



## 'AZĪZ KHAN MOKRĪ

'AZĪZ KHAN MOKRĪ, SARDĀR-E KOLL (1207-87/1792-1871), an army chief and dignitary of Qajar Iran who occupied high-ranking positions from early in Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah's reign (1204-1313/1848-96).

'Azīz Khan was the son of Moḥammad Khan (also called Moḥammad Solṭān). He was *sardār* of the Bābā Mirī family of the Mokrīs (Nikitine, *Les Kurdes*, p. 166; further genealogical information in Ḳormūjī, *Ḥaqāyeq*, pp. 293f.). He was born at Sardāšt, southwest of Mahābād, in 1207/1792-93. Little is known about his youth. He married one of Amīr(-e) Kabīr's daughters, born from Amīr Kabīr's first wife (Eqbāl, "Azīz Kān," p. 61), with whom he had three sons. His son Sayf-al-dīn Khan (d. 1308/1891-92) governed Sāvōjbolāḡ several times and was succeeded as head of the Mokrīs by his son Ḥosayn Khan, who was killed when the Ottomans invaded Sāvōjbolāḡ in 1332/1914 (ibid., pp. 61f.). 'Azīz Khan went to Tabrīz in the attendance of his elder brother. As he was literate and had a good handwriting, he went into service in the sixth regiment (*fawj-e šešom*) of Azarbaijan at Tabrīz. He was in command of this regiment as *sarhang* at the protracted siege of Herat in 1253-54/1837-39. On behalf of Moḥammad Shah, he spent two days in vain negotiations with the besieged Yār Moḥammad Khan and Kāmrān Mīrzā. Left without any important political function after his Herat mission, he took an interest in Sufism (*faqr o darvīšī*), but at the same time began cultivating several influential personalities at the court (see Eqbāl, art. cit., p. 40; Bāmdād, loc. cit.). In 1256/1840-41, the people of Fārs rebelled against Ferīdūn Mīrzā Farmānfarmā, and Moḥammad Shah sent Mīrzā Nabī (Nabīy) Khan Qazvīnī to Shiraz. Upon Mīrzā Naẓar-'Alī Ḥakīm-



bāšī's recommendation, Nabī Khan brought 'Azīz Khan with him as a consultant (*rīš-safīd*) and took over the administration of Fārs. Again in 1259/1843 Nabī Khan took with him 'Azīz Khan to Fārs. Nabī Khan was succeeded the next year by Ḥosayn Khan Moqaddam Marāga'ī Ājūdānbāšī who was appointed governor of Fārs and granted the title of *šāheb ektīār*. Through Ḥakīm-bāšī's support, 'Azīz Khan remained in office and Ḥosayn Khan, whom he knew from Tabrīz, made him first his consultant, then *taḥwīldār*, and finally *sarhang* of the fourth regiment of Tabrīz, located in Fārs. Ḥosayn Khan Šāheb Ektīār (later Neẓām-al-dawla) remained governor of Fārs until Moḥammad Shah's death in September, 1264/1848 and 'Azīz Khan remained at his service there (see Fasā'ī, I, p. 299; Bāmdād, op. cit., p. 328).

After Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah ascended the throne and made Mīrzā Taqī Khan Amīr Neẓām (*Amīr Kabīr*) his grand vizier (*atābak-e a'zam*) in October, 1848, the people of Shiraz rebelled against Ḥosayn Khan Neẓām-al-dawla. 'Azīz Khan played an important role as negotiator between the opposing parties (Fasā'ī, I, pp. 30ff.). This led Amīr Kabīr to recognize his value and name him *ājūdānbāšī-e koll-e 'asāker* (see *ĀJŪDĀN-BĀŠĪ*), in spite of his hostility towards 'Azīz Khan's protectors, Neẓām-al-dawla and Ḥakīm-bāšī. On the occasion of the Babi uprising of Zanjān led by Mollā Moḥammad-'Alī Zanjānī (begun in Rajab, 1266/April, 1850), Amīr Kabīr dispatched 'Azīz Khan to Zanjān to quell the revolt and, at the same time, to act as ambassador to Yerevan, where Prince Alexander Pavlovitch was putting down a local rebellion. After trying first to negotiate with the Babis and then to attack them, both in vain, 'Azīz Khan left it to Moḥammad Khan Amīr Tūmān, head of the troops in Zanjān, to suppress them and went himself to Yerevan (Kormūjī, op. cit., pp. 74f.; Eqbāl, art. cit., pp. 46ff.; Bāmdād, op. cit., p. 329), where he was warmly welcomed. Returning to Tehran on 9 Jomādā I 1267/12 March 1851, he was granted a cordial audience by the shah (Eqbāl, art. cit., pp. 47f.).

During the shah's journey to 'Erāq-e 'Ajam accompanied by Amīr Kabīr (Rajab to Du'l-ḥejja, 1267/May to October, 1851), 'Azīz Khan was in command of the army and the citadel (Arg) at Tehran. The newly created police force of Tehran was entrusted to his son 'Alī Khan, who had Kurdish and other tribal forces under his command (Nikitine, op. cit., p. 166). After Amīr Kabīr's dismissal in Moḥarram, 1268/November, 1851, 'Azīz Khan remained in service. Having by now mastered the art of political survival, despite the enmity of the new *šadr-e a'zam*, Mīrzā Āqā Khan Nūrī, he was promoted to *sardār-e koll-e 'asāker* (commander in chief of the army) in an official ceremony on 3 Du'l-qa'da



1269/8 August 1853. In the same month, he organized for the shah an impressive military parade at Solṭānīya (Eqbāl, art. cit., pp. 49f.). In 1268/1852 ‘Azīz Khan personally organized the execution of the Babi Fāṭema Barajānī Qorrat-al-‘ayn in Tehran. Among other important functions, he was then entrusted with the administration of the [Dar al-Fonūn](#) at Tehran.

In 1270/1853-54, the Russian ambassador Prince Dolgorouky convinced Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah in a private interview to side with the Russians against the Ottomans and their allies in the coming Crimean war. Neither the shah nor Mīrzā Āqā Khan (who discovered this secret arrangement only later) was able, or willing, to adopt a clear pro-Russian policy. Two armies were sent to the Ottoman border—one to Kermānšāh and one, under ‘Azīz Khan’s command, to Azarbaijan—but had no military success. In the same year, ‘Azīz Khan was put in charge of the administration of Azarbaijan until the new governor arrived (see Eqbāl, art. cit., pp. 50f.). In his absence, Mīrzā Āqā Khan kept intriguing with courtiers and the shah’s favorite Jeyrān Kānom against ‘Azīz Khan, which led to ‘Azīz Khan’s dismissal by the shah on 20 Šawwāl 1273/13 June 1857. His complete disgrace was announced in a court ceremony by ‘Alī Khan Ḥājeb-al-dawla, the murderer of Amīr Kabīr (ibid., pp. 52f.). No precise charges, however, were leveled against him. ‘Azīz Khan was cashiered, jailed, and asked to justify his accounts for four year’s administration in Tabrīz (Gobineau, *Les dépêches*, pp. 107ff., no. 35). In Moḥarram, 1274/August-September, 1857, he was ordered to retire to Sardašt, but even there Mīrzā Āqā Khan did not leave him in peace. He dispatched Mīrzā Faẓlallāh Nūrī to Azarbaijan to summon the ailing ‘Azīz Khan to Tabrīz to prosecute and harass him (see Nāder Mīrzā, *Tārīko joḡrāfi*, pp. 208f.).

After Mīrzā Āqā Khan was removed from office on 20 Moḥarram 1275/30 August 1858, Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah entrusted the newly-created ministry of war (*wezārat-e jang; sepahsālārī-e qošūn*) to Mīrzā Moḥammad Khan Kešīkčī-bāšī. As soon as he was informed of ‘Azīz Khan’s recovery from illness, the shah reinstated him in his former dignities and conferred upon him increasing responsibilities in Azarbaijan, where he became general manager (*pīškār*) for the *wālī* (governor-general) Bahrām Mīrzā, and in Tehran, where he was member of the cabinet in 1276/1859-60. When the governorship of Azarbaijan was transferred to the crown prince Moẓaffer-al-dīn Mīrzā in 1277/1860-61, ‘Azīz Khan replaced him as minister of war and head of the armed forces, but lost his *pīškārī* of Azarbaijan. He then aspired towards high responsibilities in the retinue of the crown prince at Tabrīz, where he had accumulated



considerable wealth and influence: *pīškārs* who did not follow his advice did not remain in office for long. In 1285/1868-69, the shah sent Ṭahmāsb Mīrzā Mo’ayyed-al-dawla to Tabrīz with full powers to jail Mīrzā Qahramān Amīn-e Laškar, who was ‘Azīz Khan’s collaborator. He sent a detailed report on the two men to Tehran and demanded that Amīn-e Laškar should pay back 70,000 *tūmāns*. ‘Azīz Khan interceded, accepting responsibility for the money. After further checking, the accountants found the money owed to be 150,000 *tūmāns*, which ‘Azīz Khan was unable to pay. His properties were then confiscated and he was exiled for about one year to Solṭānābād (present-day Arāk), receiving only a small gratuity (Eqbāl, art. cit., pp. 55ff., quoting Nāder Mīrzā).

In 1286/1869-70, Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah restored his properties to him and entrusted ‘Azīz Khan with the governorship of Māzandarān, the command of the fourth army of Tabrīz, and the governorship of Sāvōjbolāg (Eqbāl, art. cit., pp. 54ff.).

‘Azīz Khan was for the last time given the *pīškārī* of Azarbaijan in 1287/1870-71. But he was old and had no strength to cope with the courtiers surrounding the young crown prince, Moẓaffer-al-dīn. He died at Tabrīz on 18 Šawwāl 1287/11 January 1871. Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah, who was on a pilgrimage to Karbalā’, is said to have been upset by the news of ‘Azīz Khan’s death (ibid., pp. 58f.). ‘Azīz Khan’s tomb lies near the Emāmzāda-ye Ḥamza in Tabrīz (see Qorrā’ī, “Maḥall-e qabr-e ‘Azīz Kān,” pp. 69f.).

Ḳormūjī praises ‘Azīz Khan’s sense of justice and chivalrous qualities (op. cit., pp. 294ff.; see also Eqbāl, art. cit., p. 59, and Bāmdād, op. cit., pp. 333f.). According to Gobineau (op. cit., pp. 108ff., 112), on the other hand, ‘Azīz Khan reached his position as head of the army only through his incompetence. Eastwick saw him at Tabrīz in September, 1860, and described him as “a large brawny man, with bloodshot eyes, and inflamed features . . . he had lately walled up fourteen robbers, two of them with their heads downward, and so left them to perish.” Since he was Sunnite and of humble origin Amīr Kabīr’s support was decisive for his future ascendancy (Eqbāl, art. cit., pp. 59f., quoting Eastwick).

For portraits and photographs of ‘Azīz Khan see, e.g., Eqbāl, art. cit. and Bāmdād, op. cit. A square at Tehran which used to be part of ‘Azīz Khan’s living quarters bears his name: the Čahār-rāh-e ‘Azīz Khan in the neighborhood of the Arg (Nikitine, op. cit., p. 166).



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