



DONBOLĪ

DONBOLĪ, name of a turkicized Kurdish tribe in the *Ḳoy* and *Salmās* regions of northwestern Azarbaijan and of the leading family of *Ḳoy* since the 16th century. Šaraf-al-Dīn Bedlīsī (tr., pt. 1, p. 169) reported that, according to the “most authentic” theory, the Donbolī came from *Boḳtān*, a region between *Siirt* and *Cizre* in what is now southeastern Turkey, and the tribe was thus called *Donbolī-e Boḳt*. Its first leader seems to have been a certain 'Īsā Beg, whose descendants were known as the 'Īsā Begī. The Donbolī were supposedly Yazīdīs for a considerable time before becoming Shi'ite Muslims (for other theories about the origin and early history of the Donbolī, see Nikitine, pp. 110-18). The 'Īsā Begī held the district of *Sokmanābād* (modern *Zūravā*) some years before the establishment of the *Āḳ Qoyunlū* dynasty in 780/1378. Shaikh Aḥmad Beg, a descendant of 'Īsā Beg, became an important official in the *Āḳ Qoyunlū* administration and conquered both the fortress of *Bāy* (which, for a long time, remained under Donbolī control) and a part of *Hakkārī* territory southeast of *Lake Van* (Bedlīsī, tr., pt. 1, pp. 169-70).

In the Safavid period. The Safavid shah Ṭahmāsb I (930-84/1524-76) combined *Ḳoy* with *Sokmanābād* in a single district (*eyālat*) and named Shaikh Aḥmad Beg's grandson Ḥājī Beg governor, with the honorary title *ḥājī solṭān*. He also entrusted Ḥājī Beg with the defense of the frontiers of the empire, including the province of *Van*. In 955/1548 *Eskandar Pasha*, governor of *Van*, at the instigation of the Kurdish chief Ḥasan Beg, attacked and killed Ḥājī Beg in *Ḳoy* (Bedlīsī, pt. 1, pp. 170-72; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Seddon, II, p. 153). Donbolī allegiance to the shah then became increasingly tenuous, and Shah Ṭahmāsb's



troops, sent to subdue the tribe by force, massacred a large number of its leaders. Manṣūr Beg, a nephew of Ḥājī Beg, survived and fled to the Ottoman empire, where he was appointed governor of the *sanjāq* of Qotūr Deresī (Qotūr valley) and Bargīrī and was able to gather the remnants of the Donbolī tribe under his leadership (Bedlīsī, tr., pt. 1, pp. 172-73).

During the reign of Shah ‘Abbās I (996-1038/1588-1629) most of the Donbolī once more shifted their allegiance to Persia, and several tribal leaders achieved distinction. Among them were Jamšīd Solṭān, who participated in the shah’s expedition to Balk in the summer of 1011/1602 and was appointed governor of Marand after the capture of Tabrīz in the autumn of 1012/1603; Salmān Solṭān, who was for many years governor of Čürs and Salmās and was a hero of the Persian defense of Azarbaijan against the Ottomans in the summer of 1025/1616; Ṭahmāsbqolī Šīra, who in 1035/1625-26 set off on a diplomatic mission to Istanbul but was murdered en route, allegedly by Ottoman officials who “did not consider it in their interests to allow the ambassador to reach Istanbul”; Maqṣūd Solṭān, governor of Barkošaṭ in Qarābāg and Qelič Beg, who received a fief from Shah ‘Abbās (Eskandar Beg, II, pp. 643, 783, 882, 901-02, 1031, 1057, 1064, 1086; tr. Savory, II, p. 832-33, 847, 980, 1117-18, 1252, 1281, 1287-88, 1313).

In the 18th century. Najafqolī Khan (1125-99/1713-85), the son of Šahbāz Khan Donbolī, entered the service of Nāder Shah (1148-60/1736-47) after the latter took Koy from the Ottomans in 1147/1734 (Bedlīsī, repr., p. 399; Nāder Mīrzā, p. 154) and was soon appointed chief musketeer (*tofangčī āqāsī*). He accompanied Nāder Shah on his military expeditions to India, Georgia, and Dāgestān and while in India was raised to the rank of *amīr al-omarā*; Donbolī, 1349 Š./1970, I, pp. 58-68; Marvī, p. 999 n. 3). He maintained his position under Nāder Shah’s successors.

In late 1163/1750, when Āzād Khan Afġān took control of Tabrīz and Urmia, Najafqolī Khan’s nephew Šahbāz Khan Donbolī joined with several influential Afšār khans and leaders of the mountain tribes of Azarbaijan in his support. Šahbāz Khan performed many services for Āzād Khan, but at the battle of Urmia in the spring of 1170/1757 he switched sides and pledged allegiance to Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Qājār. In early 1171/late 1757, at the head of 6,000 men, he helped Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan take Isfahan but withdrew his support after the Qājār leader failed to wrest Shiraz from Karīm Khan Zand (1163-93/1750-79) a few months later. Šahbāz Khan then concentrated his energies on extending his own power base in Azarbaijan; he and Najafqolī



Khan already controlled much of the province, but an alliance with Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Khan Afšār Arašlū strengthened them further. When, in the spring of 1172/1759, Āzād Khan passed through Azarbaijan after a period of exile in Baghdad, Šahbāz Khan and Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Khan defeated him at Marāğa. A year later the two leaders prevented Karīm Khan Zand from seizing Tabrīz and forced him to withdraw from Azarbaijan, then a few months later defeated Āzād Khan once more near Tabrīz. In the spring of 1175/1762 Karīm Khan Zand again invaded Azarbaijan and took Šahbāz Khan and Najafqolī Khan's son [ʿAbd-al-Razzāq Beg](#) to Shiraz as hostages. There Šahbāz Khan once more switched sides and was appointed governor of Koy and Salmās, and his daughter Šāḥeb Solṭān Kānom was married to Karīm Khan's son Abu'l-Faṭḥ Khan (Perry, pp. 49, 57, 66, 68, 70, 73, 81, 83-84, 88, 92, 98).

In 1177/1763 Karīm Khan appointed Najafqolī Khan governor of large parts of Azarbaijan and in 1183/1769 governor of the province of Tabrīz (Nāder Mīrzā, pp. 154, 249, 271). At a time when the central government was weak and in decline Najafqolī Khan kept the province of Azarbaijan completely under control (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* VI, pp. 19, 49, 170, 283). When Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Qājār captured Azarbaijan in 1171/1757-58 he appointed his own minor son [Aqā Moḥammad Khan](#) but appointed Najafqolī Khan and ʿAlī Khan Qīlījlū joint guardians. After a severe earthquake in 1194/1780 Najafqolī Khan devoted himself to rebuilding Tabrīz. He constructed a strong fortified city wall, with eight gates; built the Daftar-kāna-ye šāhī, the government palace, which continued in use under the Qajars; and enlarged and restored the small Moʿīnī mosque, which became known as Maqām-e Šāḥeb-al-Amr. Najafqolī Khan died in 1199/1785 and was buried in Najaf near the tomb of Imam ʿAlī (Āqāsī, 1350 Š./1971, p. 191; Donbolī, 1349 Š./1970, I, pp. 86-89; idem, 1350 Š./1971, II, pp. 263-64; Nāder Mīrzā, pp. 152 ff.; Rūbayānī, pp. 370-71; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* IV, pp. 333-34). He was succeeded briefly at Tabrīz by his son Qodādād Khan.

Šahbāz Khan had died in 1187/1773 and was succeeded as governor of Koy by his brother Aḥmad Khan. Aḥmad Khan was killed in 1200/1786, and his son Ḥosaynqolī Khan became governor (Āqāsī, 1350 Š./1971, pp. 209-10; Rūbayānī, p. 373; Nāder Mīrzā, p. 151; Rīāḥī, p. 20). In the spring of 1205/1791 he concluded a friendship pact with Āqā Moḥammad Khan Qājār (1193-1212/1779-97) and, in addition to being reconfirmed as governor of Koy, was appointed governor of Tabrīz, Ardabīl, and other parts of Azarbaijan (Fasāʿī, I, p. 232; Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-šafā* I, p. 230; Donbolī, 1351 Š./1972, p. 21; Nāder Mīrzā, p. 156; Rīāḥī, p. 21; Āqāsī, 1350 Š./1971, p. 209). The next year he



accompanied Āqā Moḥammad Khan on a campaign against Ebrāhīm Ḳalīl Khan Javānšīr, governor of Qarābāg, and was rewarded with the title *amīr al-omarā*’ of Azarbaijan and the governorship of Qarāča Dāg. But he apparently aroused suspicion by marrying Javānšīr’s daughter, and Aqā Moḥammad Khan appointed his brother Ja‘farqolī Khan to govern Ḳoy and other towns of Azarbaijan (Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* I, pp. 309, 329; Rūbayānī, pp. 373-74). When Fath-‘Alī Shah succeeded to the Qajar throne in 1211/1797 Ḥosaynqolī Khan once more came into favor and was reappointed governor of Ḳoy, Tabrīz, and Qarāča Dāg.

During Ḥosaynqolī Khan’s terms as governor of Ḳoy he built several mosques, including the great Masjed-e Ḳān. He completed the Askariyīn tomb at Samarra in Iraq, begun by his father (Nāder Mīrzā, p. 151). In Tabrīz he restored the congregational mosque, which had been completely destroyed in an earthquake, and built three additional mosques and several baths (Āl-e Dāwūd, pp. 79-80, 107; Āqāsī, 1350 Š./1971, p. 220). Ḥosaynqolī Khan was also a patron of learning and poetry; among the literary men in his service were Abu’l-Ḥasan Ḥarīf Jandaqī (d. 1230/1814), who composed *qaṣīdas* in his praise (Āl-e Dāwūd, pp. 93-99, 113), and Mīrzā Mo-ḥammad-Ḥasan Fānī Zonūzī, author of *Rīāz al-jenna* (partial ed. ‘A. Rafī‘ī, Qom, 1371 Š./1992) and *Baḥr al-olūm* (unpublished). Ḥosaynqolī Khan died in 1213/1798 and was buried in the tomb at Sāmarrā; Fath-‘Alī Khan Ṣabā Kāšānī composed the *qaṣīda* engraved on his tombstone (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* I, p. 468).

When news of his brother’s death reached Ja‘farqolī Khan he assumed his brother’s posts. After a period of rebellion he appealed to Fath-‘Alī Shah for forgiveness but rebelled again in 1214/1799. The crown prince, ‘Abbās Mīrzā, then marched on Ḳoy, and in September Ja‘farqolī Khan, with an army of 15,000 horse met him at Dīlmaqān, near Salmas but was defeated (Brydges, pp. 39, 50, 68, 71-72, 88-90). For the rest of his life he served the Russian government and on 10 December 1806 was appointed governor of the district of Šekkī in eastern Transcaucasia. He died in 1229/1814 and was succeeded by his son Esmā‘īl Khan, who died in 1819 (Minorsky, “*Shekkī*,” p. 347; Jawāher-al-Kalām, p. 216).

Other leaders of the Donbolī tribe had remained loyal to the Qajars, and several became important figures in the 19th century. Foremost among them was a great-grandson of Najafqolī Khan by the same name, who rebuilt the citadel at Tabrīz in 1224/1809 (Minorsky, “*Tabrīz*,” p. 590). The best-known member of the Donbolī tribe in the 20th century was Ḥājī Mīrzā Yaḥyā Imam



Jom'a Koyī, who died in 1324 Š./1945 (Mojtahedī, pp. 24-26).

According to J. M. Jouannin, the tribe numbered some 12,000 families at the time of Ja'farqolī Khan (Dupré, II, p. 459), but only about forty years later Lady Sheil (p. 396) estimated their number at a mere 2,000 families. Today the Donbolī have been sedentary for a long time and have completely lost their tribal identity. Apparently, when the Donbolī of Koy and Salmās moved to northwestern Persia, some families remained behind in southeastern Anatolia. This group was mentioned by Bedlīsī (pt. I, p. 174) in the 16th century, as well as by Carsten Niebuhr (p. 419), who reported in the second half of the 18th century that it was located south of Dīārbakr and comprised about 500 tents. Also in the 18th century there was a group of Donbolī Kurds (presumably not turkicized) in the province of Yerevan (*Taḍkerat al-Molūk*, ed. Minorsky, pp. 101, 166).

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