



ALLĀHVERDĪ KHAN (1)

ALLĀHVERDĪ KHAN (d.1022/1613), a Georgian *golām* who rose to high office in the Safavid state. In order to counterbalance the power of the *qizilbāš* Turkman tribesmen, who constituted the Safavid military aristocracy, Shah ‘Abbās I created a standing army of Georgian, Armenian, and Circassian Christians taken prisoner in the course of campaigns in the Caucasus. These men, known as *golāmān-e kāšša-ye šarīfa*, were converted to Islam and trained for service in one of the new *golām* regiments or in some branch of the royal household. In 997/1589, Allāhverdī Khan agreed to be party to the assassination of the kingmaker and *wakīl* Moršed-qolī Khan Ostājīlū, whose excessive power could no longer be tolerated by the shah; for this service, he was rewarded by being made governor of Jorpādaqān near Isfahan, with the rank of sultan (Eskandar Beg, I, p. 401; tr. Savory, p. 578). After this, his rise to high office was rapid. In 1004/1595-96 we find him holding the office of *qūllar-āqāsī*, or commander of the *golām* regiments (ibid., I, p. 515; tr., p. 690), an office which had been created by Shah ‘Abbās I (ibid., II, p. 1106; tr., p. 527) and was one of the five principal offices of state (see R. M. Savory, “Safavid Persia,” in *Cambridge History of Islam*, Cambridge, 1970, I, p. 419). In the same year, Allāhverdī Khan was appointed governor of Fārs (Eskandar Beg, I, p. 515; tr., p. 690). This appointment signaled a radical change of policy on the part of Shah ‘Abbās. Hitherto, all important provinces had been governed by *qizilbāš* amirs; by being made governor of Fārs, Allāhverdī Khan became the first *golām* to attain equality of status with them. His appointment was also significant for another reason: it marked the inauguration of Shah ‘Abbās’s policy of converting *mamālek* or “state” provinces into *kāšša* or “crown”



provinces governed by intendants appointed directly by the Shah. The following year, 1005/1596-97, another governorship was granted to Allāhverdī khan, that of the province of Kohgīlūya, which was also brought under *kāšša* administration (ibid., I, p. 525; tr. p. 701).

Allāhverdī Khan distinguished himself in action in Shah ‘Abbās’s great victory over the Uzbeks at Rebāṭ-e Parīān in Moḥarram, 1007/August, 1598, a victory which led to the recovery of Herat after ten years of Uzbek occupation. Shortly after this battle, Allāhverdī Khan, on orders from the shah, executed the *qizilbāš* amir Farhād Khan Qarāmānlū who, like Moršed-qolī Khan Ostājīlū before him, had grown too powerful and was suspected of plotting against the shah (ibid., I, p. 574-76; tr., p. 762). By this act, Allāhverdī Khan became the most powerful man in the Safavid state after the shah. From 1008-09/1600 onwards, Allāhverdī Khan, in conjunction with Sir Robert Sherley, undertook the reorganization of the army, which meant among other things increasing the number of *ḡolāms* from 4,000 to 25,000 (L.-L. Bellan, *Chah Abbas I*, Paris, 1932, pp. 111ff.). In 1010/1601-02, Allāhverdī Khan was in charge of operations which resulted in the annexation of Bahrain to the Safavid empire (Eskandar Beg, II, pp. 614-16; tr., pp. 803-05), and from that date onwards he played a prominent part in all major campaigns on both the eastern and the western fronts. Prior to the reign of Shah ‘Abbās I, when the *qizilbāš* constituted the greater part of the Safavid army, the commander of the *qizilbāš* troops, termed *amīr al-omarā’* or *qūrčībāšī*, had been the *de facto* commander-in-chief of the Safavid armed forces. However, after the creation of the *ḡolām* regiments, commanded by the *qūllar-āqāsī*, it became necessary to adopt a new rank to indicate the person who held supreme command of the army as a whole. The term first adopted was *sardār-e laškar*, which we find applied to Allāhverdī Khan as early as 1006/1597-98 (ibid., I, p. 539; tr., p. 719); subsequently, the ancient title of *sepahsālār* was revived and used for this purpose. The fact that the *sardār-e laškar*, and subsequently the *sepahsālār-e Īrān*, was superior in rank to the *qūrčībāšī*, is not admitted, or even hinted at, by the *Tadkerat al-molūk*, but a close reading of the *Tārīk-e’alāmārā-ye ‘Abbāsī* shows that this was in fact the case.

Allāhverdī Khan died on 14 Rabī’ II 1022/3 June 1613 (ibid., II, p. 871; tr., pp. 1083-84). In his obituary notice on Allāhverdī Khan, Eskandar Beg describes him as “one of the most powerful amirs to hold office under this dynasty. During his lifetime, he was responsible for the construction of many public buildings [including the bridge across the Zāyanda-rūd at Isfahan which bears



his name] and charitable foundations. He was a man of great forbearance, modest and chaste.” Shah ‘Abbās demonstrated his genuine respect and affection for him by personally supervising the funeral arrangements, and by going to the khan’s house the day after his death to offer his personal condolences to his family (*ibid.*, II, p. 871; tr., p. 1084).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text.