



ESMĀ'IL KHAN BURBUR

ESMĀ'IL KHAN BURBUR, high ranking military official under the Qajars (b. Rāhjerd, ca. 1800; d. [Bam](#), ca. 1888).

Esmā'il Khan was the elder son of Ḥosayn Solṭān and 'Aziza Kānom from [Shiraz](#). He was also variously known as Qarāčorlu, Bātmānqelij, Āb-anbāri, and Hamadāni (Fasā'i, I, pp. 770-71; Burbur, pp. 26-29).

Around the year 1802, Ḥosayn Solṭān, the father of the infant Esmā'il, faced a serious revolt by the local population in his own estate of Rāhjerd, in the district of [Hamadan](#) (not to be mistaken with the town of the same name halfway between [Arāk](#) and Qom; see Razmārā, p. 201 and map). Ḥosayn Solṭān fled the revolt to seek help from Tehran, but lost his life at Vafs. In order to cut off the long-established Burbur lineage of the domain, the two-year-old infant Esmā'il, who had been found unattended one day outside the ancestral castle, was seized and thrown into the nearby Qara Čāy stream by the hostile villagers. He was fortunate to have been saved by the *kadkodā* (headman), who urged 'Aziza Kānom and the children to leave the estate owing to the intense local animosity towards the family. She accepted, and they went to Hamadān, where Esmā'il lived until his early twenties (Burbur, pp. 6-8).

With the advent of the 1820 war between the Ottoman Sultan Maḥmud II and [Fath-'Ali Shah Qajar](#) (Mikaberidze, I, p. 694), Esmā'il Khan, who was of large stature and great physical strength, was recruited into the army of 'Abbās [Mirzā Qajar](#), crown prince and governor of [Azarbaijan](#) (Burbur, p. 10). In the early months of the second round of Russo-Persian wars of 1826-27, 'Abbās



Mirzā attacked the Russian forces in Tāleš, Qarābāg, and Armenia, captured Ganja, Lankarān, and Šervān, and laid siege to Baku (see [RUSSIA i. Russo-Iranian Relations up to the Bolshevik Revolution](#)). In these battles, Esmā'il Khan showed great courage for which he obtained the rank of *vakil-bāši* (sergeant major). In another battle of the same war, Esmā'il Khan, who was fighting alongside the crown prince, saved him from certain death; in consequence he was promoted to the rank of *solṭān* (chief of tribal contingent; see [ARMY v. Qajar Period](#)) and personal adjutant under the direct command of the prince. From here on, his progress in the military ranks was rapid.

At the outset of the invasion of Tabriz on 24 October 1827, 'Abbās Mirzā was in Tehran, while his family remained in Tabriz. Esmā'il Khan, managed to rescue the family of the crown prince, including the ten-year-old [Firuz Mirzā](#) (later [Noṣrat-al-Dawla Farmānfarmā](#)) and take them safely to Tehran. This further solidified his position as a trusted confidant of the crown prince (Burbur, pp. 10-11). In recompense, he was promoted in rank to *sartip* (lieutenant general) and commanded 'Abbās Mirzā's personal guards accompanying the crown prince in all displacements, including Khorasan, Yazd, and [Kerman](#) (Moḥammad Shah's *farmān*, August 1838; Burbur, p. 11; see also ['ABBĀS MIRZĀ QAJAR](#)).

Esmā'il Khan was by now a prominent and highly respected military figure, and he continued his career even after the death of 'Abbās Mirzā and Fath-'Ali Shah. In the unsuccessful 1838 siege of [Herat](#) by [Moḥammad Shah](#), he commanded both the royal guards and a cavalry regiment of 700 of the Qarāčorlu Turkish-speaking tribe of Kurdish origin (Burbur, p. 12; see also [KURDISH TRIBES](#)), because of which he has been at times erroneously recorded as Esmā'il Khan Qarāčo(r)lu (Fasā'i, I, pp. 770-71). After the Herat episode, he returned to Tehran and was appointed by Moḥammad Shah as *nāẓem-al-eyāla* (regional commandant-general) of Kerman Province (Moḥammad Shah's *farmān*, July 1838). At the beginning of the reign of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, and at behest of Firuz Mirzā Noṣrat-al-Dawla, and of his minister Manučehr Khan Mo'tamed-al-Dawla, Esmā'il Khan was also made regional commandant-general of the province of [Fārs](#) (Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's *farmān*, January 1887; Burbur, p. 12).

Several years of satisfactory high-ranking military service under three shahs enabled Esmā'il Khan to have some of the ancestral domains reinstated. Moḥammad Shah bequeathed to him the estate of Kōluzin in appreciation of services rendered during the siege of Herat (Moḥammad Shah's *farmān*, July



1838), and re-established by royal decree the ownership of the former family estates of Rāhjerd, Āb-anbār, and Uč Tepe (‘Abbās Mirzā’s *farmān*, June 1833; Nāṣer-al-Din Shah’s *farmān*, January, 1887; for the localities, see Markaz; Razmārā, pp. 2, 27 and map). In the 1840s Esmā’il Khan also redeemed the family estate of Kordkord (now Eslāmābād) from ‘Isā Khan Beglarbegi Qajar for the sum of thirty-six thousand tomans where he constructed the fortification of a large castle (see [BURBUR CASTLE](#)).

Esmā’il Khan married twice; his first wife, from Hamadān, gave birth to two sons, Farajallāh Khan and Naṣrallāh Khan. His second wife, Qajar Āgā, from the Qajar ruling family, gave birth to two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥosayn, and four daughters. In the reign of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, Farajallāh Khan the *yāvar* (brigadier) headed the Bahārlu gunners (possibly of the Burbur sub-tribe in the Bahārlu confederacy) and became known as the *šir-e tup-kāna* “lion of the gunnery” (Burbur, p. 15). Farajallāh Khan had three sons and three daughters. His second son ‘Abdallāh Khan Majd-e Neẓām and his children were also known as Qarāčorlu because their grandfather (Esmā’il Khan) had at one time commanded the Qarāčorlu cavalry contingent (Burbur, p. 16).

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