



FATH-‘ALĪ SHAH QĀJĀR

FATH-‘ALĪ SHAH QĀJĀR, the second ruler of the Qajar dynasty (b. Moḥarram 1183/May 1769; d. 19 Jomādā II 1250/ 24 October 1834; [Plate I](#)).

Early life. Fath-‘Alī was the elder of the two sons of Ḥosaynqolī Khan Qovānlū Qājār, known as Jahānsūz (world burner), by the daughter of Moḥammad Āqā ‘Ezz-al-Dīnlū of the Ašāqa-bāš wing of the Qajar tribe (Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 86-87; ‘Azod-al-Dawla, p. 91). Born in Dāmḡān, then his father’s disputed provincial seat, he was called Fath- ‘Alī after his great-grandfather, Fath- ‘Alī Khan Qājār (q.v.), but was given the second name of Bābā Khan with which he was known up to the time of his official accession in 1797. His father being suspect of rebellious ambitions, Bābā Khan was sent at the age of five as a hostage to Karīm Khan Zand’s court in Shiraz, where he joined his senior uncle, Āqā (Āḡā) Moḥammad Khan (q.v.), who also was under Zand surveillance (Jālāl-al-Dīn Mīrzā, III, pp. 142-44). Returning to Dāmḡān some years later (1189/1775 according to Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 107-9), as a young boy he witnessed a series of quarrels with the rival Davallū Qajar chiefs of Astarābād (q.v.), which in 1191/1777 led to his father’s death in the hands of the Kūklān Turkmens. Taking refuge with another of his uncles, Mortaḏāqolī Khan Qovanlū, in the village of Anzān near Astarābād, Bābā Khan remained in his custody for the next two years, but upon Karīm Khan Zand’s death in 1193/1779 he joined Āqā Moḥammad Khan when the latter returned to Māzandarān and subdued Mortaḏāqolī Khan and two of his other brothers in Bārforūš. Though Āqā Moḥammad Khan was castrated in his youth, he married Bābā Khan’s mother in Sārī and in effect became his stepfather and



guardian (Sepehr, I, pp. 33-34). Participating in his uncle's early campaigns against his Qajar rivals, Bābā Khan was captured in 1194/1780 in Bārforūš together with Āqā Moḥammad Khan by another of his numerous uncles, Reżāqolī Khan, who was resentful of Āqā Moḥammad Khan's favor toward his nephew and prospective heir (Hedayāt, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, p. 132). Soon after, having been released from house arrest, in 1195/1781 Bābā Khan returned to Dāmḡān with Āqā Moḥammad Khan's blessing, and in due course he reclaimed his father's former seat and tribal territory from Qāder Khan 'Arab Beṣṭāmī (Sāravī, pp. 79-85, 93-94). He also captured Qāder Khan's daughter, Badr Jahān, who became his first wife ('Azod-al-Dawla, p. 27). Later, in Sārī in 1197/1783, he married his first Qajar wife, Āsīa Kānom, daughter of Fath-‘Alī Khan Davallū of the Yoḡārī-bāš wing of the tribe, a political union arranged by Āqā Moḥammad Khan to bring peace between the two rival Qajar clans.

Upon Āqā Moḥammad Khan's accession in 11 Jomādā I 1200/21 March 1786 in his newly established capital at Tehran, Bābā Khan, long groomed as his successor, was nominated as his heir and vice-regent (*nā'eb-al-saltāna*), while Āqā Moḥammad Khan himself did not assume a royal title out of respect for the last of the Safavid nominal claimants, Solṭān Moḥammad Mīrzā (Hedayāt, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 174, 201; Rabino, p. 29). Campaigning with his uncle against the Zands in the south of Persia, Bābā Khan was assigned in 1201/1787 to capture Yazd, where he barely succeeded in subjugating the powerful Moḥammad-Taḡī Khan Bāfqī to Qajar suzerainty (Hedayāt, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, p. 213). Returning to Gīlān to guard against suspect Qajar chiefs, Bābā Khan found enough time to accomplish his first feat of procreation. In the space of one year (1203/ 1788-89) his wives gave birth to five sons, three of whom were to become the most powerful prince-governors during their father's reign: Moḥammad-‘Alī Mīrzā, the future Dawlatšāh (q.v.) who was born to a Georgian concubine; ‘Abbās Mīrzā (q.v.), the future heir-apparent, who was born to Āsīa Kānom; and Ḥosayn-‘Alī Mīrzā (q.v.), the future Farmānfarmā (q.v.) of Fārs, who was born to Badr Jahān. Three of these sons—‘Abbās Mīrzā, Moḥammadqolī Mīrzā, and Ḥosayn-‘Alī Mīrzā—were immediately adopted as sons by Āqā Moḥammad Khan and were transferred to his harem (Hedayāt, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 225-26). Assigned for the second time to campaign in 'Erāq-e 'Ajam and Fārs, in 1204/1789-90 Bābā Khan confronted Loṭf-‘Alī Khan Zand in Qomšā. The besieged Zand ruler, facing defection within his ranks, was forced to retreat to Shiraz only to be denied entry into his capital by Ebrāhīm Khan Kalāntar Šīrāzī (q.v.), the mayor (*kalāntar*) of the city and later the future grand vizier (*ṣadr-e a'ẓam*) of Āqā Moḥammad Khan. Upon the



collapse of the Zand rule, in 1207/1792-93, Bābā Khan was engaged in mopping up operations against the remnants of Loṭf-ʿAlī's forces in Jiroft, Bam, and the environs before advancing toward the Persian Gulf littoral. He thus was absent during Āqā Moḥammad Khan's brutal massacre of the people of Kermān and his subsequent heinous torture and execution of Loṭf-ʿAlī Khan. Returning from Lār region to Shiraz in the same year, Bābā Khan was appointed governor of Fārs, Yazd, and Kermān and was given the title *jahānbānī* (guardian of the world; Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 253, 260-61). Previously Loṭf-ʿAlī Khan Zand's title, *jahānbānī* in contrast to *jahānsūz*, the title of Bābā Khan's own father, denoted a gentler side of the Qajar rule. As governor of Fārs during his four-year stay in the former Zand capital, Bābā Khan had an opportunity to learn the art of government and acquire a refined taste (Fasā'ī, ed. Rastgār, I, p. 660; tr. Busse, pp. 53-65).

Accession and consolidation. Upon receiving the news of Āqā Moḥammad Khan's assassination in Du'l-qa'da 1211/May 1797 at Šiša in the Caucasus, Bābā Khan declared himself heir to the Qajar throne and in Moḥarram 1212/July 1797 left Shiraz for Tehran. In Kenārgerd, twenty miles south of the capital, he was received by Ebrāhīm Khan, now entitled E'temād-al-Dawla and the grand vizier to Āqā Moḥammad Khan, who had rushed back from the Caucasus at the head of the royal camp to pay homage to the new shah. Bābā Khan's own brother, Ḥosaynqolī Khan, also grudgingly paid his allegiance. Moḥammad Khan Davallū, the *beglarbegī* of Tehran, who claimed to have Āqā Moḥammad Khan's precautionary order not to admit any dignitary into the capital before Bābā Khan's arrival, then opened the city gates. Such precaution proved necessary in the light of a claim to succession made by ʿAlīqolī Khan (q.v.), Bābā Khan's youngest uncle who had rushed back from Erevan in the hope of preempting his nephew's arrival at the capital. His claim was rooted in the yet unresolved order of succession in the newly-established dynasty and came despite Āqā Moḥammad Khan's removal of nearly all potential pretenders to the throne. After Bābā Khan's entry into the capital, ʿAlīqolī was lured inside the city gates by Ebrāhīm Khan and was brought to the presence of the new shah to pay his homage. Refusing to acquiesce he was physically forced to bow before the shah, all the while cursing him, before being removed to the next room, deprived of his eyes, and then sent into exile (Sepehr, I, pp. 85-89). Ascending the throne on 4 Šafar 1212/28 July 1797, he struck coins in Shiraz and Tehran first as Solṭān Bābā Khan and later as Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Shah. In a significant departure from earlier Persian coins which invoked the Shi'ite Imams, the new coins cited the shah's name, thus denoting his claim to full



sovereignty (Rabino, pp. 10, 29, pl. 21). The official coronation took place in Tehran on 1 Šawwāl 1212 (feast of Feṭr) /19 March 1798 (two days before Nowrūz; Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 319-20). Ebrāhīm Khan was reinstated as the grand vizier with nearly total control over the administration and the army.

Although Āqā Moḥammad Khan had left behind a relatively unified Persia, believing that he “raised a royal palace, and cemented it with blood” for his nephew (Malcolm, 1845, p. 216), the new shah, in the fragile outset of his reign and especially between 1797 and 1801, faced major challenges from tribal, dynastic, and administrative quarters. Most urgent was the claim to the throne by Šādeq Khan Šaqāqī, a powerful Kurdish chieftain of northwestern Azarbaijan and a former ally of Āqā Moḥammad Khan, who allegedly instigated his assassination, sheltered his assassins, and took possession of the royal crown and jewels (including the legendary Daryā-ye Nūr, q.v., and the Tājmāh). Allied with Ja‘farqolī Khan Donbolī, the *beglarbegī* of Tabriz and the chiefs of the Donbolī tribe of Koy; Mahdīqolī Khan Afšār of Urmia; and other members of the Šāhsevan confederacy of Azarbaijan, Šādeq Khan brought a force of 20,000 men to Qazvīn with the objective of capturing Tehran. Fath-‘Alī Shah, who was aided by Ḥosayn Khan Qajar Qazvīnī (later the Sardār) and other Qajar chiefs, could only manage to field 7,000 men. In the battle of Kāk-e ‘Alī, near Qazvīn, in Šafar 1213/August 1798 the shah struck a heavy blow on Šādeq Khan, forcing him to return some of the royal jewels before fleeing to his base in Sarāb (Donbolī, pp. 26-31; Jones, 1833, pp. 29-38). Upon Fath-‘Alī Shah’s advances in Azarbaijan in early 1213/1798, Šādeq Khan was forced to return the remaining royal jewels; later, during the Khorasan campaign of early 1214/1799, he was detained in the royal camp and accused of conspiring with the insubordinate Kurdish chiefs of northern Khorasan. On his return to the capital, the shah ordered Šādeq Khan to be bricked up in his jail and left to starve to death (Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 352-54, 362; Watson, pp. 124-25). Coinciding with the Šaqāqī rebellion, another claimant, Moḥammad Khan Zand, son of Zakī Khan, took control of Isfahan with the support of the Lurs of Mamassanī and the notables of Isfahan. However, the Qajar forces soon recaptured the city and executed the tribal supporters of the Zand claimant, sparing the collaborating notables after the intercession of the prominent ‘*olamā*’. Moḥammad Khan himself had fled to Baḳtīārī territory, where he managed to regroup the Lurs of Borūjerd and engage in a deadly fight with 12,000 Qajar troops under Moḥammad-Walī Khan Qajar Davallū, but he was defeated and later captured by a frontier chief. He was blinded on



the shah's order in Moḥarram 1213/June 1798 and was left to beg his way to Baṣra where he died in despair (Donbolī, pp. 36, 40; Jones, 1833, pp. 46-49; Sepehr, I, 92-94; Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 323-26, 330-35). These insurgencies demonstrated Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Shah's dependence on the Qajar chiefs and hence his reluctant compliance with their demands for privileges and provincial autonomy.

The most serious dynastic challenge, however, came from the fierce twenty-one year old Ḥosaynqolī Khan, the shah's brother, who as the governor of Fārs claimed autonomy in the south and demonstrated his insubordination by blinding three high-ranking officials in Shiraz who had condemned his traitorous designs (including Moḥammad-Zamān Khan Šīrāzī, brother of Ebrāhīm Khan). Moving to Isfahan with a small contingent, he was backed by Moḥammad-Walī Khan Qājār, governor of ʿErāq-e ʿAjam, and was cautiously welcomed by Solaymān Khan Qovanlū Eʿteżād-al-Dawla (q.v.), the shah's maternal cousin and the powerful commander of the Qajar army, who hoped to take advantage of the fraternal conflict and capture the capital in the shah's absence. Rushing back from Koy to Sārūq, near Farāhān, the embattled Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Shah, who was apprehensive of his disloyal Qajar generals, agreed to assign to Ḥosaynqolī not only Fārs province but also the governorship of Kermān. Ḥosaynqolī, however, demanded to be a partner to the crown, a demand which virtually amounted to the partition of Qajar territory. In Ṣafar 1213/August 1798 only after the shah's mother, the influential Mahd-e ʿOlyā, interceded, Ḥosaynqolī was persuaded to surrender and was given instead the governorship of Kāšān. The shah was obliged to pardon the disloyal Qajar chiefs, but he ordered the execution of the Afšār, Nānkalī, and Kolyāʾī Lor chiefs of the Kamsa confederacy of Zanjān, who were suspected as parties to the revolt. Three years later Ḥosaynqolī renewed his rebellion, this time assisted by a messianic dervish, Moḥammad-Qāsem Beg (also known as Mollā Bārānī) of the Bīrānvand Lōrs in the vicinity of Kāšān. Forging a royal edict (*farmān*), he took control of Isfahan in Rabīʿ I 1216/August 1801, issued coins, and ordered the Friday sermon (*koṭba*) to be read in his name. Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Shah, then more secure on his throne, proceeded to Isfahan and recaptured the city peacefully, forcing his brother to take refuge first in Lorestān and then in the shrine of Fāṭema Māʾšūma in Qom before being pardoned for the second time after the chief *mojtahed* Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsem Qomī mediated on his behalf. He was transferred to the village of Dezāšūb, north of Tehran, where he was blinded by the order of the shah and secretly executed in 1218/1803, sometime after the death of Mahd-e ʿOlyā (Donbolī, pp. 38-46, 74-81; Jones, 1833, pp.



55-66, 133-46; Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 333-41, 371-73; Watson, pp. 117-20, 130-32; Sepehr, I, pp. 113-17).

Shortly before Ḥosaynqolī’s second revolt, on 1 Du’l-ḥejja 1215/14 April 1801 Fath-‘Alī Shah also ordered the removal and later the execution of his first grand vizier, Ebrāhīm Khan Šīrāzī, on charges of treason and destroyed nearly his entire family. The gruesome killing of the premier was carried out immediately after the death of his ally and supporter, Mahd-e ‘Olyā, and after an orchestrated attempt to arrest all his relatives in provincial and ministerial posts. He was falsely accused by the Māzandarān rival faction in the administration of being Ḥosaynqolī Khan’s co-conspirator, but the real reason for his downfall was the shah’s deep fear of his minister. As Malcolm noted, Ebrāhīm Khan no longer tolerated the shah’s “occasional fits of ill-humor and violence” with an even-temper (Malcolm, 1845, pp. 222-23). The advice purportedly given by Āqā Moḥammad Khan to his nephew that, once securely on the throne, he should “not allow the gray head of Ḥājī Ebrāhīm, who had betrayed his first master, to go down in peace to grave” (Watson, p. 128) may be treated as apocryphal, reaffirming the familiar practice of “viziericide” to which many of Ebrāhīm Khan’s predecessors, and at least two of his successors, were subjected. His downfall ended the monopoly of the Fārs notables over the nascent Qajar administration in the southern provinces and allowed the shah greater control over appointments, revenue, and his private life. Ebrāhīm Khan was blinded in both eyes and his tongue was cut off, presumably because he dared to admonish the shah for ungratefulness toward him, before being sent into exile, where he was soon after put to death. His chief rival, Mīrzā Šafī‘ Māzandarānī, was appointed to the office of premier but with reduced authority. In the years following Ebrāhīm Khan’s downfall some of the Qajar chiefs, including Solaymān Khan Qovānlū, were also subdued or forced to retire (Kāvarī, apud Fasā’ī, ed. Rastegār, I, pp. 679-81; tr. Busse, pp. 95-100; Donbolī, pp. 71-74; Jones, pp. 128-32; on treatment of his relatives see EBRĀHĪM KALĀNTAR ŠĪRĀZĪ).

After consolidating his power in the central provinces, the shah’s attention was directed toward Khorasan, which was held by the last of the Afsharids (q.v.) in Mašhad, Solṭān Nāder Mīrzā, and a fragile confederacy of Kurdish and Qarā’ī khans. Fath-‘Alī Shah’s first and second Khorasan campaigns in Moḥarram 1213/June 1798 and again in Šafar 1215/June 1800 failed despite much ravaging and destruction by the Qajar troops, but the third campaign in Moḥarram 1217/May 1802, which was led by the shah himself, was more



successful, resulting in the capture of Mašhad by Ḥosayn Khan Qājār Qazvīnī (the Sardār). After the chief *mojtahed* of Mašhad, Mīrzā Moḥammad-Mahdī, switched to the Qajar side, Solṭān Nāder Mīrzā, Nāder Shah's grandson, was captured and brought to Tehran where he was executed in Moḥarram 1218/March 1803 in the presence of the shah. The remaining members of the vanquished Afšār house were killed, blinded, or sent to the Qajar harems. The capture of Mašhad was a boost to the shah's prestige and a prelude to future campaigns for the conquest of Herat. Through a combination of military campaigns, political marriages, and exploitation of tribal rivalries, Fath-ʿAlī Shah was also able to impose an uneasy control over the rest of Khorasan (Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 348-56, 362-64, 374-79, 384-87).

To further consolidate Qajar control over the provinces, Fath-ʿAlī Shah initiated the policy of dispatching his young sons to provinces not only as tokens of his personal power but also to replace the unreliable Qajar and other military chiefs. Enjoying a large degree of provincial autonomy and license for conquest in the peripheries, these young prince-governors were often accompanied by tutor-guardians (*lala*) from the Qajar elite and ministers (*wazīrs*) from the bureaucratic families. Most significantly, ʿAbbās Mīrzā was assigned to the governorship of Azarbaijan, a position which he held for the remaining thirty five years of his life. Arriving in Tabrīz, the most important city of the Qajar realm, in Moḥarram 1214/June 1799, he was accompanied by Mīrzā ʿĪsā (Bozorg) Farāhānī (later Qā'em-maqām I) as his vizier and Solaymān Khan E'tezād-al-Dawla as his *ātālīq* (guardian). His senior brother, Moḥammad-ʿAlī Mīrzā (later Dawlatšāh) was appointed governor of Qazvīn and Gīlān and later was given tenure for life over Kermānšāh and western Persia. After the removal of Ḥosaynqolī Khan in 1214/1799, Ḥosayn-ʿAlī Mīrzā (later Farmānfarmā) was appointed to the governorship of Fārs, which remained in his tenure until 1834. Ḥasan-ʿAlī Mīrzā Šojā'-al-Salṭana and later Moḥammad-Walī Mīrzā held shorter tenures over Khorasan and Yazd. Reconstructing the Safavid pattern of imperial rule, these and other prince-governors maintained provincial courts and administrations on the model of the Tehran government and enjoyed a large degree of autonomy in regional affairs and in relations with neighboring powers, but they were not entirely independent from the capital. With the shah's approval ʿAbbās Mīrzā advanced into the Caucasus, where he first encountered the resistance of the local khans and soon after the Russian and Ottoman powers who themselves entertained expansionist designs for the region. Competing with ʿAbbās Mīrzā, Moḥammad-ʿAlī Mīrzā also secured the shah's equivocal consent for advance



in Kurdistan and into the interiors of Ottoman Iraq. In the south Ḥosayn-‘Alī Mīrz’a and his sons moved southwards in the direction of the Persian Gulf and in the east Moḥammad-Walī Mīrzā, and later ‘Abbās Mīrzā, were able to score occasional victories against the Afghans and Turkmens. For the shah the policy of perpetual conquest had the advantage of keeping at bay the competitive princes and diverting their attention from the center and from turning against each other (‘Azod-al-Dawla, pp. 116-17). Despite its shortcomings, the shah’s policy of appointing princes to provincial governments fostered a period of relative calm and recovery in the first quarter of the 19th century, even though it engendered a new source of tensions within the royal family, especially on the question of succession.

Foreign policy and relations with neighboring powers. The encounter with neighboring European powers was a sobering experience for Fath-‘Alī Shah. Coming at the outset of Europe’s imperial expansion, it transformed the shah’s image as the majestic king of kings (*šāhanšāh*) at the turn of the century to that of a vulnerable ruler of a declining kingdom a quarter of a century later. Although Ottoman missions to the Persian court and visits by envoys of the neighboring Afghan, Uzbek, and Sind rulers of the east, the Mamluks of Iraq, and the Arab vassals of the Persian Gulf were familiar occurrences which boosted the shah’s image as the pivot of his “Guarded Domain,” other missions from the Christian powers were novelties which eventually made him realize the limits of his own power and his vulnerabilities. The first exchanges of envoys with Britain and soon after with Napoleonic France coincided with the Russian annexation of Georgia (Gorjestān, q.v.) in 1800 and the subsequent Persian defeat in the first round of the Russo-Persian wars (1804-1813). During this period Fath-‘Alī Shah’s court was a frequented venue for ephemeral alliances and baffling imperial contests.

The arrival in Tehran in 1799 of Mahdī-‘Alī Khan, the envoy of the governor of Bombay, first drew Fath-‘Alī Shah’s serious attention to British India. The envoy’s account of British power and wealth was

[Plate IIa](#), [Plate IIb](#), and [Plate IIc](#)

[Plate III](#)

exaggerated and that of his own mission spurious (Watson, p. 123; Greaves, pp. 375-76), but it nevertheless prepared the ground for the favorable reception of Captain John Malcolm and his mission on behalf of the governor-



general of India in November 1800. Malcolm's proposal for an alliance against the ruler of Kabul, Zamān Shah Dorrānī, was welcomed by the shah, who at the time was afraid of Zamān harboring the unruly khans of Khorasan. The spectacle put up by the envoy, and the expensive array of gifts which he presented to the shah and the Qajar princes and officials, impressed the Persian monarch who in turn bedazzled the British envoy with a show of royal splendor. Although Malcolm insisted that his presents for the shah, which had cost the East India Company a small fortune, were "rarities" and "curiosities" from the governor-general of India, the shah preferred to receive them as "tributes" and "offerings" from an inferior neighboring power. Reconstructing the style of receptions at the Safavid court, the shah's own love for extravagance, his court's strict etiquette, his bejeweled appearance, and his kingly manner all served to reflect majesty and might. The British offer for monetary assistance to Persia in the event of war with its neighbors further confirmed in the mind of the shah his superior status (for the text of the 1801 Anglo-Persian treaty and instructions to Malcolm, see Hurewitz, I, pp. 117-24).

This view of Anglo-Persian alliance was soon put to a severe test when in 1804, upon the shah's request for military and financial assistance, the British refused to extend the terms of the 1801 treaty to defense of Persia in the war against Russia (Greaves, pp. 380-81). Seeking an alternative ally in the tumultuous Europe of the time, the shah responded positively in 1806 to an earlier French prelude and welcomed Napoleon's envoy, Amédée Jaubert. Offering to employ the French in his service, the shah subsequently dispatched his own envoy to accompany Jaubert back to France (Jaubert, pp. 238-44). Increasingly aware of his own country's strategic position and disappointed with the British, the shah succumbed to Napoleon's plan—which at the time appeared deceptively viable—to conquer British India. In exchange for Persian cooperation the shah was promised full assistance to retrain and reorganize his army, manufacture firearms, and create a modern artillery. Napoleon's letters aroused in the mind of the shah Nāder-like ambitions to prevail over Russia, then an enemy of France, recapture Georgia, and even partake in the French conqueror's Indian spoils. The Treaty of Finkenstein (May 1807) not only stipulated that the shah "sever all diplomatic relations with England, declare war at once on the latter power, and commence hostilities without delay" (art. 8) but also give the French forces the right of passage through Persia and assist in the Indian campaign (arts. 10-13; for the text see Clercq, II, pp. 201-3 and Hurewitz, I, pp. 184-85). Caught up in the excitement of the Napoleonic adventure, the shah committed a serious



blunder by placing his vulnerable domain between two potent enemies, Russia and Britain, unaware of the fact that his French ally had no reluctance to enter into alliance, almost immediately after Finkenstein, with Russia and sign with her the friendship treaty of Tilsit in July 1807 (Nafisi, I, pp. 93-108; Amini, pp. 111-40).

Despite the shah's high hopes, the Gardane mission (q.v.; 1808-9) and its partial success in training and equipping the Persian army with modern weapons proved to be a poor substitute for French promises to guarantee Persian territorial integrity against foreign aggression. Even by 1808 when, under pressure from ‘Abbās Mīrzā, the shah refused to receive Malcolm's second mission and turned down his offer of a new alliance against France, even under the implicit threat of British military action, he was still hopeful that French mediation on his behalf with Russia would bear fruit. By February 1809, having lost all faith in Napoleon's good will, in a remarkable reverse of policy the shah took advantage not only of the British offer of an alliance but received in Tehran the British envoy from London, Harford Jones Brydges, only a day after General Gardane and his mission left the capital in protest (Watson, pp. 159-60; Jones, 1834, pp. 183-85; Amini, pp. 199-210).

The shah's change of heart may be attributed in part to his fear of British military intervention in the Persian Gulf and the occupation of Kārg Island, should Jones' offer for alliance be turned down. Moreover, the prevailing pro-British tendency in the Qajar administration, led by Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥosayn Amīn-al-Dawla and Mīrzā ‘Isā Qā'em-maqām, managed to convince the shah of the futility of reliance on such an unpredictable ally as Napoleon. In the view of the shah, Harford Jones' mission, originating in London, represented that of a sovereign equal in stature to himself and therefore was considered superior to Malcolm's mission, which the shah rightly considered to be representative only of the East India Company's mercantile interests. His assessment of the missions was further confirmed in a public display of rivalry and mute antagonism between the two British representatives.

Still leaving open the option of a French alliance, the shah and his ministers successfully utilized rivalry between the East India Company and the British Foreign Office to further their objectives of receiving military and financial assistance. Furthermore, by dispatching Mīrzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Khan Īlčī Šīrāzī (q.v.), the shah reasserted his demands in London and in exchange received another British envoy extraordinary, Sir Gore Ouseley, who arrived in Tehran on 10 November 1811 with the special assignment of finalizing the second



Anglo-Persian treaty and facilitating peace between Russia and Persia (Ṭāherī, pp. 422-87). Fath-ʿAlī Shah's letter of the same date to Napoleon not only reflects his bitter disappointment with the French conqueror's unfulfilled promises but his astute effort to justify his new stand: "Although Persia is located in the East and France in the West, and a great distance is in between, the friendship and affection of inner heart that was achieved by divine favor and blessing was such that it become a source of astonishment for the people of the world and envy to the kings. And yet because of such negligence [i.e. Napoleon's] today there is no sharper and more injurious a thorn [for us] than the admonition which is now directed toward both our states. Because of the friendship of that friend we have lost all other friends and set our eye of expectation on the path of friendship of that affectionate partner but finally because contrary [deeds] to [the original] objective were manifested [from you], we were engrossed in disappointment and remorse and became the subject of much rebuke and chastisement" (Kāvūsī and Aḥmadī, eds., document 55, p. 204).

The most important results of Ouseley's mission were the conclusion of the definitive Anglo-Persian treaty (Hurewitz, I, pp. 199-201) and British mediation for the 1813 conclusion of the Golestān Treaty (q.v.) with Russia. The conclusion of the Golestān peace treaty not only resulted in the loss of precious territory in the Caucasus but also made Persia more susceptible to Russian imperial whim and to British insidious conduct. Article 4 of the Treaty of Golestān reserved to the shah the right to nominate his own heir-apparent but allowed the Russian emperor to afford "assistance in case he should require it to suppress any opposing party. The power of Persia will thus be increased by the aid of Russia" (Hurewitz, I, p. 198). Yet despite the mixed outcome of this early diplomatic enterprise, and despite the shah's understandable bafflement and his territorial losses during this exceptionally treacherous episode of European history, Fath-ʿAlī Shah and his ministers should be credited for their diplomatic maneuvering and for ultimately opting for British financial commitment and military assistance in the face of Russian military superiority.

Recognizing Persia's military limitations and decreasing British interest in the affairs of his country at the end of the Napoleonic wars, the shah was content to maintain a minimum of diplomatic dealings with Europe. Yet he complied with his sons' pursuit of conquest as Herat was temporarily occupied by Ḥasan-ʿAlī Mīrzā in 1816 and between 1819 and 1823 Moḥammad-ʿAlī Mīrzā



and ‘Abbās Mīrzā scored successes in war against the Ottomans in Iraq and eastern Anatolia. Though Fath-‘Alī Shah was careful not to enter into another conflict with Russia, in the months leading to the second round of Russo-Persian wars (1826-27), he ultimately yielded, against his own better judgment, toward the pro-war party in his court led by Allāh-Yār Khan Āṣaf-al-Dawla and backed by ‘Abbās Mīrzā. In the face of popular excitement aroused by the ‘*olamā*’s call for holy war (*jehād*), any resistance to war, the shah realized, could have resulted in domestic unrest and even his own downfall. The war council held in the presence of the shah in Solṭānīya later in spring of 1826 could not find an effective solution to the Persian setbacks in the battlefield because of the animosity between the shah’s sons, the absence of an effective military command, and most of all because of the shah’s “extreme unwillingness to part with money” in order to re-equip the Azarbaijan army or to raise, as the shah wished, a new irregular cavalry in Tabrīz under his own command. His proverbial avariciousness, which had become acute with age, was best evident in his auctioning off to ‘Abbās Mīrzā the gifts presented to the shah by the Russian envoy Prince Menchikov (Watson, pp. 223-34) or his hysterical rage when the crown prince first relayed to him the urgent Russian request for payment of a huge war reparation. By the conclusion of the Treaty of Torkamānčāy in February 1828, the shah was deeply troubled not only by the humiliation of defeat and the temporary loss of Tabrīz but the burden of a war indemnity of 4,000,000. It was only because of British persuasion that the parsimonious shah, faced with the bankruptcy of the state treasury, reluctantly parted with a large portion of his own royal treasures. Seeking the assistance of the British envoy, John McDonald, then in Tabrīz, and his consul in Tehran, John McNeill, the shah was at least able to receive guarantees that the Russians would not use the war reparation to advance further into his domain, knowing that the resentful khans of Azarbaijan were willing to render assistance to the Russians to march into the capital (Watson, p. 238; Atkin, pp. 145-61). The shah’s letters to ‘Abbās Mīrzā during the negotiation for payment of the war tribute clearly reflect the impact of the war on the royal coffer and on the demoralized shah: “If God willing you found the blessing of visiting our threshold, you will see with the eye of insight how what was accumulated was scattered at once, and whatever was saved utterly diminished” (Qā’em-maqām, pp. 45-49).

Personality, political culture, and public image. Although most European visitors received public audiences with Fath-‘Alī Shah, seldom could they see through the shah’s solemn facade. One exception was Malcolm, who in 1800



met the shah at the peak of his rule. He described him as “above the middle size, his age little more than thirty, his complexion rather fair, his features regular and fine, with an expression denoting quickness and intelligence.” The royal beard, famous for its extraordinary length and its black, glossy, appearance, and the royal dress, “covered with jewels of extraordinary size” with the rays of the sun playing upon them, “baffled all descriptions” (Malcolm, 1845, p. 210; Hollingbery, pp. 77-87). On another occasion, anxious to leave an impression of might and majesty on foreign visitors, the shah even asked one of his ministers to find out whether they “praised and admired his appearance” (Morier, *Journey*, p. 192). Yet despite formalities and fairy tale appearance, in audiences with the European envoys the shah was anxious to hear about Europe (*farangestān*) and the changing political scene on the eve of the Napoleonic era. In Malcolm’s account he emerges as alert and curious though perhaps self-indulging. He asked about the truth of the East India Company (q.v.) robbing India of its riches, the power of the French General Bonaparte, the gold mines of South America, and the arts and manufactures of Europe before contending himself with the might of his own armies and the need to maintain the potency of their “swords and lances.” Impressed with the knowledge of history displayed by the envoy, who informed the shah of the history of the Qajar tribe and the royal ancestry, the shah asked about the British royal house, government, and people. When Malcolm explained the meaning of liberty in England, the shah observed that “your king is, I see, only the first magistrate of the country” (*kad-koḏā-ye awwāl*). “Such a condition of power,” the shah continued, “has permanence, but it has no enjoyment” whereas his own absolute authority over his subjects “is real power but then it has no permanence” (Malcolm, 1845, pp. 213-15). The same indulgent spirit appears in Harford Jones’ February 1809 audience, when the confident shah demanded that the letter of the king of England be placed on the edge of his throne and the presents of the envoy, including a large diamond worth £25,000 and an ebony box with a scene of the battle of Trafalgar cut in ivory, be placed on the first step of his peacock throne (Jones, 1834, pp. 186-87). Accompanying the shah from Solṭāniya camp to the meadow of Ūjān, north of Tabrīz, Jones recorded some of the shah’s reflections on his own dynasty and government. After listening to the envoy’s recollections of Loṭf-‘Alī Khan Zand, the shah expressed his qualified regret for Āqā Moḥammad Khan’s brutal treatment of the Zand prince though he himself had no doubt that he, too, would have killed Loṭf-‘Alī for the reason of his own security but added, unmindful of his own utter cruelties toward many of his subjects, that “his death should not have been such as my uncle made him to suffer.” He was



gracious enough to add that the Zand prince was “a true and noble lion” (Jones, 1834, pp. 263-64). On another occasion when ‘Abbās Mīrz’a, who was present in the camp, tried to press his father through Jones’ mediation for more funding for the war with Russia, the shah retorted with a sincere account of his own meager finances: “Some fool or other has been telling you about my wealth—where should it come from? I have put a prince in every province, and the report I receive from them is, that the revenue of the provinces do not do more than support the charges of Government. It is true, that on the Nourouze they send me presents, but what are they?—not money—but horses and camels, mules, sheep, shawals, pearls, and such sort of trumpery:—the first, as you see, enables me to move about and then (bursting into a laugh),—the women coax me out of the two last. Of money, real money, Mr. Ambassador, I get no more, as the Ameen-al-dowleh will tell you, then pays the troops I keep on foot, and my household establishment. It is true, I have got parcels of stones, more perhaps than any other monarch has, but what are these worth in a case of this sort?” (Jones, 1834, pp. 286-87). Although the shah’s disclaimer may be attributed to his well-known avariciousness, it nevertheless represented the monetary restraint his government encountered in shouldering the heavy cost of the war. On other occasions the shah inquired from Jones about English geography and everyday life, the parliamentary system, and the royal family (including the future of the monarchy and the possibility of a queen ascending the throne after George IV (i.e., Queen Victoria), limits to the king’s authority, and his relation to the parliament (then a heated issue in British politics), relations between the British government and the East India Company (another controversial issue at the time), the French Revolution and republicanism. Especially of interest to the shah and prince governors was the New World (Yangī donyā) and its geography and government, a subject of numerous inquiries to foreign visitors. Jones may have hidden from the shah the occurrence of the American Revolution and the fact that it was no longer a British colony, but the shah must have extracted enough information out of Jones to make him acknowledge that the shah possessed “not only a very strong, but a very amiable mind; and the remarks which he made, and the inferences he drew from time to time, manifested very considerable power of reflection.” With reference to British political system, Jones quoted the shah as saying: “I can easily conceive how a country, under such regulations as you state England to be, may do all that you say; but I have no idea, if I was to attempt tomorrow to introduce such things here, how we should all live, or how there would be any government at all.” He justified his fear of a European-style reform by arguing: “Supposing I was to



call a Parliament at Teheran, and deliver up to it the whole power of taxation, I should then never get a penny—for no Persian parts with money, unless he is obliged to do it.” In view of the shah it would take “a very long time to make such a Government, and such a people, as yours. Our Government is simple, and the people know all about it in a day. Our laws are much simpler than yours,—and so far they are better; and I know the experience, that, under these laws, and under this Government, Persia has improved very much since I came to the throne” (Jones, 1834, pp. 300-301). In this, perhaps the first royal comparison between European representational government and Persian absolutism, one can see not only the shah’s complacency but his dilemma in handling change at a time when his country faced powerful threats to its borders. Later, in 1812, he inquired from Ouseley about other European advances, among them the English postal service and means of increasing state revenue. He even asked the ambassador to produce a plan in writing so that better communication could be created in his own realm, but the postal reform, like the horse-carriage that Ouseley had brought from England for the shah, was the subject of momentary royal excitement which was soon to be forgotten (Morier, *Second Journey*, pp. 192-98).

With minor variations, later British envoys reflected on the shah’s public character and the mode of their reception. Sir Gore Ouseley (as recorded by himself, by William Ouseley, and by Morier) portrayed a shah still at home with his daily habits, his cheerful mood, his seasonal encampments, his love for jewels and for chase, his indulgences, and his moments of rage. William Ouseley, noting the shah’s “considerable intelligence, and quick comprehension,” acknowledged he had “much curiosity respecting the state of sciences in England, and a strong desire to introduce into his own empire the improvement which we had made in various branches of art.” The same author, however, noted that the shah’s annoyance with his ministers’ petty jealousies and conservative decorum was such that on one occasion he even told them publicly that “he should bestow their titles on some of his dogs” (W. Ouseley, III, pp. 367-68).

Yet in the 1820s and early 1830s the shah’s image in the eyes of Westerners was gradually transformed as his country sustained defeat in the war with Russia and in turn relied more heavily on Britain for peace and support. On the occasion of negotiations for the Treaty of Golestān, Gore Ouseley’s daring comparison between the Persian monarch and the neighboring Ottoman sultan enraged the shah (G. Ouseley, pp. 89-90; Ṭāherī, pp. 475-76). In Morier’s



two travel accounts, written over the space of five years, the evolving image of the shah and his court provided the raw material for his later farcical portrayal of the shah in his famous *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (q.v.). By the time James Baillie Fraser (q.v.) wrote his account of the shah and the Persian court in the early 1830s, the aging shah was no longer the untarnished king of kings but a whimsical and vulnerable ruler of a decaying dynasty in the throes of domestic and international turmoils. He is “by nature unwarlike,” and “by no means remarkable for personal courage,” wrote Fraser. “A child of fortune, habituated to the exercise of uncontrolled power” whose mind “has not been strengthened in the school of adversity, nor was it naturally of a very vigorous description.” Though Fraser considered him “sincere in his religious professions, a good father, [and] temperate,” he blamed him for his “insatiable desire of accumulating wealth,” a “ruling passion” not only “more injurious to his kingdom than all the efforts of his enemies” but one which degraded him to sell his own daughters and even his wives “to individuals generally of noble rank, for large sum and assuredly not always with the consent of either party” (Fraser, 1836, pp. 197, 227-29).

Yet despite such a negative portrayal, the shah sustained an image of majesty at home that at least for the first twenty five years of his rule was barely challenged by forces of domestic unrest. The shah’s mild temperament, in sharp contrast to that of his fierce predecessor and some of his own sons, was inclined to outdoor activities, hunting, and military parade; to the women of the harem; levees; the opulence of the court; and a nomadic thirst for possession and the ostentatious display of jewels. Some distinct features of his early Qajar tribal life remarkably survived in him side by side with the wit and refinement of the high culture. Despite his annual resort in summer camps, he was happy to assign the harshness of military campaigns to his many warlike and ambitious sons and instead to enjoy music and dancing in the harem, or pose for his many majestic portraits, or converse with his many poets and learned companions. A good shot and an excellent horseman, at home with all intricacies of camp life, his warrior instincts were safely diverted to hunting and the chase; he seldom led troops in person to substantial battles, especially in war against the Russians, perhaps out of a fear of captivity. Whether it was his residence as heir-apparent in the Zand capital, which introduced him to wordly pleasures, or his inborn narcissistic tendencies, he was able to move with ease between the rugged tent-dwelling of his ancestors and the lavish life of the palace.



In contrast to the austerity of Āqā Moḥammad Khan's time, Fath-ʿAlī Shah was accustomed to laudatory titles and honorifics. Though at the time of his ascendancy, a court chronicle referred to him merely as "grand prince" (*šāhzāda-ye aʿzam*; Sāravī, pp. 306, 309), he soon was to be addressed by court chroniclers such as Donbolī and Kāvarī as the king of kings (*šāhanšāh*) and soon afterwards as *kāqān*, the latter apparently first addressed to him in competition with the neighboring Ottoman sultan (see Naṣīrī, I, pp. 10-11, cf. p. 56). Whereas the former title represented Fath-ʿAlī Shah's imperial status within a Persian royal system in which both ʿAbbās Mīrzā and Moḥammad-ʿAlī Mīrzā were addressed as shah, reflecting a certain awareness of Persia's ancient monarchical heritage, the latter title of *kāqān*, which became almost synonymous with his name, was a reference to his status as the supreme chief of all tribes and his Turko-Mongolian descent. Retrogressively this title was applied to Fath-ʿAlī's ancestors, and later, to his crowned descendants in a recurring fashion so as to denote the order of dynastic succession. The Qajar capital's official nomenclature, Dār-al-Ḳelāfa (the seat of the caliphate) distinguished Tehran as the seat of a supreme authority from Tabrīz, the seat of the crown-prince ʿAbbās Mīrzā, the *nāʿeb-al-saltāna* (viceroy), and from Isfahan, the Safavid capital and Persia's most important clerical center in the Qajar period. Both these cities (together with the coveted city of Herat) retained the nomenclature of Dār-al-Saltāna (the seat of kingship) since the Safavid era. It is also possible to infer from the term Dār-al-Ḳelāfa a claim to Shiʿite royal authority perhaps in competition with the Ottoman claim to the Sunni caliphate since the late 18th century and, more importantly, as a prestigious complement to the collective claim of the Shiʿite *ʿolamā* to the status of legal guardianship (*welāya*) on behalf of the Hidden Imam. Other honorifics with legendary, Islamic, biblical, and historical references, Persian and Turko-Mongolian, were also appended to the name of the shah and his dynasty in royal edicts, official documents, foreign correspondence, and chronicles. The naming of the shah's many sons was an indication of changing royal taste. Whereas the senior sons were often named after the Shiʿite saints or tribal ancestors (the latter often with the suffix *qolī* "slave"), some of the younger ones were named after Persian heroes of the *Šāh-nāma*. Most of the shah's senior sons and a few of his favorite wives and daughters enjoyed honorific titles often irrespective of their rank and significance, though the titles of the senior ministers were often reflective of their official function (see ALQĀB WA ʿANĀWĪN).

In an attempt to celebrate royalty, many visual representations of the shah



and his court were produced. Rock reliefs, often adjacent to Sasanian sites in Ray, Fārs, and Kermānšāh (the latter executed crudely by Moḥammad-‘Alī Mīrzā over the Sasanian relief of Tāq-e Bostān), reflected the Qajar shah’s desire to be seen, by his own people and by future generations, as the heir to the ancient Persian empire. The indigenous memory of the Persian ancient past, preserved in works of history and epic and conveyed to the Qajars by the literati in their service, often through the Zand court, found a new resonance in the shah’s and his ministers’ curious minds as they observed learned European visitors such as Jones and the Ouseley brothers and artists such as Robert Ker Porter paying attention to such ancient sites as Persepolis or eagerly detecting in his person and his court the living evidence of ancient rites and past royal splendor. Large scale portrayals of the shah in many majestic poses and clad in the most extravagant outfits, and those of his public levies (*salām*) with the princes, ministers, and foreign envoys in attendance, were produced not only for the shah’s self-gratification but were also displayed in public for his subjects (Malcolm, 1845, p. 44), even though such life-size representations were contrary to the Islamic prohibition of reproducing human images. Patronizing a thriving school of remarkable royal artists, several such paintings were dispatched as royal presents to Calcutta, London, Paris, and St. Petersburg as well as to princely courts throughout the kingdom and to the neighboring principalities. The popularity of royal images went beyond a show of respect for the shah’s life-size paintings and included miniature images exquisitely produced on water pipes and vases and colored window glasses. The interiors of the royal palaces were also adorned with wall paintings depicting royal levees, hunts, and feasts while some in the harem depicted women musicians, singers, and entertainers in the style of the Zand period. The shah’s court was also frequented by a host of calligraphers, painters, musicians, book illuminators, jewelers, and craftsmen whose magnificent array of productions is a testimony to the artistic enrichment of the period.

Fath-‘Alī Shah’s era also witnessed a period of royal constructions and architectural innovations which are examples of the shah’s taste and mode of patronage. New pavilions, private residential quarters for the harem, a public audience hall, and landscaped gardens were created in Tehran’s Golestān complex; the existing building embellished and expanded; and the Tehran citadel (*arg*) was reconstructed. New fortifications and gates were built around the enlarged city walls, the Tehran *bāzār* was reconstructed, and new urban quarters began to emerge with new residences built by the nobility. Other



palaces and gardens were completed and repaired in the vicinity of the capital, including the Solaymānīya palace in Karaj, the Qaṣr-e Qājār north of the capital, and a resort pavilion in Solṭānīya, the site of the shah's summer camp. The prince governors also built their own palaces and public buildings. Yet the shah's efforts never amounted to a systematic attempt to develop Tehran into a new metropolis and it remained economically, demographically, and culturally behind Tabrīz and Isfahan. The shah's religious patronage included the Tehran royal mosques (Masjed-e Šāh; now renamed as Komeynī mosque in open breach of the Islamic law of *waqf*); mosques and colleges (*madrasas*) in Kāšān, Isfahan and other cities; and extensive renovations and gilding of the shrines of Imam 'Alī, Imam Ḥosayn, and 'Abbās b. 'Alī (qq.v.) in the holy cities of Ottoman Iraq at enormous cost. Carefully nurturing an image of Shi'ite patronage, the shah extensively added to and beautified the shrines of Fāṭema Ma'sūma in Qom and Imam 'Alī al-Rezā in Mašhad. (Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* X, p. 106)

Honoring the ancient tradition of literary and scholarly patronage, Fath-'Alī Shah's court became a center for poets and literati who often benefited from the shah's personal attention and received state pensions. A heterogeneous mix of the remnants of the Zand court and of Isfahan and Tabrīz circles, these men thrived in the favorable environment of civility and high culture under Fath-'Alī Shah. The literary movement led by such figures as Fath-'Alī Khan Šabā, 'Abd-al-Wahhāb Mo'tamed-al-Dawla Našāṭ, 'Abd-al-Razzāq Donbolī (Maftūn), Mīrzā Moḥammad Fāẓel Khan Garrūsī, Mīrzā Šādeq Waqāye'negār Marvazī, Faẓl-Allāh Kāvarī, and later Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsem Qā'em-maqām Farāhānī constituted the Royal Society (Anjoman-e Kāqān) best known for reviving the style of classical masters of Persian poetry (Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* IV, pp. 298-326; Āryanpūr, *Az Šabā tā Nīmā* I, pp. 14-77; see BĀZGAŠT-E ADABĪ). In the spirit of cultural nationalism, the poet laureate, Šabā, composed his famous *Šāhanšāh-nāma* (Book of the king of kings), in competition with Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*, chronicling in 70,000 verses the great deeds of his patron Fath-'Alī Shah and his dynasty. Remarkable for its style and for mythologizing Qajar history, as an epic produced under royal patronage it did not always attempt to depict its hero in a historical light, as in its account of the defeats in the war with Russia (*Majma' al-foṣahā'*, pp. 618-33; Nāṭeq, pp. 143-62). Traces of the shah's interests are detectable in several other works of this literary circle, although his own limited poetic talent, which resulted in the compilation of a *dīvān* entitled *Kalām al-molūk molūk al-kalām*, with the pen name "Kāqān," remained hopelessly facile and unrepresentative of any



sincere sentiments of its author, even after many hands conceivably edited and improved it. Since he lacked any formal education, his ability to compose poetry was acquired mostly through the court literati. “Whenever in a gathering discussion would turn to a learned issue,” writes Aḥmad Mīrzā ‘Azod-al-Dawla, “His Majesty the Kāqān conversed with each group according to its own tenet (*maslak*) in such a way as though for years he had studied that subject. This knowledge, however, was not acquired through education but through what was memorized in the course of many intermingling and discussion with the people of learning and inquiring about works and [spiritual] status of the literati in attendance in the royal *anjoman* (p. 130). History was among the shah’s favorite topics, and he had his own reader of the *Šāh-nāma* who loudly recited while the shah was riding (‘Azod-al-Dawla, pp. 45, 140). In conversations with Malcolm, Jones, and Ouseley brothers he also learned about European literature, history, and religious developments.

A superstitious man, like all his successors, the shah required the court astrologer to determine the auspicious hour for all his important activities and to interpret his dreams, an aspect of his personality which explains many of his trepidations and political inconsistencies. An observant Shi‘ite greatly deferential to the men of religion, he managed to preserve the royal prerogatives in the face of the increasing public presence of the ‘*olamā*’. Conscious of their high status, which they acquired in the early decades of his rule, and the influence they wielded among the public, the shah willingly patronized the ranking *mojtaheds* and revered them through monetary gifts, land tenure (*toyūl*), appointments to religious offices, and above all by allowing them the control of charitable endowments (*waqfs*), the judicial process, the pulpit of the mosques, and instruction in the colleges as well a free rein to suppress, and occasionally eliminate, their Sufi and other unorthodox critics.

The reign of Fath-‘Alī Shah should be seen as the golden age of Shi‘ite legalism when the production of a vast body of studies in *feqh*, *oṣūl*, and related fields transformed modern Shi‘ite scholarship. Among many of the Persian and Arab *mojtaheds* invited to the court and given frequent access to the shah was Mīrzā Abu’l-Qāsem Qomī (better known as Mīrzā-ye Qomī), the renowned Oṣūlī (q.v.) jurist who reconstituted the Qom teaching circle with the full support of the shah and in competition with Isfahan and Najaf. Among the Isfahani *mojtaheds*, the shah was particularly mindful of the rich and powerful Sayyed Moḥammad-Bāqer Šaftī, the Ḥojjat-al-Eslām, who, despite many of his power



struggles with the provincial governors of Isfahan, was considerate of the shah's wishes. Among the jurists in Najaf he particularly revered Shaikh Ja'far Najafī (the author of *Kašf al-ġeṭā'*), who shared many of his worldly appetites, and Sayyed Moḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī, who was the chief instigator of the *jehād* during the second round of wars with Russia.

Yet despite respect for the *mojtaheds*, the shah prided himself on his religious latitude and reserved favor for philosophers, mystics, and even the anti-Oṣūlī '*olamā'*. In 1811 Mīrzā Moḥammad Aḵbārī promised the shah that through an act of necromancy he would be able to produce the severed head of the Russian commander in the Caucasus, the Inspector-General (Persian *ešpoktor*) Pavel Dimitrievich Tsitsianov (q.v.). Whether by sheer coincidence or acquiescence with the Persian field commanders, Mīrzā Moḥammad made good of his promise at the end of his forty-day retirement (*čella*, q.v.), though the shah declined to fulfill his exchange promise to remove from positions of power all the Oṣūlī *mojtaheds*. Despite his careful facade of religiosity, and because of his political failures and private indulgences, he was not immune, especially in his final years, to reproof by the '*olamā'*, less out of piety and more because the shah's financial recourses diminished in reverse proportion to his inborn avarice.

Private life, the harem, and offspring. Despite his posthumous image of carnal debauchery and irresponsible pleasure-seeking, in his own time Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah was regarded as a man of "elegant manners and many accomplishments" who was "very regular in the execution of his public duties." Malcolm further depicted the shah as a responsible ruler who leaves the inner court at eight in the morning and after spending some time with favorite courtiers sits at breakfast at ten before holding daily a public levee, for the princes, nobles, ministers, public officers, and the envoys and visitors, and a private court with his ministers in which "business [wa]s transacted" (Malcolm, 1845, pp. 216, 220-21). In the first ten years of his rule he also held a daily levee for the women of the harem (ʿAzod-al-Dawla, pp. 12-14).

The shah's private life and especially the harem (*andarūn*) constituted a considerable expense, involving the upkeep of at least a thousand wives, many unmarried daughters, other female relatives, concubines, women entertainers, servants, cooks, pages, eunuchs, attendants, guards, and other employees of the inner court. Reputed to be one of the most procreant men on record, the shah compensated for his castrated uncle by conceiving in forty-seven years of his adult life at least 260 children of whom sixty sons and fifty-



five daughters survived their father (Sepehr, II, pp. 140-46). The most significant consequence of building such a large harem and a larger progeny was the emergence of a huge royal family, which by the time of shah's death reached one thousand in number and by the middle of the 19th century exceeded ten thousand. The shah's sons, and especially the senior prince-governors, reduced his reliance on the Qajar elite but became a major drain on the treasury. The shah's many political marriages with daughters of the Qajar chiefs and provincial khans, who often were hostages to their families' good conduct, served as an effective alternative to exhaustive conflicts. Likewise, the shah gave in marriage many of his own daughters to the Qajar chiefs, to other tribal khans and their offspring, and to high-ranking officials, often at a high price, as safeguards for their perpetual loyalty to the throne. The network of political unions in the harem, and presence of many wives from tribal nobility which the shah disliked, did not distract him from sheer sexual pleasure, frequent divorce, sale, expulsion, or demotion in marriage from permanent to temporary rank. Throughout his adult life a continuous supply of captives entered the harem, first from the harems of the vanquished houses of Zand and Afšār and from the Georgian and Armenian campaigns, and later as slave concubines offered for sale or presented to the shah from the provinces. The shah's sexual indulgence, however, was not entirely devoid of amorous affairs. One important cause of conflict with his brother was Ḥosaynqolī Khan's desire for an attractive Jewish captive, Maryam Kānom, a wife of Āqā Moḥammad Khan, whom the shah inherited and fell in love with, hence refusing to give her away. Later, the shah fell in love with another Šīrāzī, a dancing-girl named Tūṭī, and for many years mourned her early death (ʿAzod-al-Dawla, p. 25; Malcolm, 1845, p. 221).

As a miniature version of the shah's outer court, the harem's hierarchical order recognized the status and the division of labor among the royal wives. Organized for the shah's pleasure and comfort, the harem was supervised first by the mother of the shah (Mahd-e ʿOlyā) and later by several of his senior wives and daughters who exercised considerable influence on the shah, his court, and his ministers. After the death of Mahd-e ʿOlyā, among the shah's Qajar wives Āsīa Kānom, mother of the crown prince ʿAbbās Mīrzā, was the most senior, but the shah's greatest affection was for Tāwūs Kānom Tāj-al-Dawla, an Eṣfahānī concubine and a close ally of Ḥājī Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Šadr Eṣfahānī. The *Takṭ-e koršīd* (sun throne), which was commissioned by Šadr Eṣfahānī as a wedding present, was renamed in her honor as *Takṭ-e Tāwūs*. Żīāʾ-al-Saltāna, the shah's most learned and sophisticated daughter (by



Maryam Kānom), who acted as her father's private secretary and consultant, was the voice of the harem and influential both with the shah and with the royal princes. Golbadan Bāji Kāzen-al-Dawla, a lowly concubine who rose to the head of the private treasury, presided over the harem finances and the shah's private funds, heading a host of women secretaries and accountants ('Azod-al-Dawla, pp. 17-27).

Final years (1826-1834). Defeat in the second conflict with Russia brought to the surface the fundamental flaws of Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah's government and his weakening grip over the country. Compounded by personal tragedies, most significantly the death of his sons Moḥammad-'Alī Mīrzā in 1823 and 'Abbās Mīrzā in 1833, the shah increasingly withdrew from public life and lost interest in the everyday affairs of the state. The last two decades of the shah's reign witnessed the death of Mīrzā Saḡī Māzandarānī, the influential grand vizier (d. 1234/1818-19); Mīrzā Bozorg Farāhānī the Qā'em-maqām, minister to 'Abbās Mīrzā in Azarbaijan and perhaps the most capable statesman of the Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah period (d. 1237/1821); Hājī Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Eṣfahānī Amīn-al-Dawla, the astute state accountant and, later, the grand vizier (d. 1239/1823), soon to be followed by the death of Mīrzā 'Abd-al-Wahhāb Mo'tamad-al-Dawla Naṣāṭ in 1244/1828, depriving the shah of a close circle of trusted advisors. They were replaced by a younger generation of ministers, of whom Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsem Qā'em-maqām and Mīrzā 'Abd-Allāh Amīn-al-Dawla Eṣfahānī (qq.v.) were the most prominent. They were, however, not of the stature and experience to harness the growing influence upon the shah of the Qajar princes and nobles, the ranking *mojtaheds*, and the harem. The events leading to the war with Russia, and especially the unprecedented appointment in 1826 of a Qajar chief, Allāh-yār Khan Āṣaf-al-Dawla Davallū, to the position of grand vizier, demonstrated the shah's inertia in the face of a mounting pro-war delirium. The loss to Russia of the rest of the Caucasus (and temporarily the province of Azarbaijan) not only was a rude shock to the shah and an irreparable drain on his already dwindling treasury but a major discredit to his authority as he began to encounter immediately after the Russian war a series of debilitating tribal and urban revolts in Isfahan, Yazd, Kermān, and Khorasan. 'Abbās Mīrzā's shaky position, and his bad health, was only partially improved as he completed the royal charge of quelling the revolts in the eastern provinces, especially at a time when public resentment of the princely governments was at its height. But his death not only deprived the shah of a beloved son and a capable successor, who in his later years served almost as an equal partner to his aging and demoralized father, but faced Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah



with a stiff resistance to his decision to bypass his surviving senior sons in succession and instead nominate as heir-apparent the young Moḥammad Mīrzā, ‘Abbās Mīrzā’s senior son. Most significantly, Ḥosayn-‘Alī Mīrzā, the Farmānfarmā of Fārs, viewed the nomination not only as a personal affront to his own rightful position but a sign of the shah’s surrender to a pro-Russian interpretation of Article 13 of the Treaty of Torkamānčāy, which guaranteed ‘Abbās Mīrzā’s succession (Hurowitz, I, pp. 234; Amanat, 1997, p. 22). Fath-‘Alī Shah, witnessing signs of insubordination in Fārs, arrived in Isfahan in October 1834 to collect the tax arrears due from Fārs to the central treasury. With no apparent symptoms of illness, he died there suddenly. He was buried in the tomb which he had constructed for himself in the shrine of Fāṭema Ma’šūmā in Qom (Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* X, pp. 92-95).

The dictum (*saj’*) of the royal emblem (*ṭogrā*)—“Thus rested the seal of kingship by the eternal might, in the hand of the king of the time, Fath-‘Alī” (*gereft kātām-e šāhī ze qodrat-e azalī, qarār dar kaf-e šāh-e zamāna, Fath-e ‘Alī*)—reflected the achievement of Fath-‘Alī Shah’s reign, for he was able to transform a largely Turkic tribal khanship into a centralized and stable monarchy on the old imperial model which brought to the Guarded Domains of Persia (Mamālek-e maḥrūsa-ye Īrān) a period of relative calm and prosperity, secured a state-religious symbiosis, laid down rudiments of a state administration, and fostered a period of cultural and artistic revival which remained the hallmark of the Qajar era. Yet the shah’s complacency, rooted in a culture of conquest, was never distant enough from the tribal norms and familial mores so as to allow, with few exceptions, the budding of a modern state, even to the extent that his Ottoman and Egyptian contemporaries were able to achieve. At the outset of his reign the shah still stood a fair chance to slow down, if not repel completely, the torrent of European military expansion and imperial diplomacy which began to impact his country. By the end of his reign, his compounding financial troubles and military and technological disadvantages brought his country to the brink of political collapse hastened by an ensuing war of succession after his death.



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Plate I. Fath-‘Alī Shah Qājār. Painting signed by Mehr- ‘Alī and dated 1224/1809-10 (253 x 124 cm). Courtesy of the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, VR-1107.

Plate IIa-c. The court of Fath-‘Alī Shah (ca. 1812-13). These watercolors, based on life-size wall paintings at the Negārestān Palace near Tehran, depict an idealized version of a Now Rūz (New Year’s) reception rather than any actual event. The central panel (60 x 52 cm) (Plate IIa), showing the enthroned shah, his sons, and court officials, is flanked by side murals (each 33 x 135 cm) (Plate IIb and Plate IIc) portraying rows of other dignitaries, including envoys from France, Great Britain, and the Ottoman empire (see L. Diba, ed., *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch 1785-1925*, London, 1998). The Art and History Trust, L TS 1997.5.1-3. Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Plate III. Sketch of Fath-‘Alī Shah by Robert Ker Porter (Travels & #138;, 1821, frontispiece). William Ouseley (III, p. 132) considered it “a strong and spirited resemblance of the Persian Monarch’s countenance.” Courtesy University of Hawaii Library.