



## 'ABD-AL-REŽĀ KHAN

'**ABD-AL-REŽĀ KHAN** AMĪR MO'AYYAD (d. 1249/1833), deputy-governor and powerful noble of Yazd. His father, Moḥammad-Ṭaqī Khan Bāfqī, had for forty years (in the Zand and early Qajar periods) dominated the political scene in Yazd and Kermān, either through direct rule or through his numerous sons and sons-in-law whom he had appointed to various local government posts.

When Fath-'Alī Shah ascended the throne, the Qajar policy of nominating royal princes alone to provincial governorships was established. When Moḥammad-Valī Mīrzā was appointed governor of Yazd, 'Abd-al-Režā Khan became his deputy and, following his father's footsteps, began to accumulate power and privileges. Thus, when in 1243/1827-28 Moḥammad-Valī Mīrzā left for Tehran to report on the revolt of 'Abbās-qolī Mīrzā, the governor of Kermān and Balūčestān, 'Abd-al-Režā seized the opportunity to proclaim himself governor and challenged Qajar authority. He confiscated Moḥammad-Valī Mīrzā's properties and sent his family and retinue off to Tehran. In the meantime 'Abbās-qolī Mīrzā joined forces with Moḥammad-Qāsem Khan Gorjī; both marched on Yazd but were defeated (Moḥammad-Ja'far Nā'inī, *Jāme'-e Jafarī*, pp. 626, 643). Fath-'Alī Shah then appointed Ḥasan-'Alī Mīrzā Šojā'-al-saltāna governor of Kermān and Yazd. The latter laid siege to Yazd to force 'Abd-al-Režā Khan out. Yazdī notables and 'olamā' reportedly intervened on behalf of the rebel and had the shah order Šojā'-al-saltāna to lift the siege and withdraw from Yazd. Soon 'Abd-al-Režā Khan was officially appointed the governor of Yazd (*ibid.*, pp. 666, 673).

Intrigues, fierce rivalry, and plots continued unabated. In 1246/1830 Šojā'-al-



salṭana once more besieged Yazd when ‘Abd-al-Režā Khan, in alliance with Šafī‘ Khan Rāvarī, who had married his sister, rose again in rebellion. The siege continued for nine months. Faṭḥ-‘Alī Shah then ordered the crown prince ‘Abbās Mīrzā (his most brilliant military commander, in charge of the royal forces in the north on the Russo-Iranian frontier) to march southward and restore order and Qajar authority. ‘Abd-al-Režā surrendered, and the rebels were brought to Kermān, where they were kept under house arrest in separate dwellings. Šojā‘-al-salṭana was also replaced and sent under guard to Tehran. The two rebels, however, succeeded in escaping from their guarded houses. ‘Abd-al-Režā managed to flee to Khorasan, where he planned to cross the frontier and go to Herat (1247/1831). On his way highwaymen robbed him of all his possessions and weapons, so he returned and surrendered to the governor of Qāyen, who interceded on his part with the crown prince. A few months later he was brought to Tehran, where, following an unsuccessful attempt at suicide, he was cruelly put to death in 1249/1833. Many of his Qajar enemies reportedly had a bloody hand in the killing.

A recent study (Bāstānī Pārīzī, “Qā‘em-maqām va gereftārīhā-ye ū dar Kermān va Yazd,” *Yağmā* 27, 1353/1974-75, no. 3) analyzes ‘Abd-al-Režā Khan’s rebellion as a popular uprising against the corruption and prevailing political dominance of the Qajars. Basing his argument chiefly on a chronicle, *Jāme‘e Ja‘farī*, written by a scribe at the service of ‘Abd-al-Režā Khan, the author asserts the anti-Qajar rebellion was fomented by the Yazdī people themselves, who saw in the person of ‘Abd-al-Režā Khan a good leader. Attractive as this thesis might be, it must be taken with caution, for there exists no historical evidence to prove it correct. True, all sources confirm the fact that local notables and ‘*olamā*’ petitioned the shah on his behalf. Yet none mentions popular uprisings. Undoubtedly ‘Abd-al-Režā Khan challenged the Qajar’s authority. His motive, however, may have been not to promote the people’s interests but his own.

The story of ‘Abd-al-Režā Khan’s revolt is but one episode in the long history of power struggles and personal feuds that marred the Qajar’s century and a half long reign. It clearly displays the serious weakness of the central government authority in the provinces, challenged as it was by well-armed, semi-autonomous, regional centers of power. It also proves (as Bāstānī Pārīzī notes, *ibid.*, pp. 142-43) how fatal to the nation’s political sovereignty were such disruptive, disunifying forces, particularly at a time when Iran was engaged in a major war with the Russians, a war which finally resulted in the annexation



of northern Azarbaijan and the entire Caucasus by the enemy.

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