



# ESKANDAR BEG TORKAMĀN MONŠĪ

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**ESKANDAR BEG TORKAMĀN MONŠĪ**, author of *Tārīk-e ‘ālamārā-ye ‘abbāsī* (q.v.), a history of the reign of Shah ‘Abbās I. Internal evidence indicates that Eskandar Beg was born in 968/1560 or 969/1561: He was twenty-six years old when he fought on the side of Ḥamza Mīrzā at the battle of Şā’en Qal’a (spring of 994/1586) and seventy years old in 1038/1628-29 when he completed his history (I, pp. 336, 1095, tr. Savory, pp. 472-73, 1325). The statement in the *Mer’āt al-‘ālam* (apud Storey, I/1, p. 310) that Eskandar Beg died in the year in which he completed his history (1028/1628-9) appears to be incorrect. In the introduction to the chronicle, formerly termed *Dayl-e Tārīk-e ‘ālamārā-ye ‘abbāsī* and now known as the *Kolāṣat al-sīar*, “it is stated that when Iskandar-munshī brought his *‘Ālamārā* to completion, he was requested to extend his famous annals over the reign of Shah ‘Abbās I’s successor, Şafī. After some hesitation, the aged historian (then 70 years old) started on his new work” (Minorsky, p. 540). The chronicle, however, was completed by Moḥammad b. Ma’sūm b. K̄vājagī Eşfahānī, who says that he covered ten years of the reign of Shah Şafī. Since Şafī reigned for fourteen years (1038-52/1629-42), it seems virtually certain that the first four years of his reign were recorded by Eskandar Beg, who must, therefore, have died about 1043/1633 (Storey, I/2, pp. 1280-81).

Few personal details are known about the life of Eskandar Beg. He started his career in the Safavid bureaucracy by studying bookkeeping (*‘elm-e sīāq*), but



he soon gave this up as unworthy of his talents and obtained an appointment in the royal chancellery (*daftar-kāna-ye homāyūn*) and started at the Dīvān-e wekālat. Shortly later he was transferred to the Dīvān-e enšā', where he worked for some time under Mawlānā Moḥammad-Amīn Monšī. His promotion was rapid when Qāzī Aḥmad was put in charge of the chancellery. In 1001/1592-93 he joined the rank of royal secretaries (*monšīān-e 'ezām*) and from that moment his career in the shah's personal service began (*Ālamārā*, pp. 1-2, 455; tr., 2, p. 628; Qāzī Aḥmad, tr. Minorsky, pp. 97-98). As a result, he was either an eyewitness of many of the events he described or was in a good position to ascertain the truth. He accompanied the Shah on many of his expeditions, and was for a time attached to the retinue of the vizier Ḥātem Beg Ordūbādī (*Ālamārā*, p. 755, tr., p. 948). A collection of his epistles reportedly exists in a manuscript bearing the title *Ketāb tarassol men monšā'āt-e Kāvāja Eskandar Bīg Monšī* (*Ālamārā* II, Afšār's introd., p. seven).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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(for cited works not given in detail, see "Short References"):

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