



BAHMAN MĪRZĀ

BAHMAN MĪRZĀ (fl. 1225/1810-1301/1883-84), the fourth son of 'Abbās Mīrzā and brother of Moḥammad Shah (r. 1250-64/1834-48). After Moḥammad Mīrzā succeeded Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah, he appointed Bahman Mīrzā (at the time governor of Ardabīl) governor of Tehran (19 Ša'bān 1250/21 December 1834). Later Bahman Mīrzā became the governor of Hamadān and, when his uterine brother Qahramān Mīrzā died, succeeded him as governor of Azarbaijan.

During the last years of Moḥammad Shah's reign, Iran was in a state of political and social turmoil. Debilitated by gout, the shah had turned the government over to his grand vizier Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī. While Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī was taking control of the kingdom, in Khorasan Moḥammad Shah's maternal uncle Allāhyār Khan Āṣaf-al-Dawla was plotting against the shah and grand vizier. Apparently the plot was to proceed as follows: Āṣaf al-Dawla's son Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Sālār, with the help of his brothers was to wrest control of Khorasan from Moḥammad Shah and to gather a large force of cavalry and infantry to march on Tehran. After they had taken the capital, they were to replace Moḥammad Shah with Bahman Mīrzā (E'temād-al-Saltāna, *Montaẓam-e nāṣerī*, 1300/1883, III, p. 188). Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī got wind of the conspiracy and moved to stop it. Though Āṣaf al-Dawla used the pretext of going on pilgrimage to escape the country through Azarbaijan, the *sālār* and his brothers went ahead with their revolt, effectively taking control of Khorasan and declaring their independence from the central government (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* I, p. 196). Bahman Mīrzā, who may have known of and have been an accomplice in his uncle's plot, learned that Ƙosrow Khan Gorjī had



been dispatched to Kurdistan to subdue a revolt by Reẓāqolī Khan Ardalān (a grandson of Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah). This report was particularly ominous for Bahman Mīrẓā, who had heard that Ẓosrow Khan's route was to take him through Zanjān for the purpose of arresting him. Well aware of Ẓosrow Khan's reputation for cruelty, Bahman Mīrẓā made his way by a byroad to Tehran. Apparently unsure about Bahman Mīrẓā's intentions, Ḥājī Mīrẓā Āqāsī ordered Ẓosrow Khan to travel to Zanjān to force the prince into a rash act, which is what happened (Nāder Mīrẓā, *Tārīk ojoḡrāfiā-ye Dār-al-salṭana-ye Tabrīz*, Tehran, 1323/1905, p. 196). In Tehran, Bahman Mīrẓā tried to see Ḥājī Mīrẓā Āqāsī at the 'Abbāsābād fort, but the grand vizier would not admit him as he was one of the conspirators. Though Moḡammad Shah eventually gave Bahman Mīrẓā sanctuary, his behavior toward him was anything but friendly, and the prince still felt threatened by the machinations of the grand vizier; thus, one day while out riding, he took refuge in the Russian embassy.

The Czarist government, which saw harboring a Persian prince as an important element in its foreign policy toward Iran, granted Bahman Mīrẓā asylum, and several days later the prince left Iran for Tiflis accompanied by his wives, children, secretaries, and servants. After a little more than three years in Tiflis, Bahman Mīrẓā took up residence in Šūšī (capital of Qarābāḡ) where he spent the rest of his exile and died in 1301/1883-84. Throughout this relatively long exile, he enjoyed the protection and support of the Czarist government, which stipulated for him a yearly stipend of 30,000 silver rubles (= 15,000 *tomans*) and each year gave him another princely sum under another heading (Nāder Mīrẓā, loc. cit.; M. T. Sepehr, *Nāseḡ al-tawārīḡ (Tārīḡ-e Qājārīya)*, Tehran, 1385/1965, III, p. 118).

Nāder Mīrẓā (loc. cit.) considers Bahman Mīrẓā innocent of the charge of plotting against Moḡammad Shah (for which he blames Ḥājī Mīrẓā Āqāsī and attributes the accounts of Bahman Mīrẓā's ambition by Reẓāqolī Khan Hedāyat (*Rawẓat al-ṣafā-ye nāṣerī X*, Tehran, 1339 Š./1960, pp. 341f.) and M. T. Sepehr (*Nāseḡ III*, pp. 118-23) to the authors' desire to please the monarch. Nāder Mīrẓā describes Bahman Mīrẓā as "dignified and reserved, a man of means and leisure," and quite astute in amassing wealth. According to him Bahman Mīrẓā's good government in Tabrīz brought peace and security to Azarbaijan and earned him popularity.

Bahman Mīrẓā had more than 100 children and grandchildren, and his sons and grandsons continued to serve the Czarist government and army. One of them, Dārāb Mīrẓā, even tried to capture Zanjān the year that the Russians



occupied northern Iran (1909), but was repulsed by Constitutionalist forces (‘A. Navā’i, *Fatḥ-e Tehrān*, Tehran, 1356 Š./1977, pp. 223-40).

Bahman Mīrzā’s residence in Czarist territory gave the Russian government new incentive to meddle in the internal affairs of Iran. On one occasion, at the beginning of the reign of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah after three designated crown princes had died in childhood, the Russians insisted that their own royal retainer be installed as Nāyeb-al-Salṭana (‘A. Navā’i, “Walī’ahdhā-ye Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah,” *Yādgar* 3/10, 1326 Š./1947, pp. 54-67; the words of Mīrzā Āqā Khan Nūrī cited by Count de Gobineau (report dated 3 Šawwāl 1273/7 June 1857 in vol. 28 of the documents relating to Iran in the French Foreign Office) explicitly refer to this meddling: “A crown prince must be declared as soon as possible, for the Russian chargé has been to see the shah several times to insist on behalf of his government that Bahman Mīrzā be named Nāyeb-al-Salṭana” (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* I, p. 197).

Bahman Mīrzā was a man of letters and a patron of literature; authors and translators dedicated many works to him. Always amiable and generous in his dealings with others, he gave scholars, poets, and artists a special place of honor. While residing in Tabrīz, he asked Mollā ‘Abd-al-Laṭīf Tasūjī and Mīrzā Moḥammad-‘Alī Khan Šams-al-Šo‘arā’ Sorūš Eṣfahānī, to translate the *Alf layla wa layla* into Persian. Tasūjī rendered the tales into elegant Persian prose, while Sorūš culled the works of classical Persian poets to find, as best he could, analogues to the original Arabic verse. Where he failed to do so, he would translate the Arabic into Persian verse himself (M. Qazvīnī, “Wafayāt-e mo‘āṣerīn,” *Yādgar* 3/4, 1946, p. 8).

An avid reader and bibliophile, Bahman Mīrzā possessed a magnificent library. At the suggestion of his brother Moḥammad Mīrzā, he compiled a *taḍkera* and named it *Taḍkera-ye moḥammadšāhī* after him. He began the work in 1249/1833 while governor of Ardabīl and enlarged it in 1256/1841 after stints as governor of Tehran and Tabrīz gave him access to more and better sources. *Taḍkera-ye moḥammadšāhī* is divided into three *reštās*; the first deals with 123 past poets, the second with the poetry of the king, his offspring, and two other poets (13 poets), and the third with fifty-seven contemporary poets. The book is of little value for biographical information but is replete with extensive selections of poetry (e.g., 4,500 verses from Ferdowsī alone; see Goļčīn-e Ma‘ānī, *Taḍkerahā* I, pp. 330-38).



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On British efforts to repatriate Bahman Mīrzā, see F. Ādamīyat, *Amīr Kabīr o Īrān*, 4th ed., Tehran, 1354 Š./1975, pp. 200-02, 235, 465.

On the *Tadkera-ye moḥammadšāhī*, see also Storey, I/2, pp. 893-95.

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