a rival government in Mashhad had died a natural death.

#### THE CONTEST FOR HEGEMONY IN WESTERN IRAN, 1751-63

'Alī Mardān had meanwhile gained support and fresh levies from Shaikh Sa'd of the Āl-Kathīr, the Vakīl of 'Arabīstān (Khūzīstān). In the late spring of 1752 this new force set off with the Lurs of Ismā'īl Khān towards Kirmānshāh, and made friendly contact with the fortress. An attack on their base camp by Muḥammad Khān Zand failed miserably, and after replenishing his stocks the Bakhtiyārī chief left his unwilling hosts at the fortress and continued into the Zand homeland. Near Nihāvand he was met by the main Zand force under Karīm Khān, and was completely routed. Once again 'Alī Mardān was forced to flee into the hills, and thence to Baghdad.

At this juncture, a new and potentially more redoubtable enemy confronted the Zands. Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Qājār, elder and only surviving son of Tahmāsp II's first Vakīl-al-daula, Farḥ 'Alī Khān, had by now extended his sway from Asarābād, on the north-western marches of the Afsharid kingdom, to include Māzandarān and Gīlān as far as Rasht and Qazvīn. Drawn by appeals for help from Kirmānshāh, he arrived at the head of a small force within a day's march of the Zand army just as it had resumed its siege of the fortress. Leaving with his main force to meet this threat. The Qājārs refused battle and retired straight to Asarābād. Although the campaigning season was already well advanced, the Zand leader determined to press home his advantage and invested the fortress of Asarābād for two months. A stalemate was reached: supplies were running low in the fortress, and the Zands for their part were constantly harassed by Türkmens irregulars, but neither side would yield anything in negotiations. Finally, Muḥammad Ḥasan took the field and, by a feigned flight which drew the Zands into a Türkmens ambush, utterly routed his attackers. The

Vakīl and less than half his battered forces straggled back to Tehran, leaving in Qājār hands his *roi jainant* Ismā'īl III.<sup>5</sup>

The Qājārs did not follow up their victory, and after wintering in Tehran Karīm received word that 'Alī Mardān Khān was raising an army in Lurīstān to challenge him again. Early in 1753, he returned to Iṣfahān to keep a watch on this threat and on the progress of the siege of the Kirmānshāh fortress.

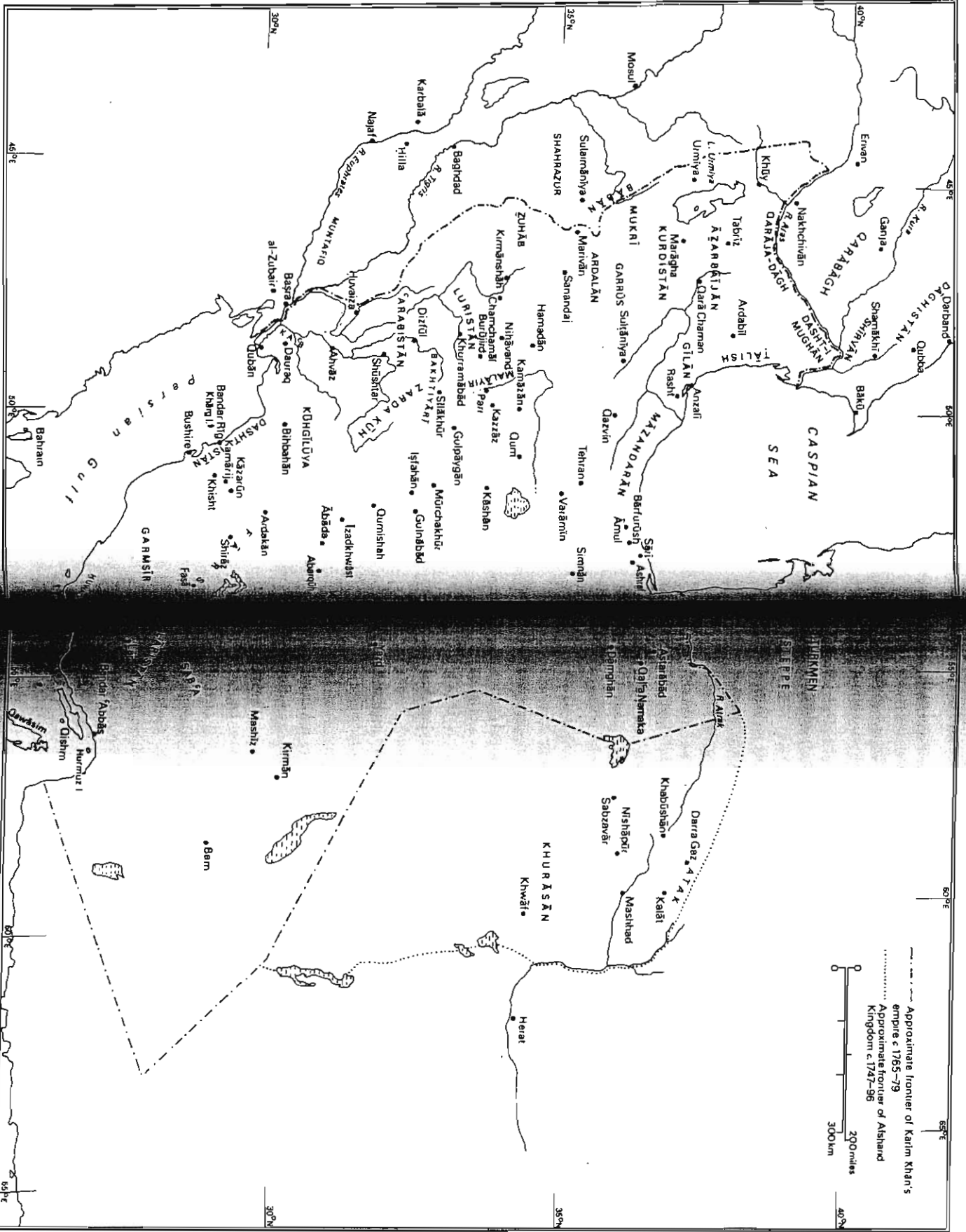
Meanwhile, in Baghdad political intrigues were afoot to support the military threat to the Zand regency. Under the enlightened and shrewd Sulaimān Pashā, the city of the Caliphs had become a refuge for victims of Nādir Shāh in his later years and, more recently, for many who judged it unwise to risk public life in the Iran of his successors until the present chaos cleared. Among these was Muḥafāz Khān Bigdlīlī Shāmlū, who had been on his way as ambassador to Istanbul to ratify the peace treaty of 1746 when he learned of Nādir's assassination. A few years later appeared another refugee, who gave himself out to be a son of Shāh Tahmāsp II. He claimed to have been spirited away from Iṣfahān by a loyal retainer at the time of Mahmūd's massacre of the Safāvid princes in 1725, and to have lived in Russia until after Nādir's death. Whether they believed his claim or not, he was a heaven-sent opportunity for the Pasha to fish in Iran's troubled waters, for Muḥafāz Khān to return home as a man of consequence, and for 'Alī Mardān when he arrived in flight from the field of Nihāvand to settle accounts once and for all with his Zand rival. All three espoused his cause, proclaimed him Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusain II, and began to recruit an army with which to place him on the throne of Iran.<sup>6</sup>

Contact was established with the beleaguered garrison of the Kirmānshāh fortress, and the encouraging promise given that the royal army would soon march to their relief. The Zands redoubled their efforts to take this obstinate outpost, but to no effect and in the spring of 1753 'Alī Mardān and Muḥafāz Khān, reinforced by the Lurs of Ismā'īl Khān, and with the promise of help from Āzād Khān, set off over the Zagros with their royal protégé. Then suddenly Sulṭān Ḥusain II revealed himself as quite unsuitable — whether mad, nervous or otherwise unco-operative is not clear — to be passed off as a Safāvid monarch. The march slowed as new contingents, denied access to the prince, deserted in droves.

Karīm Khān, doubtless aware of these developments, finally advanced from Iṣfahān, sending ahead an ultimatum to the defenders of the Kirmānshāh fortress. Two years of siege had taken their toll, and with no hope of relief by 'Alī

<sup>5</sup> Gulīstāna, *Mujmal al-Tawārīkh*, pp. 205-15; Nāmi, pp. 28-30.

<sup>6</sup> Gulīstāna, pp. 243-50; Qazvīnī, *Fanā'id al-Shajaryā*, fol. 73b-73b.



Map 1. Iran under Zand rule, 1751-1795

Mardān's depleted rabble, Muḥammad Taqī and 'Abd al-'Alī capitulated to the Vakīl, whose generous terms were scrupulously observed. Continuing westwards, Karīm confronted 'Alī Mardān's forces when their last hope – Āzād Khān and his Afghans – was still two days away, and scattered them without difficulty. Muṣṭafā Khān was captured, but 'Alī Mardān yet again made his escape, taking with him the Safavid pretender. Finding him a useless burden, the Bakhtiyārī chief later blinded this unfortunate and left him to make his way to the Shī'ī shrines of Iraq, where he lived out his life as a religious recluse.

But 'Alī Mardān's own end was not far away. After the disastrous series of defeats that followed the triumph of Kirmānshāh, the Zand army split into several fugitive fragments. Spring of 1167/1754 found Muḥammad Khān and Shaikh 'Alī Khān Zand in the Chamchamāl region of Kirmānshāh, where 'Alī Mardān surprised them and took them to the enforced hospitality of his camp in a nearby gorge. Talks of an alliance with Karīm against the common enemy, Āzād, came to nothing, and the Zand khans realised that their only hope was to defeat the Bakhtiyārī leader before he defeated them. At a pre-arranged signal, they overpowered 'Alī Mardān and his companions at their next interview, and Muḥammad Khān killed the Bakhtiyārī chief with his own dagger. The captives successfully ran the gauntlet of musketry from Ismā'īl Khān's Lurs and eventually rejoined Karīm Khān with the welcome news that his earliest and most persistent rival was no more.<sup>7</sup>

Āzād Khān, a Ghilzai Afghan who during the post-Nādir chaos had risen to somewhat precarious power in Āzarbāijān, had in summer 1753 mistimed his junction with 'Alī Mardān's royal army, and found himself in a position similar to that of Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Qājār one year before – numerically inferior against a triumphant Zand army. Like the Qājār chief, he chose discretion and retreated, pleading that he wished only to dissociate himself from 'Alī Mardān now that he knew his pretender to have been an impostor. But Karīm insisted on nothing less than Āzād's surrender and tribute, which was rejected. Karīm's lieutenants reminded him of the *déjà-vue* against the Qājārs, but he was adamant, and attacked. His kinsmen's reluctance led to complete tactical confusion and precipitated the very disaster they had predicted: the Zands were routed and fled back to their fortress at Parī, where Shaikh 'Alī Khān was left to organize the defence. Karīm, Ṣādiq and Iskandar Khān hurried to Iṣfahān, but found the town disaffected and, judging it indefensible, left for Shīrāz.

Āzād was not slow to exploit this sudden collapse of the Zand power. At Parī

he tricked Shaikh 'Alī and Muḥammad Khān into the open and seized them, together with fifteen others of Karīm's family who were in the fortress. The prisoners and booty were despatched under a strong escort to Urmīya, Āzād's northern base, while in October he secured undefended Iṣfahān and reduced the dependent towns to subjection, levying heavy contributions on all.<sup>8</sup>

Karīm had meanwhile been refused entry to Shīrāz by the governor, Ḥāshim Khān Bayāt, and was forced to turn about. With a few local reinforcements, he returned as far as Qumishah, which had recently been ravaged by Āzād's deputy, Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān Aīshār. From here he mounted a series of guerrilla raids against Āzād's foragers and communications. An army under Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān advanced to exterminate this wasps' nest. After a spirited defence, during which the Vakīl's half-brother Iskandar was killed, the Zands were obliged to retreat south-westwards into the Kūhgilūya mountains. They spent the rest of the winter in the Bakhtiyārī and Lurī hills, supported at Khurramābād by the Fajī Lurs. Then the Zand's flagging morale was raised by the spectacular escape of the prisoners taken by Āzād at Qal'a Parī: ably abetted by the Zand womenfolk, Muḥammad and Shaikh 'Alī managed to slip their bonds and slay the escort leader, and rode to freedom in the ensuing confusion.<sup>9</sup> In the spring of 1167/1754, Āzād sent his re-equipped army under Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān to confront the new Zand force. This had badly lost cohesion during the severe winter, and by the time Karīm had fallen back on the Sīlakhār region, near Burūjird, the last of his Lurī allies had slipped away. The Zand nucleus fought a fierce holding action to allow the women and baggage to escape, and won through to Chamchamāl with the loss of most of their flocks.

Here Muḥammad Khān separated from the others, and commenced a whole series of exploits with the murder of 'Alī Mardān. He then set about recruiting tribal levies on the borders of the Zuhāb pāshālik and prepared to march on Kirmānshāh. Ḥāidar Khān of the Zangana prepared the ground by wresting Kirmānshāh from its enforced allegiance to Āzād, demolishing the defences and leading a general evacuation to join Muḥammad Khān at the frontier. From here the Zand Khān maintained an active threat to Āzād's communications with Urmīya, intercepting at least one treasure-convoy. He completed Ḥāidar Khān's work by blowing up the remains of the Kirmānshāh fortress and, in the winter of 1168/1754–55, stormed and destroyed the Tekkelū fortress of Valāshjīrd. Having cleared western 'Irāq-i 'Ajam of Āzād's collaborators, he marched via Khūzīstān to amass further plunder and join Karīm's army in Fārs.

<sup>7</sup> Gulistāna, pp. 292–9.

<sup>8</sup> *Carmelie Chronicle* 1, p. 638; Hovharyants, *Parmut'ian Nor Jughayan*, p. 286.  
<sup>9</sup> Gulistāna, pp. 279–83; Nāmi, p. 40.

Āzād had meanwhile marched into Shīrāz in August 1754 and the next month Farh 'Alī drove Karīm's small force out of Kāzārūn. He fell back on the strategic village of Khishr, near the pass of Kamārij, his last tenuous foothold on the Iranian plateau. Naṣīr Khān, his nominal vassal at Lār, had ignored his appeals for help, and the Zand nucleus was left with a few local allies such as Rustam Sulṭān, the headman of Khishr. A plan was evolved to lead Farh 'Alī into ambush in the narrow Kamārij pass: the Zands and the Dashristānī musketeers lined up on the plain below, while Rustam Sulṭān and the musketeers of Khishr positioned themselves atop the hills flanking the defile. Like 'Alī Mardān three years before, the Afshār were ambushed and routed. The survivors were pursued through Kāzārūn to Shīrāz, which Āzād had to evacuate ten days later. Agents opened the city to the besieging Zands, and on 13 Šafār 1168/29 November 1754, Karīm first entered his future capital of Shīrāz.<sup>10</sup>

Next spring, Muḥammad Khān Zand, who had now rejoined Karīm, defeated Farh 'Alī Khān, and Āzād took steps to relinquish his precarious hold on Iṣfahān and retire northwards. While Karīm was consolidating his hold on Fārs and preparing to subjugate Naṣīr Khān of Lār, his Qājār rival Muḥammad Ḥasan was similarly reasserting his authority over Māzandarān and Gīlān, so that the Qājār domains were now adjacent to Āzād's territory; and when in November one of Āzād's generals was defeated by a Qājār force, the Afghan pulled out of Iṣfahān and retired to Kāshān. Karīm Khān heard of this on his way to raid Kirmān and, changing direction, retook Iṣfahān unopposed on 17 December 1755. Two days later he set off in pursuit and Āzād, caught between the Zand and Qājār forces, made all speed back to Urmīya early in 1756.<sup>11</sup> But all was not well in the Zand camp. Karīm's varied commitments in Fārs, the Gulf coast, Yazd and Kirmān had dispersed his manpower; the bulk of his army at Iṣfahān now consisted of infantry, many of them Arabs, recruited from the Garmṣīr and Dashristān (the Gulf littoral). Disgruntled at the length of their service, the hardships of a particularly severe winter and their arrears of pay, they demanded their release. Karīm, fearing a confrontation with the Qājārs, refused. At this juncture an ultimatum arrived from Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān demanding that the Zand khān recognize Ismā'īl Shāh, still in Qājār hands, and co-operate or be eliminated. This message, which only made Karīm more adamant in his refusal, caused a mutiny. Though this was quelled after a few days' fighting, the damage had been done; Iṣfahān, with an oppressed and

<sup>10</sup> See Malcolm, II, pp. 123-5; Kalānār, pp. 49-56.

<sup>11</sup> *Gombroon Diary* VIII, 22 and 30 December 1755, 21 March 1756.

disgruntled populace and held by an unreliable garrison, was indefensible when the Qājār chief advanced. Shaikh 'Alī and Muḥammad Khān Zand were sent to meet him and, on 27 March, at Kazzāz, between Qum and Kāshān, were heavily defeated. Muḥammad Khān was captured and sent to Māzandarān, where in 1758 he was killed after attempting to escape. Karīm Khān moved out with a few Zand veterans to Gulnābād, the site of the victory of the Ghilzai Afghans over the Safavids in 1722, and about the beginning of April 1756, was routed and fled to Shīrāz. The Qājārs then entered Iṣfahān unopposed.<sup>12</sup>

Late in June, Muḥammad Ḥasan marched on Shīrāz, but found it too well defended and, on news of an advance by Āzād, hurried back to defend Iṣfahān. However, he could not muster a large enough force to face the Afghans' reported 40,000, and withdrew via Kāshān and the Sīyāh-Kūh route to Sārī. Āzād thus re-occupied Iṣfahān about mid-August of 1756. He then moved rapidly in pursuit of Muḥammad Ḥasan, but the Qājārs were fast enough to block the Alburz passes, and Āzād therefore swung round to Rasht in order to outflank them along the Caspian coastal route. Muḥammad Ḥasan in turn moved through Sārī to Āmul, and completely destroyed Āzād's advance lines at Rūdar with a surprise cavalry-raid at night. Āzād, who had been preparing to winter at Rasht, found his elaborate exploratory front being rolled up in confusion by this bold stroke, and in February had to abandon Rasht in a precipitous retreat to Qazvīn. Muḥammad Ḥasan continued through Gīlān and Ṭālish as far as Astārā on the edge of the Mughān Steppe, then cut across Āzārbāijān and laid siege to Āzād's base of Urmīya.<sup>13</sup>

Āzād marched from Iṣfahān on 15 April 1757, resolved on a decisive battle, and two months later was met by the Qājār's main force a short distance from Urmīya. Despite his superiority in numbers, Āzād was deserted at the height of the battle by Shāhbāz Khān Dunbulī and other disaffected local khāns; the rest fled before the victorious Qājārs, who looted his baggage and returned to lay siege to Urmīya. The fortress capitulated within days, and with it went the loyalty of most of Āzād's former territory. Farh 'Alī Khān Afshār was induced to join with the Qājārs, while Āzād fled to Baghdād.<sup>14</sup>

Karīm Khān had meanwhile engaged in a series of operations designed to secure the hinterland of Shīrāz, from the Kūhgilū mountains across the Garmṣīr to Khūzistān. His neglect of Iṣfahān enabled Muḥammad Ḥasan to return to the

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 March, 17 April 1756; Nāmi, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> Burkov, *Materialy* I, 419-20; Ghifārī, *Gulistan-i Murād*, pp. 16-19.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-24; Dunbulī, *Tajribat al-Afshār* II, pp. 20-1.



metropolis on 15 December 1757, after another lightning winter offensive, a double thrust via Burujird and Hamadān. The famine-stricken city could barely support its own populace, let alone the large and restless army yet again forced upon it and, in March of the following year, Muḥammad Ḥasan set off to invest Shirāz once more. As before, Naṣīr Khān Lāri was invited to join the Qājār chief, and a month later the complete force was encamped outside the Zand base. But Shirāz had been well stocked with supplies and the remaining local resources destroyed; daily sorties and raids cut off men and mounts forcing the Qājārs to seek further afield for food and fodder, and in a few weeks the siege became an ironic copy of Karīm Khān's abortive assault on Astarābād six years previously, this time with the rôles reversed. One night in Shawwāl 1171/July 1758, the Afghan and Uzbek contingents, inherited mainly from Āzād, looted the Qājār camp and deserted in a body. The next day the depleted and dispirited Qājār army struck camp and fled north.

The over-extended Qājār commitment was now rolled rapidly back to its point of origin. Husain Khān Develū of the rival Yūkhārī-bāsh branch of the Qājārs, who had held Iṣfahān for Muḥammad Ḥasan, relinquished the city and raced back towards Astarābād to secure it with his own men. Muḥammad Ḥasan's loyal governor of Māzandarān massacred most of the unreliable Afghans who had been allowed to settle around Sārī after Āzād's defeat; but even on reaching Tehran the Qājār chief was deserted by Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān Afshār, Shāhbāz Khān Dunbulī and other recently-acquired lieutenants. Qājār control had everywhere been eroded: Sārī was plundered by Yamūt Türkmēn and fell to Shaikh 'Alī Khān's pursuing Zands. Muḥammad Ḥasan, taking with him the puppet king and a few loyal retainers, fled to Astarābād, which despite Husain Khān Develū had remained loyal to him.

In Muḥarram 1172/September 1758, the Vakīl and his army moved from Shirāz to follow up Shaikh 'Alī Khān and deliver the *coup de grâce*. He combined his slow advance with a review and reorganization of his realms in 'Irāq-i 'Ājam, arriving at Tehran in December. Shaikh 'Alī Khān, unable to breach the Qājār lines at Ashraf (present-day Bīshahr), boldly turned their right flank and made for their capital along the coast, which obliged Muḥammad Ḥasan to pull back hurriedly. An engagement at Kalbād drove the Qājārs into Astarābād, though Shaikh 'Alī was unable immediately to follow up this success. Fearing betrayal by the Yūkhārī-bāsh potential traitors in his midst, Muḥammad Ḥasan had them massacred, then emerged again to bring Shaikh 'Alī to battle before he could be extensively reinforced from Tehran. The resulting clash, on 15 Jumādā II 1172/14 February 1759, ended in a total Qājār defeat. Muḥammad Ḥasan was struck

down in flight by a Kurdish renegade from Qājār service, and Astarābād fell with enormous booty into Zand hands.<sup>15</sup>

Having recovered Ismā'īl III, Karīm could once more legitimately style himself *waḳīl* and reassert his authority with a grand traditional Naurūz celebration in Tehran. Āzād Khān was still at large in Iraq, and Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān and his allies controlled Urmīya; but the most immediate danger seemed to stem from the disaffected Afghan troops and their families in Māzandarān. The Qājār governor at Sārī had anticipated this with his massacre the previous year, and the Zand ruler resolved to rid himself of this superfluous and dangerously fickle minority at one blow. That same Naurūz, thousands of Afghans were massacred all over northern Iran – reputedly 9000 in Tehran alone – and those who escaped were hunted down and killed as far away as Yazd.

After spending the summer heat in the *yaiḡāq* (summer quarter) of Shamitān, and a second winter in Tehran, the Vakīl moved, in spring 1173/1760, on an aggressive reconnaissance of Āzarbāijān. Marāgha was temporarily secured, but the lightly-equipped Zand army found Tabriz too well-defended by Faṭḥ 'Alī and returned to Tehran before the summer. That autumn, the Vakīl and his full court took a long-needed rest on the pastures of Sulḡāniya and returned to Tehran in December to prepare a full-scale spring offensive.

He was anticipated in this by his old enemy Āzād who, since early 1758, had been planning to retake Tabriz with the help of the Pasha of Baghdad. The Georgian king Heraclius (Erakli), under pressure from the expanding power of both Afshārs and Zands, encouraged him to return to Āzarbāijān, but on his approach demurred at providing active aid; and Āzād's former lieutenants Faṭḥ 'Alī and Shāhbāz Khān, far from flocking to his standard, drove off his vanguard and prepared to defend their independent stake in the province. Probably in the summer of 1760, Āzād advanced on Tabriz with a large and composite army and faced the coalition of Afshār and other Āzarbāijān warlords at Marāgha. He was completely routed and fled to Kurdistan.<sup>16</sup> Failing to recruit further support either among the Kurds or from Sulaimān Pāshā, he and his household retinue made their way to a comfortable asylum at the Georgian court in Tiflis. Two years later, his last hope of glory gone with the Vakīl's conquest of Āzarbāijān, he surrendered to Karīm and was kept as an honourable pensioner at Shirāz for the rest of his life.

It is not clear why Karīm Khān was unable to take immediate advantage of these struggles for Āzarbāijān. Probably his hold on Māzandarān and Gilān –

<sup>15</sup> Chūfārī, pp. 43–101; Nāmī, pp. 83–8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68–72; Dunbulī, II, pp. 31–5.

which were to remain Qajār-dominated during the rest of his reign – was not secure enough to allow him to extend the Zand front. It was not until the summer of 1762, after prolonged confrontation at a distance, that the Vakil advanced on Tabriz. Near Qarā Chaman, some sixty miles south-east of Tabriz, he was attacked by Faḥ 'Alī Khān's army, which at first seemed sure of victory. But the Zand forces, rallied by Karīm and Shaikh 'Alī, swept the field; Shāhbāz Khān was captured and hastily transferred his allegiance to the Vakil, while Faḥ 'Alī fled to Urmīya. Tabriz opened its gates, and a few weeks later the Vakil was besieging Urmīya. Spirited sorties by the garrison, hit-and-run raids by the local Kurds and a severe winter failed to dislodge the blockaders, and Urmīya fell seven months later, in Sha'bān 1176/February 1763, the last fortress in western Iran to resist the Zands.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE CENTRE, 1763–6

With the collapse of Faḥ 'Alī's confederation, following so soon on that of the Qajārs, the Vakil was for the first time master of all Iran, with the exception of the Afsharid state of Khuṛāsān. The large retinue that accompanied the Zand army, first on a tour of western Āzarbāiḥān, then the following summer to Shīrāz, included a large number of new allies and hostages, among them Āzād and Faḥ 'Alī. The latter, who by all accounts lacked the generous qualities that made Āzād respected even by his enemies, was executed in Muharram 1178/July 1764 near Isfahān, probably on the instigation of ex-minions who now found themselves free to voice their detestation.<sup>17</sup>

Given Faḥ 'Alī's record of oppression and treachery, this action may be seen as an act of policy; as also may the massacre of the Afghans, in view of the still precarious victory recently enjoyed by the Zands and the fact that the Afghans were generally detested as a reminder of the worst days of Nādir Shāh's tyranny. But during this same period there were other executions and acts of cruelty which plainly embarrass the most devoted chroniclers and can only be regarded as a stain on the Vakil's otherwise unblemished record of magnanimity and forbearance. It would seem that tensions had arisen in the Zand ranks which led to something approaching a purge. During Karīm's summer recreation in the Khamsa region in 1760, a Zand officer had been executed after a harem squabble involving the sister of Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Qajār, whom Karīm had

CONSOLIDATION OF THE CENTRE, 1763–6

recently married. During the siege of Urmīya, a plot was discovered to assassinate the Vakil; some half-dozen conspirators, including the camp physician, were executed, and their heads flung at the foot of the city wall.

Soon after the siege the most palpable stain on the Vakil's character occurred. Shaikh 'Alī Khān had apparently shown himself so arrogant and independent as to constitute a threat to his cousin's authority; he is charged by the chroniclers with misappropriation of booty and provincial revenue, and with cruelty and extortion in dealing with conquered populations. Three of the clique he had cultivated in camp at Urmīya were executed on Karīm's orders. Shaikh 'Alī, refusing to heed the signs, remonstrated so hotly with his cousin that the two came to blows and Karīm had him blinded. It can only be concluded that the Vakil saw such arrogance and obstinacy from one who had hitherto been his close personal friend and most able lieutenant as a genuine threat to his rule, and as a dangerous crack in the united Zand front at a still critical period. Both seem to have been completely reconciled: Shaikh 'Alī spent the rest of his life (until 1186/1772) as a respected member of the court, and never became a focus of sedition.

Several lesser Zand officers were dismissed or arrested at this time, including Saḥz 'Alī, a nephew of Shaikh 'Alī Nadr Khān Zand, whose flight from the baggage-camp at Qarā Chaman had nearly cost the Zands that battle, died after a drunken debauch, possibly from poison.<sup>18</sup> Three Zand officers were blinded at Khūy some three months after Urmīya, and others were blinded and executed later at Isfahān. Then the purge stopped.

Another possible explanation for this spate of executions, besides that of policy, may be advanced. At Sīlākhūr, during the last weeks of 1763, Karīm was taken gravely ill. There were fears for his life, though he recovered within the month. No indication of the nature of his illness is given by the Persian chroniclers, but reports reaching the Carmelite community at Baḡa about this time assert that he had recently recovered from an abscess of the throat caused, it was said, by excessive addiction to opium. He had also taken to excessive drinking and meted out summary punishments to suspected miscreants while drunk.<sup>19</sup> Certainly both vices were common enough among rulers of the time, but this is the only period of his life when the Vakil was noted to be dangerous in his cups. It may perhaps be conjectured that his impaired judgment and fits of vindictiveness – perhaps too his addiction to wine and opium – were the

<sup>17</sup> Nāmī, p. 122.

<sup>18</sup> Ghifārī, p. 113.    <sup>19</sup> *Carmelite Chronicle* 1, pp. 663, 666.

reactions of a sick man under stress to a few genuine cases of disloyalty among men he had come to trust. Happily his temporary aberration never reached the fatal precipice of Nādir's madness.

Paradoxically, the only irrefutable case of real and sustained rebellion at this time was treated by Karīm with consistent moderation and clemency. His cousin and half-brother Zaki, as his conduct on the Vakīl's death was to show, was a cruel and selfish opportunist. Piqued by a fancied lack of recognition of his rôle in the battle of Qarā Chamān, he and his adherents had retired to Tehran, where he plundered Shaikh 'Alī's baggage, and continued to Iṣfahān. Here his Bakhtiyārī supporters tricked 'Alī Muḥammad Khān Zand, then governor of Burjird, into renouncing his allegiance to the Vakīl and joining Zaki to exploit the long-suffering populace of Iṣfahān. They then launched an abortive attack on Kāshān. Karīm forbore at first to interfere, but by Rabī' II, 1177/October 1763 he realized that the whole centre of his realm was likely to crumble under the shocks of this irresponsible adventure. He advanced from Arābābil to the relief of Kāshān and Iṣfahān, and Zaki Khān, together with his family, Bakhtiyārī adherents and a collection of hostages from the families of loyal Zands in Iṣfahān, fled through the Bakhtiyārī mountains to Khūzistān. He lost his baggage and hostages to the pursuing Nazār 'Alī Kān Zand on the western edge of the Zarda Kūh foothills and, his resources greatly depleted, sought the help of Maulā Muṭṭalīb, the chief of the Shīrī Mushāshā' Arabs, who was then Vālif of 'Arabistān.

The Vālif found it convenient to use Zaki's forces as an arm of his advance on rebel-held Dizfūl. Zaki, however, recruited reinforcements from the Al-Kathīr tribe, then waging a blood-feud against the Vālif and, under their influence, secured the adherence of the Governor of Dizfūl in a threefold alliance against the Vālif. Zaki then sent a force under 'Alī Muḥammad Khān which killed Maulā Muṭṭalīb's family and captured him alive. Anxious to avoid the clutches of his blood-enemies the Al-Kathīr, the Vālif paid Zaki a ransom of 60,000 tumāns; but no sooner was this accepted than Zaki found it expedient to hand over his prisoner to the now dominant Āl-Kathīr, who promptly killed him.<sup>20</sup> The Āl-Kathīr had no further use for their Zand ally, and the remaining Mushāshā' became bitterly hostile, so Zaki Khān was obliged to lead his few remaining Bakhtiyārī and Lurī adherents back into the mountains. Here, early in 1764, he was intercepted by Nazār 'Alī Khān and threw himself on the Vakīl's clemency. Both he and 'Alī Muḥammad were granted a full pardon.

This ended an episode which might have split the Zand empire irreparably had Zaki Khān been any where near as diplomatic in dealing with his allies as was the Vakīl. The revolt had acted as a barometer, indicating the latent disaffection of various tribal elements in the Zand confederation and on its fringes, which Karīm now took steps to remedy. The Bakhtiyārī, still conscious of their jealously maintained status under the Safavids and Nādir Shāh and having come near to attaining power under 'Alī Mardān, now tasted the Vakīl's displeasure. Having retaken Iṣfahān and restored his authority there by early 1764, Karīm sent forces into the Zarda Kūh to round up and disarm as many Bakhtiyārī tribesmen as possible. Three thousand of their fighting men were incorporated into the Zand army and the rest forcibly resettled, the Haft Lang around Qum and Varamīn, some two hundred miles to the north, and the Chahār Lang near Fāsā in Fārs, three hundred miles south-east of their ancestral lands.<sup>21</sup> Next their northern neighbours, the Falī Lurs, whose nominal submission to the Vakīl had likewise been sloughed off during Zaki's revolt, were chastised: in the winter of 1764-5 the Zands struck at Khurramābād, plundering Ismā'īl Khān's possessions and forcing him to flee to the Iraqi plains and the hospitality of the Banū Lām. Karīm dealt out no further punishment to the Lurī tribesmen, merely replacing Ismā'īl as paramount chief by his more compliant brother. Whereas the Bakhtiyārī seem to have been cowed for the rest of the Vakīl's reign, his attempts to subjugate the Falī Lurs were less successful: soon after this Ismā'īl Khān returned to power and retained his influence for the rest of the Zand period.

Finally, the Zand army moved into northern Khūzistān, preceded by a detachment under Nazār 'Alī Khān which pursued the Banū Lām and plundered a group of Āl-Kathīr tribesmen. During the few days the Vakīl spent at Dizfūl and Shūshār - where he celebrated Naunūz of 1178/1765 - he made several new government appointments and extracted 20,000 tumans in reparations and presents from the recalcitrant province. In May he returned to Shīrāz through the Kūngūyā mountains, where other rebel strongholds remained to be breached.

Ever since Karīm had been driven back on Kāzārūn by Azād in 1754, this mountainous area to the north-west of Shīrāz had come to form the strategic left flank of the new Zand heartland of Fārs, guarding the routes to Khūzistān and Khūzistān. His first campaign here was undertaken in 1777, while Azād and Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān were struggling for supremacy in the north. Bibbahān,

<sup>20</sup> Chūfārī, pp. 128-37; cf. Kasrāvī, *Tārīkh-i Panjād-sāla-yi Khūzistān*, pp. 133-4.

<sup>21</sup> See Fasā'ī, *Fārnāma-yi Nāqūrī* I, pp. 214-5.

the central stronghold of the independent mountaineers, was blockaded, stormed and sacked, and Jayizān fell after a gruelling eight-month siege stretching over the summer. While the Vakil was in Āzarbāijān in 1760, one of the two officials he had appointed to govern the Kūhgūlūya rebelled with the support of the local tribes. Though he was dismissed and captured, the mountaineers maintained their independence until the spring of 1178/1765, when all paid homage to the Vakil on his return from Khūzistān, with the exception of the Luri tribe of the Liravī centred on two fortresses near Bihbahān. The Zand advance met with desperate resistance all around these strongholds, which fell after appalling casualties on both sides. No quarter was asked or given; prisoners were beheaded and a tower of skulls built as a warning to others. The excessive savagery of this treatment would have gone unnoticed in Nādir's day, but as the action of the normally moderate Vakil it calls forth a somewhat anxious justification from the chronicler Mirzā Sādiq Nāmi:<sup>22</sup> the unrepentant brigands had put up a fierce fight and an example was necessary in this strategic area.

On 2 Safar 1179/21 July 1765, after an absence of almost seven years, the Vakil entered his capital and was not to leave again for the remaining fourteen years of his reign. Only now could he give thought to securing his strategic right wing, the large and mountainous province of Lār. Nāṣir Khān had risen by a process of organized brigandage in the period of the Afghan invasion and Nādir Shāh's reign to gain undisputed control of Lār and its dependencies, the Sab'a region bordering on Kirmān and the Gulf littoral. Nādir Shāh had been content to confirm his *de facto* dominion. He had failed to take Shirāz during the interregnum, but from 1751, with a strong standing army, asserted his authority over the port of Bandar 'Abbās and the trade routes inland. He had been wooed with further diplomas and titles by Āzād, Muḥammad Ḥasan and Karīm Khān, and had indeed aided the Qājār chief in his abortive siege of Shirāz in 1758. Karīm's first campaign in Lār, in 1755, was a two-pronged advance on the city of Lār itself, which however held out; Nāṣir Khān agreed to pay tribute and a truce was reached. Over the next three years, the Zands kept up intermittent pressure on Nāṣir Khān, who was also involved in border hostilities with Shāhrukh Khān, governor of Kirmān.

When Karīm Khān set off in pursuit of the Qājārs in 1758, he detailed a force to chastise Nāṣir Khān which had some success, but made no attempt to take the stronghold of Lār itself. While Sādiq Khān governed Shirāz, the Khān of Lār continued his depredations unchecked, and in 1760 even forced a truce by the

terms of which his autonomy was recognized for a small tribute and hostages were exchanged. Early in 1179/1766, however, Karīm dispatched Sādiq to reduce the fortress. The town of Lār fell quickly, and a deserter showed the Zands a secret track up the rocks on top of which was Nāṣir Khān's fortress. Nāṣir Khān nevertheless fought on until, with supplies running low, his men mutinied and he was forced to sue for terms. His stronghold was demolished and he and his family were taken back to Shirāz, where they were generously treated as hostage-guests. The inhabitants of Lār were not subjected to reprisals, and Mas'ūh Khān, a cousin of Nāṣir Khān, was appointed to govern in his stead, which he did loyally for the rest of Karīm's reign.<sup>23</sup>

## CENTRIFUGAL REGIONS, 1758-77

The provincial centres which lay even further away from Shirāz showed a proportionately greater determination to live a life of their own at the outset of the Zand regency. At the end of Nādir's reign, Kirmān was seized by an Afshār, Shāhrukh Khān, whose family had held the province more or less continuously since the time of Shāh 'Abbās. He added Yazd and Abarqūh to his domains and paid nominal homage but no taxes to the Afsharid rulers in Mashhad. In 1754, he appealed to Nāṣir Khān Lāri for help against repeated raids by a former governor of Kirmān, Mu'īmin Khān Bāfqī. Nāṣir Khān marched with 8000 men ostensibly to join him, but on meeting Shāhrukh Khān near Mashiz he bound him hand and foot and sent to Kirmān for a ransom. This was refused and he advanced to besiege the city. But he was hotly resisted, and when Shāhrukh Khān managed to bribe his guards and escape, the Khān of Lār beat a disgruntled retreat.

Meanwhile Yazd, traditionally dependent on Isfahān, broke free under Taqī Khān Bāfqī, a local chieftain who had profited from the rivalries of Āzād, Muḥammad Ḥasan and Karīm Khān to become self-styled governor. On his way north in 1758, the Vakil sent a flying column under Zakī Zand to bring Taqī Khān to book. The "governor" was dragged straight from his bed to the rack, and before Karīm arrived with the main body of the army had already disgorged 12,000 tumāns. At a further court hearing, all his creditors were brought forward to testify to his oppression and were duly reimbursed. Taqī Khān was mulcted and dismissed, and the Zand army moved on. In 1760, while the Vakil was in Tehran, Shāhrukh Khān once more took possession of Yazd. Karīm

<sup>22</sup> Pp. 128-9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.



therefore despatched Khudā Murād Khān Zand to impose his authority on the whole of Kirmān province. Shortly before the arrival of the Zand army, Shāhrukh Khān was killed in a popular insurrection, but his successors at first refused to admit Khudā Murād to Kirmān. He negotiated an entry on terms, which once inside he ignored and subjected the city to even greater oppression than had Shāhrukh Khān. A bare six months later, in Ramazān 1174/March 1761, he was deposed and killed by a victim of his injustice, one Taqī Khān from the village of Durrān, who, with a small force of musketeers from his native village, scaled the city wall one night and seized control.

Like that of previous governors, his reign began in a wave of relative popularity and military expansion; but Kirmān soon relapsed into the civil turmoil and economic stagnation with which successive predators had familiarized it. Late in 1762 Taqī Khān Bāfqī, who was with the Vakīl's army in Āzarbāijān, begged the chance to redeem himself by an attack on his namesake in Kirmān. His advance guard was roughly handled by the Durrānī musketeers, and he turned tail without further engagement. Another expedition about 1764 almost foundered on the jealousy of its joint commanders, a Kurd, Muḥammad Khān Garrūsī, and an Afshār, Amīr Gūna Khān Tārumī. Garrūsī was fortunate to reach Kirmān at a time when Taqī Khān was absent, and took advantage of mutinous elements within to seize the city. But he was unable to extend his authority outside, and two months later had to flee when Taqī Khān mounted a successful night raid and recaptured Kirmān. In a second advance on Kirmān soon after this, the Kurdish khan was routed in the field and again retired to Shīrāz.

For his fifth attempt to hold this stubborn province, the Vakīl commissioned the veteran 'Alī Khān Shāhiseven, who methodically drove Taqī Khān back on his capital and invested it determinedly. But during a skirmish outside the walls, he was shot dead by a sniper and his army trudged back to Shīrāz. Outside Kirmān, the invincible Taqī Khān was becoming a legend and a mockery of Karīm Khān's pretensions to be regent of Iran. 'Alī Khān's army was sent back to the attack under Nazār 'Alī Khān. By judicious propaganda and generous treatment of defectors he encouraged desertions by many who were disillusioned with the extortionate sway of Taqī Khān. By about spring of 1766, supplies had dwindled in the blockaded city and popular disaffection increased to such a degree that Taqī Khān was seized and the gates thrown open to the Zands. He was taken to Shīrāz and put to death.<sup>24</sup> From then on Kirmān and its

<sup>24</sup> Ghifārī, pp. 145-8. For the most detailed account of Kirmān during this period, see Vazīzi, *Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, p. 316ff.

dependencies remained securely in the Vakīl's hands, though the rivalries of the various local governors did little to restore its prosperity. Eventually, Karīm Khān appointed as *beglebēgan* Ismā'īl sayyid, Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī Shāh Maḥallāti, well respected locally for his piety and generosity. His moral authority overrode the petty squabbles of the regional military governors, and his ample private income precluded any necessity for extortion or peculation; Kirmān was thus governed wisely and well for the rest of the Vakīl's reign.

The provinces of Astarābād (Gurgān), Māzandarān and Gilān never wholly submitted to Zand rule, remaining a centre of Qājār power and intermittent revolt from Nādir's time up to Āghā Muḥammad's final overthrow of the Zands in 1795. Karīm Khān was aware of the magnitude of this problem and attempted to reduce it by appeasement, by dividing the Qājārs among themselves and by taking hostages, but without great success. On his death in 1759, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān left nine sons, most of whom fled from Astarābād to the traditional Qājār refuge, the Turkmens of the Dashr-i Qipchāq (the northern steppe). From here they took to raiding the governor, Ḥusain Khān Develū, appointed by the Zand, who was of the rival Yūkhārī-bāsh clan. But Muḥammad Ḥasan's eldest son Āghā Muḥammad Khān, then aged about eighteen, was captured in Māzandarān and sent to Tehran, where Karīm treated him with exceptional kindness and urged him to persuade the remaining fugitives to give themselves up. This they did, and were settled on the family estates; the elder princes, including Āghā Muḥammad and Ḥusain Qulī Khān, were taken as hostages to Shīrāz, where they were treated with Karīm's customary kindness. Muḥammad Ḥasan's sister, Khadija Bigum, was likewise taken to Shīrāz as the Vakīl's wife.

This wise policy was unfortunately prejudiced by the immediate military pacification of the Qājār realms, undertaken by Zakī Khān with unnecessary cruelty. But the greatest risk the Vakīl took in attempting to tame these provinces was in later appointing Muḥammad Ḥasan's second son, the twenty-year old Ḥusain Qulī, to govern Dāmghān. With Āghā Muḥammad a hostage in Shīrāz and a eunuch (he had been castrated by 'Adil Shāh in 1748),<sup>25</sup> Ḥusain Qulī Khān was the heir apparent and guarantor of the posterity of the Ashāqa-bāsh clan of the Qājārs. Perhaps, as the Qājār historians claim, the Vakīl was persuaded by Āghā Muḥammad – for whose political sagacity he had a genuine respect – that this was the best way to retain full control of Māzandarān.<sup>26</sup> At any

<sup>25</sup> Mar'ashi, *Majmū'at-tawārīkh*, p. 98.

<sup>26</sup> Rizā Qulī Khān Hidayyat, *Rawzat al-Jā'iz* Nājiri, IX, p. 86. With allowance made for obvious partisanship, this is the most detailed and reliable source for events in the north-east of the Zand realm.



rate, the youth's first action on taking up his appointment in Shawwāl 1182/February 1769 was to marry the daughter of a Qājār noble, from which union was born in the following year the future Fath 'Alī Shāh. Over the course of the next eight years Husain Qulī recruited and organized a powerful following of Ashāqā-bāsh and their clients and, by intimidation backed by open warfare where necessary, neutralized the power of the Yūkhārī-bāsh who were subsidized by the Zand. He was careful to keep within the bounds of the traditional Qājār clan feud and could never be proved to have rebelled openly against the Vaktī; with the result that Karīm refrained from exerting pressure on his hostages and was content to send three small expeditionary forces to replace or restore the Yūkhārī-bāsh khans and exact apologies and contrite promises from the young Qājār.

His savage destruction of the Develū stronghold of Qal'a Namaka earned for him the sobriquet of Jahānsūz Shāh ("World-burner"), and brought a punitive force of Lurī and Kurdish cavalry under Zakī Khān. Husain Qulī prudently withdrew to the Türkmen steppes, but when Zakī's force retired he came out of hiding and killed Hasan Khān, the ex-governor of Astarābād who had recently relinquished his post in fear of attack. Fearing for his own position, Muḥammad Khān Savādkūhi, governor of Māzandarān, called for Zand reinforcements and marched on Astarābād. Husain Qulī bypassed him, seized his capital of Sarī, defeated him in the field, tortured and killed him. His son Mahdī Khān escaped to Shirāz, and returned with a Zand army to exact vengeance; again the Qājār took refuge on the steppes, only to return and defeat Mahdī Khān at Bārfurūsh after the Zands had withdrawn. Finally, in 1190/1776, Zakī Khān returned to Māzandarān and restored order with a brutally long remembered. All Husain Qulī's supporters were so relentlessly persecuted that by the time Zakī left for Shirāz even the Qājār's Türkmen allies had begun to desert him. He massacred a band of Türkmen raiders who had attacked one of his few remaining allies, then soon after a last abortive assault on Astarābād, about 1191/1777, he was murdered by a band of Türkmen as he lay asleep in the open. Though the Vaktī condoned most sympathetically with Āghā Muḥammad, he can hardly have been other than greatly relieved.

## THE PERSIAN GULF

During the greater part of this period the Zand ruler was more actively occupied with affairs on the Persian Gulf. The Iranian littoral of the Gulf, from the Shaṭt al-'Arab to the Strait of Hummuz, was dominated by a series of petty

Arab shaikhs and their often intractable subjects. For the most part Sunni Muslims, they remained aloof from their Iranian neighbours, and paid tribute to inland rulers only when these could afford to send armed expeditions to enforce it; even then, they would often escape temporarily to the offshore islands. Their nominal occupations of fishing, pearling and trading were supplemented by booty from raids on their rivals by land and sea. Their counterparts on the Arabian shore included the Qawāsīm (or Jawāsīm) of Julfār, who from 1760 began to infiltrate Qishm Island and the inland regions near Bandar 'Abbās.

This port, developed by Shāh 'Abbās to serve Kirmān and Iṣfahān, had already lost much of its importance through Nādir's transfer of the capital to Mashhad, and during the anarchy of the interregnum was a centre only of continuous strife as the governor Maulā 'Alī Shāh, Naṣīr Khān Lārī, the local Banū Ma'īn Arabs and the invading Qawāsīm struggled for the rights to salvage the sorry remains of Nādir's navy, plunder the dwindling merchant traffic and blackmail the British and Dutch trading posts. Even after Karīm Khān had established himself at Shirāz, his access to this region was at first blocked by the hostile Naṣīr Khān, and by the time this menace was neutralized, Shirāz's natural port of Būshahr (Bushire) had risen to replace Bandar 'Abbās as Iran's first trading centre. This process was confirmed when first the Dutch in 1759, then the British East India Company in 1765, moved their bases from Bandar 'Abbās in the lower Gulf and resettled respectively on Khārg Island and at Būshahr, in the upper Gulf.

Karīm Khān's contemporary at Būshahr was Shaikh Nāṣīr, who combined his small army and fleet in 1753 to capture the Bahraīn archipelago. He was imprisoned by the Vaktī two years later, but on release remained a loyal vassal of the Zands until his death in 1783. Some forty miles north-west of Būshahr ruled his rival and occasional ally Mir Naṣīr Vaghā'ī of Bandar Rīg, whose jurisdiction included the offshore island of Khārg.

In 1753, Baron Kniphausen, former director of the Dutch agency at Basra who had been imprisoned, fined and expelled by the Ottoman governor on various trumped-up charges, returned from Batavia with three ships and occupied the island of Khārg. From here, he so successfully blockaded the Shaṭt al-'Arab that the governor refunded his "fine" and in vain begged him to return to Basra. Kniphausen proceeded to turn Khārg into a flourishing Dutch colony with a stout fort and a village, attracting Armenian merchants from the mainland and the staff of the declining settlement at Bandar 'Abbās.

The terms by which the Dutch held Khārg were now called in question. According to the Baron and his successors, Mir Naṣīr of Bandar Rīg had freely

ceded the island to them, while Mir Nāsīr's energetic adolescent son Mir Muḥannā maintained that they owed a heavy rent.<sup>27</sup> With the pretext of his father's inability to press this claim, Muḥannā killed both his parents and, by 1755, had taken control of Bandar Rīg. His elder brother Ḥusain returned from Bahraïn, but at the same time Karīm Khān suddenly descended on Bandar Rīg and detained both brothers at Shirāz for a year. When they returned in 1756, apparently reconciled, a British agency had been established at the port; but this was hastily abandoned when Mir Muḥanna killed his brother and fifteen other relatives and recovered complete control of Bandar Rīg. Over the next few years Mir Muḥannā's notoriety spread throughout the Gulf. The Vakil arrested him again in 1758, but reinstated him on the intercession of an influential relative of the pirate; and when, in 1765, Karīm sent a demand for tribute backed by a force under Amīr Gūna Khān Afshār, Mir Muḥannā embarked his men and livestock on boats and set off to Khārgū, a small island next to Khārg. The Vakil is said also to have demanded tribute from the Dutch on Khārg, who likewise refused.<sup>28</sup> With both Shaikh Nāsīr of Būshahr and the British reluctant to render naval aid, the Zand army was left helpless on the shore.

Finally the East India Company's vessel and Shaikh Nāsīr's flotilla sailed diffidently into the attack, and for the next five weeks Mir Muḥannā's fleet ran rings round them, and continued to prey on merchant shipping from its Khārgū base. A Dutch expedition from Khārg was routed, and the pirate quickly followed up this advantage by landing in force on Khārg itself. On New Year's Day 1766 the director, Van Houting, was tricked into leaving his fort to negotiate, whereupon he and his staff were seized and bundled into boats for Būshahr, there to await passage back to Batavia. By this coup, Mir Muḥannā secured the strongest fort and richest warehouse in the Gulf; he had likewise regained control of Bahraïn, and when the frustrated Zand army withdrew from Bandar Rīg the Vaghāī chief reoccupied his original base as well.

A further Zand expedition under Zaki Khān failed even to take Bandar Rīg. The East India Company attacked Khārg independently and were beaten off with loss, after which Mir Muḥannā in reprisal captured a British merchantman, the *Speedwell*, as she sailed up the Gulf. No co-ordination was achieved between the Company and the Zands, despite protracted talks; but, by 1768, definite pressure was exerted on Khārgū through a joint blockade by Zaki's army at Bandar Rīg and Shaikh Nāsīr's fleet. Hardship robbed Mir Muḥannā of support,

<sup>27</sup> Records of the Dutch East India Company: *Briefven overzaken*, 2716 (1756), Khārg, fol. 5-6; 2777 (1757), Khārg pt. III, fol. 15-19. For a detailed account of this episode see Perry, "Mir Muḥannā and the Dutch." <sup>28</sup> Niebuhr, *Reisebeschreibungen* II, pp. 183-4.

and early in 1769 he was surprised by a revolt of some of his kinsmen and only just escaped with his bodyguard in a small open boat. The island submitted to the Zands, and the Vakil showed his usual statesmanship in forgoing all reprisals, distributing Mir Muḥannā's property among the rebels and appointing their leader, Ḥasan Sulṭān, to govern Bandar Rīg. Mir Muḥannā had meanwhile landed near Baṣra, where he was captured by the governor's men and executed. Khārg slipped back into the poverty and obscurity of the days before the Dutch, who never returned to the Gulf; and Bandar Rīg, its defences demolished and the independent Vaghāī spirit crushed, was henceforth completely overshadowed by Būshahr.

Karīm's attempts to control the lower Gulf at this later period were rather less successful. In 1769, he sent a demand to the Imām of Oman for tribute on the same terms as had been imposed by Nādir, and for the return of Nādir's ship the *Rahmānī* which the Imām had bought from the Banū Māīn without the Vakil's consent. These demands were contemptuously rejected, and an intermittent state of war, manifested in isolated acts of piracy, subsisted between Iran and Oman for most of the Zand period. Having won some measure of control over the Bandar 'Abbās region, Karīm in 1773 sent a force under Zaki Khān to mount a seaborne invasion of Oman. Shaikh 'Abd-Allāh of the Banū Māīn—the real power in the region, whose son was then a hostage in Shirāz—promised every support but, on Zaki's arrival, lured him to Humuz Island with the promise of his beautiful daughter's hand in marriage, and then imprisoned him. The Zand army awaited his return to the mainland in vain, and finally dispersed; the Vakil was obliged to comply with the Shaikh's suggestion of a reciprocal return of hostages, and 'Abd-Allāh's son was sent from Shirāz while a chastened Zaki returned in disgrace.<sup>29</sup> So ended the Vakil's first attempt to emulate Nādir Shāh by foreign conquest.

The largest and best organized of the "pirate" states which the Vakil set himself to subdue was that of the Banū Ka'b of Khūzistān.<sup>30</sup> From the late sixteenth century, they had moved from lower Iraq to settle at Qubān on the Khaur Mūsā inlet, and later at Dauraq on the Jarāhī river. After Nādir's death their great Shaikh Salīmān rebuilt this centre as his capital and renamed it Fallāḥīya. He rapidly expanded his realms along the Shaīf al-'Arab to comprise a triangular empire of about one hundred miles a side, embracing both Iranian and Ottoman territory. In 1758 he laid down the nucleus of a navy which soon outstripped that of the *qapūṭān jāshā* of Baṣra. His amphibious forces could raid

<sup>29</sup> Nāmi, pp. 176-8; East India Company, *Factory Records* xvii, 1071 (18 May 1774). <sup>30</sup> For a detailed account of these operations, see Perry, "The Banū Ka'b."

date-groves and caravan routes and blockade the Shaḥī at will, and when pursued by the forces of either the Pasha or the Yakkīl would disappear into their marshland fastnesses and evade or buy off their frustrated pursuers.

Karīm Khān mounted punitive campaigns of limited success in 1170/1717 and 1178/1765, for the second of which he had been promised assistance by 'Umar Pāshā of Baghdad. A truly international project was evolved for combined operations against this brigand state, whereby Ottoman troops and the East India Company's gunboats were to drive the Ka'b inland from the Shaḥī while the Zand army intercepted them from the north-east. But though Karīm reached Fallāḥīya, the boats and supplies promised by the Pasha never materialized. By dint of destroying Ka'b property, the Yakkīl elicited tribute from Shaikh Salīmān and marched home, after delivering a strong protest to the Pasha. The Ka'b, after playing cat-and-mouse with the clumsy and ill co-ordinated Basran navy, likewise bought a truce with the Turks. The British at Basra, who omitted to have themselves included in this treaty, lost three ships to the Ka'b and unwisely launched their own amphibious offensive with reinforcements from Bombay; they suffered heavy casualties and withdrew to patrol the Shaḥī. All remaining Turkish and British pressure on the Ka'b was then removed when Shaikh Salīmān induced the Yakkīl, by means of expensive presents, to serve both the Pasha and the Company's agent with an ultimatum to withdraw from Iranian territory and cease molesting his "subjects" the Ka'b.

Ka'b fortunes declined rapidly with the death of Shaikh Salīmān in 1768, after thirty-one years of independent russling with the three greatest powers in the Gulf. His successors readily co-operated with the Yakkīl seven years later in his conquest of Basra. Only with the taming of the shaikhs of the Gulf ports and the Ka'b was the Zand leader ready for this last and most ambitious target, which had eluded both Shāh 'Abbās and Nādir Shāh.

#### WAR WITH THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1774-79

Karīm's war with the Turks was fought simultaneously on two fronts — the Shaḥī al-'Arab, and the Kurdish provinces of Bābān and Zuhāb, from where Baghdad itself could be threatened. The major political cause of the war was 'Umar Pāshā's intervention in the rivalries for the frontier province of Bābān (approximately present-day Sulaimāniya in Iraq), which, since the death of Sulaimān Pāshā of Baghdad in 1762, had fallen increasingly under the influence of the Zand-sponsored viceroys (*vā'il*) of Ardalān (equivalent to the present *ksīān* of Kurdistan). 'Umar's replacement of the Bābān ruler in 1774 provoked two

campaigns by the Zands to restore Iranian influence in the area. This sudden hardening of the Pasha's hitherto *laissez-faire* attitude was further manifested in his imposition of a frontier toll on Iranian pilgrims to the shrines of Najaf and Karbāla, and in his confiscation of the residue of Persian pilgrims and residents who died during the epidemic that devastated Iraq during 1772-73. Demands for redress and for fair treatment of pilgrims, in accordance with Nādir's treaty of 1746, brought no response.<sup>31</sup>

With the loss of Mashhad, free access to the shrines of Iraq was more important to the Zand leader than it had been to the Safavids or the Afsharids, and the Pasha's policy was enough to justify a Shi'ī *jihād*. Other motives were the need to employ a standing army prone to restlessness, and to recoup prestige after Zakī's embarrassing misadventures on Hurmuz; to chastise the Pasha and his *muzālim* (governor) of Basra for their connivance at Ka'b depredations and for alleged assistance of the Omani enemy; and above all the commercial prize of Basra itself. In recent years, the Iraqi port had perceptibly overtaken its rival Būshahr which, in 1769, had been abandoned by the East India Company in favour of Basra. Factors favouring the Zands were the weakness and disorganization of both Baghdad and Basra after the recent epidemic, and the inability of the Sublime Porte, chastened after its defeat by Russia in 1774, to render direct assistance to its near-autonomous eastern province.

While 'Alī Murād and Nazār 'Alī Khān Zand kept the Pasha's forces occupied in Kurdistan with a few thousand men, Šādiq Khān marched with some 30,000 men to commence the siege of Basra in Šafar 1189/April 1775. The Mutasallim's Muntafiq Arab allies retired without attempting to deny Šādiq passage of the Shaḥī, and boats provided and crewed by the Ka'b and the Arabs of Būshahr secured the Iranian army's transport and supplies. The garrison under the energetic Sulaimān Aqā defended the town with spirit, and Šādiq was forced to entrench for a blockade lasting over a year. The Company resident, Henry Moore, after attacking some of the besiegers' supply boats and providing a chain boom to block the Shaḥī below Basra, slipped anchor and left for Būshahr and Bombay at the start of the siege. In October, a fleet from Oman broke through the boom to land supplies and reinforcements, which greatly raised Basran morale, but their united sortie the following day appears to have been indecisive. The Omani fleet was thus confined to its anchorage under constant fire, and that winter the Jmām decided to cut his losses and sailed back to Muscat.

<sup>31</sup> The accounts of this war and its causes in the Persian chronicles (Nāmi, p. 181ff.; Chifāri, pp. 176-7, 186ff.) are substantially confirmed by Ottoman sources (e.g. *Harī-i-Hamgūn* I, nos. 2, 174, 192, 218, 219; Jaudar (Cevdet), *Tarih* II, pp. 55ff.)

A relief force from Baghdad was defeated by Sādiq's Shi'ī Arab allies, the Khazā'il, and, by the spring of 1776, the tightened blockade had brought the defenders to the verge of starvation. Mass defections and the threat of mutiny drove Sulaimān Āqā to capitulate on 26 Šafar 1190/16 April 1776.

Ottoman reactions to these events on the eastern frontiers were surprisingly slow, even granted the death of the capable Sulīḥ Muṣṭafā III and his succession by the weak 'Abd al-Hamid late in 1773, and the subsequent Russian misadventure. An Ottoman envoy, Vehbi Efendi, was despatched to Shirāz in February of 1775, when the Kurdish front was momentarily quiet and before news of the impending siege of Baṣra had reached Istanbul. He arrived in Shirāz, ironically, about the same time that Sādiq reached Baṣra, but was not empowered to negotiate over this new crisis.<sup>32</sup> By the time he returned to the Porte, bearing the conventional compliments and detailed complaints against 'Umar Pāshā, Baṣra had fallen. Some months later the Porte dismissed 'Umar on charges of provoking a needless war, enforcing this decision with an army under the Pasha of Raḡqa; but this attempt to subject Baghdad directly to Istanbul misfired, for 'Umar's former lieutenant 'Abd-Allāh soon took over the pashalik. It was not until about May 1776 that the Porte had a *fahri* issued declaring war on the Vakīl and forces were levied for a campaign on the Kurdish front. At Marivān in Rabī' 1191/May 1777 Khustrau Khān, the Vāli of Ardalān, was heavily defeated by the reinforced Pasha of Bābān, but some months later a three-pronged Zand invasion of Kurdistān restored the *status quo* with a rout of the Turkish-Bābān forces on the plain of Shahrazur, and 'Abd-Allāh Pāshā initiated peace negotiations.

In Baṣra, meanwhile, a heavy indemnity was extorted and hostages, including Sulaimān Āqā, were sent to Shirāz. But there was no prescription and Sādiq seems in general to have respected the terms of capitulation. Only when he returned to Shirāz later in the year, leaving 'Alī Muḥammad Khān to administer the city and region, did the occupation degenerate into a chaos of unrestrained greed and senseless slaughter. Extortion increased to the verge of outright looting and women were abducted for the pleasure of the commandant and his officers. Having squeezed the town dry, 'Alī Muḥammad turned his attention to the countryside: he plundered and burned down the town of al-Zubair and repeatedly robbed the Muntafiq Arabs despite a pledge of safe conduct. In June 1778, the Muntafiq retaliated by routing one of his raiding parties and, in September, 'Alī Muḥammad set out with a large force to teach them a lesson.

<sup>32</sup> State Papers, SP 97/11 (Turkey), fol. 212; cf. Ghifāfi, p. 190.

The Arabs led him into a trap between the Euphrates and a swamp, and massacred him and his army almost to a man.

Vengeance satisfied, the Muntafiq made no attempt to follow up this resounding success by retaking Baṣra, and the garrison was able to sit tight until Sādiq Khān hastened back with reinforcements in December. Bled of all wealth, depopulated by plague, siege and occupation, Baṣra was already more of a liability than an asset to the Zands; from now on it lost its commercial importance both as a terminus of the caravan route to Aleppo and as a port, and was no longer of use even as a bargaining-point in negotiations with Baghdad, since these had collapsed with the recent death of 'Abd-Allāh Pāshā and a renewal of internecine anarchy in the pashalik. Sādiq was already preparing to withdraw when he received the not unexpected news of the Vakīl's death on 13 Šafar 1193/1 March 1779.

#### KARĪM KHĀN'S SUCCESSORS 1779-95

Now in his seventies, Karīm had been ill for six months, though he remained active until the end. No sooner had he breathed his last than the folly and malice of his leading kinsmen, apparent though overshadowed during his reign, erupted unchecked to blast apart all that he had created. Karīm's three sons — the elder two, Abu'l-Faṭḥ and Muḥammad 'Alī, frivolous and incompetent, and the youngest still a child — became pawns in a vicious struggle for supremacy. Even before the Vakīl had been buried, Zakī Khān, allied with 'Alī Murād Khān and ostensibly proclaiming the Vakīl's second son, lured from the citadel and slaughtered Nazār 'Alī and Shaikh 'Alī Khān and their supporters, who had battered onto Abu'l-Faṭḥ. Sādiq arrived from Baṣra to press his own claims to the succession, but was deserted by his army when Zakī threatened reprisals on their families in Shirāz, and fled to Bam.

On the morning after the Vakīl's death, his Qājār hostage Āghā Muḥammad, who was allowed to go hunting outside the walls, escaped northwards. Zakī had sent in pursuit 'Alī Murād Khān Zand, who now rebelled at Iṣfahān in the name of Abu'l-Faṭḥ. On his march against him, Zakī Khān committed such atrocities at the village of Īzadkhwāst that even his own men were shocked, and killed this monster on the spot. Sādiq was thus enabled to return and occupy Shirāz, but was still opposed by 'Alī Murād. After an eight-month blockade, Shirāz fell by treachery in February 1781; Sādiq was murdered together with all his sons except Ja'far, who had come to terms privately with 'Alī Murād.

'Alī Murād found himself faced with a resurgence of Qājār power and



established his capital strategically at Isfāhān. He campaigned energetically in Māzandarān, but Ja'far Khān took advantage of his absence to march on Isfāhān. Hastening to defend his capital in midwinter against his doctors' advice, 'Alī Murād died at Mūrchakhūr in February 1785. His reign, which saw the Zands relinquish all claims to northern and even central Iran, can be seen as the watershed between Zand and Qājār history. Ja'far Khān occupied Isfāhān, but was driven out twice by Āghā Muḥammad and fell back on Shirāz. In 1204/1789, his treachery in dealing with his own supporters provoked a mutiny in which he was killed.

He was succeeded by the young Luṭf 'Alī Khān, the only one of Karīm Khān's successors to have won admiration for his courage and integrity.<sup>33</sup> Having recovered Shirāz from the mutineers, he then held it against a determined Qājār assault. His downfall was precipitated by a mutual distrust between him and Hājī Ibrāhīm, the *Kalāntar* (Mayor) of Fārs who had initially helped him to power. On his way to attack Isfāhān in 1206/1791, Luṭf 'Alī was deserted by his army on the instigation of the Kalāntar's brother, and on racing back to Shirāz found the city in the hands of Hājī Ibrāhīm. Denied help from Būshahr, the young Zand prince nevertheless continued with the few troops still loyal to him and a few Arab levies to fight off the Qājār advance on Shirāz, which Hājī Ibrāhīm had offered to turn over to Āghā Muḥammad. At one point, he secured the Qājār camp in a daring night raid, but his forces scattered to plunder. At dawn it transpired that Āghā Muḥammad and the hard core of his army were still in the camp; Luṭf 'Alī had to flee eastwards. After several more vicissitudes he surprised Kirmān in 1794 and held it for four months before the Qājārs were admitted by treachery.

The Qājār eunuch behaved with studied barbarity in the fallen town: all adult males were killed or blinded, and some 20,000 women and children given as slaves to the troops. Luṭf 'Alī himself fled to Bam, where he was seized by the governor and handed over to the Qājārs. Āghā Muḥammad had his last Zand enemy blinded and cruelly tortured before taking him back to Tehran for execution. Luṭf 'Alī's courage and resilience had imparted a certain nobility to the death throes of the Zand dynasty; but the urban governors and headmen, the tribal chiefs and regional warlords, justifiably disillusioned with the Zands and not yet familiar with the Qājārs, had elected to turn a new page in the history of Iran.

<sup>33</sup> His career is sympathetically chronicled by Malcolm, II, pp. 171-201.

#### GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY UNDER THE ZANDS

The geographical extent of the Zand empire at its zenith, from 1765 to 1779, was in practice about half that of the Safavids. Sīstān and Baluchistān, never strongly held and regarded by Nādir mainly as a source of manpower, had remained aloof from the wrangling in western Iran on Nādir's assassination and under Naṣir Khān Baluch were partly absorbed into the Durrāni empire; thus Lār and Kirmān, exercising a tenuous jurisdiction over the coastal shajkhdoms of Makrān, constituted the eastern marches of Karīm Khān's Iran. The natural frontiers of the Lūt and Kavir deserts, and the turbulent Qājār province of Astarābād, separated the Zand state from the Afsharid kingdom of Khurāsān, which from 1755 was effectively a tributary of Ahmad Shāh. The only contact between Zands and Afsharids seems to have been two visits to Shirāz by Shāhrukh's son Naṣir-Allāh Mirzā, in 1767 and 1775, which were requests for aid to further personal and factional interests rather than embassies. The prince was politely received but went home empty-handed.<sup>34</sup> There is no record of contact between the Vakīl and Ahmad Shāh; it would seem that these two great contemporaries, having divided Nādir's empire so neatly between them, agreed tacitly to keep Khurāsān as a buffer between their separate interests and hostile peoples.

Gīlān was traditionally administered by its own governors even when incorporated by Muḥammad Hasan Khān into the Qājār realms, and this arrangement continued under the Zands. On leaving the north in 1763 Karīm re-appointed as beglerbegī at Rāsh, Hīdāyat-Allāh Khān, who controlled this keystone of the northern provinces until his death, engineered by Āghā Muḥammad Khān, in 1784. He maintained a brilliant court and a powerful army, but prudently kept up his annual tax remittance to Shirāz, supplemented by gifts and special orders of silks. His sister was married to Karīm Khān's eldest son, Abū'l-Faṭh. His revenue was augmented by trade with the Russians, who maintained a post at Anzālī (Enzeli).

Azarbāijān and the provinces south of the Caucasus, including the tributary Christian kingdom of Georgia, were conceptually an indispensable part of Safavid Iran. However, Safavid pretensions to rule Georgia, and even her southern Muslim neighbours of Shirvān, Qarābagh and Nakhchivān, had been shaken by Peter the Great's incursion of 1722 and, although the chroniclers

<sup>34</sup> Ghifārī, pp. 160-1; *Factory Records* xvii, 1085 (1 February 1775).



ignore it. Iran's hold on the regions north of the Aras was completely eroded over the next forty years. Āzarbāijān under its beglerbegī at Tabriz, Najaf Quli Khān Dunbulī, whose son was held hostage at Shirāz, was the only province of this region to owe direct allegiance and pay direct taxes to the Vakil during his fourteen years in Shirāz. The most powerful of the Transaraxian khans was Faḥr 'Alī Khān Qubba'ī (or Darbandī), who ruled over much of the region corresponding to Soviet Āzarbāijān from the 1760s until 1789; regarded by the Persian chroniclers as a vassal of the neo-Safavid Zand state, he was in fact autonomous, maintained friendly relations with his Georgian neighbour and, like him, sought Russian financial and military aid against threats from the Ottomans and rival Daghistānī khans.

Heraclius of Georgia, after his occupation of Eriwan in 1749 and defeat of his formerly Āzād in 1751-2, could afford largely to ignore the changing situation south of the Aras. After it became obvious that Mashhad was no longer the seat of government, and probably about the time of the Zand army's progress through Āzarbāijān (1762-63), Heraclius tendered his submission to the Vakil and received his diploma as Vāli of Gurjistān – the traditional Safavid office, by this time an empty honorific. From 1752, increasing appeals to Russia for subsidies and troops against Lezgī and Turkish attacks had brought Georgia more closely under Russian influence. With the Vakil's death and the belligerent Qājār expansion in the north it became no longer either necessary or indeed desirable to curry favour with Iran; following through a proposal he had made as early as 1771, Heraclius in 1783 formally placed Georgia under Russian protection. There was no direct Russian contact with the Vakil. In the spring of 1784 Catherine II sent an embassy to 'Alī Murād Khān in response to his *ex post facto* offer to cede the Transaraxian khanates in exchange for recognition and aid against the Qājārs; but 'Alī Murād died before this agreement could be ratified.<sup>35</sup>

A more important area where the Safavid conceptual heritage clashed with the exigencies of historical fact is that of the nature of the Zand ruler's authority. Such was the abstract prestige of the Safavid Shah, especially since Nādir's premature and unpopular usurpation of the throne, that the early contenders for power in the interregnum found it necessary to create and carry around with them the nonentity Ismā'īl III, as a talisman to canvass support and legitimize their power. Their respect for their protégé was non-existent, and Karīm was content once he settled at Shirāz in 1764 to immure the Shah in the fortress of

<sup>35</sup> Ferritès de Saueboeuf, *Mémoires Historiques, Politiques et Géographiques* II pp. 202-3; Burkov, II, pp. 148-9; III, pp. 179, 182.

Abāda with adequate pension and provisions and an annual Naurūz present from his supposed viceroy.

The title originally assumed by Karīm (though not attested in this form) was presumably *vakil al-daula*, "viceroys of the state", which in Safavid times implied supreme command of the Shah's army and politico-military dictatorship on his behalf. It had been conferred on Nādir by Tahmāsp II, was assumed by 'Alī Mardān Khān on his investiture of Ismā'īl, and in turn inherited by Karīm Khān. But soon after settling in Shirāz, the Zand leader is said to have changed the form of his title to *vakil al-rā'āyā*, "representative of the people". This title, which from Safavid times into the present century designated a local magistrate appointed by the crown to investigate cases of oppression or corruption, perhaps continues a centuries-old tradition of a provincial ombudsman in Iran.<sup>36</sup> Karīm insisted on this appellation for the rest of his reign, declining to assume the title of *shāh*, even when Ismā'īl III died almost unnoticed in 1187/1773. It became obvious that *vakil* was in effect a personal honorific while Karīm's position was equivalent to that of *shāh*. His successors of the Zand dynasty apparently did not adopt the title of *vakil*.

Karīm Khān owed his undiminished popularity in large measure to the fact that he thus respected the surviving Safavid prejudice and the distrust of the long-oppressed masses of any new despot who might emulate Nādir. At the same time he realized that the Safavid ghost was ready to be quietly laid by a government that could justify itself by humane and efficient policies rather than by appeal to a threadbare charisma, and allowed the outworn device of a regency to drop into oblivion.<sup>37</sup>

Nor did Karīm Khān seek the sanction of the 'ulamā for his novel position. Formerly the bulwarks of the Shah's authority as viceroy of God and the Imāms, their power had already been weakened by Nādir's quasi-Sunni religious policy and his resumption of much *vagf* property to pay for his army. During the interregnum, many of the 'ulamā emigrated to the shīnes of Iraq, so that those who remained or returned in Karīm's reign found their sanction unwanted by a tribal leader whose own religion was perfunctory at best. He upheld the Shī'a in a conventional way, having coin struck in the name of the hidden Imām, building mosques and shrines, and allotting stipends to religious functionaries in Shirāz. Šūfī dervishes also began to return to Iran in his reign, but their persecution at the hands of the 'ulamā – a recurrent phenomenon throughout

<sup>36</sup> See Perry, "Justice for the Underprivileged", esp. pp. 211-12.

<sup>37</sup> For further discussion of these points, see Perry, "The Last Safavids".

the greater Safavid period – was not encouraged until later Zand and early Qājār times, when the collapse of central government provoked a sometimes violent assertion of civic responsibility by provincial 'ulamā and their urban allies. Thus, of the Ni'mat-Allāhīs, Nūr 'Alī Shāh was mutilated at Mūrchakhūr in 'Alī Murād's time, Muštāq 'Alī Shāh was killed by a mob in Kirmān during Luṭf 'Alī Khān's rule and several more were condemned to death by the *mujtahid* Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī in Kirmānshāh up until the early years of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh Qājār.<sup>38</sup>

The Vakil kept central political control firmly in his own hands. Despite a considerable survival of Safavid court offices and protocol, none of the resident amīrs or civil officials rose to special prominence. His vazīrs functioned as clerks and companions of his leisure hours rather than colleagues in government; in this he followed Nādir's precedent and anticipated Āghā Muḥammad. Throughout this period, from Abū'l-Faḥ Khān's fate in the Iṣfāhān triumvirate to Hājī Ibrāhīm's relationship with first Luṭf 'Alī Khān and then Āghā Muḥammad, it is abundantly clear that the necessary alliance between the tribal ruler and his urban bureaucracy was never one of mutual trust.

The raw materials of Karīm's original coalition – the Luṭf, Lakī and Hamadān plains tribes of the Zand, Vand, Zangana, Kalhur and Qarāgūzū – remained closely connected with the Zand chief after his rise to power, providing more than half of his standing army of Fārs while serving also as wardens of the Zand homeland and the Kurdish and Luṭf marches. The Zangana in particular, who governed Kirmānshāh throughout this period, were well represented at court, and Haidar Khān was twice sent as ambassador to Baghdad. Control of more distant tribes was often largely nominal, the Vakil merely confirming a *de facto* chief. Transportation of an insubordinate tribe was applied only once, against the Bakhtiyārī in 1764. The urban centres of tribal territories, such as Qājār Astarābād and Sārī, or Musha'sha' Shūshar and Dizful, were administered by a local dignitary who was in theory a government-appointed beglerbegī, but in practice a tribal chieftain kept in line by means of hostages and shows of force. Tribal groups which, like the Zand themselves, had returned from exile, were welcomed and encouraged to settle in western Iran.

The years from 1722 to 1764 appeared to the townsmen and villagers of Iran a constant vicious circle of military occupation and extortion by a series of freebooters who used funds squeezed from one area to ravage another. Karīm Khān had to remedy some forty years of artificial famine and depopulation, to

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Browne, *Literary History of Persia* IV, p. 368; Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1722–1906*, pp. 32–3, 38.

which he himself had of necessity contributed during his struggle for power. His approach to this was typically pragmatic and straightforward: his promises were always kept, his threats never empty. He is never reported to have made the extravagant and hypocritical gesture characteristic of Nādir and his Afsharid successors in declaring a tax amnesty, except in the case of Kirmān on evidence of genuine hardship, nor was he remiss in claiming his dues. He insisted instead on closely vetting the tax returns of governors and their minions every year. Those too rapacious would be dismissed and fined. All government officials, the beglerbegī of a province or *hakim* of a major town and their subordinates in administration, were paid a fixed government salary which was reviewed periodically together with their appointments.<sup>39</sup>

The Vakil succeeded in repopulating his devastated kingdom primarily through his restoration of internal security and his reputation for justice, rather than by any overt propaganda. Shī'ī Muslims needed little encouragement to return from the insecurity of exile in Iraq, and the Vakil encouraged the growing influx by active invitations to Christians and Jews; the merchants and bankers of the community, to return and settle in thriving Shirāz. One such caravan from Baghdad in 1763 was said to have numbered about 10,000 returning refugees.<sup>40</sup> Under Karīm Khān Shirāz became the largest Jewish centre in Iran, and Armenians were encouraged to resettle round Shirāz and Iṣfāhān by the gift of complete villages.

The *Rustam al-kawārib* provides evidence of the Vakil's active interest in the problems of a depressed agriculture.<sup>41</sup> In the autumn of 1189/1775, a severe famine in Iṣfāhān and Fārs obliged Karīm to throw open the state granaries for the relief of the poor. In Iṣfāhān, the grain was sold to the populace at a fixed rate of 100 dinārs per *man-i Tabrizī* (equivalent to 6½ lb.); at Shirāz, the shortage was so acute that grain had to be brought from as far afield as Tehran, Qazvīn and even Āzarbāijān, so that on arrival the cost had soared to 1400 dinārs per *man*. Despite the urgings of his ministers to cover these expenses, the Vakil insisted on distributing this grain at the same nominal rate as at Iṣfāhān, and with the aid of this heavy subsidy the famine was eventually beaten.

Karīm Khān's contribution to the architecture of Shirāz (most of which is still standing despite four subsequent earthquakes and the destructive malice of Āghā Muḥammad Khān when he sacked the town in 1206/1792) is worth special mention, less for its artistic merit than as an example of planned urban renewal –

<sup>39</sup> E.g. *Farmanārs* Nos. xx, xxv in British Library MS Or. 4935; cf. Rustam al-Hukamā', *Rustam al-Tashrīh*, p. 307.

<sup>40</sup> *Cornellie Chronicle* I, pp. 662–63, 672. <sup>41</sup> Pp. 421–2.

the first since Shah 'Abbās's re-construction of Iṣfahān – inspired primarily by military and political considerations. Having undergone two sieges by the Qāzars, the Vakil's first concern was for the defences of the sprawling and poorly-walled city. Over the year 1180/1766–7, the perimeter of *ḡjarsābās* was cut to one *farsākh* (about six kilometres) by the demolition of older, outlying buildings and earthworks, and the amalgamation of several quarters; the number of gates was reduced from at least twelve to six, piercing a stout new wall with eighty round towers and a broad ditch. The huge labour force involved was paid from the royal treasury, as in the case of the Vakil's other buildings. These are the *arg* or citadel and the palace complex, the Vakil's bazaar (still functioning, although bisected by the main modern thoroughfare), the Vakil's mosque, and various baths and caravanserais. He also renovated various shrines and tombs, including those of Shāh Shujā', Hāfīz and Sa'dī. Nor did he neglect to perpetuate his city's just renown for beautiful gardens, laying out new complexes inside and outside Shirāz.<sup>42</sup>

The southward shift in the political centre of gravity emphasized the Gulf and Indian Ocean commerce, which in turn enriched the capital. In addition to encouraging trade with the European companies, the Vakil received two embassies from the powerful Ḥaidar 'Alī of the Deccan, about 1184/1769–70 and in 1774.<sup>43</sup> The Indians were promised trading facilities at Bandar 'Abbās, but the main purpose of these missions may have been to reconcile the Vakil and the Imām of Muscat, with whom Ḥaidar 'Alī was already on good terms, so as to make the Gulf safer for neutral shipping. At Shirāz the Indian merchants had their own caravanserai and, like all the wholesalers and retailers of the capital, benefited from the low rent charged for use of the Vakil's bazaar and caravanserai.<sup>44</sup>

Karīm's policy of attracting merchants and artisans, and encouraging the officers and men of his tribal army and their dependants to set up residence in and around Shirāz, considerably increased its population. Estimates by contemporary visitors put the figure at between 40,000 and 50,000 inhabitants, which compares very favourably with estimates for ruined Iṣfahān over the same period (between 20,000 and 50,000).<sup>45</sup> Order and security were well maintained both within the city and in its environs, as is confirmed by several contemporary travellers. Niebuhr was assured on his way to Būshahr by a party of Arab pilgrims that "nowhere in the world could one travel with such safety as in

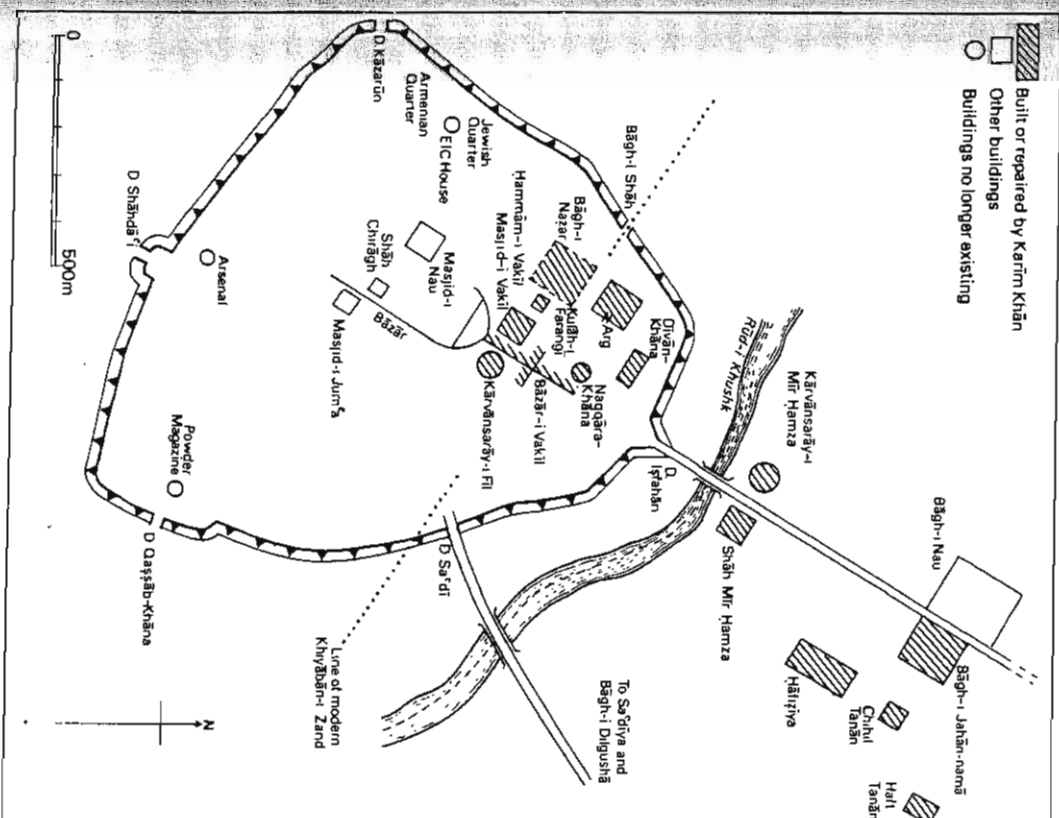


Fig. 1 Shirāz at the time of Karīm Khān Zand.

<sup>42</sup> See Nāmī, pp. 134–5; Ghifārī, pp. 155–6; Francklin, *Observations made on a tour from Bengal to Persia*, pp. 51–5.

<sup>43</sup> Ghifārī, p. 169; *Factory Records* xvii, 1069.

<sup>44</sup> Francklin, pp. 58–9.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. Kinnel, p. 64; *Letters Edificantes*, p. 314.

Persia".<sup>46</sup> The large standing army of Fārs, when not on campaign, was kept amused by a well-run brothel quarter, the staff of which were in turn heavily taxed, and thus played their part in the economic as well as the social scheme of the Zand metropolis.<sup>47</sup>

There are more stories told of Karīm Khān's kindness, simplicity, generosity and justice than about any other Iranian monarch. As the archetype of the good king with a genuine concern for his people he overshadows Khusrau Anūshīrvān the Just or Shāh 'Abbās the Great; where these and other rulers surpass him in military glory and international prestige, the Zand Khān quietly retains even today an unparalleled place in his countrymen's affections as a good man who became and remained a good monarch. He was not ashamed of his humble origin, and was never tempted to seek for himself a more illustrious pedigree than that of the chief of a hitherto obscure Zagros tribe who had once lived by brigandage. As a poor soldier in Nādir's army he once stole a gold-embossed saddle from outside a saddlery where it had been left for repair, but on learning that the saddler had been held responsible for its loss and was to be hanged, he was smitten by conscience and surreptitiously replaced the saddle.<sup>48</sup> As Vakīl, he retained his simple tastes in clothes and furniture, and bowed to the dictates of his station only to the extent of having a bath and a change of clothes once a month, an extravagance that is said to have shocked his fellow-tribesmen. His physical courage is frequently emphasized, and the history of his campaigns sufficiently illustrates that what he may cede to Nādir Shāh in military genius he more than recoups in tenacity of purpose and resilience in apparent defeat.

What above all made his reign a success was his closeness to his subjects, his identification of his own needs with theirs, and his consequent tolerance and magnanimity shown to all classes. The manifest genuineness of this attitude, its remoteness from any bulwark of assumed piety or disguised self-interest, ensure him a favourable mention by contemporary writers of every loyalty. He remained easy of access for all, setting apart a regular time each day for receiving complaints and petitions in the traditional manner. Traditional, too, was his indulgence in wine, opium and all-night debauches, though these seem seldom to have prejudiced his efficient and humane conduct of government.

Apart from a few arguably ill-considered ventures such as the wars against Oman and Ottoman Iraq, the Vakīl's military enterprises were of a defensive and conservative nature. His treasury remained empty by design, as incoming

revenue was ploughed back into the country in the form of buildings and amenities, wages and pensions, and internal security. Fixed tax assessments and price controls guaranteed the peasantry subsistence survival with a chance to improve their lot in good years, and must have mollified their well-founded distrust of tribal rulers. Karīm made it a personal rule not to appropriate windfalls: just as in his years of struggle he distributed booty among his troops and new allies, so in the period of consolidation he refused to confiscate the residue of those deceased without immediate heir, and when during the rebuilding of Shīrāz a pot of gold coins was unearthed he shared it out amongst the workmen on the site.<sup>49</sup>

During his fourteen years of rule from Shīrāz, Karīm Khān succeeded in restoring a surprising degree of material prosperity and peace to a land ravaged and disoriented by his predecessors. Obviously his virtues are greatly enhanced by their juxtaposition with the savagery and tyranny of Nādir Shāh and Āghā Muḥammad Khān, and undeniably the state he created was disgraced and destroyed by his unworthy successors; but his rare combination of strength and purpose with common sense and humanity produced, for a brief period in a particularly bloody and chaotic century, a stable and honest government.

<sup>46</sup> See Ruzsam al-Hukamā, pp. 319, 420, 421.

<sup>46</sup> *Reihsberühungen* II, p. 178. Cf. also Francklin, p. 130; Scott Waiving, p. 302.

<sup>47</sup> Ruzsam al-Hukamā, p. 346ff; Dunburt, II, p. 47ff.

<sup>48</sup> For this and similar stories see Malcolm, II, p. 148ff.

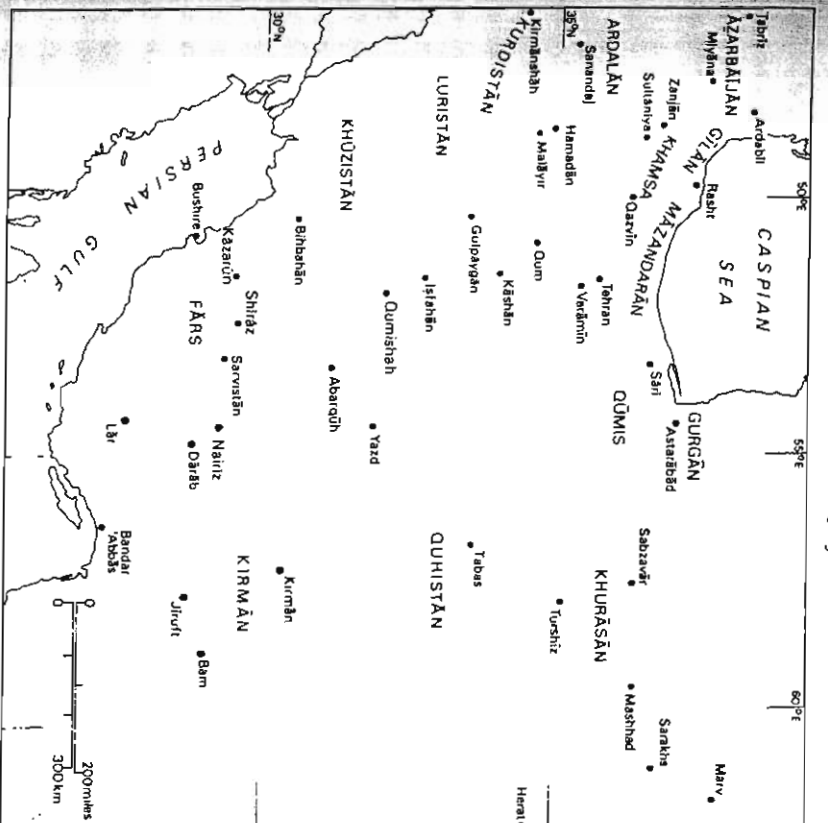
## ĀGHĀ MUḤAMMAD KHĀN AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE QĀJĀR DYNASTY

### THE EMERGENCE OF THE QĀJĀRS

The preceding chapter described the unsuccessful attempt by a small tribal confederation in south-west Iran, led by the Zands, to establish control over the other tribal groupings on the Iranian plateau. Its failure was due to the limited number of fighting men whom the Zands and their confederates could muster for sustained campaigning; the family rivalries and divisions of the ruling house after Karīm Khān Zand's death in 1793/1779; the superior military resources of the Qājārs; and not least, the single-minded ambition of their ultimate nemesis, Āghā MuḤammad Khān Qājār. In this chapter, his career will be placed within the context of the rise of the Qājārs, one of the original components of the Safavids' Qizilbāsh confederacy. For Āghā MuḤammad Khān's bid for overall kingship, the disturbed condition of late 18th-century Iran proved particularly favourable.

As for the Qājārs' early history, there is a late tradition that they were part of the Turkish Oghuz confederacy, and first entered Iran with other Oghuz tribes in the 11th century. However, neither of the surviving lists of Oghuz tribes, those of Maḥmūd Kashgharī and Rashīd al-Dīn, include them, although both mention the Afshārs. Conceivably, they were an element in a larger tribe (the Bayāts have been suggested as the most likely), from which they later broke away. The same late tradition claims an eponymous ancestor for the tribe in Qājār Noyan, the son of a Mongol, Sartuq Noyan, who was supposed to be *Aizbeg* to the Il-Khān Arghūn. Qājār Noyan was also alleged to be an ancestor of Timūr.

If credibility is accorded to such references, early Qājār history might hypothetically be reconstructed as follows: with the break-up of the Il-Khanate, following the death of Abū Sa'īd in 736/1335, the Qājārs, already an independent tribe, moved westwards in the direction of Syria or Anatolia, perhaps into the country around Diyarbakr or Erzurum. Later, during the 15th century, possibly during the reign of the Āq Qūyūnlū ruler, Uzun Ḥasan (857–82/1453–78), or that of Ya'qūb (883–96/1478–90), the Qājārs established themselves in



Map 2. Iran during the lifetime of Āghā MuḤammad Khān Qājār

Āzarbāijān and, from that time, became associated with the area of Erivan, Ganja and Qarābāgh. Presumably, it was also during the Āq Qūyūnlū ascendancy that the Qājārs, like other Oghuz tribes in Āzarbāijān and eastern Anatolia, fell under the influence of Ithnā-'Asharī ('Twelver') Shi'ism, and became *mirādī* (disciples) of the Shaikhs of Ardebīl. All this, it should be emphasized, is hypothesis.<sup>1</sup>

With the rise of the Safavids, the Qājārs begin to assume historical visibility. A contingent of them was among the 7,000 tribesmen who accompanied the

<sup>1</sup> See Sümer, "Bayat", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., I, p. 1117; Sümer, "Kādjar", *idem*, IV, p. 387; Lambton, "Kādjar", *idem*, IV, p. 387ff. Also Reid, *Tribalism*, and Sümer, *Oğuzlar*. Indications of the opprobrium attached to the Qājār name during the 19th century was the rumour that linked their origins with Damascus and their ancestors with the army of the executed Yazid. Morier, "Account", *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* VII, p. 231.



future Shāh Ismā'īl on his triumphant march from Arzinjān to Shīrvān in 906/1500-1,<sup>2</sup> and thereafter, they were a conspicuous element of the Qizilbāsh confederacy. For the remainder of the 16th century, there were few major events in which one or more Qājār amīrs did not play a part, although, in terms of numbers, the Qājārs were among the less prominent Qizilbāsh tribes.

Probably during the Safavid period, the well-established division between the two rival branches of the Yūkhārī-bāsh and the Ashāqa-bāsh Qājārs emerged, each further sub-divided into the clans of the Qūyūnlū, Develū, Izzal-Dīnlū, Ziyādīlū, etc. The Qūyūnlū clan of the Ashāqa-bāsh branch provided the ruling dynasty of Iran from the late 18th to the early 20th century, while their erstwhile rivals, the Develū clan of the Yūkhārī-bāsh branch, provided many of the functionaries and military commanders of the kingdom.

Tradition has it that, partly because he mistrusted their growing power, and partly to strengthen his north-eastern frontier against the Uzbeks and Türkmens, Shāh 'Abbās I divided the Qājār tribe, by relocating a large number of them in northern Khurāsān and Gurgān with other Qizilbāsh and Kurdish tribes. The majority were apparently settled in or around Astarābād, although Āq Qaī'a on the river Gurgān was originally their principal habitat.<sup>3</sup> In Gurgān they shared the province with the indigenous Iranian and long-settled Arab population, as well as with other tribal groups, principally Jalāyirids and Bayāts. In Khurāsān they were to be found in Sabzavāī and Turshīz, in Chahcha and Mekhne between Kalāt and Sarakhs, and most importantly, in Marv, where they shared the oasis with a mixed Iranian, Arab and Tatar population, and constituted the front line of defence against the Uzbeks.

From the time of this division, the Qājārs in the Erivan, Ganja and Qarābāgh region gradually disappeared, absorbed by new tribal groups. Those in Marv survived the arrival into the area of the Yamūt Türkmens, and also the repeated interventions of Nādir Shāh into the affairs of the oasis, but finally succumbed about 1200/1785 to the raids of Shāh Murād, the Mangit Khān of Bukhārā. Thus only the Qājārs of Gurgān proved strong and numerous enough to retain their identity during the upheavals following the break-up of the Safavid kingdom and the tumultuous years of Nādir Shāh's rule. They no doubt benefited from their isolated location, enjoying limited protection from the north-east by the Qara-Qum desert, and from the south-west by the swamps and forests of

Māzandarān and the sweep of the Alburz range. Yet their location was not so remote that they could not easily strike in the direction of Tehran via Sāri and Firuzkūh, into Rasht along the coast, into Qūmis (the Simnān-Damghan-Shāhrūd area) via Ribā'i-Safīd and Bisfām, or into Khurāsān by way of Khabūshān (Qūchān), while the wastes of the Qara-Qum never prevented regular contact with the region of the lower Āmū-Daryā (Oxus), and provided a refuge in times of crisis. The Qājārs maintained a relationship with the Yamūt, Göklen, and other Türkmen tribes of the Qara-Qum, in which trade, occasional raiding and outright hostilities, marriage and military alliances all played a part.<sup>4</sup> As 'lords of the marches' in the zone between Türkmen nomadic pastoralism and Iranian sedentary agriculture, the Qājārs maintained an uneasy balance between the traditions of the Iranian plateau and those of the steppes.

Fath 'Alī Khān, the founder of the fortunes of the Ashāqa-bāsh Qājārs of Astarābād in the 18th century, was the son of a certain Shāh Qulī Khān of the Qūyūnlū Qājārs of Ganja. He had made his way to Gurgān and married into the Qūyūnlū Qājārs of Astarābād. The date of Fath 'Alī Khān's birth is given variously, ranging from 1097/1685-6 to 1104/1692-3. Before the Ghilzai invasion of Iran, he was reputed to be a military commander of some consequence, and had once served as *hākim* of Mashhad. In 1133-4/1720 he had been ordered to assist an incompetent royal commander in the pacification of Khurāsān, but was worsted in battle by Malik Maḥmūd Sīstānī and withdrew to his base in Astarābād. The Afghan siege of Iṣfāhān in 1134-35/1721-2 may have brought him out of his retreat,<sup>5</sup> but Tahmāsp's subsequent flight from the capital offered Fath 'Alī Khān Qājār an opening to prove his loyalty to the Safavids. Tahmāsp reached the vicinity of Tehran. According to Father Krusinski, the Safavid forces, on turning back towards Qum to face the pursuing Afghans, included some Qājār tribesmen, described as "hardy and trusty Fellows, of approved fidelity".<sup>6</sup> Tahmāsp, short of men and at that time lacking potential allies, needed the 9,000 fighting men whom, according to Krusinski, the Qājārs of Astarābād could muster. Fath 'Alī Khān was rewarded with the appointment of

<sup>4</sup> Marriage alliances between the Qājārs and Türkmens of the Qara-Qum were by no means uncommon, as in the case of Bahrām 'Alī Khān of Marv, whose mother was a Sator and whose father was a Qājār. See Bukhārī, *History*, p. 58. The vendettas and alliances between the Qājārs and the Türkmens were a permanent feature of this period.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 14 *supra* and Krusinski, *History* II, p. 79. Lockhart rejects the tradition preserved in the Qājār chronicles, of how Fath 'Alī Khān and his followers had previously made their way to Iṣfāhān during the course of the Ghilzai siege and offered their services to Shāh Sulṭān Husayn; here allegedly, the Qājār chieftain became an object of jealousy at the Safavid court, and eventually withdrew in disgust. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafawi Dynasty*, p. 280. Cf. Lambson, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Krusinski, *op. cit.* II, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Hassan-i Rūmlū, *Chronicle*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Rīzā Qulī Khān, *Relation*, p. 29; Fraser, *Narrative*, p. 620; Rabino, *Mazandarān*, p. 86. According to Rīzā Qulī Khān, Āq Qaī'a (Mubārakābād) was divided into two quarters to keep the Yūkhārī-bāsh and Ashāqa-bāsh apart; *op. cit.*, p. 38.

*ʿIsmāʿil al-Dawla* to Tahmāsp, of whose entourage he thus became the leading member. By joining the Safavid fugitive, he acquired a position which could be exploited at the appropriate time. Moreover, Tahmāsp's fortunes appeared to be improving. Russian interest in the Caspian provinces had receded after Peter the Great's death in 1725. Ashraf the Afghan was embroiled with the Ottomans and was cut off from the Ghilzai base at Qandahar. The Abdālīs in Herat were preoccupied with their own quarrels. The nearest and least formidable enemy was Malik Mahmūd Sīstānī, striving to be master of Khurāsān. To campaign against Malik Mahmūd, Tahmāsp accompanied Fath ʿAlī Khān to Astarābād to collect more troops. The Qājār chieftain became a mainstay to Tahmāsp and was appointed his *Vakil al-Dawla*, while other Qājār chieftains were granted lesser titles (Dhu'l-Qa'da 1138/July 1726).

The grant of the title and office of *Vakil al-Dawla* confirmed that Fath ʿAlī Khān was the real power in Tahmāsp's camp and set a precedent followed on several later occasions: Nādir Khān Afshār adopted the same title in 1144-45/1732, when he replaced Tahmāsp with the eight-month-old ʿAbbās III; ʿAlī Mardān Khān Bakhtiyār assumed it in 1163-4/1750 on behalf of Ismāʿīl III; and Karīm Khān Zand likewise, on behalf of the same figure-head a year later.

The Safavid Shah and his Qājār supporters set off to capture Mashhad from Malik Mahmūd Sīstānī, but at Khabūshān Tahmāsp Qulī Khān (later Nādir Shāh) joined them with a small force of Afshārs and Kurds. By the time the army resumed its march towards Mashhad, this newcomer had completely ingratiated himself with Tahmāsp. When they came within sight of the city, the rivalry between Fath ʿAlī Khān and Tahmāsp Qulī Khān was approaching its climax. The circumstances of Fath ʿAlī Khān's fall remain obscure; he was murdered on 14 Safar 1139/11 October 1726. It is possible that MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān Develū of the Yūkhārī-bāsh Qājārs of Astarābād was implicated in these events; from this time onwards he became the most prominent figure in the Gurgān region.

#### THE CAREER OF MUḤAMMAD ḤASAN KHĀN QĀJĀR

Fath ʿAlī Khān's death left his troops in the Safavid service. They continued to serve Shah Tahmāsp, and after his overthrow, Nādir Shāh. Leadership of the Qājārs now shifted from the Qūyūnlū clan of the Ashāqa-bāsh branch, to the Develū clan of the Yūkhārī-bāsh. The late Fath ʿAlī Khān had apparently failed to consolidate his leadership over all the Astarābād Qājārs. MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān Develū, who had joined Tahmāsp Qulī Khān (later Nādir Shāh), pros-

#### THE CAREER OF MUḤAMMAD ḤASAN KHĀN QĀJĀR

pered in his service and was rewarded with the rank of *beglerbegī* of Astarābād. Subsequently, however, Nādir Shāh ceased to trust MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān and on one occasion ordered him to dismantle a fort which he had erected in Astarābād. MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān transferred his loyalty to Nādir's son, Rizā Qulī, and during Nādir's absence in India, when rumours of his death reached Iran, MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān persuaded Rizā Qulī to murder the captive Tahmāsp and his two sons, ʿAbbās and Ismāʿīl, in prison in Sabzavār. The Qājār chieftain himself carried out the deed, with conspicuous brutality, probably in the latter part of Dhu'l-Qa'da 1152/February 1740. Following the attempt on Nādir Shah's life in Safar-Rabīʿ I 1154/May 1741, interrogation of the attacker implicated MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān, as well as Rizā Qulī. However, the former survived, perhaps because he combined the office of *beglerbegī* of Astarābād with that of leader of the Qājār contingent in Nādir's army. MuḤammad Zamān Khān, his son, acted as his deputy in Astarābād when he was absent with Nādir's forces. He lived to be a leader in the conspiracy which resulted in Nādir Shāh's assassination (1160/1747).

Meanwhile, Fath ʿAlī Khān's surviving son, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān, had become a rival to MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān. He later proved himself a courageous and resourceful leader, but in his youth lacked sufficient manpower to challenge the prevailing Develū hegemony in Astarābād. Thus he spent his early years as a fugitive, protected by the Yamūt Tūrkmen, who pursued a policy of *'aide et impera'* towards their Qājār neighbours. It is certain that, at the time of the birth of MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān's eldest son, MuḤammad (7 Muḥarram 1155/14 March 1742), he himself was in hiding in the Qara-Qum desert and the child's mother, also of the Qūyūnlū clan, was concealed in the house of Āghā Sayyid Muḥīd in Astarābād, where the future Shah was brought up as the son of the *ayyid*.

Some two years after this, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān launched an attack on Astarābād, presumably directed as much against his Develū rival as against Nādir Shāh. A further inducement was the presence of part of the royal treasure in Astarābād. There is no reason to suppose that the attack was not long planned, since MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān had contacted the Safavid pretender, Sām Mirzā. According to the English merchant, Jonas Hanway, the attack occurred on the 30 Dhu'l-Qa'da 1156/15 January 1744, only a few days after MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān had been in the city, presumably for reconnaissance purposes and to enlist supporters among the entourage of the ḥākīm, MuḤammad Zamān Khān, son of the *beglerbegī*, MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān, then absent from the province.

Aided by 2,000 Qājār and other tribal supporters, and 1,000 Yamūt auxiliaries, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān made an easy conquest. MuḤammad Zamān Khān fled, and Astarābād passed without a fight into MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān's possession. Thereafter, however, disaster struck. The Safavid pretender had been captured even before the uprising took place; approaches to the beglerbegi of neighbouring Māzandarān, made on the strength of earlier exchanges, were now rejected; and having acquired a share of the plunder of Astarābād, the Yamūt chieftains lost interest in the enterprise, although not before a quarrel had broken out over division of the spoils.

Meanwhile, Nādir Shāh had ordered Bihbūd Khān, *sardār* of the Atak, to take the field: he marched on Astarābād and defeated MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān several stages to the east of the city. MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān fled into the Qara-Qum. Bihbūd Khān entered Astarābād where, joined by MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān Develū, he loosed a reign of terror on the Ashāqa-bāsh Qājārs and their alleged supporters. Hanway records seeing two pyramids of skulls, one consisting of Bihbūd Khān's victims, and the other of MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān's, near the entrance to the city. If MuḤammad and his mother were still in concealment in Āghā Sayyid MuḤfid's house, they were lucky that their presence was not discovered.

MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān accompanied his Yamūt allies, recently driven out of Khwārazm into Mangishlaq, in an attack upon the ruler of Khiva, Abu'l-Ghāzi Khān, who was, as his father, Jībārs Khān, had been, a client of Nādir Shāh. In addition, Khiva was threatened by an uprising of the Salor Türkmens. Abu'l-Ghāzi Khān appealed to Nādir Shāh for aid. Nādir Shāh ordered his nephew, 'Alī Qulī Khān (the future 'Ādil Shāh), ḥākim of Mashhad, and Bihbūd Khān, *sardār* of the Atak, to assist the Khān of Khiva, and once again MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān found himself fighting along side the Yamūt against his late father's Afsharid foes. The feud between the Qūyūnlū Qājārs and the Afsharids, as well as with the Develū Qājārs and, later, the Zands, helps to explain the conduct of Āghā MuḤammad Khān at a later period. In one encounter, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān fought Bihbūd Khān single-handed and wounded him, but he and his Türkmen allies were finally defeated and forced to flee into the Qara-Qum desert, where Nādir Shāh's troops sought them in vain.

Following Nādir Shāh's assassination in 1160/1747, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān again tried to seize Astarābād. He was again assisted by the Yamūt, led by their chieftain, Bekeri Khān, and later by the Göklen. This revolt was suppressed by Nādir Shāh's nephew, 'Alī Qulī Khān, now reigning as 'Ādil Shāh, who, having learnt of the existence of MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān's son, MuḤammad, then about six years old and still living in Astarābād, ordered him

to be brought to Mashhad. He apparently intended to kill the boy, but was prevailed upon to spare his life and castrate him instead; hence, the later sobriquet of *Āghā* (eunuch). Soon after 'Ādil Shāh's death (1161/1748), Āghā MuḤammad was restored to his family and, for the next ten years, shared his father's adventurous life. During this period MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān made a determined effort to become ruler of all Iran.

This ambition was not unrealistic for a tribal chieftain who had already established a reputation for determination and courage. The descendants of Nādir Shāh were weakened by mutual rivalries. In the east, the Abdālī Afghans of Ahmad Shāh Durrānī (1160—87/1747—73) were nominally in possession of Khurāsān, but looked towards the Indus as a natural area for expansion. In the west, the situation was in flux. Iṣfahān was dominated by 'Alī Mardān Khān and his Bakhuyārīs. In Fārs and Luristān, Karīm Khān Zand had a formidable tribal following. In Āzarbāijān, the Afghan adventurer, Āzād Khān, seemed secure and able to expand his territory. MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān consolidated his grip upon Gurgān and Māzandarān, extended his suzerainty into Gīlān, and then, in 1164/1751, struck out to relieve 'Alī Mardān Khān's forces in Kirmānshāh, which were besieged by Karīm Khān Zand. News of 'Alī Mardān Khān's defeat led MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān to withdraw rapidly towards Astarābād, pursued by Karīm Khān Zand, who besieged the city (1165/1751—2). Eventually, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān, assisted by his Yamūt allies, led Karīm Khān's forces into an ambush; the Zands withdrew to Tehran, leaving the Safavid puppet, Ismā'īl III, a pawn in MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān's hands. MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān then set about the recovery of Māzandarān and Gīlān, where the local rulers had abandoned his cause as soon as his fortunes appeared to be ebbing.

In Gīlān, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān showed his determination to bring order to the region. He found the province particularly torn by a feud between the rulers of Shaft and Fūmin, the former supported by another local ruler, Mirzā Zakī of Gaskar. Since the Shaft-Gaskar faction was in the ascendant, he supported the Fūmin faction in the person of the young Hidāyar-Allāh Khān, whom he appointed governor, although with his own representative to assist him. After the death of MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān in 1172/1759, Hidāyar-Allāh Khān renounced his Qājār allegiance and submitted to Karīm Khān Zand, who confirmed his appointment, but left him to his own devices. He maintained a refined court in Rāsh, financed by the silk industry and the sea trade between Fanzlī and Astrakhan. However, he was treacherous and bloodthirsty, even by the standards of the age, and his eventual overthrow by MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān's son and political heir, Āghā MuḤammad Khān, passed unremarked.

In 1168/1755, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān added to his growing reputation by

*defeating an Abdālī army near Sabzevār. Then in 1169/1756, he advanced towards Isfahān, defeated the troops of Karīm Khān Zand at Gulnābād, and occupied the former Safavid capital, where he had gold coins struck in his name. He then advanced to Shirāz, only to turn back at the news that Āzād Khān was advancing from Āzarbāijān. A complicated series of manoeuvres followed, in which MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān eventually made a triumphant progress through Gilān, Talīsh and across Āzarbāijān to Āzād's stronghold of Urmīya, while Āzād fled into Ottoman territory. This year of 1170/1756-7 was the peak of his career, commemorated by gold coins struck as far apart as Tabrīz, where he left Āghā MuḤammad Khān as his deputy, and Yazd. By Rabī'ī-Rabī'II 1171/December 1757, he was again in Isfahān, whence he set out for Shirāz finally to defeat his Zand rival. But now his luck turned. The countryside around Shirāz had been laid waste, so that his army lacked forage, while Karīm Khān, safe behind the walls of Shirāz, refused to give battle. Eventually, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān was compelled to retreat (Shawwāl 1171/July 1758), with Karīm Khān's most skilful general, Shaikh 'Alī Khān, in pursuit. As he entered Māzandarān to seek refuge in Astarābād, he was hampered by treachery among his own followers, especially MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān Develū, and was forced to give battle in the least favourable circumstances. Always a courageous fighter, in the end he was struck down by a life-long foe, MuḤammad Khān of Savādkūh, as he tried to effect his escape (15 Jumādā 1172/12 February 1759).*

Karīm Khān Zand subsequently entered Astarābād and seized the treasure there. He realized that he could not control this distant province without strong local backing and appointed the experienced MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān Develū as beglerbegī. In thus elevating the Develū Qājārs, he assured the decline of their Qūyūnlū kin, but he left nothing to chance. MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān's eldest son, Āghā MuḤammad Khān, had escaped after his father's death, but was eventually captured and taken to captivity in Shirāz, where he was later joined by his full-brother, Ḥusain Qulī Khān, and where his paternal aunt, Khadija Begum, already a member of Karīm Khān's harem, proved an invaluable support. Two other sons, Murtazā Qulī Khān and Muḥafāz Qulī Khān, were allowed to remain in Astarābād, because their mother was the sister of Karīm Khān's appointee as beglerbegī. MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān's remaining sons, Rīzā Qulī, Ja'far Qulī, Mahdī Qulī and 'Alī Qulī ('Abbās Qulī died about this time), were sent to Qazvīn, where they were confined to a family property, although Ja'far Qulī and 'Alī Qulī were later permitted to join Āghā MuḤammad Khān in Shirāz. Karīm Khān's treatment of his defeated rival's family was unusually humane for the period.

Āghā MuḤammad Khān remained almost twenty years a hostage in Shirāz. Karīm Khān accorded him consideration and even sought his advice, acknowledging his skill in political matters. It was nonetheless a long and bitter exile, but it allowed Āghā MuḤammad to acquire an intimate knowledge of his hosts, and perhaps to foresee the divisions amongst the Zands which followed Karīm Khān's death. Moreover, he had, in Khadija Begum, a confidante in Karīm Khān's harem, to keep him informed about court intrigue, and later help him to escape as soon as Karīm Khān died.

Karīm Khān sent Āghā MuḤammad Khān's brother, Ḥusain Qulī Khān, north again as ḥākīm of Dāmghān (Shawwāl 1182/February 1769). It later proved disastrous for the maintenance of Zand control in Qūmis. With Āghā MuḤammad Khān a eunuch, Ḥusain Qulī Khān was next in line for leadership of the Qūyūnlū Qājārs; thus he was bound to act as a counterweight to the Develū Qājārs in the vicinity of the tribal homeland. Once established in Dāmghān, however, Ḥusain Qulī Khān, seeking vengeance against his late father's Develū and other foes, behaved with such ferocity that Karīm Khān was forced to intervene. He was finally murdered near Findarīsk, east of Astarābād, by some Yamūt Türkmens with whom he was feuding (c. 1191/1777). By then, his wife, an 'Izz al-Dīnlū Qājār, had given birth to Faṭḥ 'Alī (the future Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh), as well as another son, also named Ḥusain Qulī.

On 13 Šafar 1193/1 March 1779, Karīm Khān died and Āghā MuḤammad Khān escaped from Shirāz to Māzandarān. These two events mark the end of an epoch. During the half century of turbulent history which separated the elevation of Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān as *Vakil al-Dawla* of Tahmāsp II in 1138-39/1726, from Āghā MuḤammad Khān's return to his homeland, the history of the Qājārs had been one of struggle. This was partly the result of their own intestine rivalries and partly the result of the recognition, first by the Afsharids and then by the Zands, that the Qājārs posed a serious threat to their own ambitions. Yet for a brief period between 1164-5/1751 and 1172-3/1759, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān had nearly acquired control over wide areas of northern, western and central Iran, and seems to have behaved as more than a mere tribal khan. He apparently obtained part of Nādir's treasure after 1159-60/1747, which must have enabled him to rule in some opulence. At Ashraf, where he held court, he repaired the Safavid palace and engaged in various public works: a bridge over the Bābul, for example, and a mosque at Bārānūsh. He also struck coins, evidence of a claim to sovereignty. Hence, when Āghā MuḤammad Khān began, in 1192-3/1779, the process whereby he eventually brought all Iran under his control, he was not so much aspiring to new goals as fulfilling those of his father.



*Unlike Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān, however, Āghā Muḥammad Khān solved the two problems which led to his father's downfall: the self-destructive rivalry of the leading Qājār clans, and the acquisition of a broad base of support from among the northern and north-western tribes which could offset the strength of the tribes of the south and south-west. The solution of these two problems enabled him to achieve the political consolidation which had eluded his immediate predecessors — Ghilzais, Afsharids, Zands, and his own father — since the fall of the Safavid kingdom.*

ĀGHĀ MUḤAMMAD KHĀN QĀJĀR: THE CONSOLIDATION OF POWER  
(1193–1204/1779–89)

Āghā Muḥammad Khān's career may be divided into four phases. First, his early years and confinement in Shīrāz, which ended in 1193/1779, when he was thirty-seven. Secondly, a period of about six years from 1193/1779 to 1199–1200/1785, during which he consolidated his power-base in the Alburz region and extended his control over much of northern and north-western Iran, in competition with 'Alī Murād Khān Zand. The third phase, between 1199–1200/1785 and 1208–9/1794, began with the wresting of 'Irāq-i 'Ajam (central Iran), from the Zands, and ended with the conquest of Fārs and Kirmān, and the death of Luṭf 'Alī Khān Zand. In the fourth phase, between 1208–9/1794 and 1211–12/1797, Āghā Muḥammad Khān, now master of the greater part of the Iranian plateau and of the territory formerly controlled by the Zands, ravaged the erstwhile Safavid province of Gurjīstān (Georgia) in response to the intransigence of its ruler, proclaimed himself Shah, and conquered Khorāsān. At the time of his death, he was planning campaigns against Herat, Bukhārā, or possibly Baghdad.

In 1192–3/1779, Āghā Muḥammad Khān had long been absent from his native province. After escaping from Shīrāz, he met the leading Develū khans in the Varāmīn district and healed the ancient family feud which had been a major cause of the Qājārs' misfortunes. He then visited the shrine of Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīm, where his father's skull was buried, and from there entered Māzandarān. He first had to establish his authority among his Qūyūnlū brothers and half-brothers. Two, in particular, Rīzā Qulī and Murtaẓā Qulī, challenged him, but in a battle fought on 15 Rabi' I 1193/12 April 1779, he routed them and took Māzandarān. Murtaẓā Qulī, however, withdrew to Astarābād, where he consolidated his position. Āghā Muḥammad Khān could not dislodge him and had to tread warily, since a conflicter with Murtaẓā Qulī, whose mother was a Develū, would threaten the fragile alliance he had achieved between the Qūyūnlū and

Develū clans. Also, a more immediate threat presented itself: a combined Zand-Afghan army sent by 'Alī Murād Khān Zand and commanded by Maḥmūd Khān, son of Āzād Khān Afghānī. Āghā Muḥammad's loyal brother, Jā'far Qulī, led the Qājārs against this force and repulsed it. Āghā Muḥammad's hold on Māzandarān was temporarily secure.

He now established himself at Bārfarūsh (Bābul), with Farḥ 'Alī and Husain Qulī, sons of his late brother, Husain Qulī, towards whom he was already displaying marked favour. Shortly after, his brother, Rīzā Qulī, resentful that he lacked an apanage, led a band of Lāhījānis against Bārfarūsh, seized the palace and captured Āghā Muḥammad Khān. When the news reached Astarābād, Murtaẓā Qulī raised a force of Qājārs and Tūrkmen, marched on Sarī and released Āghā Muḥammad Khān. Rīzā Qulī Khān and Āghā Muḥammad were reconciled, but the former, still dissatisfied, fled to the feuding Zands. At first, he sought help from 'Alī Murād Khān in 'Irāq-i 'Ajam, then from Sa'dīq Khān in Shīrāz, but neither realized his hopes, and he eventually died in Khorāsān. His former supporters joined Āghā Muḥammad Khān and were employed against Murtaẓā Qulī Khān, who now hoped to capture Māzandarān, but Āghā Muḥammad Khān's troops defeated him in a succession of engagements, and thereafter the two brothers reached an understanding: Murtaẓā Qulī Khān's position was confirmed as *de facto* ruler of Astarābād and he was granted the revenue of several districts in Māzandarān.

These Qājār squabbles, and the gradual emergence of Āghā Muḥammad Khān as sole ruler of Māzandarān, provoked 'Alī Murād Khān Zand into attempting to invade that province, but Āghā Muḥammad Khān advanced from Bārfarūsh with a force of Qājār cavalry and Māzandarānī *tujangchīs* (musketeers) to drive the invaders back towards Tehran. He then occupied all Qūmis and appointed governors in Simnān, Dāmghān, Shāhrūd and Bisjām. These actions south of the Alburz enhanced his prestige and provided plunder and assignments with which to reward his followers, especially his numerous siblings. Thus, 'Alī Qulī Khān, who had assisted him in the conquest of Qūmis, was given Simnān as a *wayrāghāl*, a land grant in lieu of salary or pension.<sup>7</sup> Āghā Muḥammad returned to Astarābād to renew the various agreements already made with Murtaẓā Qulī Khān and other members of his family.

In the same year, 1195/1781, Āghā Muḥammad Khān for the first time encountered the Russians. The Russian government, interested in opening a direct trade-route with India, had sent Count Voionovich to establish a "factory"

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 13, p. 489, for further discussion of this and related terms.



on the south-eastern shores of the Caspian. The Count appeared with a flotilla off the coast of Gurgān and applied for permission to establish a trading-post at Ashraf, then a favourite residence of Āghā Muḥammad Khān, rebuilt in 1193/1779 on his return from Shīrāz. Āghā Muḥammad Khān refused this request, but Voinovich proceeded to establish a temporary settlement at Qaraduvīn and on the off-shore Āshūrāda islands. Lacking a fleet, Āghā Muḥammad Khān could not prevent this, but was determined that the occupation should not become permanent. He persuaded the Russian commander and his officers to visit him in Astarābād, where they were seized and held hostage until Voinovich sent orders to his men on Āshūrāda to dismantle the buildings and leave.

This experience with the Russians may have prompted Āghā Muḥammad Khān's decision to invade Gīlān in 1196/1782 since its ruler, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān, seemed to welcome contacts with Russian traders, who frequented the bazaars of Enzeli and Rash. Āghā Muḥammad Khān regarded the Russian presence in Gīlān with suspicion and had other reasons for marching into Gīlān. It was a flourishing province. Its ruler drew substantial revenue from the silk industry and sea trade with Russia. Hidāyat-Allāh Khān's accumulation of treasure doubtless provoked Āghā Muḥammad Khān's greed. He also had a grievance against the khan. Originally appointed ruler of Gīlān by Muḥammad Hasan Khān Qājār, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān had betrayed the Qājār cause and become a client of the Zands.

The Qājār troops met with no resistance on entering Gīlān, while Hidāyat-Allāh Khān made a show of compliance by sending two emissaries, Mirzā Sādiq, his *munajjim-bāshī* (chief astrologer) and Āghā Sādiq of Lāhījān, to sue for favourable terms. But Hidāyat-Allāh Khān did not trust Āghā Muḥammad Khān and left Gīlān by sea for Shīrvān. The Qājār army plundered Rasht and Āghā Muḥammad secured ample treasure. His followers could be richly rewarded. Elated by victory, he sent his brother, Ja'far Qulī Khān, to conquer Khamsa, the region south of the Alburz extending westwards from Qazvīn to the borders of Āzarbāijān, with Zanjān as its administrative centre. Ja'far Qulī Khān defeated a Zand force in the vicinity of Ray or Karaj and occupied Qazvīn. He then proceeded to Zanjān, soon capturing that city. Āghā Muḥammad Khān joined him at Sulṭāniya, with the rest of the army from Gīlān. During the following years, however, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān re-established himself without difficulty as ruler of Gīlān, while the Qājārs were occupied elsewhere.

Between Khamsa to the west, and Qūmis to the east, lay the country around Tehran which had long served as a Zand outpost, threatening the Qājār homelands in Māzandarān and Gurgān. During 1197/1783, therefore, Āghā

Muḥammad Khān decided to eliminate this menace by besieging Tehran and evicting its garrison, but without success. Plague first swept the town, and then the besiegers' camp, so that he had to march his ailing troops off towards 'Alī Bulāgh (Chashma 'Alī), near Dāmghān.

In the following year, 1198/1784, Āghā Muḥammad Khān met the greatest challenge of his career so far. Five years had passed since his flight from Shīrāz, and in that time he had done much to end the feuds which had hitherto hindered Qājār ambitions. Not only had he asserted his authority among his kinsmen, but had gained control of both the northern and southern foothills of the Alburz, apart from the environs of Tehran. His threat to Zand control of the plateau could not be ignored. 'Alī Murād Khān Zand, in retaliation for the Qājārs' attack on Tehran the previous year, sent a large army to Māzandarān under the command of his son, Shaikh Vais Khān. The notables of Māzandarān hastened to submit, while Āghā Muḥammad Khān, abandoned by all but a handful of followers, retreated to Astarābād, where he strengthened the fortifications. Murṭazā Qulī Khān, fearing that his property in Māzandarān was being ravaged by the invaders, and probably considering Āghā Muḥammad Khān's position hopeless, joined the Zands. Apparently encouraged by this defection, 'Alī Murād Khān sent additional forces into Māzandarān to advance against Astarābād. The Zand troops, under the command of Muḥammad Zāhir Khān, a kinsman of 'Alī Murād Khān, laid siege to Astarābād, but neglected their lines of communication. In Astarābād, Āghā Muḥammad Khān had prepared plentiful supplies. Daily skirmishing below the walls devastated the surrounding countryside so that the Zands needed supplies from Māzandarān, but Āghā Muḥammad Khān sent out raiding parties to attack the inadequately guarded route along which the Zands' provisions had to come. When the besiegers' plight was desperate, Āghā Muḥammad Khān sallied out from behind his walls and dispersed them. Muḥammad Zāhir Khān fled towards the Qara-Qum, was captured by the Qājārs' Yamūt allies, and was handed over to Āghā Muḥammad Khān for execution. Few Zand soldiers found their way back to Māzandarān, and Āghā Muḥammad Khān's forces were soon in hot pursuit. Near Ashraf, he defeated the dispersed the principal Zand garrison in Māzandarān and pressed on to Sarī, the capital. By the beginning of 1199/November 1784, Māzandarān was free of the invaders. 'Alī Murād Khān raised fresh troops and sent them north under the command of his cousin, Rustam Khān Zand, but they were repulsed by a Qājār army commanded by Ja'far Qulī Khān. 'Alī Murād Khān died not long after, on 1 Rabī' II 1199/11 February 1785. As soon as Āghā Muḥammad Khān heard the news, he ordered his troops to advance on Tehran.

Outside Tehran, Āghā MuḤammad Khān prepared for a siege, but there then occurred an incident highly indicative of the prevailing attitude of the times. During the preceding fifteen years, Tehran, which was strongly walled, had changed hands on a number of occasions, but had remained a bastion of Zand hegemony in the north. At the approach of Āghā MuḤammad Khān's army, the Tehranis closed their gates and sent out a message to the effect that, since Ja'far Khān Zand was now ruler in Iṣfahān, they regarded him as their sovereign and were his obedient servants, adding, however, that they would obey whomsoever actually occupied the throne. Āghā MuḤammad Khān was thus to understand that were he to defeat Ja'far Khān, these people would acknowledge him as their sovereign. He immediately set off for Iṣfahān. Ja'far Khān Zand sent troops to intercept him, but they turned back at Qum without giving battle. A larger Zand force then advanced as far as Kāshān, only to be defeated at Nusratābād, north-west of the city. As soon as news of this disaster reached Ja'far Khān Zand, he fled to Shirāz. Āghā MuḤammad Khān entered Iṣfahān, where he found the remaining Zand treasure, and the khan's harem. The Qājār army plundered the city, still the largest and probably the richest in the country.

During the summer of 1199/1785, Āghā MuḤammad Khān made Iṣfahān his base while he dealt with 'Irāq-i 'Ajām, enforcing the submission of Ahmad Khān, another son of Āzād Khān Afghānī, who had been Zand commander at Nusratābād, and that of the Bakhtiyārī Khāns. In Iṣfahān, he appointed a beglerbegī who had held the same office under 'Alī Murād Khān Zand and who, at the latter's death, had proclaimed himself Shah until imprisoned by Ja'far Khān Zand. Āghā MuḤammad Khān released him and, judging him reliable, re-appointed him. Having made these arrangements, he left for Tehran; he had proved himself worthy of the Tehranis' obedience by deposing Ja'far Khān Zand and capturing the former capital of the kingdom. The Pazukī Kurdish chieftain, Mājnuūn Khān, was sent ahead to receive the city's submission, while the main army moved westwards to Hamadān, where a number of Kurdish and Turkish tribal chieftains submitted or renewed allegiance formerly given.

Āghā MuḤammad Khān entered Tehran, which was henceforth to be the Qājār capital, on 11 Jumādā I 1200/12 March 1786. From this time, he seems to have regarded himself as ruler of Iran, although he refrained from assuming the title of Shah.

Ja'far Khān Zand still ruled in Shirāz, and once he had ascertained that Āghā MuḤammad Khān was back in the north, he marched on Iṣfahān. An attempt to defend the city by the Qājār beglerbegī failed and following its capture, a Zand governor was appointed. Detachments were sent forward to occupy Kāshān and

Qum, while Ja'far Khān himself took the road to Hamadān. Here, however, an alliance of local tribal leaders, including Khusrau Khān, the Vālī of Ardābil and MuḤammad Husain Khān Qarāgūzlū, attacked and defeated him. Ja'far Khān Zand retired to Iṣfahān. By now, however, Āghā MuḤammad Khān had learnt of the loss of Iṣfahān, and was rapidly marching southwards. Ja'far Khān abandoned Iṣfahān a second time and fell back upon Shirāz. Āghā MuḤammad Khān reoccupied Iṣfahān without difficulty, appointed his brother, Ja'far Quṭī Khān, as beglerbegī, left him with a strong garrison, and then marched in the direction of Gulpāyghān to receive the formal submission of the Vālī of Ardābil, Khusrau Khān. The latter had followed his tribal alliance's rout of Ja'far Khān Zand by advancing as far as Malā'ir, and thence to Gulpāyghān. Here they halted and Khusrau Khān sent all the booty and prisoners taken in the recent battle near Hamadān to Āghā MuḤammad Khān, with a letter of submission. Āghā MuḤammad Khān acknowledged the Vālī's homage and sent him gifts and the grant of the districts of Sunqur and Kullīā'ī. The submission of so important a chieftain was a notable event. From this year, 1200/1786, the alliance, initiated long before in the lifetime of MuḤammad Hasan Khān Qājār, between the Qājār dynasty and the Vālīs of Ardābil, was reinforced by periodical dynastic marriages.

News of a revolt by the governor of Zanjān now forced Āghā MuḤammad Khān to turn north again. The rebellious governor was pardoned and Āghā MuḤammad Khān made a triumphal entry into Tehran, but Gilān was requiring his attention. Since the Qājārs' first invasion in 1196-7/1782, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān had returned to his province, apparently with Russian assistance. Āghā MuḤammad Khān considered the whole Caspian coast to be threatened by Hidāyat-Allāh Khān's dalliance with the Russians. He was not himself averse to allowing Russian merchants to trade in his territory. He did so at Mashhad-i Sar in Māzandarān, but their movements were strictly regulated and he was determined not to grant them privileged status or special concessions, as Hidāyat-Allāh Khān had done. He had not forgotten the Voinovich affair of 1195-6/1781. In any case, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān's return to Rāshṭ was an open challenge to Qājār hegemony in the north and in itself, sufficient cause for war. Fortunately for Āghā MuḤammad Khān, Hidāyat-Allāh had many enemies; he had for years participated in the feuds characteristic of the ruling families in Gilān.

The second invasion of Gilān in 1200/1786 proved as easy as the first. Such support as Hidāyat-Allāh Khān had previously enjoyed melted away. On the march to Rāshṭ, Āghā MuḤammad enlisted in his service Mahdī Beg Khal'farbārī, ruler of Tunakābun, a former appointee of Karīm Khān Zand along

with other defectors. The Russian consul in Gīlān, supposedly an ally of Hidāyar-Allāh Khān, betrayed him by supplying the Qājārs with arms. Recognizing the futility of further resistance, Hidāyar-Allāh Khān boarded a Russian ship at Enzeli, bound for Shirvān or Lankeārān, but was handed over to Āghā 'Alī of Shaft (or, according to a different source, another local ruler with whom he was feuding), who killed him to avenge the massacre of his family some years before. Gīlān was now absorbed into the Qājār kingdom. Āghā MuḤammad Khān did not regard the Russian settlements at Rasht or Enzeli as sacrosanct. The local Russian officials had shown themselves to be treacherous in their dealings with the late Hidāyar-Allāh Khān; no doubt Āghā MuḤammad Khān was shrewd enough to assess the value of their friendship, despite their protestations of good will. Apart from the actual annexation of the province, the most important gain was the great treasure found in the late ruler's palace. Enough is known of Āghā MuḤammad Khān's character for it to be evident that this would mean more to him than the friendship of unreliable Russian officials. In any event, an aspiring Iranian conqueror needed gold with which to bind men to his service and recruit fresh followers.

It is clear that 1199-1200/1785-6 was Āghā MuḤammad Khān's *annus mirabilis*. During that period, he had gained control of 'Irāq-i 'Ajam, Isfāhān, Tehran and Gīlān, had driven the Zand ruler, Ja'far Khān, back to Shirāz, and, in all but name, had become Shah. A period of relative inactivity followed these triumphs before Āghā MuḤammad Khān turned south again. Meanwhile, Ja'far Khān Zand moved into the Kūhgilūya country and occupied Bihbahān, while sending Zand troops to MuḤammara, later named Khurramshahr, to punish the Banū Ka'b for disloyalty. After celebrating Naurūz in 1201/1787 in Bihbahān, he returned in triumph to Shirāz, where he learnt that the governor of Yazd, Taqī Khān, had revolted. He gathered as large a force as possible and moved to Yazd, where Taqī Khān was strengthening the city's fortifications. Taqī Khān also applied to the ruler of Tabas, Amīr MuḤammad Khān, for assistance. The Zand army was soon encamped below the walls of Yazd, but, after several assaults had been repulsed, the unexpected arrival of the Khān of Tabas and his troops induced panic among the besiegers, whose army dispersed, leaving Amīr MuḤammad Khān to plunder the Zand camp at his leisure. He obtained a vast booty which included Ja'far Khān's tents, baggage and the entire siege-train. Amīr MuḤammad Khān with his followers and some of Taqī Khān's, the Zand artillery and the wealth obtained from Ja'far Khān's camp, now took the road to Isfāhān, recruiting additional cavalry from the districts of Kūh-pāya, Nā'in, and Ārdīstān en route. The governor of Isfāhān, Ja'far Qulī Khān,

probably expected an attack by Ja'far Khān Zand from the south; not one from the east by an obscure ruler in the Dash-e-Lūt. Nevertheless, he quickly marched out against Amīr MuḤammad Khān, scattered his troops and seized his train and artillery. At this juncture Āghā MuḤammad Khān decided to head southwards. He joined his brother in Isfāhān in 1202/1788, despatched his nephew, Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān to obtain the submission of Taqī Khān in Yazd, and set off himself to chastise the Qashqā'ī, who withdrew into the mountains to avoid a battle. However, the Qājār army pressed on to within sixty-five miles of Shirāz. Āghā MuḤammad Khān probably hoped to lure Ja'far Khān Zand from behind his formidable walls and bring him to battle. But Ja'far Khān would not be drawn, and Āghā MuḤammad Khān returned to Isfāhān where, having replaced Ja'far Qulī Khān with his youngest brother, 'Alī Qulī Khān, he was rejoined by Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān, who had defeated Taqī Khān of Yazd. Āghā MuḤammad Khān then set off for Tehran.

With Āghā MuḤammad Khān having gone north again, Ja'far Khān Zand began to prepare yet another expedition against Isfāhān. 'Alī Qulī Khān, learning of this, sent a force of Qarāgūzlū tribesman to hold Qummishah, but the advancing Zand army worsted them. 'Alī Qulī Khān thereupon withdrew to Kashān, leaving Isfāhān open to Ja'far Khān Zand. This was a serious setback for the Qājārs, and Āghā MuḤammad Khān advanced by forced marches from Tehran to Isfāhān, causing Ja'far Khān to flee back to Shirāz. Qājār rule was re-established in Isfāhān, but Āghā MuḤammad withdrew to Tehran again, as if not yet confident that he could succeed against Ja'far Khān on his own ground and in so hostile a countryside as Fārs. But on 25 Rabi' II 1203/23 January 1789, Ja'far Khān was assassinated. A four-month civil war followed in which various contenders among the Zand ruling family competed for the succession. This struggle ended with Luṭf 'Alī Khān's triumphant entry into Shirāz in Sha'ban-Ramādān 1203/May 1789. Āghā MuḤammad Khān seems to have considered that, Ja'far Khān having been replaced by the inexperienced Luṭf 'Alī Khān, the time had come to eliminate the Zands.

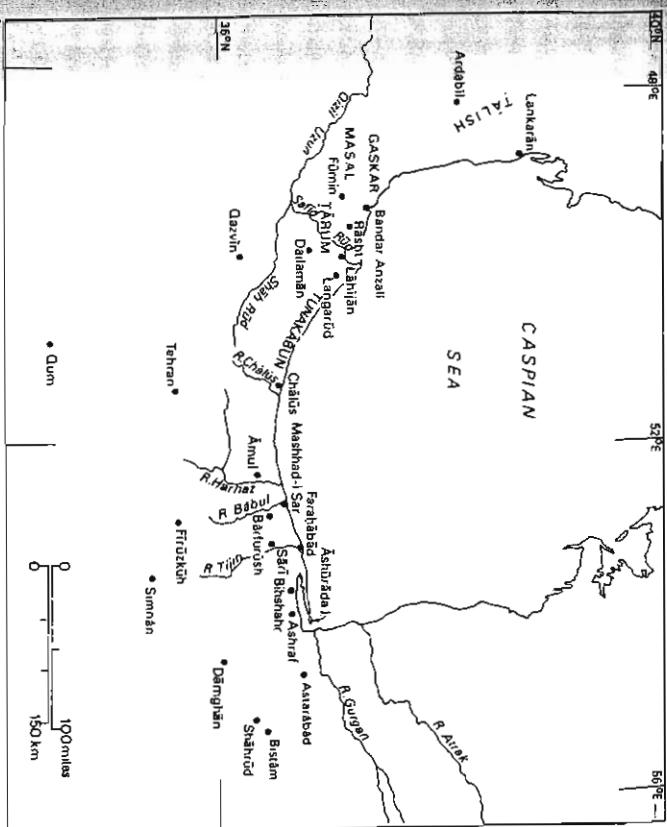
#### THE STRUGGLE WITH LUṬF 'ALĪ KHĀN ZAND

Āghā MuḤammad Khān now advanced on Shirāz. When he was about eight miles north-west of the city, Luṭf 'Alī Khān intercepted him. An inconclusive battle was fought on 12 Shawwāl 1203/25 June 1789. Luṭf 'Alī Khān withdrew into Shirāz, where Āghā MuḤammad Khān besieged him until 18 Dhū'l-Hijja/7 September. He then struck camp and returned to Tehran, where he remained

until the following Naurūz. On 3 Ramađān 1204/17 May 1790, he again set out for Shirāz. In western Fārs, the governor of Bihbahān submitted to him, but Luṭf 'Alī Khān responded by again leading his troops out of Shirāz. This time no confrontation occurred. Āghā Muhammad withdrew to the north-west to settle the affairs of Qazvin and Khamsa, while Luṭf 'Alī Khān unsuccessfully attacked Kirmān. An incident then occurred which may have determined Āghā Muhammad Khān's later attitudes to those around him. There was hitherto little in Āghā Muhammad Khān's career to suggest that he was more ferocious or brutal than his contemporaries. Hitherto, his staunchest supporter had been his brother, Ja'far Qulī Khān, who had apparently assumed that he would eventually succeed Āghā Muhammad Khān as head of the Qājār tribe, but who was becoming restless since he had not been formally designated heir. Moreover, Āghā Muhammad Khān obviously favoured his nephew, Faḥ 'Alī Khān, son of the late Ḥusain Qulī Khān. A quarrel arose between the brothers, and Āghā Muhammad Khān ordered Ja'far Qulī Khān's execution (1205/1790-1). Āghā Moḥammad Khān presumably considered his brother's death a necessity, since he was aware, from his familiarity with Zand family rivalries, how a dynasty could disintegrate through fratricidal conflict.

The news of Luṭf 'Alī Khān's failure at Kirmān allowed Āghā Muhammad to concentrate on the problems of Āzarbāijān. He appointed Faḥ 'Alī Khān beglerbegī of Trāq-i 'Ajam as far as the northern border of Fārs, and advanced into Āzarbāijān in the spring of 1206/1791. He halted at Tārum on the Saḥīd Rūd and sent his close relative and confidant, Sulaimān Khān Qūyūnlū, to subjugate Tālish. Meanwhile, he himself moved on to Sarāb, where the governor, Sādiq Khān, chief of the Shaqāqī Kurds, had shown hostility. From there he proceeded to Ardabil to visit the shrine, and then entered Qarājađagh, where he destroyed all opposition, and appointed the Dunbulī Kurdish chieftain, Ḥusain Qulī, governor of Khūy and Tabrīz.

While Āghā Muhammad Khān was pacifying the north-west, important events had occurred in the south. Luṭf 'Alī Khān Zand and his troops had marched north to attack Faḥ 'Alī Khān, who was encamped at Qumishah, and advanced on Isfahān. Taking advantage of Luṭf 'Alī Khān's departure, Ḥājji Ibrāhīm, the *kalantar* of Fārs, seized Shirāz, while his brother staged a mutiny among Luṭf 'Alī Khān's troops. Luṭf 'Alī Khān hurried back to Shirāz, only to find his gates closed to him, and his officers' families held hostage in the citadel. He thereupon withdrew into the mountains between Kāzarūn and the Persian Gulf, where he gathered sufficient forces to attempt the recapture of Shirāz. Ḥājji Ibrāhīm apparently staged this *coup* with no further end in view than to



Map 3. Cītan, Māzandarān and Guṛgān during the lifetime of Āghā Muhammad Khān Qājār

expel the Zands and establish control over Shirāz, but Luṭf 'Alī Khān's resilience necessitated a change of plan. Ḥājji Ibrāhīm sent an envoy to Āghā Muhammad Khān, then in Khamsa returning from Āzarbāijān, offering a gift of 3,000 mares, formerly Zand property, and requesting on behalf of the people of Fārs that he become their ruler. For Āghā Muhammad Khān, this was an unanticipated opportunity to bring about both the conquest of Fārs and the final destruction of the Zands. He promptly accepted the offer, appointed Ḥājji Ibrāhīm beglerbegī in Fārs, despatched an officer to Shirāz to seize Zand property there and bring Luṭf 'Alī Khān's family to Tehān, and ordered Faḥ 'Alī Khān to have troops stationed in Ābāda ready to assist Ḥājji Ibrāhīm if necessary.

Meanwhile, Luṭf 'Alī Khān had defeated the troops sent against him by Ḥājji Ibrāhīm and had seized the fort at Kāzarūn. He had advanced to the vicinity of Shirāz and was preparing to starve his former capital into submission. Inside the city, Ḥājji Ibrāhīm found that some of the tribal levies, while willing to acquiesce in the removal of Luṭf 'Alī Khān, had expected his replacement by another Zand. Ḥājji Ibrāhīm was too far committed against the late ruling house to be



able to compromise on this issue. He disarmed troops still loyal to the Zands by a ruse and expelled them from the city. They promptly joined Luṭf 'Alī Khān's forces, but their lack of weapons made them less useful than would otherwise have been the case. Nevertheless, Luṭf 'Alī Khān began to gain ground again, being in control of virtually all the districts around Shīrāz. He attempted negotiation with Hājji Ibrāhīm, even offering to retire with his family, now in the latter's hands, to India or Ottoman territory. Hājji Ibrāhīm rejected these terms and sent a message to Ābāda, requesting that Qājār troops come to Shīrāz by a circuitous route. These beat off the first Zand troops sent against them, but were defeated when Luṭf 'Alī Khān took the field in person. Hājji Ibrāhīm remained safe in Shīrāz, but Luṭf 'Alī Khān held the surrounding countryside.

As soon as Āghā MuḤammad Khān learnt that the troops from Ābāda had suffered a reverse and that Hājji Ibrāhīm's situation was desperate, he sent 7,000 horsemen, together with the remaining forces at Ābāda, to join the Hājji. Luṭf 'Alī Khān allowed these reinforcements to reach Shīrāz, probably (as the historian Fasā'i suggests) anticipating that once the garrison was strengthened, it would emerge from the city and could be destroyed in open battle. He was correct in this, for shortly afterwards an engagement was fought to the west of Shīrāz, and he triumphed over the combined forces of Hājji Ibrāhīm and his Qājār auxiliaries. This was late in 1205-6/1791, or early in 1206-7/1792. The Shīrāzis were now suffering severely from the siege, and it was doubtful whether they could hold out. Much of Fārs was devastated by the fighting, and for three or four years locusts had plagued the countryside. Although Luṭf 'Alī Khān's troops suffered almost as much as those of Hājji Ibrāhīm, some of the latter were beginning to defect to the Zands. Āghā MuḤammad Khān therefore mustered as large a force as possible and himself advanced into Fārs. On 14 Shawwāl 1206/5 June 1792, Luṭf 'Alī Khān, with a handful of troops, made a desperate night attack on Āghā MuḤammad Khān's camp near Persepolis. It seemed successful: Luṭf 'Alī Khān was assured that the Qājārs were routed. Elated by this success, he allowed his troops to scatter and rested for the night, only to discover at first light that Āghā MuḤammad Khān still held the field. He then fled, via Nirīz and Kirmān, to Tabas.

Āghā MuḤammad Khān entered Shīrāz on 1 Dhū'l-Hijja 1207/21 July 1792 and remained there for a month, holding court in the Bagh-i Vaki'l (cf. p. 906). Before leaving for Tehran (11 Muharram 1207/29 August 1792) he confirmed Hājji Ibrāhīm as beglerbegi of Fārs and exhumed the body of Karīm Khān Zand to be sent to Tehran with gates of the Vaki'l's palace. He also carried off surviving members of the Zand family. In the spring of the following year, he

returned to Shīrāz, and asserted his hold over the city more brutally. Hājji Ibrāhīm and other supporters of the Qājārs were granted titles and favours, but all the notables of the province, including Hājji Ibrāhīm, were compelled to surrender women and children as hostages. He also ordered the destruction of the citadel and the outer walls of Shīrāz before leaving for Tehran on 14 Muharram 1208/23 August 1793.

While Āghā MuḤammad Khān consolidated his hold over Fārs, Luṭf 'Alī Khān was still a fugitive. From Tabas, with the assistance of the local khan, he marched on Yazd and dispersed such forces as opposed him there. He then captured Abarqūh, where he left a garrison, and moved on to Dārāb. A pursuing Qājār army wasted time besieging Abarqūh, and then marched via Sarvisiān, towards Nirīz, where Luṭf 'Alī Khān was known to be. For some eleven days, the two forces skirmished inconclusively, but eventually Luṭf 'Alī Khān's men, wearying of the struggle, began to desert. Luṭf 'Alī Khān returned to Tabas and then set out for Qandahar, presumably to seek assistance from the Durrāni ruler, Timūr Shāh; at Qā'in, however, he learnt that the latter had recently died. He then went south to Narmashir and Bam, where two local khans offered to cooperate with him. With this additional support, he captured Kirmān in Sha'bān 1208/March 1794, was proclaimed *Pādishāh* and struck coins.

Āghā MuḤammad Khān now mobilized all his available forces for a campaign against Kirmān. He left Tehran on 3 Shawwāl 1208/4 May 1794 for Fārs, and was joined north of Qum by Hājji Ibrāhīm and the notables of the province. From there, he advanced to Kirmān, where Luṭf 'Alī Khān conducted a skilful defence, defeating the Qājār advance guard. About this time, it seems that Āghā MuḤammad Khān's frustration over the Zands began to give way to acts of irrational violence. It was said that on one occasion, catching sight of a coin struck in Luṭf 'Alī Khān's name, he immediately ordered that Luṭf 'Alī Khān's captive son, Faṭḥ-Allāh, be castrated. Luṭf 'Alī Khān held out in Kirmān for four months, but the morale of his troops steadily deteriorated. Finally, on 29 Rabī'l 1209/24 October 1794, a traitor opened the gates of the citadel, the besiegers overran the city, and Luṭf 'Alī Khān fled to Bam. Āghā MuḤammad Khān, enraged at his escape, ordered that all male prisoners be killed or blinded, and the women and children handed over to his troops as slaves. Kirmān, systematically plundered and devastated, did not recover before the 20th century. In Bam, Luṭf 'Alī Khān was betrayed by his host and handed over to Āghā MuḤammad Khān, who ordered him to be raped by his slaves, blinded and taken to Tehran, where he was tortured to death.

While Āghā MuḤammad Khān was besieging Kirmān, Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān had



been asserting Qājār authority throughout the sparsely populated Kirmān province by means of a circuitous march through Bam, Narmashir, Jirufī, the country north of Bandar 'Abbās and Lārisān. At the beginning of Jumādā I 1209/November 1794, both uncle and nephew were back in Shirāz, and in Jumādā II 1209/December–January 1794–5, Fath 'Alī Khān was appointed beglerbegī of Fārs, Kirmān and Yazd, with the title of *Jalānshāhī*, formerly held by Luīf 'Alī Khān. The loyal notables of Fārs were rewarded for their support and the members of the new beglerbegī's household and administration were named. Hājji Ibrāhīm was appointed grand vizier with the title of *'Iṣmā' al-Dawla*.

## EXPANSION INTO GEORGIA AND KHURĀSĀN

Āghā Muhammad Khān could now turn to the restoration of the outlying provinces of the Safavid kingdom. Returning to Tehān in the spring of 1209/1795, he assembled a force of some 60,000 cavalry and infantry and in Shawwāl–Dhu'l-Qa'da/May, set off for Āzarbāijān, intending to conquer the country between the rivers Aras and Kura, formerly under Safavid control. This region comprised a number of independent khanates of which the most important was Qarābāgh, with its capital at Shūsha; Ganja, with its capital of the same name; Shirvān across the Kura, with its capital at Shamākhī; and to the north-west, on both banks of the Kura, Christian Georgia (Gurjīstān), with its capital at Tiflis. As he approached the Aras, Āghā Muhammad divided his force into three. The left wing was sent in the direction of Erivan, the right advanced parallel to the Caspian shore into the Mughān steppe and across the lower Aras into Shirvān and Dāghīstān. The centre, under Āghā Muhammad Khān himself, advanced towards the fortress of Shūsha. Ibrāhīm Khān, ruler of Qarābāgh, had long anticipated such an attack. He had not only strengthened his capital but assembled a strong force to halt the Qājār. He endeavoured to block Āghā Muhammad Khān's advance with this army, but was defeated and forced to withdraw behind the walls of Shūsha, pursued by the Qājār vanguard. Āghā Muhammad Khān then moved forward with the main part of the army, and the siege of Shūsha began. It lasted from 20 Dhu'l-Hijja 1209/8 July 1795 until 23 Muḥarram 1210/9 August 1795, and although Ibrāhīm Khān's allies from Bākū and elsewhere defected and made peace with Āghā Muhammad Khān, his own troops resisted vigorously. Both sides desired a settlement, and Ibrāhīm Khān eventually decided to submit to Āghā Muhammad Khān, to pay regular tribute and to surrender hostages, although the Qājārs were still denied entry into

Shūsha. Ibrāhīm Khān retained his enmity towards the Qājārs, as subsequent events would prove, but since the main objective of the campaign was the conquest of Georgia, Āghā Muhammad Khān was prepared to negotiate, to open the road to Tiflis.

Much had happened in Georgia since the fall of the Safavids. Recently, on 23 Sha'bān 1197/24 July 1783, Erekle (Heracles), the ruler of Kartli and Kakheti (the central core of the Georgian kingdom) and Catherine II of Russia had signed the Treaty of Georgievsk which made Georgia a Russian protectorate. In it, Erekle specifically renounced Georgia's former dependence upon Iran, while another article of the Treaty allowed the stationing of Russian troops in Georgia for mutual defence against Georgia's Ottoman and Iranian neighbours. Following the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War of 1787, however, the Russian garrisons had been withdrawn. Now, nearly a decade later, Erekle, having renounced his allegiance to Iran, found himself unprotected in the face of a resurgence of Iranian military power. Āghā Muhammad Khān cannot have been ignorant of events in Georgia, or unaware of Russia's threatening presence beyond the Caucasus. His suspicions had been aroused by recent Russian activity in both Gilān and Asarābād. This may explain part of the hostility he felt towards the Vālī of Georgia, although while the Zands were still undefeated he had remained ostensibly amicable. In 1200–1/1786, soon after the death of 'Alī Murād Khān Zand, he received an envoy from Erekle, and offered the latter sovereignty over Āzarbāijān, not then in his possession, if Erekle could obtain Russian backing for him in his conflict with the Zands. Five years later, his conquest of Āzarbāijān in 1206/1791 raised apprehensions in Tiflis, and Erekle had applied to Saint Petersburg for assistance, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Georgievsk, although without result, since the Russian government was preoccupied elsewhere. As soon as Erekle heard of Āghā Muhammad Khān's plans for a summer campaign across the Aras in 1210/1795, he sent an urgent request to Saint Petersburg for Russian aid. None was given, however, largely on the advice of General Ivan Gudovich, the commander of the Caucasian line, who did not take the threat seriously.

Meanwhile, Āghā Muhammad Khān had left Shūsha and advanced on Ganja, where the ruler, Jawād Khān, submitted. From there, he sent a threatening letter to Erekle. He reminded him that, under the Safavids, Georgia had been a part of Iran and demanded Erekle's immediate submission, assuring him that if he came to pay homage, he would be confirmed as Vālī. According to the author of the *Fārsnāma-yi Nājiri*, Āghā Muhammad Khān declared, "Shah Esmā'īl Šāfavi ruled over the province of Georgia. When in the days of the deceased king we

were engaged in conquering the provinces of Persia, we did not proceed to this region. As most of the provinces of Persia have come into our possession now, you must, according to ancient law, consider Georgia part of the empire and appear before our majesty. You have to confirm your obedience; then you may remain in the possession of your governorship. If you do not do this, you will be treated as the others."<sup>8</sup>

Erekle reacted by reaffirming his allegiance to Russia and summoning all the troops he could muster to Tiflis. Āghā MuḤammad Khān now left Ganja with 40,000 cavalry, having been joined by his original left and right wings. On 25 Šafar 1210/10 September 1795, the Qājār vanguard joined battle with the Georgians, commanded by Erekle's grandson, but was forced back. Then Āghā MuḤammad Khān and the main body of the army came up on the next day, and a decisive engagement took place outside Tiflis. The battle lasted a whole day. The Iranians were three times repulsed and Āghā MuḤammad Khān is said to have recited verses from the *Šāh-nāma* of Firdausi to encourage his troops, who greatly outnumbered the enemy.<sup>9</sup> By nightfall, however, the Georgians had suffered heavy casualties and had retreated into the citadel of Tiflis. Later, what remained of the Vālī's army, and those inhabitants of Tiflis who could, abandoned the city.

Tiflis was systematically sacked, and after the devastation and massacre, 15,000 Georgian slaves, mostly women and children, were deported to Iran. An eye-witness, who entered the city shortly after the Iranian troops had withdrawn, described the pitiful sighs he saw: "I therefore pursued my way, pained as it were, with carcasses, and entered Tiflis by the gate of Tapitag; but what was my consternation on finding here the bodies of women and children slaughtered by the sword of the enemy; to say nothing of the men, of whom I saw more than a thousand, as I should suppose, lying dead in one little tower! The Shah had arrived at Handshu, on his way back to Tiflis, and was consequently but three versis off. In traversing the city to the gate of Handshu, I found not a living creature but two infirm old men, whom the enemy had treated with great cruelty, to make them confess where they had concealed their money and treasures. The city was almost entirely consumed, and still continued to smoke in different places; and the stench from the putrefying bodies, together with the heat which prevailed, was intolerable, and certainly infectious."<sup>10</sup>

Āghā MuḤammad Khān remained nine days in the vicinity of Tiflis. His victory proclaimed the restoration of Iranian military power in a region for-

<sup>8</sup> Hasan-i Fasā'i, *Fārs-nāma-yi Nādirī*, I, r. Busse, p. 66.

<sup>9</sup> Malcolm, *History* II, p. 284.

<sup>10</sup> Arteni, *Memoirs*, pp. 228-9.

merly under Safavid domination. Russia's client, Georgia, had been punished and Russia's prestige damaged. Across the Ottoman frontier, the Pashas of Kars and Erzerum sensed danger. But Āghā MuḤammad Khān did not stay to consolidate his victory. He turned back and marched down the valley of the Kura and, having ravaged the Khanate of Shirvān, established his winter-quarters in the Mughān steppe. It was here at Javād, to the west of the confluence of the Kura and the Aras, that Nādir Shāh had held his coronation in 1148-9/1736, sixty years earlier.

Āghā MuḤammad Khān had hitherto refused the title of Shah, on the grounds that Iran was not entirely subject to his authority. Now, the Qājār chieftains and officers of state, headed by Hājji Ibrāhīm, came and pressed him to take the title of Shah before marching on Mashhad and bringing the former Safavid province of Khurāsān, as far as the Āmū-Daryā river, under his protection. In agreeing to their petition, Āghā MuḤammad Khān is supposed to have said, "If, according to your desire, I put the crown on my head, this will cause you, in the beginning, toil and hardship, as I take no pleasure in bearing the title of king as long as I am not one of the greatest kings of Persia. This petition will not be granted but by toil and fatigue."<sup>11</sup> Āghā MuḤammad Khān intended to make his coronation ceremony an act of legitimization. Following the Safavid custom, the sword of Shāh Ismā'īl Šafavī was suspended from the roof of the tomb-chamber of Shaikh Šafī at the shrine of Ardabil on the eve of the coronation, while prayers were offered for the new Shah's welfare. The next day, the sword was brought from Ardabil and girded on the new ruler. The crown was placed on his head and on each arm he wore an arm-band in which were set the famous gems, the *Daryā-yi Nūr* and *Tāj-i Māh*. Surviving portraits of Āghā MuḤammad show him wearing a high, ovoid crown, the lower part encrusted with pearls and precious stones. The ceremony was followed by a feast and distribution of alms. Shortly afterwards, the Shah and his army set off for Tehran, but his ultimate destination was Mashhad.

Hājji Ibrāhīm stayed in Tehran to supervise the administration, and there he received the envoys of the French Republic, J.-G. Bruguières and G.-A. Olivier, who urged him to persuade the Shah to consolidate his hold over Georgia and establish an outlet to Europe by way of Mingrelia, before the Russians annexed the southern Caucasus region. Meanwhile, the confusion prevailing in Khurāsān made its conquest comparatively easy. This region, untouched by the earlier struggles among the Zand, Bakhīyārī and Qājār rivals, had formerly

<sup>11</sup> Hasan-i Fasā'i, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

been protected by the Durrānī ruler, Ahmad Shāh, but after his death in 1187/1775, his successors preferred to concentrate their attention upon their Indian borderlands. In the late decades of the 18th century, Khurāsān was in a state of near anarchy. In Mashhad, the authority of Shāhrukh, Nādir Shāh's grandson, was hardly more than nominal. Outside Mashhad, the surrounding countryside was held by various independent chieftains, of whom the most powerful was probably Ishāq Khān, with his headquarters at Turbat-i Haidarī.<sup>12</sup> In the eastern foothills of the Alburz, Kurdish chieftains controlled the higher land from such strongholds as Bujinūrī, Khabūshān (Qūchān), Darra Gaz and Kalāt. To the north, in the direction of the Qara-Qum, the barrier between Iran and the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhārā, dwelt the Türkmens: from west to east, the Göklen, the Tekke, the Yamū, the Sarig, the Salor and Ersari. Across this vast expanse, tribal warfare, the plundering of caravans, and cattle- and slave-raiding were endemic.

The newly-crowned Āghā MuḤammad Shāh advanced into Khurāsān by way of Gurgān, halting in Āstarābād to punish the Göklen Türkmens who had been raiding in that province.<sup>13</sup> He then left for Mashhad, while local khans, recognizing the impossibility of resistance, hastened to submit. All these chieftains were forced to hand over hostages, who were sent to Tehran. As Āghā MuḤammad Shāh approached Mashhad, Shāhrukh came to the Qājār camp, accompanied by a leading *mujtahid*, Mirzā Mahdi, and one of his sons. Āghā MuḤammad Shāh sent his nephew, Husain Quli Khān (the younger brother of Fath 'Ali Khān), to welcome the party, and the visitors, especially the *mujtahid*, were treated with respect. He then sent Sulaimān Khān Qājār, accompanied by Mirzā Mahdi and 8,000 troops, to occupy the city and assure its inhabitants of the Shah's benevolence. The next day, Āghā MuḤammad Shāh entered Mashhad on foot (as Shāh 'Abbās I had been accustomed to do) as a pilgrim to the shrine of Imām Rizā, weeping and kissing the earth. For the next twenty-three days, he continued his pilgrimage, seemingly oblivious of affairs of state. Then a change came over him. Orders were given for the exhumation of Nādir Shāh's remains, which were reburied with those of Karīm Khān Zand in Tehran; Shāhrukh was compelled to surrender any jewels formerly belonging to Nādir Shāh. Shāhrukh denied on oath that he had any left. Under torture, he revealed the whereabouts of some of the gems. He was tortured again, and handed over a great ruby which

<sup>12</sup> According to Motier, Ishāq Khān possessed 160,000 sheep, 20,000 camels and 6,000 broad-mares. *Op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>13</sup> It was perhaps in regard to this punitive expedition that Fraser heard the rumour that the Shah had "ordered that all the male captives should have the thumb of their right hand cut out by the socket, thus disabling them from using either the bow or the spear". Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

Āghā MuḤammad Shāh had long covered.<sup>14</sup> Shāhrukh and his family were then sent to Māzandarān. Shāhrukh himself died on the way, at Dāmghān, where his tomb still stands. He was sixty-three, and had ruled Khurāsān, in name at least, for forty-six years.

## THE LAST MONTHS

The Shah had arrived in Mashhad in May 1796. He seems to have spent some time there, settling the affairs of Khurāsān. It is possible that he contemplated advancing against Herat, then an appendage of the Durrānī kingdom, but formerly a Safavid province and traditional residence of the Safavid *vafī' abd*. He may also have contemplated, as Malcolm was told, an expedition against Bukhārā, to avenge the Mangit usurper Shāh Murād's treatment of the Qājārs of Marv. He sent an emissary to Bukhārā, addressed not to Shāh Murād, but to Abu'l-Ghāzī Khān, last ruler of the dispossessed Janid dynasty, demanding the return of Iranian slaves held in Bukhārā. Shāh Murād is said to have replied insultingly, but to have assembled the Iranian captives in Bukhārā so that they should be ready, if necessary, to be returned to Iran. Āghā MuḤammad Shāh is also supposed to have proposed at this time a combined attack on Bukhārā to Timūr Shāh Durrānī.

In the event, news of developments in the north-west called for immediate action. Catherine II, eager to extend Russia's hegemony beyond the Caucasus, and having a pretext in the Shah's treatment of her client, Erekle, had sent an expedition into the south-eastern Caucasus, under the command of Count Valerian Zubov. Its goal was to annex the Kura-Aras region and chastise the Shah. Zubov first occupied Darband and Bākū, the districts of Salyan and Talish, and then Shamākhī and Ganjā; it seemed that his final destination was Tabriz. However, the death of Catherine in November 1796, and the accession of Paul I, opposed to his mother's Caucasian policies, led to the expedition's immediate recall. Meanwhile, the Shah had returned to Tehran, ordering the military commanders in the provinces to assemble there with their contingents the following spring. Āghā MuḤammad Shāh apparently contemplated an extended campaign, for he summoned Fath 'Ali Khān to Tehran and appointed him deputy (*Nā'ib al-Salimān*) during his absence. In Dhū'l-Hijja 1211/June 1797, the Shah left Tehran, intending to march through Āzarbāijān to Qarābāgh, Shirvān and Georgia, but in camp at Suljāniya, the news of Zubov's

<sup>14</sup> Malcolm, *op. cit.* II, pp. 390-1.

recall arrived. This led to a change of plan. It was less urgent to punish Georgia, and the Shah decided to deal first with the recalcitrant Ibrāhīm Khān of Qarābāgh, who had recently become a Russian protégé. The royal army therefore advanced from Miyanā to Ardabil, and then moved towards Shūsha. At Ādinabāzār, there appeared a delegation of nobles from Shūsha, announcing that Ibrāhīm Khān and his family had fled into Dāghīstān, and inviting the Shah to take possession of their city. In response to this unanticipated good fortune, the Shah left the army at Ādinabāzār in the charge of Hājī Ibrāhīm and Sulaimān Khān Qūyūnlū. The Shah's nephew, Husain Qulī Khān, and Farḥ 'Alī Khān's sons, Husain 'Alī Mirzā and MuḤammad Qulī Mirzā, were with them. The Shah set off with 5,000 horsemen and 3,000 infantry and, rapidly fording the Aras, entered Shūsha. He remained there three days until, disturbed one evening by a quarrel between two servants in his private quarters, he ordered their immediate execution. Sādiq Khān, leader of the Shaqāqī Kurds, was present. He tried to intercede for the servants, but the Shah was implacable, agreeing only to postpone their execution until the following morning, to avoid shedding blood on a Friday. He foolishly allowed the condemned men to continue attending him until he fell asleep, when they, joined by a third servant, stabbed him to death, on 21 Dhū'l-Hijja 1211/16 June 1797. They then fled to Sādiq Khān, bearing the treasure that the Shah had with him, including the *Darḡayī' Nār* and the *Tāj-i Māz*. Sādiq Khān took the assassins under his protection, assumed charge of the regalia, and set out with his troops for Tabrīz. The Qājār ascendancy, to which the late Shah had devoted himself with such single-mindedness, was now to be put to the test.

Utter confusion followed the news of Āghā MuḤammad Shāh's death. In Shūsha, the royal troops dispersed, returning to the main camp, while the two officials who always accompanied the late Shah, the *Manshī al-Mamālīk* and the *Idāik Aqāsī Bāshī*, fled to Tehran by way of Nākhchivān and Marāgha. The inhabitants of Shūsha plundered the Shah's camp, while the local *'ulamā* buried his remains. Confusion also reigned in the main camp at Ādinabāzār. Husain Qulī Khān and Sulaimān Khān Qūyūnlū set off with the sons of Farḥ 'Alī Khān for Tehran by way of Tālish, Shaft and Rāshr. Hājī Ibrāhīm took the main part of the army, including the Māzandarānī musketeers and the contingent from Fārs, and travelled via Ardabil and Zanjān to Tehran. Meanwhile, Mirzā MuḤammad Khān Develū, the governor of Tehran, closed the gates of the city and put the citadel in a state of defence until Farḥ 'Alī Khān could arrive from Shirāz. The princes and nobles arriving from Shūsha encamped outside the walls but were denied entry.

Āghā MuḤammad Shāh's brother, 'Alī Qulī Khān, had been in Erivan at the time of the Shah's assassination. Marching via Khūy, Tabrīz and Marāgha, he approached Tehran from the west, but on being denied entry to the city, withdrew to the fortress of 'Alī Shāh on the river Karaj, where he proclaimed himself Shah. At the same time, Sādiq Khān and his Shaqāqī Kurds, who had left Shūsha for Tabrīz on the night of the Shah's assassination, marched on Sarāb and Qazvīn, in order to free the Khan's wife and son held captive there, while at the same time summoning followers from Sulduz, Marāgha, Tabrīz, Ardabil and Muḡhān. Having appointed his brother, MuḤammad 'Alī Sulḡān, governor of Tabrīz, and another brother, Ja'far Khān, governor of Qarājadāgh, he himself settled down to besiege Qazvīn. In Qazvīn, the garrison played for time, holding out until the arrival of a relief force from Tehran. Meanwhile, Sādiq Khān ordered his brothers to take Khūy and, in an effort to raise an army to achieve this, the two chieftains assembled a mixed force including artisans and craftsmen pressed from the bazaars of Tabrīz, as well as recruits from Qarājadāgh.

News of the Shah's murder did not reach Farḥ 'Alī Khān in Shirāz until ten days after it had happened. He made the necessary arrangements, appointing his eldest son, the nine-year-old MuḤammad 'Alī Mirzā, nominal beglerbegī of Fārs, observed three days of mourning, and then left for Tehran. Some distance short of Ray, he was joined by Hājī Ibrāhīm, Husain Qulī Khān, and the loyal princes and he was informed of the rebellion of his uncle, 'Alī Qulī Khān. The latter fell into his nephew's hands, was blinded, and then allowed to live in retirement at Bārfārūsh, where he died in 1240/1824-5. Farḥ 'Alī Khān made his formal entry into Tehran on 20 Šafar 1212/15 August 1797.

Sādiq Khān Shaqāqī was still besieging Qazvīn, so Farḥ 'Alī Khān marched on the city with as large a force as he could muster. Sādiq Khān advanced to meet him at Khāk-i 'Alī, about thirty miles east of Qazvīn, and after a hard-fought engagement, the Kurd's forces were dispersed with heavy losses, and the royal army entered Qazvīn. Sādiq Khān and his remaining men fled to Sarāb, intending to go to Āzarbāijān, where he believed that his brothers had strengthened the fortifications of Tabrīz and gained possession of Khūy. In Sarāb, however, he met them both, fugitives like himself. The governor of Khūy, Ja'far Khān Dunbulī, and his brother, the former governor of Tabrīz, Husain Khān Dunbulī, had united their Kurdish followers, scattered in the confusion following Āghā MuḤammad Shāh's death, and defeated Sādiq Khān's brothers. Sādiq Khān had to submit, although he was in a strong position, in that he still had Āghā MuḤammad Shāh's crown-jewels. Farḥ 'Alī Khān, who had come to



Zanjan intending to restore order in Āzarbāijān, agreed that, in return for the jewels, Šādiq Khān be pardoned. With his supporters killed or dispersed, the jewels in themselves were of little use to Šādiq Khān and, in his own districts, the Shaqāqī Kurds were held in check by their Dunbulī rivals. Šādiq Khān made a good bargain, gaining the districts of Sarāb and Garmrūd. Meanwhile, Faḥr 'Alī Khān, learning that plague was ravaging Āzarbāijān, preferred to settle its affairs from a distance. The recalcitrant chieftains submitted, and received honours and offices. Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Qūyūnlū, Āghā Muḥammad's maternal cousin, was re-appointed governor of Erivan, which he was to hold against the Russians in 1804, and Ja'far Khān Dunbulī was rewarded with the governorships of Tabriz and Khūy. Faḥr 'Alī Khān then returned to Tehran, which he reached in Jumādā II 1212/November–December 1797.

His obligations to his dead uncle were now fulfilled. Two of the late Shah's assassins had been seized when the Qājār troops entered Qazvin. One was cut to pieces by Faḥr 'Alī Khān's brother; the other was dismembered by the Shah's executioner. The third, captured later near Kirmānshāh, was burnt to death in Tehran. Orders were sent to Ibrāhīm Khān, now back in Shūsha, to exhume the body of Āghā Muḥammad Shāh and send it with suitable honours to Tehran, where it rested for three days in the shrine of Shāh 'Abd al-ʿAzīm, to the south of the city. A great procession, led by Muḥammad 'Alī Khān Qūyūnlū, a close kinsman of the late Shah, with an escort of 2,000 horsemen, then accompanied the corpse to Najaf, where the cortège was received by the Pasha of Baghdad. Like Shāh 'Abbās I, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh was buried in the *ḥaram* of the Imām 'Alī, where his tomb came to be venerated as that of a *shahīd* (martyr) who had died waging *jihād* against the unbelievers. However, one pilgrim who visited the tomb shortly afterwards was not impressed: "On the outside of the mausoleum, near the door, and under the path-way, are deposited the remains of Shah Abbass, of Persia: and on the other side of the building, adjacent to the platform on which prayers are said, is a small apartment, in which is the tomb of Mohammed Khan Kajar, late king of Persia, formed of a single block of white marble, on which they constantly burn the wood of aloes, and every night light up camphire tapers in silver candlesticks; and, during both the day and the night, several devout persons are perpetually employed in chaunting the Koran. All this pomp and state at the tomb of Mohammed Khan is highly improper in the vicinity of the holy shrine, and can only be attributed to the ignorance and rusticity of his descendants."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Mirzā Abū Talīb Khān, *Travels* II, pp. 345–6.

On 3 Shawāl 1212/21 March 1798, which was both Naurūz and the 'Īdal-Fir, Faḥr 'Alī Khān crowned himself Shah in the Gulistān Palace in Tehran. Opposition to his succession was not yet over. That summer, Šādiq Khān Shaqāqī and Ja'far Khān Dunbulī rebelled, and hardly had the one submitted and the other fled into Ottoman territory, before the Shah's brother, Ḥusain Qulī Khān, now beglerbegī of Fārs, revolted. Nevertheless, Faḥr 'Alī Shāh was now firmly seated upon his throne, and his brother's rebellion came to nothing. He had little statesmanship or charisma, but his rule was secure. Āghā Muḥammad Shāh's ambitions had been fulfilled: the Qājārs, in the person of his favourite nephew, were finally established on the throne of the Safāvids.

It is difficult to view the reign of Āghā Muḥammad Khān in perspective. The entire plateau was rife with warfare. The Shah himself was constantly on the move. The sources seem little more than accounts of a string of engagements. Scarcely any European travellers visited Qājār Iran before the reign of Faḥr 'Alī Shāh or left descriptions of what they saw, while the grotesque anecdotes of Āghā Muḥammad Shāh's cruelty do little to give a balanced view of events of the period.

Āghā Muḥammad Khān was a man who governed from the saddle, and his leadership was tenacious rather than charismatic. As a military commander he was undoubtedly able; it is worth recalling Malcolm's assessment of his troops, written not long after his death: "His army was injured to fatigue, and regularly paid; he had introduced excellent arrangement into all its Departments, and his known severity occasioned the utmost alacrity and promptness in the execution of orders, and had he lived a few more years, it is difficult to conjecture the progress of his arms."<sup>16</sup> Beside this opinion may be placed a second, also by a Briton, James Baillie Fraser: "Āga Mahomed had likewise the talent of forming good and brave troops. His active and ambitious disposition kept his army constantly engaged; and they acquired a veteran hardihood and expertness, that rendered them superior to any other Asiatic troops."<sup>17</sup>

Thus, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh's success was evidently due to a combination of skilful military organization, the ability to manipulate and control shifting rivalries and alliances among the tribes, and the qualities of a tireless, far-sighted and prudent commander in the field. While no precise figures for the Qājār army of the late 18th century exist, those obtained by Malcolm in 1801 reflect the scale of the military establishment in the preceding reign. Malcolm mentions 35,000 regular cavalry and 15,000 infantry, a standing army paid from the central

<sup>16</sup> Malcolm, "Memorandum", *Journal of the Central Asian Society* XVI, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 229.



treasury.<sup>18</sup> In addition, levies of both cavalry and infantry could be summoned from the provinces and tribes when needed. There was an ineffective artillery arm, manned mainly by Georgian and Armenian gunners, which Malcolm thought capable of improvement. There were also 200 *qamburak* (swivel-guns mounted on camels), which were judged to be purely ceremonial.<sup>19</sup>

The regular cavalry included the royal *ghulāms* (household cavalry), mainly recruited from the Astarābād region, while the most valuable infantry were the Māzandarāni *tufangchīs* (musketeers). Āghā Muḥammad Shāh was said to have called them 'the Shah's bodyshir' (*pirāban-i tan-i shāh*), and in times of danger, he slept in their midst.<sup>20</sup> Writing during the middle years of the next reign, Fraser states that the provinces of Māzandarān and Astarābād had their revenues commuted to the provision of 12,000 *tufangchīs* and 4,000 cavalry.<sup>21</sup>

Āghā Muḥammad Shāh employed the tactics of his own Qājār tribe and their Turkmen neighbours, in which the surprise attack, encirclement from the rear, and maximum mobility all featured. He rarely lost an engagement, but had the reputation of only giving battle when reasonably sure of victory. His troops lived off the country when in enemy territory and, wherever appropriate, he employed a "scorched earth" policy to deny the enemy supplies.<sup>22</sup> He knew that his soldiers were capable of spontaneous feats of courage and daring, but, if confronted by resolute opponents, tended to lack tenacity.<sup>23</sup> During Count Zubov's invasion in 1211-12/1797, he told Hājī Ibrāhīm that while he intended to harry the Russians mercilessly, he would never send his troops into close combat with the Russian infantry, because of their formidable fire-power and unyielding ranks; he took this decision long before he entered the field. When caution or retreat were needed, or a strategy required modification, he would quickly appreciate the situation: as Hājī Ibrāhīm told the British, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh was a brave enough leader in battle, but his "head... never left work for his hand!"<sup>24</sup> His re-uniting of the Iranian plateau under a single rule owed as much to his astuteness as to his military skill.

A central issue for Āghā Muḥammad Shāh was the tribal arithmetic of eighteenth-century Iran. Since the overthrow of the Safavids, every contender

for power had needed an adequate base among these groups. They had constituted the basis of Nādir Shāh's régime, and had also been the cause of its disintegration. In order to succeed, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh had to create a network of tribal alliances and allegiances. His own Qājār tribe, although not numerous, were wardens of the north-eastern marches and enjoyed a reputation for their fighting skill. With Gurgān cut off from the rest of Iran, and difficult to attack from the south, his original home-base was relatively secure, especially as the Qājārs of Astarābād generally enjoyed good relations with the Turkmen tribes of the south-western Qara-Qum. Unpredictable as the Turkmens might be, the Yamūt had, on more than one occasion, provided sanctuary and support to Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān and his son, and been rewarded accordingly with opportunities for raiding with the Qājārs, with access to superior pastures and with marriage alliances with the Qājārs. Thus, the Yamūt were permitted to move from the arid banks of the Arak to the fertile Gurgān plain, where the villages along the Qara Sū were allotted to them as *huyūl*, thus provoking strife between the newcomers and the settled cultivators of the Arak.<sup>25</sup> However, the Turkmens were always uncertain neighbours and, on at least one occasion towards the end of the reign, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh, exasperated by the depredations of the Göklen in northern Khurāsān, severely punished them during his 1210-11/1796 campaign in that province.

From Gurgān, he first turned his attention to Māzandarān, and recruited there those Māzandarāni *tufangchīs* whom he so highly prized. Yet even with them and his Turkmen allies, he still lacked the tribal following that the Zands possessed. To compensate, he methodically established a network of clients and allies among the tribal leaders of the north and west, especially in the Khamisa region of 'Irāq-i Aḡlam and in Āzarbāijān. This frequently involved choosing between two rival groups. His support of the Dunbulī Kurds rather than their Shaqāqī Kurdish rivals in Āzarbāijān exemplifies this. It also involved skilful use of threats and rewards: on the one hand, the practice of taking hostages from the families of tribal leaders and, on the other, offering them marriages into the ruling house. Tribes could be won over by partnership with the victorious Qājārs, with opportunities for plunder, for settling old scores with rivals, and for better grazing grounds. They could likewise be coerced by threatening withdrawal of such prospects, the promotion of a rival tribe or faction, and ultimately, punitive measures such as the confiscation of livestock or forcible eviction. In Māzandarān, for example, three distinct tribal groups were settled in

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سید محمد علی شاه  
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To the west, in the Khamsa region of 'Irāq-i 'Ajam, which was among the earliest conquests of the Qājārs south of the Alburz, the Turkish Jāllū Shāhsevan and the Baghdādī Shāhsevan were both apparently relocated in the Sāva and Kharagān districts.<sup>26</sup> Further west still, he formed alliances with the Mukrī Kurds of Sāuj Bulāgh, the Dunbulī Kurds of Khūy, and the Qarāgūzū Turks of Hamadān, to name only three. Even more important was the close collaboration between the Qājārs and the Vālis of Ardālān, an alliance first formulated during the lifetime of MuḤammad Hasan Khān Qājār, and thereafter sedulously pursued by Āghā MuḤammad Shāh and Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh.

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The civil administration of Iran during the reign of Āghā MuḤammad Shāh appears rudimentary. The Shah was mainly preoccupied with military matters.<sup>27</sup> His court was almost invariably his tent, and it has been seen that his chief minister, Hājī Ibrāhīm, was also often in the field, as were the secretaries and those answerable to the Shah for the fisc. For years, Āghā MuḤammad Shāh relied upon only two senior officials to handle affairs of state. These were Mirzā Ismā'īl, a former household servant of the Qājārs, who acted as *miristayfi* (chief revenue officer), and Mirzā Asad-Allāh Nūrī, from the district of Nūr in Māzandarān, who served as *lashkar-navis* (military paymaster). Mirzā Ismā'īl endeavoured to establish a secure revenue after decades of fiscal mismanagement but, as 'Abd-Allāh Mustaufī says, in describing his ancestor Mirzā Ismā'īl's experiences in Āghā MuḤammad Khān's service, "Āghā MuḤammad was himself the treasurer, minister of finance and *sāhib-i dīwān* of his own government."<sup>28</sup> Not until 1209/1794-5 did he acquire a principal vazir in the traditional sense, when Hājī Ibrāhīm became the *'itimād al-Dawla*.

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سید محمد علی خان  
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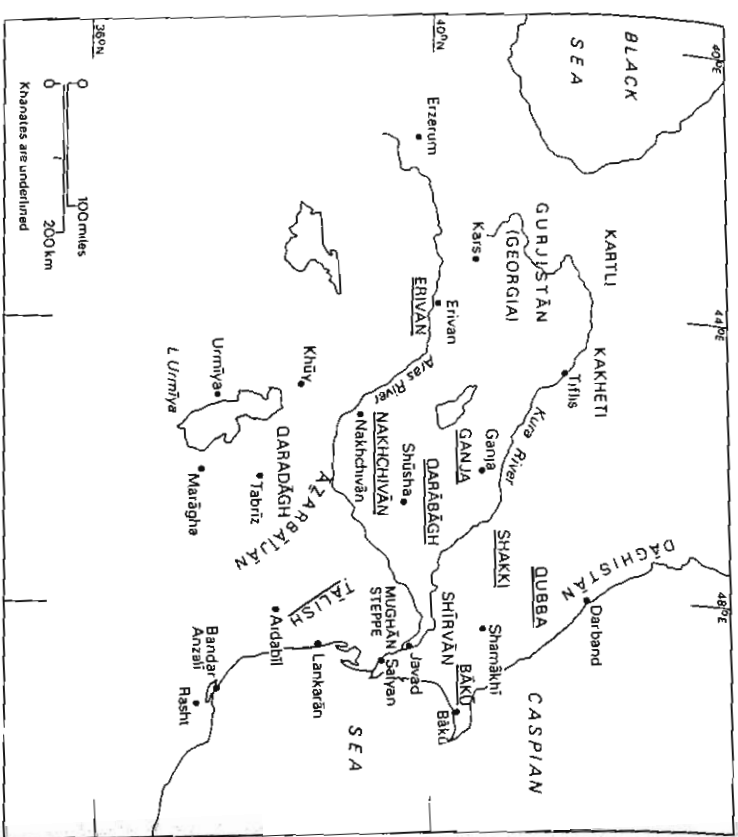
The civil administration of Iran during the reign of Āghā MuḤammad Shāh appears rudimentary. The Shah was mainly preoccupied with military matters.<sup>27</sup> His court was almost invariably his tent, and it has been seen that his chief minister, Ḥājji Ibrāhīm, was also often in the field, as were the secretaries and those answerable to the Shah for the fisc. For years, Āghā MuḤammad Shāh relied upon only two senior officials to handle affairs of state. These were Mirzā Ismā'īl, a former household servant of the Qājārs, who acted as *mirṭawfī* (chief revenue officer), and Mirzā Asad-Allāh Nūrī, from the district of Nūr in Māzandarān, who served as *lashkar-navis* (military paymaster). Mirzā Ismā'īl endeavoured to establish a secure revenue after decades of fiscal mismanagement but, as 'Abd-Allāh Mustawfī says, in describing his ancestor Mirzā Ismā'īl's experiences in Āghā MuḤammad Khān's service, "Āghā MuḤammad was himself the treasurer, minister of finance and *sāhib-i dīwān* of his own government."<sup>28</sup> Not until 1209/1794-5 did he acquire a principal vazir in the traditional sense, when Ḥājji Ibrāhīm became the *'Iṭimād al-Dawla*.

Āghā MuḤammad Shāh recruited officials such as he needed from any available source. The former Zand administration was not excluded and provided, among others, Ḥājji Ibrāhīm and Mirzā Buzurg, the *Qā'im-Maqām* of the next reign. What he required in his agents was effectiveness and loyalty. A typical example was Ḥājji MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān, an illiterate tradesman whom he appointed beglerbegī of Isfahān, and who subsequently rose even higher. As Morier relates: "He was originally a green-grocer of Isfahan, of which city he and his family are natives. His first rise from this humble station was to become Kar Khoda (or deputy) of his *mahal*, or division; his next, to become that of a larger *mahal*; he was then promoted to be the *Kalantar*, or mayor, of the city; and thence he became the *Thakbir*, or Chief, of a rich and extensive district near Isfahan, where he acquired great reputation for his good government. He afterwards made himself acceptable in the eyes of the late King [Āghā MuḤammad Shāh], by a large *pesch-keesh*, or present; and as the then Governor of Isfahan was a man of dissolute life, oppressive and unjust, he succeeded in

<sup>26</sup> Field, *Contributions*, xxix, pts. 1 & 2, pp. 167-8, 171; Rabino, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>27</sup> Āghā MuḤammad Khān is said to have despised bureaucrats as *firāz-bān* (milk-sops). 'Abd-Allāh Mustawfī, *Sharf-i Zindagani-yi Man*, 2nd. ed., Tehran, n.d., 1, pp. 5, 11. <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.





Map 4. Northwestern Iran during the lifetime of Āghā MuḤammad Khān Qājār

deposing him, and was himself appointed the *Beglarbeg*: here, from his intimate knowledge of the markets, and of all the resources of the city, and of its inhabitants, he managed to create a larger revenue than had ever before been collected."<sup>29</sup>

Provincial administration in the late 18th century followed the precedents of Safavid times: beglerbegs were appointed to provinces, and hākims to less important charges; city government was divided between the *kālāntar* and the *darughā*; and in the *mahals* (city quarters), the grievances of the people were addressed to the *kadekhudā*. The manner of control in either cities or countryside did not apparently undergo any radical change during the reign of Āghā MuḤammad Shāh. Of greater significance for the population was the fact that no

<sup>29</sup> Morier, *Second Journey*, p. 131.

Government within living memory had so effectively enforced its will. Āghā MuḤammad Shāh seems to have cherished a belief in his rôle as a traditional *Shahanshāh*, the fount of justice and protector of the poor. Wide stretches of the country were forcibly pacified, the servants of the government were compelled to exercise moderation in their demands, the roads were made safe for merchants, and justice was meted out from the throne, albeit with a heavy hand.

Malcolm, reporting opinion in Iran shortly after Āghā MuḤammad Shāh's death, states that, "Aga Mahomed Khan was rigid in the administration of justice. He punished corruption in the magistrates, whenever it was detected. Such as committed crimes which according to the Koran merited death, were seldom forgiven; and he never pardoned persons who in any shape disturbed the tranquillity of his dominions . . . during the latter years of his reign commerce revived in every quarter. This was not more the consequence of his justice, than of the general security which his rule inspired; and of the extinction, through the severity of his punishments, of those bands of robbers with which the country had before been infested. To the farmers and cultivators he gave no further protection than what they derived from the terror of his name; but that was considerable: from the collector of a district to the governor of a province, all dreaded a complaint to a monarch, by whom the slightest deviations in those who exercised power, were often visited by the most dreadful punishments."<sup>30</sup>

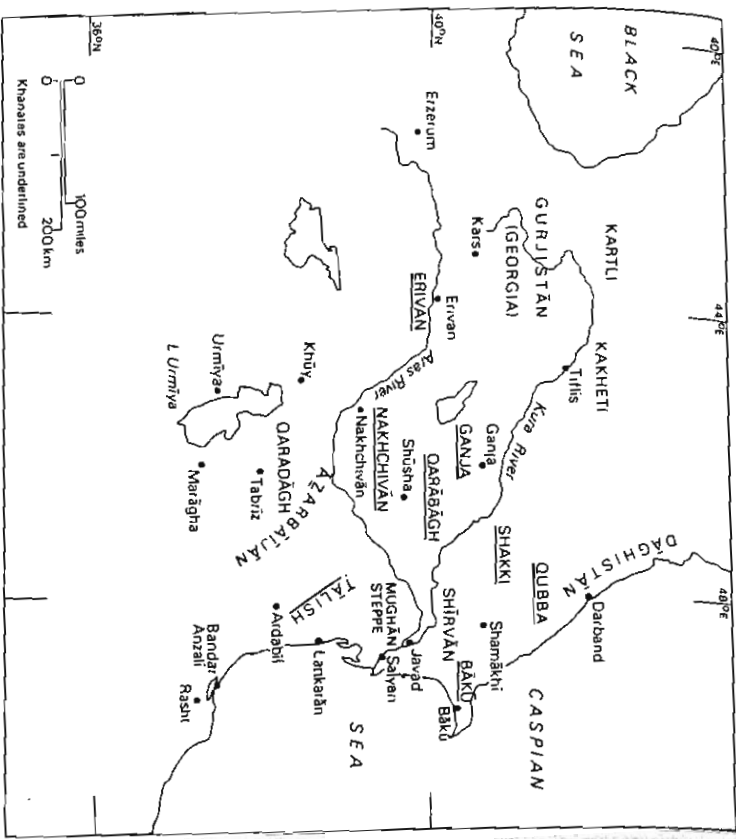
It is unclear whether Āghā MuḤammad Shāh pursued a deliberate policy in his dealings with the Shī'ī *ulamā*. Brought up in the house of a Sayyid and for a time passed off as his son, he showed respect for the *ulamā* throughout his life and supported them with grants and endowments.<sup>31</sup> His ostensible piety, notwithstanding his reputation as a wine-bibber, certainly won their approval. A chronicle describes him, in 1210-11/1796, approaching the shrine of the Eighth Imām on foot: ". . . displaying signs of weakness, poverty, humility, and submissiveness, and shedding tears, he walked to the shrine and kissed the blessed soil."<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere, the same source, commenting upon his death, declares: "All his life he had honored the Sharia. As long as he lived he performed his prayers at the time prescribed, and each midnight, though he passed the day in toil and exertion, he rose to offer a prayer."<sup>33</sup>

Another chronicle relates how, when recovering from an illness, he dreamt that he saw a figure dressed as a *mulla*. He claimed that this experience fortified the sense which he had of his royal mission. He may, like the late MuḤammad

<sup>30</sup> Malcolm, *History* II, pp. 206, 212. <sup>31</sup> Algar, *Religion*, pp. 42-3.

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Rizā Shāh,<sup>34</sup> have supposed his visitor to have been Ḥazrat 'Alī, or perhaps the Eighth or Twelfth Imām, both of whose names were inscribed on his coinage, as they were on that of most rulers from the time of Shāh Tahmāsp II onwards.<sup>35</sup>

Āghā MuḤammad Shāh's patronage of Islamic institutions indicates an awareness of the duties of a Shī'ī ruler. In Tehran, he ordered the construction of the Masjid-i Shāh, Shah's mosque, and in Mashhad, the renovation of the shrine. Āghā MuḤammad Shāh also commissioned some secular building, less for aesthetic than for practical purposes. In Astrābād, he repaired or strengthened the walls, cleared the ditch, erected public buildings, including a palace for the beglerbegī, and generally improved the town's amenities.<sup>36</sup> Similar repairs and improvements were undertaken at Bāfarūsh (Bābul) and Ashraf, and especially at Sāfī, where he built himself a palace.<sup>37</sup> In general, however, a lifetime of campaigning, followed by a comparatively brief reign, did not permit much patronage of architecture or the arts. Perhaps his most enduring legacy is Tehran itself, although little remains of the city as it was in his lifetime.

Early in the course of establishing his power, Āghā MuḤammad Shāh was compelled to address the question of the succession. He, of course, had no issue, but in choosing a successor, he had to avoid further exacerbating the interecnic feuding among the Qājār clans. In addition to the rivalry between the Yūkhārī-bāsh and Ashāqa-bāsh Qājārs, there had also been the destructive feud between the Qūyūnlū and the Develū clans among the latter. These conflicts had to be resolved for Qājār rule to survive. Among his siblings, only Ḥusain Qulī Khān was a full-brother, and hence his obvious heir, but he predeceased the monarch. Fortunately he left sons, Fath 'Alī Khān and Ḥusain Qulī Khān. As soon as Āghā MuḤammad Khān escaped captivity in Shirāz in 1192-3/1779, he seems to have determined that Fath 'Alī Khān should be his heir, and in 1196/1781-2, he arranged his nephew's marriage to the daughter of Fath 'Alī Khān Develū, thereby binding the rival families of Qūyūnlū and Develū in a marriage alliance. He further promoted this alliance through the marriage of his grandson, Fath 'Alī Shāh's son, 'Abbās Mirzā, to a Develū Qājār girl in 1216-17/1802, and there is other evidence<sup>38</sup> of Āghā MuḤammad Shāh's foresight in respect of the succession. All his hopes for the future of his dynasty were thus linked to the line of 'Abbās Mirzā and his descendants. Indeed a European traveller in Iran during the reign of Fath 'Alī Shāh heard the rumour that, had Āghā MuḤammad Khān

lived longer, he would have bypassed the succession of his nephew in favour of 'Abbās Mirzā.<sup>39</sup> It was this preoccupation with neutralizing inter-tribal feuds among the Qājārs, as well as his dream of a Qūyūnlū ruling house which led to the exclusion from the succession of Fath 'Alī Shāh's eldest son, MuḤammad 'Alī Mirzā, the offspring of a Georgian concubine, who was perhaps the ablest of Fath 'Alī Shāh's sons and who, had he lived and reigned, might have injected into the government of the kingdom some of his great-uncle's willful energy and prudent foresight.

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