



'ALĪ-QOLĪ KHAN ŠĀMLŪ

'ALĪ-QOLĪ KHAN ŠĀMLŪ B. SOLṬĀN ḤOSAYN KHAN B. DŪRMĪŠ KHAN (d. 977/1589), Safavid governor of Herat and guardian of the future Shah 'Abbās I. He was appointed governor of Herat in 985/1577 by Shah Esmā'īl II (*Aḥsan al-tawārīk*, ed. C. N. Seddon, Baroda, 1931, p. 494) and left Qazvīn in October, 1577 to take up his new post. He carried orders from the shah for the execution of the shah's nephew, 'Abbās Mīrzā, then six years of age, who had been left defenseless at Herat after his *lala* ("guardian"), Šāh-qolī Ostājīlū, had been murdered by a group of Afšārs at the shah's instigation. Shah Esmā'īl II had promised to link 'Alī-qolī Khan Šāmlū by marriage to the Safavid royal house in the person of Zaynab Begom, the fourth daughter of Shah Ṭahmāsp; no doubt this was to be 'Alī-qolī Khan's reward for ridding the shah of a potentially dangerous rival. In the event, the marriage never took place (Eskandar Beg, I, p. 135; tr. p. 219). On his arrival at Herat, 26 Ramaẓān 985/7 December 1577, 'Alī-qolī Khan was persuaded to delay the execution of the young prince, on the ground that it would not be proper to put to death the innocent descendant of a *sayyed* on the eve of 27 Ramaẓān, the holy Laylat-al-qadr. On a variety of pretexts the execution was postponed until after 'Īd-e Feṭr, which fell that year on December 12. This delay saved the life of 'Abbās Mīrzā, for the shah had died on 13 Ramaẓān/24 November, and a courier bearing the news reached Herat in the late afternoon of 2 Šawwāl 985/13 December 1577, just in time to procure a stay of execution (the full story is told in Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 243ff.; tr., pp. 362ff.).

'Alī-qolī Khan assumed the position of *lala* to 'Abbās Mīrzā and defied repeated



orders from the new shah, Solṭān Moḥammad Ḳodābanda, to send the prince to Qazvīn. He asserted that such a move would be contrary to the interests of the state, since it would seriously weaken Khorasan and encourage an Uzbek attack on that province. Finally, the shah and the queen, Maḥd-e ‘Olyā, sent ‘Alī-qolī Khan’s father, Solṭān Ḥosayn Khan, to Khorasan. They gave him three months in which to return with ‘Abbās Mīrzā; if ‘Alī-qolī and the coalition of amirs who supported him continued to defy the royal firman, they would be deemed rebels (Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 244-46; tr., pp. 364-66).

After the murder of Maḥd-e ‘Olyā by a group of *qizilbāš* conspirators in 987/1579, the struggle for control of Khorasan between the Šāmlū-Ostājlı coalition led by ‘Alī-qolī Khan Šāmlū and that led by Mortazā-qolī Khan Pornāk Torkman, governor of Mašhad, increased in intensity. The supporters of each faction at court tried to influence the shah in their favor. ‘Alī-qolī Khan’s mother and father were both put to death by members of the opposing faction (Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 246-60; tr., pp. 366-85). In 989/1581 the shah sent a punitive force against ‘Alī-qolī Khan, but the amirs in charge of this force were unable to make any headway either by negotiation or by military action. ‘Alī-qolī Khan’s coalition proclaimed ‘Abbās Mīrzā shah in Khorasan, minting coins in his name and including his name in the *koṭba*. The following year (990/1582), Solṭān Moḥammad Shah himself took the field with 80,000 men to quell the revolt; but, after almost a year of desultory fighting and negotiation, the shah could only conclude a truce with ‘Alī-qolī Khan on the basis of the *status quo ante*: ‘Alī-qolī Khan reaffirmed his fealty to Solṭān Moḥammad Shah and agreed to consider Ḥamza Mīrzā the heir apparent; in return, ‘Alī-qolī Khan was confirmed as governor of Herat and guardian of ‘Abbās Mīrzā and secured the dismissal of his archenemy, Moḥammad-qolī Khan Pornāk; the shah even bestowed upon him the noble title of “my son” (15 Ša‘ban 991/3 September 1583; Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 276-91; tr., pp. 406-22). Not long after the royal family had retired, however, the leaders of the Šāmlū-Ostājlı coalition, ‘Alī-qolī Khan Šāmlū and Moršed-qolī Khan Ostājlı, fell out; and the latter seized possession of ‘Alī-qolī Khan’s trump card, the prince ‘Abbās Mīrzā (12 Rajab 993/10 July 1585; see R. M. Savory, “Safavid Persia,” *Cambridge History of Islam*, Cambridge, 1970, I, p. 413). ‘Alī-qolī Khan retired to Herat, “overcome with remorse and chagrin at his negligence, while Moršed-qolī Khan carried ‘Abbās Mīrzā off in triumph to Mašhad” (Eskandar Beg, I, p. 304; tr. p. 437).

‘Alī-qolī Khan’s star now began to decline. In Moḥarram, 996/December, 1587 a huge Uzbek army under ‘Abdallāh Khan laid siege to Herat. After a heroic



defense lasting for more than a year, ‘Alī-qolī Khan finally surrendered the city in Rabī‘ I, 997/February, 1589, and was treacherously put to death by the Uzbek khan after a promise of quarter. The fate of Herat had been sealed by the procrastination of ‘Alī-qolī Khan’s old rival, Moršed-qolī Khan Ostājlū; the latter, in a position of supreme power in the state after installing ‘Abbās Mīrzā on the throne on 1 Ḍu’l-qa’da 996/1 October 1588, deliberately delayed the dispatch of a relief force to Herat until it was too late (Savory, “Safavid Persia,” pp. 413-15).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also N. Falsafī, *Zendagānī-e Šāh ‘Abbās-e Awwal I*, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1334 Š./1956, pp. 25, 37, 40-46, 60-64, 115-20, 124-27.