



BAKTĪĀRĪ X. NAJAFQOLĪ KHAN ŞAMŞĀM-AL-SALTĀNA

Najafqolī Khan **Şamşām-al-Saltāna**, an *ilḳān* of the Baktīārī tribe and prime minister of Iran after Moḥammad-‘Alī Shah was deposed. The second son of Ḥosaynqolī Khan *Īlḳānī*, Najafqolī was born in 1270/1853-54 and was educated to the point of literacy while with the tribe. After his father was killed by Zell-al-Solṭān, the reigns of Baktīārī government fell into the hands of Najafqolī’s paternal uncles. When Zell-al-Solṭān was removed from the governorate of Isfahan in 1305/1887-88 and Najafqolī’s elder brother Esfandiār Khan was released from prison and made *ilḳān*, Najafqolī became his deputy (*ilbegī*). With his brother’s death in 1331/1913, Najafqolī assumed the office of *ilḳān* with the title Şamşām-al-Saltāna (the “sword of the sultanate”) and was given the governorate of the Čahār Maḥāl of the Baktīārī region.

After the bombardment of the Majles building, Mīrzā Moḥammad Khan Kāšī was appointed governor of Isfahan by Moḥammad-‘Alī Shah; the new governor ended Şamşām-al-Saltāna’s short tenure as ruler of the Čahār Maḥāl region. It was not long, however, before the people of Isfahan, who had had their fill of the shah’s tyranny, were emboldened by news of the successful resistance against royal forces in Tabrīz. In Jomādā I, 1327/May-June, 1909, acting on the instructions of his younger brother, ‘Aliqolī Khan, who was in Europe at the time and in contact with expatriate liberationist circles, and after obtaining the agreement of Ḥājī Āqā Nūr-Allāh, an influential Isfahani *mojtahed* (spiritual leader) and supporter of constitutional liberty, and



assurance of support from his paternal cousin Ḥājī Ebrāhīm Khan Żargām-al-Salṭana, Şamşām-al-Salṭana attacked and took Isfahan with a force of Baktiārī cavalry. The Qajar governor having fled without resisting, Şamşām-al-Salṭana became the governor of the province. After learning of the fall of Isfahan, Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah first delegated Farmānfarmā to confront Şamşām-al-Salṭana; however, when Farmānfarmā declined, the shah turned to several loyal Baktiārī khans residing in the capital, among them Amīr Mofakḵam Sardār Żafar, and ultimately appointed Sardār Aşjaʿ to go to Isfahan. The loyalist khans started out for Isfahan, but, on the pretext of not having the necessary supplies, stopped near Kāşān. In the meantime, Sardār Asʿad ʿAlīqolī Khan, who had returned from Europe via Moḥammara, was sending messages to the Baktiārī khans asking them to refrain from familial warfare. He went to Baktiārī territory to gather forces and entered Isfahan. Around the time the army of the north was making for Tehran, Sardār Asʿad left Isfahan, also headed for the capital, and accompanied by Şamşām-al-Salṭana's cavalry. The two armies finally took Tehran and forced the shah's resignation.

Sometime later, with rumors rife in Tehran that Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah was preparing to attack Iran, the cabinet of Sepahdār fell and Constitutionalist leaders, who needed Baktiārī cavalry to repel the shah's impending invasion and put down other rebellions, chose Şamşām-al-Salṭana as prime minister with the portfolio of minister of war. With the help of the Majles, Şamşām-al-Salṭana announced a 100,000-toman reward for the capture of Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah. The American financial agent W. Morgan Shuster (q.v.) also greatly aided the effort to finance the war and military preparations. Finally, with the killing of Arşad-al-Dawla and with Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah's attack neutralized, the Russians, using the pretext that Shuster's efforts ran counter to the financial and nonmaterial interests of the Czarist state, sent a note of protest to Iran and moved their troops from Rašt to Qazvīn. Foreign Minister Woṭūq-al-Dawla visited the Russian embassy to apologize; however, the Russians told him that another ultimatum was in the offing. They demanded that Shuster and his colleagues leave Iran within forty-eight hours, stating that Iran had no right to hire foreign agents without the approval of the Russian and British governments. The British government sided with the Russians; however, the nation of Iran to a person stood up against this presumption, and the Majles rejected the ultimatum. The terrified Regent (*nāyeb-al-salṭana*) Nāşer-al-Molk and Prime Minister Şamşām-al-Salṭana, however, accepted it and dissolved the second Majles (2 Moḥarram 1330/23 December 1911); as a result, Şamşām-al-Salṭana gained absolute control of the government and Baktiārī influence



spread on all levels. During this period, the Russians bombarded the cupola of the Emām Rezā shrine and massacred people in Rašt, Tabrīz, and Urmia. In the south, the British, for their part, were eroding the rights of the people and the interests of the Iranian state. A year and a half later in Šafar, 1331/January, 1913, the government of Šamšām-al-Salṭana fell; he retired to his home until Jomādā II, 1337/March, 1918, when he again became prime minister. Four months later, however, because he was unable to cope with a severe famine and restore order in the country, Aḥmad Shah asked him to resign. When he declined, the shah removed him from office and asked Woṭūq-al-Dawla to form a new cabinet; Šamšām-al-Salṭana, though confined to his home, continued to assert that he was prime minister.

Two years later he was appointed governor of Khorasan in the government of Qawām-al-Salṭana; however, because of the revolt of Colonel Moḥammad-Taqī Khan Pesyān in Mašhad against Qawām-al-Salṭana and Šamšām-al-Salṭana's devotion to Moḥammad-Taqī Khan, he refused to go to Khorasan (Kordād, 1300 Š./May-June, 1921). Šamšām-al-Salṭana spent the last years of his life in Čahār Maḥāl of the Baḳtīārī region and died there in 1309 Š./1930 at the age of 82. He was buried with military honors in the Taḳt-e Pūlād cemetery in Isfahan.

Šamšām-al-Salṭana was a sincere man, passionately devoted to the cause of constitutional government. However, true to his tribal background, he ruled the government as a chief; he was also a generous and forgiving man. During his prime-ministership, a commercial council composed of six merchants and six representatives of the state was formed and the gendarmerie of Iran was created by Swedish officers.

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