



GĪLĀN V. HISTORY UNDER THE SAFAVIDS

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Gīlān has traditionally been considered by its local population as a land of two distinct regions divided by the course of Safidrūd River. The author of *Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*, who may have sojourned there, refers to the people of the two sections as those of this side of the river (*īn sū-ye rūdīān*, i.e., of the west bank) and those of that side of the river (*ān sū-ye rūdīān*, i.e., of the east bank) and stresses the warlike character of its men that makes engagement in constant inter-village battles their only profession until old age turns them into zealous enforcers of religious precepts (*moḥtaseb-e ma’rūfgar*). Later sources have referred to the two parts as Pīš Gīlān and Pas Gīlān, Rū[d]-pīš and Rū[d]-pas (Rūh-pīš in Lāhijī, p. 334), but more often by the local terms Bīa-pīš and Bīa-pas (the Gīlakī term *bīa* “water” is a vestige of an old Iranian word, Av. *vaδay-*, *vaiδi-* “watercourse,” preserved also as *vūye* “water” in the Tati language of Tākestān, see Henning, 1954, p. 146; idem, 1977, p. 464; *Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*, ed. Sotūda, pp. 149-50, tr. Minorsky, pp. 136-37, comm. pp. 388-91; Qāšānī, p. 57; Mar‘ašī, pp. 91, 101, 119, 275; *AirWb.*, cols. 1344-45).

Major areas had their own local lords who often were at war with each other but always managed to keep outside powers at arm’s length. Lofty mountains



with winding narrow passes, impregnable forests, frequent torrential rain, and unhealthy climate caused mighty conquerors to deem it wise to be pleased with a nominal token of allegiance (e.g., visiting the court) and the regular payment of tribute. Thus, it remained a favorite area of political refuge as long as it managed to maintain its autonomous state (see, e.g., Rašid-al-Dīn, *Jāme' al-tawārikò*, Baku, pp. 232, 237; idem, *Tāriḳ-e Ġāzānī*, p. 120; Āqsarā'ī, p. 143; Ṭahmāsb Šafawī, pp. 11-12, 76-77; Šokrī, ed., pp. 13-14; Qāzī Aḥmad, ed. Ešraqī, p. 162). Ġilān was the only area in Persia that remained virtually independent of Mongol rule when the entire country had fallen to them, and it remained so even after the costly invasion of it by Oljāytū. No Mongol governor was sent to Ġilān; instead, the Il-khan authorized the ruler of Bīa-pīš to bring the entire area under his command and gave him a Mongol girl as a sign of the Il-khan's good will (Qāšānī, pp. 55-56, 61-72; Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 10-18; Neẓām-al-Dīn Šāmī, pp. 101, 295; 'Alī Yazdī, II, pp. 562-63; Mar'ašī, pp. 365-66, 375-76; Mīrk'ānd, VI, pp. 460-61; Spuler, pp. 165-66, tr., pp. 170-72; cf. the letters exchanged between Tīmūr and Sayyed 'Alī Kīā of Ġilān in Navā'ī, ed., 1977, pp. 51-63).

In the late 15th-early 16th century, Ġilān was under the overlordship of the members of two local clans. Bīa-pas (with Fūman, q.v., and, later, Rašt as its center), a Sunnite area, was ruled by the Shafi'ite Amīra Dobbāj of the Dobbāj/Ešḥāqvand clan, who traced back his lineage to the Sasanian kings and beyond and, at the same time, claimed descent from the biblical prophet Isaac (Ešḥāq). Bīa-pīš (with Lāhījān as its capital), mostly Shi'ite, was under Kār Kīā Mīrzā 'Alī, a *sayyed* from the Zaydī Shi'ite Amīr Kīā'ī clan, a family of relatively newcomers (*now-pādšāh*), although at least one of its members did not hesitate to claim a Sasanian ancestry as well (Qoṭb-al-Dīn Šīrāzī, pp. 9, 16-17; Eskandar Beg, p. 110, tr., p. 182; Qāzī Aḥmad, p. 255; Qāšānī, pp. 56-59).

The youthful Esmā'īl Šafawī I (q.v.), the later founder of the Safavid dynasty, took refuge in Ġilān, where he stayed for about six years (Lāhījī: eight years) before the breakup of the Aq Qoyunlu Empire gave him the chance he had been looking for to make his bid for the throne of Persia in 905/1499. Esmā'īl refused to stay with Amīra Ešḥāq, the ruler of Rašt, which had been arranged for him by his advisors (Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, pp. 18-19), probably because he could not trust a Sunnite (cf. Lāhījī, 105; Wāla Ešfahānī, p. 168; *Habīb al-sīar* IV, pp. 490-91; Montaẓer-e Šāḥeb, ed., p. 44). He, however, readily accepted the invitation of the then paramount ruler of Ġilān, the Shi'ite Kīā Mīrzā 'Alī of Lāhījān, who had fought the Aq Qoyunlu (q.v.) several times and,



according to the author of *‘Ālamārā-ye şafawī* (ed. Šokrī, p. 39), was affiliated with the Safavid order. The Aq Qoyunlu prince Rostam Beyg many times tried peaceful means as well as military might to make Mīrzā ‘Alī surrender Esmā‘īl, but Mīrzā ‘Alī never gave in (Abū Bakr Ṭehrānī, pp. 499-507; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā‘ī, I, p. 638, II, pp. 13-21; Montazer-e Şāheb, ed., pp. 33, 35, 38-40; Moẓtar, ed., pp. 58 ff.; Qāẓī Aḥmad, ed. Eşrāqī, pp. 46-47; Wāla Eşfahānī, pp. 68-85; Eskandar Beg, pp. 25-26, tr. pp. 41-42; Lāhījī, pp. 103-6; Mar‘ašī, pp. 331-33; *Habīb al-sīar* IV, pp. 441-42, 446-48).

Despite their family relationship and occasional alliance, the rulers of Bīa-pīš and Bīa-pas were often at war (e.g., Mar‘ašī, pp. 81-83., 97-98, 264, 273, 287-95, 297-300; 348, 371, 399-400, 475-76; Lāhījī, pp. 20, 24-27, 72, 80, 171-75). Bīa-pīš reached its zenith under Mīrzā ‘Alī, whose superior power was often practically acknowledged both by the ruler of Bīa-pas and those of western Māzandarān (see, e.g., Lāhījī, pp. 64-74, 78-86, 107-8). Mīrzā ‘Alī had developed special affection for Amīra Eşḫāq, to whom he had given his own sister in marriage. However, the first new seed of animosity between the two rulers of Bīa-pas and Bīa-pīš was planted in 899/1494-95, when Amīra Eşḫāq, who apparently was on friendly terms with the Aq Qoyunlu prince Alvand Beyg, tried to intercept the future Shah Esmā‘īl (r. 907-30/1501-24) on his way from Gīlān to Ardabīl (Lāhījī, p. 105; Wāla Eşfahānī, p. 79). In 907/1501-2, Mīrzā ‘Alī asked Amīra Eşḫāq to dismiss his army commander, ‘Abbās, whom Mīrzā ‘Alī resented because of his duplicity during the siege of Sārī by Mīrzā ‘Alī in 899/1494-95, his extreme Sunnite sentiments, and his arranging for the peace treaty between Amīra Eşḫāq and Alvand Beyg Aq Qoyunlu. The main reason, however, seems to have been the proven capability of ‘Abbās and his brothers as excellent military leaders that Mīrzā ‘Alī could not overlook. Amīra Eşḫāq refused to comply and, in the battle of the Safīdrūd River, the forces of Bīa-pīš were routed and, according to the terms of a peace treaty of the same year, Kūčeşfahān was ceded to Amīra Eşḫāq, the governor of Bīa-pas at Fūman. From 907 on, Kūčeşfahān became the bone of contention between the two, for which many more battles were fought that ravaged all of Gīlān. Jayḥān and Raḥmatābād were also lost after another defeat in 908/1502-3, in which Lāhījān in particular suffered a great deal. ‘Abbās sent the head of the Bīa-pīš commander to Morād Khan Aq Qoyunlu and deported Bīa-pīš women and children to Bīa-pas, where they were kept until the conclusion of peace treaty, when he sold them back to their husbands and fathers at the market price of slaves (Lāhījī, pp. 68-69, 106-30, 138-44, 153, 172-73, 175; Wāla Eşfahānī, p. 168).



Amīra Eshāq died in the same year, and his son and successor Amīra ‘Alā’-al-Dīn, evidently aware of the sore issue of Kūčeşfahān, which the governors of Bīā-pīš considered their prize possession, intended to return it to Mīrzā ‘Alī, but he was killed before arrangements could be made (Lāhijānī, pp. 133-34).

Mīrzā ‘Alī (r. 883-911/1477-1505) led Bīā-pīš to the peak of its power, winning a number of contests over Qazvīn against Aq Qoyunlu, extending his sway over Tehran and Şahrīār, and at times penetrating as far south as Sāva. He believed that a show of force was concomitant with the principles of effective government and felt little clemency towards adversaries (Lāhijī, pp. 65, 73-74, 78, 82-85, 97-99). Endless expeditions that often involved looting, burning, destroying, etc. devastated the entire area and drained the resources of Bīā-pīš to the point that Lašt-e Neşā no longer was able to sustain the daily expenses of its governor (i.e., Solţān Ḥasan, Mīrzā ‘Alī’s brother) and the whole of Bīā-pīš could not afford to send a tribute of two hundred tomans demanded by Shah Esmā’īl as a congratulatory gift (*moştloq*) for his victory over the Uzbeks in Khorasan (Lāhijī, pp. 35-38, 41-44, 51, 53-57, 138-44, 157, 171-75, 202, 277, 328, 334, 347, 389-90; cf. with tributes paid to Tīmūr and Uzun Ḥasan: Neẓām-al-Dīn Şāmī, I, p. 295; Yazdī, II, p. 461; Mar’aşī, pp. 375-76, 378-79).

In 910/1504, Mīrzā ‘Alī was removed in a bloodless coup d’état at Rānekūh by his brother Kār Kīā Solţān Ḥasan, the ruler of Lašt-e Neşā, who had already made a secret agreement of cooperation with Ḥosām-al-Dīn, the ruler of Fūman. Ḥosām-al-Dīn, however, refused to honor his commitment for peace and instead requested that Mīrzā ‘Alī be sent to him as hostage. He plundered Rānekūh when his request was rejected. Solţān Ḥasan also failed to win the support of his brothers, in particular of Solţān Hāşem whose nomination by Mīrzā ‘Alī to succeed him was the main cause of the coup. Frustrated by the adamant, hostile attitude of Ḥosām-al-Dīn and feeling insecure in his own realm, Solţān Ḥasan twice sent his son, Solţān Aḥmad, to the court appealing for intervention. Shah Esmā’īl first dispatched an amir with an army to settle the issues, but the presence of the Safavid army created more problems. When the second envoy of Shah Esmā’īl to Ḥosām-al-Dīn also came back empty-handed, the king ordered his new commander-in-chief (*amīr-al-omarā*, q.v.), Shaikh Najm-al-Dīn Mas’ūd Raştī, to arbitrate between the two. Shaikh Najm-al-Dīn’s envoy and Ḥasan’s representative arrived together in Fūman, but both were arrested by Ḥosām-al-Dīn’s order (Lāhijī, pp. 157-68, 183-90, 192-93, 196-98, 200-204, 218, 228; Qāzī Aḥmad, ed. Eşrāqī, p. 88).

Shah Esmā’īl, furious at the unruliness of Ḥosām-al-Dīn, who seems not to



have sent regular tribute as well, decided to punish him. A Safavid army crossed into Gīlān and started ravaging the country. Gaskar and Kūčeşfahān were conquered, and the army posed to move on Rašt. The king himself joined the troops at Kūčeşfahān. Ḥosām-al-Dīn, who was well aware of the ruthlessness of Shah Esmā'īl in punishing defeated adversaries, appealed to Shaikh Najm-al-Dīn, who managed to persuade the king, who had in the meantime received valuable gifts from Ḥosām-al-Dīn and also could no longer tolerate the continuous rain, to call off the expedition. He left unexpectedly, leaving the army behind and having authorized Shaikh Najm-al-Dīn to settle the issue between the two at his own discretion (Lāhijī, pp. 262-68; Bedlisī, p. 137; *Ḥabīb al-sīar* IV, pp. 483-84; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, p. 117; Eskandar Beg, p. 31, tr. 50; 'Abdī Beyg, p. 44; Qāzī Aḥmad, ed. Eşrāqī, p. 87; Moẓṭar, ed., pp. 236-37; Wāla Eşfahānī, pp. 154-55).

Meanwhile, in 911/1505, Mīrzā 'Alī, who was not sure of Solṭān Ḥasan's loyalty, in a secret agreement with his other brothers and former officials of his court, had Solṭān Ḥasan murdered, but he himself was killed the next day by the nobles loyal to Solṭān Ḥasan (Lāhijī, pp. 157-58, 166-67, 181-83, 222-39; Wāla Eşfahānī, pp. 155-56; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, p. 116). Ḥasan's son, Kār KīāAḥmad, who was then at the royal camp, returned to Lāhijān only to find himself just a figurehead. The real power was wielded by the vizier Sadīd, who isolated the young prince by methodically eliminating his supporters and assigning his own relatives and associates to key positions. To pave the way for his own rule as the prince, he sent an emissary to Ḥosām-al-Dīn promising him peace in order to secure his cooperation for the removal of Solṭān Aḥmad in his own favor. Moreover, he also had cultivated a cordial relationship with the king's powerful confidant Shaikh Najm-al-Dīn, and through him he secured a royal edict that gave him the authority to kill at will (Lāhijī, pp. 251-55; 259-61, 270-74, 282-86, 290, 293; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, pp. 116, 120).

Sadīd informed Shaikh Najm-al-Dīn of his agreement with Ḥosām-al-Dīn when the former arrived for arbitration. Shaikh Najm-al-Dīn, who was a Bīa-pas native and, according to Lāhijī, feared for his own life, gave in to all Ḥosām-al-Dīn's demands, even promising him Lašt-e Neşā, the traditional homeland of Solṭān Aḥmad. Aḥmad Khan had no choice but to agree since the peace treaty also stipulated that Sadīd would become the sole representative of the court in case of any disagreement between him and Sadīd. Solṭān Aḥmad eventually succeeded in having Sadīd murdered in 912/1506-7 as he was asleep (Lāhijī,



pp. 306-12). The death of Sadīd antagonized Najm-al-Dīn further, who decided to punish Solṭān Aḥmad by demanding tributes, summoning him to the court, and trying to turn Shah Esmā'īl against him. Several times royal decrees were obtained by both sides appointing one or the other to the government of Lašt-e Nešā, and, in the meantime, Lašt-e Nešā was devastated by Ḥosām-al-Dīn (Lāhijī, pp. 269-71, 330-47). The death of Shaikh Najm-al-Dīn in 915/1509-10 deprived Ḥosām-al-Dīn of his powerful ally. The following year, Solṭān Aḥmad traveled to the court with valuable gifts for Shah Esmā'īl, who consequently appointed him the governor general of the entire Caspian area from Āstārā to Esterābād/Astarābād (q.v.; Lāhijī, pp. 356-64, 369-79; Rabino, 1917, pp. 427-28, tr. pp. 494-95).

Ḥosām-al-Dīn was succeeded by his son Amīra Dobbāj, who apparently in reaction to the good relation of the court with Solṭān Aḥmad Khan, but most probably because he was in some secret agreement with the Ottoman court, considered himself strong enough to disregard the requirement of the allegiance to Shah Esmā'īl (*dam-e este'dād o esteqlāl mīzad wa lawāzem eṭā'at wa enqīād ba 'amal namīāward*; Inalcik, 1973, p. 107, refers to Gīlān as an autonomous frontier province of the Ottoman Empire). In 925/1519, Shah Esmā'īl ordered Aḥmad Khan and some local rulers of Māzandarān and Rostamdār, including Dūrmeš Khan (q.v.) and Zaynal Khan Šāmlū, to conquer Bīa-pas. Amīra Dobbāj, rather than facing the Safavid army alone, decided to send gifts to the court and plead for clemency while, at the same time, appealing to Aḥmad Khan, who at that time was at the royal camp, to intervene. Shah Esmā'īl, who never recovered from the defeat at Čalderān (q.v.) and probably was not unaware of Dobbāj's relation with Sultan Salīm, pardoned him. Amīra Dobbāj had coins struck in Shah Esmā'īl's name and a year later visited the court, on which occasion he received the title Moẓaffar Solṭān and was also given a daughter of Shah Esmā'īl in marriage (Fūmanī, pp. 11-16; *Ḥabīb al-sīar* IV, pp. 563-64, 567-68; Moẓṭar, ed., pp. 566-67, 575; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, p. 219; *Wāla Eṣfahānī*, pp. 272-74; Qāzī Aḥmad, p. 141; Rabino, 1917, pp. 428-30, tr. 495-97; see also Sultan Salīm's letter, dated 923/1917, addressed to the ruler of Gīlān [referred to as *sepahsālār-e a'zam-e amīrān*], most probably Amīra Dobbāj, exulting his victory at the battle of Čalderān, and asking Dobbāj to keep him informed of Esmā'īl's movements; see Navā'ī, ed. 1989a, pp. 311-15).

In 935/1529, Khan Aḥmad Khan went to Qazvīn, the capital, to commit his allegiance to the young king Shah Ṭahmāsb (930-84/1524-76). Persuaded by



Shah Ṭahmāsb, he recanted his Zaydī faith and adopted Twelver Shi'ism, which he endeavored to force on his subjects after his return to Gīlān. After a rule of thirty years and two months, Aḥmad Khan passed away in Ša'ḅān 940/February-March 1534. He was succeeded by Kār KīāḤasan, who died of the plague in 943/1536. Ḥasan's son, Aḥmad, later known as Khan Aḥmad Khan (944-1000/1538-92), who was only one year old upon his father's death, was proclaimed ruler of Bīa-pīš by a local grandee, Amīra'Abbās, who at the time was in charge (*ṣāḥeb-ekṭīār*) of the government (Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, pp. 362-63; 'Abdī Beyg, pp. 136-37; Eskandar Beg, p. 110, tr. Savory, pp. 182-83; Rabino, 1917, pp. 430-31, tr. p. 498; Pārsādūst, 1998, p. 564).

In the civil war that followed the death of Shah Esmā'īl I between the rival factions of the *qezelbāš*, Moẓaffar Solṭān, who, did not have cordial relation with the court despite having married the king's sister, supported the rebellious Ostājīlūs against the forces of Dīv Solṭān (q.v.), the *amīr-al-omarā'*, who was acting in the name of the youthful new king Shah Ṭahmāsb (Qāẓī Aḥmad, ed. Ešrāqī, pp. 162-63; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, pp. 245-47, 251-54; Wāla Ešfahānī, pp. 331-36; Bedlīsī, II, p. 171; 'Abdī Beyg Šīrāzī, pp. 62-63; Ṭahmāsb Šafawī, pp. 10-12; Pārsādūst, 1998, pp. 556-57; Savory, pp. 51-53). Once the rebellion was crushed, Moẓaffar Solṭān, now rightly fearful of Shah Ṭahmāsb's revenge because of his support of the rebellious amirs, and most probably in collusion with the Ottoman court that had its eyes on Gīlān, the source provider of raw material for the flourishing Ottoman silk industry (see Inalcik, 1994, chap. 10), became intent on undermining the Safavid power. According to Qāẓī Aḥmad, he also made contacts with another deadly enemy of the Safavids, namely 'Obayd-Allāh Khan, the Uzbek ruler of Bukhara. He became totally alienated from the royal court after the death of his wife in 938/1532, and during the invasion of Azarbaijan by the Ottoman Sultan Solaymān in 940/1534, in the hope that Solaymān would soon put an end to the Safavid rule, joined Sultan Solaymān at the head of an army of 8000 (Qāẓī Aḥmad, ed. Ešrāqī, pp. 254-56; Fūmanī, pp. 16-18; Eskandar Beg, pp. 110-11, tr. Savory, p. 183; Navā'ī, ed., 1989, p. 161; Bedlīsī, II, p. 182 [army of 5000]; Pārsādūst, 1998, pp. 556-59). The scorched earth policy adapted by Shah Ṭahmāsb, who did not want to have the disastrous battle of Čālderān repeated, in addition to the severe early cold of that year, forced the Ottoman troops to withdraw (Ṭahmāsb Šafawī, pp. 25-30; Eskandar Beg, pp. 66-68, tr. Savory, pp. 111-12; Bedlīsī, II, pp. 182-85; Qāẓī Aḥmad, ed. Ešrāqī, pp. 228-36; Pārsādūst, pp. 153-67). Moẓaffar Solṭān returned to Gīlān in fear and disappointed, but before he could reach Rašt, the seat of his government, he was attacked and



defeated by Amīra Ḥātem of Kūhdam, a member of his own entourage. Moẓaffar Solṭān left Gilān to take refuge with Solṭān Ḳalīl, the then governor of Šīrvān, who also had married a daughter of Shah Esmāʿīl. Solṭān Ḳalīl, however, soon died on Jomādā I 942/November 1535 and Moẓaffar Solṭān was taken to Tabrīz, where he was burned alive in public on 7 Rabīʿ II, 943/17 February 1537 by the order of Shah Ṭahmāsb. Shortly afterwards, Rostam Fūmanī, a former ranking amir under Moẓaffar Solṭān, attacked and captured Amīra Ḥātem, who had established himself in Bīa-pas and had coin struck in his own name. Amīra Ḥātem was sent in chain to the royal court, but he was eventually pardoned and sent to Kermān (Bedlīsī, II, pp. 187-88; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navāʿī, II, pp. 355-56; Fūmanī, pp. 19-27; Qāzī Aḥmad, ed. Ešrāqī, pp. 255-56; ʿAbdī Beyg, pp. 76-78, 84; Eskandar Beg, p. 111, tr., p. 183; Rabino, 1917, p. 430, tr. 497).

After the death of Kār Kīā Ḥasan in 944/1538 (see above), Shah Ṭahmāsb, persuaded by Kīā Ḳor Kīā Ṭālaqānī, a former courtier of Kār Kīā Ḥasan, sent his own brother, Bahrām Mīrzā, as the governor of Gilān at the head of a large army. Bahrām Mīrzā established himself in Deylamān and a few months later imprisoned Kīā Ḳor Kīā, who was very much respected by the people of Gilān. People rebelled and defeated the prince, who fled to Qazvīn (Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navāʿī, II, pp. 361-62; Bedlīsī, II, pp. 189, 190; ʿAbdī Beyg Šīrāzī, p. 86; Eskandar Beg, p. 110, tr. Savory, pp. 182-83; Rabino, 1917, p. 430, tr. pp. 498-99). In 945/1538, Khan Aḥmad Khan, the infant ruler of Bīa-pīš, received a royal decree that added Bīa-pas to his dominion, thus making him the sole ruler of Gilān. Atrocities of the Bīa-pīš army and the chaotic situation that followed their invasion eventually led the people of Bīa-pas to invite Amīra Šāhroḳ, a remote relative of Moẓaffar Solṭān living in Ḳalkāl, to take over the government of Bīa-pas. Amīra Šāhroḳ arrived in Gilān in Šawwāl 950/January 1544 and struck coins in Shah Ṭahmāsb's name. He ruled for seven years before, due to complaints of Khan Aḥmad Khan, he was summoned to the court. Facing intrigues instigated by Khan Aḥmad Khan, who wished to regain control of Bīa-pas, and also unable to meet the increasing monetary demands of *qezelbāš* leaders, Amīra Šāhroḳ secretly left for Gilān. He was, however, overtaken by the troops sent after him and executed in Tabrīz with all his entourage (Bedlīsī, II, pp. 234-35; Fūmanī, pp. 28-31; Rabino, 1917, p. 432, tr. pp. 499-500). Then followed in Bīa-pas a period of total anarchy when, among other things, children were kidnapped and sold into slavery. Finally, Shah Ṭahmāsb gave the government of Bīa-pas to Solṭān Maḥmūd, a son of Moẓaffar Solṭān living in Ḳalkāl, with Kār Kīā Aḥmad Solṭān as his regent (*wakīl*). They



reached Rašt in 965/1557-58, but shortly afterwards, Kār Kīā Aḥmad, hoping to secure the government of Bīa-pas for himself, complained to the court that Solṭān Maḥmūd was unfit to rule. Shah Ṭahmāsb summoned both of them to the court; Maḥmūd was sent in exile to Shiraz, where, by the instigation of Khan Aḥmad Khan, the governor of Bīa-pīš, he was poisoned by Moḥammad b. Ġiāṭ-al-Dīn Maṣṣūr Šīrāzī, who had been appointed as his preceptor (Fūmanī, pp. 32-38; Rabino, 1917, pp. 432-33, tr., p. 500).

Khan Aḥmad Khan was now the paramount ruler of Bīa-pīš as well as Bīa-pas. Shah Ṭahmāsb, in order to curtail the power of Khan Aḥmad Khan, who had shown signs of disobedience and had not visited the court for twenty years, gave the government of Bīa-pas to Jamšīd Khan, the son of the late Moḥaffar Solṭān, who was also Shah Ṭahmāsb's own grandson. At the same time, Khan Aḥmad Khan was ordered to relinquish Gaskar to its former lord Amīra Sāsān, from which Khan Aḥmad had driven him out. Khan Aḥmad gave up Bīa-pas but refused to surrender Kūčeṣfahān claiming that it had always been a part of Bīa-pīš (Kūčeṣfahān was ceded to Bīa-pīš in 882/1477-78 during the rule of Solṭān Moḥammad of Bīa-pīš and recovered by Bīa-pas in 907/1501-2; see Mar'ašī, pp. 399-401). To quell his rebellion, the king dispatched on a peace mission to Gilān one of his trusted men, Yūlqolī Beg Du'l-Qadr. On Du'l-ḥejja 974/June 1567, Amīra Sāsān was routed in a surprise attack near Sīāh-rūdbār by Šāh Maṣṣūr Lāhījī, the military commander of Lāhijān and governor of Kūčeṣfahān. The king's envoy, Yūlqolī Beg Du'l-Qadr, who was then in Rašt with a handful of his entourage, was also killed and his head sent to Khan Aḥmad, who then entered Rašt in triumph (Bedlīsī, pp. 234-37; Eskandar Beg, p. 111, tr. p. 184; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, pp. 558-59; Fūmanī, pp. 41-44; Qāzī Aḥmad, ed. Ešrāqī, pp. 367-68; Rabino, 1917, p. 434, tr. pp. 501-2). Shah Ṭahmāsb, still hopeful for a peaceful solution, sent Khan Aḥmad Khan a threatening letter recounting his misdeeds and rebellious acts but also promising him forgiveness if he would go to the court. The latter answered making excuses for not visiting the court for twenty years, but still refused to comply (Navā'ī, ed., 1989, pp. 118-32; Nowzād, ed., pp. 62-76; in a previous, versified letter [he was an accomplished poet] that he sent to the court, Khan Aḥmad mentioned exorbitant demands of the *qezelbāš* amirs and the officers of the *dīvān* as the reason for his long absence from the court; see Qāzī Aḥmad, p. 467). Thereupon, Shah Ṭahmāsb, who was already furious at Khan Aḥmad for his cowardly role in the poisoning of Solṭān Maḥmūd and also at the fact that several royal envoys sent to Gilān to arrest Ġiāṭ-al-Dīn Maṣṣūr (whom Khan Aḥmad was harboring) had been turned away by Khan Aḥmad empty-



handed, ordered his amirs to cross into Gilān and capture him. Khan Aḥmad marshaled his forces and prepared for battle, but his army under Kīā Rostam, the military governor of Rašt, was defeated and Aḥmad Khan fled. (According to Bedlīsī, pp. 236-37, who had first-hand information of the operation, Khan Aḥmad was deceived by Ma'šūm Beyg, the commander of the Safavid army, into disbanding his troops, upon which Ma'šūm Beyg launched a surprise attack on his camp.) The Safavid army committed many atrocities in Gilān, indiscriminately looting and destroying property and killing people while looking for Khan Aḥmad. He was eventually captured and jailed in the Qahqaha fortress in Azarbaijan. There he made friends with Prince Esmā'īl, the future Shah Esmā'īl II, whereupon Shah Ṭahmāsb, fearing rebellion in the castle, sent Khan Aḥmad Khan to the fortress of Estakr in Fārs, where he remained for ten years (Bedlīsī, pp. 234-38, 240; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, pp. 559-66; Navā'ī, ed., 1989, pp. 118-34; Nowzād, ed., pp. 62-78; Fūmanī, pp. 43-52; Eskandar Beg, pp. 111-13, tr. Savory, pp. 183-87; Qāzī Aḥmad, ed. Ešraqī, pp. 462-78; Wāla Ešfahānī, pp. 351-55; Waliqolī Šāmlū, pp. 85-88; Afūšta'ī, pp. 68-69; Rabino, 1917, pp. 435-36, 449, tr. pp. 503, 519; Ḥosaynī Astarābādī, p. 83, with the wrong date 965).

With the removal of Khan Aḥmad Khan Bīa-pas enjoyed a period of peace under Jamšīd Khan, who arrived in Fūman and later married a daughter of Shah Ṭahmāsb. Allāhqolī Beyg Solṭān Ostājlu, who had captured Khan Aḥmad, was rewarded, as the guardian (*lala*) of Prince Maḥmūd Mirzā, with the government of Lāhījān and the rest of Bīa-pīš was divided among other *qezelbāš* amirs. The iron-handed rule of the amirs, whose excessive demands never seemed to end, eventually caused a popular uprising in Lāhījān in 979 /1571-72. People attacked the castle of Lāhījān in the absence of Allāhqolī Solṭān, killing everyone, including women and children, and also defeated Amīra Sāsān, the governor of Gaskar. The rebellion ended when its leader, a certain Dobbāj, was killed in a battle with the army sent against him by Shah Ṭahmāsb (Bedlīsī, pp. 240, 243, who also mentions an earlier, short-lived uprising by a certain Hāšem Khan; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, pp. 578-81; Navā'ī, ed., 1989, pp. 118-34; Eskandar Beg, pp. 113-14, tr. Savory, pp. 187-88; Fūmanī, pp. 54-63; Qāzī Aḥmad, ed. Ešraqī, pp. 570-71; Wāla Ešfahānī, pp. 363-65; Ḥosaynī Astarābādī, p. 84, with the wrong date 966).

Khan Aḥmad Khan remained in prison until 985/1578, when the new king Moḥammad Ḳodā-banda (985-96/1578-88), at the suggestion of his queen, who was a close relative of Khan Aḥmad and the actual power behind the throne,



released him from Estakr fortress and took him along in his retinue to Qazvīn. There he gave Khan Aḥmad one of his own sisters in marriage and reinstated him in his former dominion of Bīa-pīš. A previous order for the release of Khan Aḥmad had been already issued by Shah Esmā'īl II, the predecessor of Ḳodā-banda, but evidently it had not been carried out (Qāzī Aḥmad, ed. Ešrāqī, pp. 462-78; Eskandar Beg, pp. 112-13, 223, 227, tr. Savory, pp. 186, 333, 340; Jalāl-al-Dīn Monajjem, pp. 42-43; Afūšta'ī, p. 69; Navā'ī, ed. 1989b, pp. 135-37; Nowzād, ed., pp. 87-89; Fūmanī, pp. 64-68; Rabino, 1917, p. 438, tr. p. 506).

The return of Khan Aḥmad Khan, who had not given up the ambition of being the sole ruler of Gīlān, marked the beginning of a new era of relentless conflicts that lasted for fifteen years and involved the governor of Šīrvān. Gīlān suffered a great deal of devastation. Hardly had Khan Aḥmad arrived in Gīlān before he marched against Bīa-pas. He was routed by the forces of Jamšīd Khan, who ordered the massacre of all captives and had a minaret made of their heads. This, however, did not deter Khan Aḥmad from trying several more times to conquer or at least control Bīa-pas. In the meantime Jamšīd Khan was removed (Fūmanī, p. 71, gives the incorrect date of 2 Dūl-qa'da 998/2 September 1590; Mīrzā Kāmṛān was killed in 986/1579, see Fūmanī, p. 88) and murdered two months later by a conspiracy engineered by his own generals. Mīrzā Kāmṛān of Kūhdam, the leader of the coup, who aspired to secure the government of Bīa-pas for himself, sent Jamšīd Khan's treasury as gifts to the court with a letter accusing Jamšīd Khan of having harbored rebellious intentions. He also bribed the officials of the court and asked for a royal decree assigning him to the government of Bī-pas. The ineffective king Sultan Khan Ḳodā-banda, who faced more serious problems in his realm (e.g., see Bedlīsī, II, pp. 255-61, 268-69, 272, 279-83), appointed him the interim governor of Bīa-pas and warned Khan Aḥmad Khan, who was hopeful to recover Kūčešfahān, not to interfere in Bīa-pas affairs. Khan Aḥmad, who was more fearful of Mīrzā Kāmṛān than of his predecessor, pleaded to the court to have the area divided among the *qezelbāš* amirs. The king, who had developed some affection for Khan Aḥmad and, moreover, was resentful of Mīrzā Kāmṛān's murder of Jamšīd Khan, dispatched Salmān (Fūmanī: Solaymān) Khan to Rašt and divided the rest of Bīa-pas among a few of Ostājilū amirs (Fūmanī, pp. 65-80; Eskandar Beg, pp. 265-67, tr. Savory, pp. 391-94; Wāla Ešfahānī, pp. 626-29).

In the meantime, Mīrzā Kāmṛān was driven out of Rašt by Šīrzād Kāklavānī, who gathered a substantial army around a young man (*qalandar pesar*,



according to Eskandar Beg, p. 267), whom he called Maḥmūd Khan and claimed to be a son of the late Jamšīd Khan. Šīrzād arrived in Rašt with the fake prince, but he offered his allegiance to Khan Aḥmad Khan when he learned that Salmān Khan was approaching Gīlān at the head of an army. A skirmish took place just outside Rašt, in which Šīrzād was taken prisoner and killed a few days later. The *qezelbāš* amirs entered Rašt in triumph but, finding themselves totally isolated in the middle of a very hostile population that kept harassing them and their troops day and night, returned to Qazvīn dejected and penniless (*parīšān o bīsāmān*). They took with them Ebrāhīm Khan, the younger son of Jamšīd Khan, and left behind in Rašt his elder brother, Moḥammad-Amīn Khan. For a while Bīa-pas was able to enjoy a brief period of peace before ‘Alī Beyg Khan of Fūman, the son of the former *wakīl* of Jamšīd Khan, arrived from Qazvīn to assume the power as the *wakīl* of Moḥammad-Amīn. Hostilities flared up again involving the forces of Gaskar and Ṭāleš, and, for a while, Bīa-pas was divided between the two centers of Fūman and Rašt (nominally under Ebrāhīm Khan and Moḥammad-Amīn, respectively). When hostilities eventually came to a halt, Ebrāhīm Khan was the nominal and ‘Alī Beyg, his *wakīl*, the real ruler of Bīa-pas while Moḥammad-Amīn, who had been kidnapped by Khan Aḥmad and placed for a short time in Rašt as his protégé ruler, was a refugee in Lašt-e Nešā under Khan Aḥmad’s protection (Fūmanī, pp. 92-93, 111-13, 125-26; Nowzād, ed., pp. 102-5, 79-80, 129-30, 192-93; Navā’ī, ed., 1988, pp. 124-27; Eskandar Beg, pp. 266-69, tr. pp. 391-97; Wāla Ešfahānī, pp. 629-33).

The next king, Shah ‘Abbās I (996-1038/1588-1629), who was determined to establish a strong centralized government for all Persia, naturally would look for an opportune time to subdue the independent-minded Khan Aḥmad Khan, who was married to the king’s sister. The opportunity arrived when Khan Aḥmad refused to surrender the renegade *qezelbāš* amirs who had taken refuge with him in Gīlān and, instead, sent some token gifts with 150 tomans in cash that infuriated Shah ‘Abbās (Jalāl-al-Dīn Monajjem, p. 107). Shah ‘Abbās’s preoccupation with the Ottomans and Uzbeks at that time temporarily kept him from moving against Khan Aḥmad. The Ottomans, who were in control of Azarbaijan and a good part of the western shorelines of the Caspian Sea, had organized a substantial fleet there, which enabled them to establish a direct line of communication with Khan Aḥmad as well as with the Uzbek ruler of Bukhara, whom they encouraged to invade Khorasan. Khan Aḥmad could not have been unaware of the nearby Ottoman presence when he rejected Shah ‘Abbās’s offer of a new marriage alliance (Shaw, pp. 182-83). The



situation changed somewhat when the Ottoman Emperor, faced with the pending war with the Habsburgs, concluded a peace treaty with Shah ‘Abbās (Khan Aḥmad had criticized Shah ‘Abbās for his peace initiative in a letter sent to him), but Azarbaijan was still in Ottoman hands and the Uzbeks were ravaging Khorasan. In 999/1590-91 Shah ‘Abbās offered a new marriage alliance with Khan Aḥmad by asking the hand of Khan Aḥmad’s youthful daughter for his son Ṣafī Mīrzā, which Khan Aḥmad rejected. The following year, when Shah ‘Abbās learned that Khan Aḥmad had dispatched his vizier to the Ottoman court in order to arrange a joint, contemporaneous attack against him, Shah ‘Abbās decided to do away with his rebellious subject once and for all. Khan Aḥmad, in desperation, appealed to the Russian czar for protection, but the czar’s response could not arrive in time and Farhād Khan Qarāmānlū, the commander of the Azarbaijan army, was ordered to conquer Gīlān. Farhād Khan entered Gīlān by way of Āstārā and Gaskar and, reinforced by the forces of Gaskar and Bīa-pas, routed Khan Aḥmad Khan’s army on 5 Ṣawwāl 1000/15 July 1592. The Safavid army indulged in its usual show of ruthlessness. According to the eye-witness account of Orūj Beyg Bayāt, about 10,000 people, half of them women and children, were massacred in one town, and the wife of the town’s governor was burned alive (Nowzād, ed., pp. 91-96; Navā’ī, ed., 1988, III, pp. 17-33; Orūj Beyg Bayāt, pp. 248-51; Jalāl-al-Dīn Monajjem, pp. 107-10, 115-16; Eskandar Beg, pp. 448-51, tr. 621-23; Qāzī Aḥmad, ed. Müller, pp. 93-94, 97-102; Belīsī, II, pp. 293-94; Afūšta’ī, pp. 393-95, 465; Fūmanī, pp. 130-32; Ḥosaynī Astarābādī, pp. 153-54; Falsafī, pp. 142-43).

Shah ‘Abbās tried to keep Khan Aḥmad in Persia by offering him amnesty and his government of Bīa-pīš, but Khan Aḥmad Khan, evidently remembering Shah ‘Abbās’s treatment of renegade amirs that he had turned over to him, fled with Moḥammad-Amīn to Šīrvān and from there proceeded to Istanbul, hoping to use the Ottoman court in order to regain his realm. He died there in exile in 1005/1596-97 (Afšūta’ī, pp. 464-73; Fūmanī, pp. 161-62; Nowzād, pp. 93-95; Eskandar Beg, p. 529, tr., p. 706; see the letters exchanged between the two courts in Navā’ī, ed., II, pp. 130-209). A few days later, Shah ‘Abbās arrived in Lāhījān; he completely destroyed Khan Aḥmad’s palace, proclaimed general amnesty, and appointed Mahdīqolī Khan Šāmlū and ‘Alī Beyg Solṭān as the governors of Bīa-pīš and Bīa-pas, respectively. K̄vāja Masīḥ, the former vizier of Khan Aḥmad who had fled to the court and, according to Fūmanī, was the main instigator of the invasion of Gīlān, was rewarded with the title of “the elder” (*rīš-safīd*) of Bīa-pīš. He also forbade unprecedented customs (*omūr-emobda’ā*; e.g. depriving girls of their right of inheritance) as well as the



unjustified, customary taxes (e.g., poll tax, taxes on marriage and death) that traditionally were collected by local rulers. (These taxes must have been reinstated after the removal of Mīrzā ‘Alī, who had abolished them upon his assumption of power; see Lāhījī, pp. 10-11; Mar‘ašī, p. 415) One year later, Shah ‘Abbās dismissed Maḥdīqolī Khan when he received complaints about his conduct of government and ordered the abolishment of any unreasonable taxes levied by Khan Aḥmad Khan or the people after him. Eventually, in 1008/1599, Gīlān was incorporated into the crown lands (*kāṣṣa*) that were administered by viziers (Nowzād, ed., pp. 96-98; Eskandar Beg, pp. 451, 459-60, tr., 624, 633; Jalāl-al-Dīn Monajjem, p. 115; Fūmanī, pp. 132, 135-36, 172, 234-36; Ḥosaynī Astarābādī, pp. 157-58; Eskandar Beg and Wāla, p. 297; della Valle, p. 159; Röhrborn, tr. pp. 157-58, 163-64, 176, 178, 181, n. 50).

The end of the local dynasty did not bring about the total submission of the independent-minded local population, which was now facing the ever increasing demands of non-local officials sent to them by the central government. Shah ‘Abbās’s occasional token measures to alleviate the tax burden and to redress the wrongs (e.g., Eskandar Beg, pp. 459-60, tr. 633; Fūmanī, pp. 202-4, 206; Ḥosaynī Astarābādī, pp. 157-58) did little to win the heart of the people in Gīlān. Popular revolts sprang up within a couple of years after the conquest of Gīlān and were crushed with the usual cruelty of the *qezelbāš*. The revolt of Ḥamza Khan Ṭālešī in the castle of Šīndān in 1002 was followed in the same year by those of ‘Alī Beyg Khan Fūmanī, the governor of Bīa-pas, and Ṭāleš-kūlī (Jalāl-al-Dīn Monajjem, pp. 131-34, 139-40; Afšūta’ī, pp. 475-85; Fūmanī, pp. 140-46, 163-68; Eskandar Beyg, pp. 494-501, 513-14, tr. 670-75, 689-92). On one occasion, Shah ‘Abbās ordered the massacre of Lašt-e Nešā’s entire population, and in another instance sent his executioner to kill indiscriminately the men and women of the rebellious villages (Jalāl-al-Dīn Monajjem, pp. 140; Afšūta’ī, pp. 540-47; Fūmanī, pp. 163-67, 169-71). The most threatening insurrection happened at Lašt-e Nešā in 1038 soon after the death of Shah ‘Abbās in the same year. People lost patience with the oppressive rule of Aṣlān Khan, the vizier of Gīlān, and rallied around a certain Kālanjār Solṭān, who emerged from the forests claiming to be the son of the late Amīra Jamšīd Khan of Bīa-pas. A large army (ten thousand according to Fūmanī) of commoners (*ajāmera*) followed him and proclaimed him king as ‘Ādel Shah and Ġarīb Shah. Houses, shops, caravansaries, market places, as well as the residence of the mayor (*kalāntar*) of Lāhījān and the government offices were looted and destroyed. ‘Ādel Shah was eventually defeated by Sārū Taqī Khan, the vizier of Gīlān and Māzandarān, who marched from Ṭāleš and ravaged



Lašt-e Nešā. When he left, he took with him the girls and the women that his army had taken prisoner. ‘Ādel Shah was captured and sent to the court, where he was executed (Fūmanī, pp. 261-89; Eskandar Beg and Wāla Ešfahānī, pp. 15-18; Bedlīsī, II, pp. 297, 299; Ḥosaynī Astarābādī, p. 237).

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