



KIĀNI, SAYYED NĀDERŠĀH

KIĀNI, SAYYED NĀDERŠĀH (b. Kulāb, 1897; d. 1970), 20th century Isma‘ili poet and writer of Afghanistan, born in Kulāb, southwestern Tajikistan. Towards the end of the 16th century, an ancestor of his, Sayyed Šāleḥšāh, later nicknamed Šāh-e Abdāl, was probably summoned by the Isma‘ili imams in Persia to organize the dispersed Isma‘ili communities of Afghanistan. Abdāl’s offspring gradually gained prominence in northern Afghanistan and around the year 1835, Nāder’s great grandfather, Shah ‘Abd-al-Hādi, visited the first Āqā Khan ḤOasan-‘Ališāh (d. 1881) in Kermān, who appointed him as his representative in Afghanistan. During the reign of Amir ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Khan (r. 1880-1901), Nāder’s father, Sayyed Gowhar, was either exiled or migrated to Kulāb out of fear. Sayyed Nāder was only one year old when his father died, and his upbringing fell upon his two elder brothers, Sayyed Faridun, and Sayyed Taymur. Faridun died in 1909, and Sayyed Taymur requested and received permission to return the family to Kabul. Actual resettlement of the family and Nāder’s arrival in Kiān valley took place in the reign of Amān-Allāh Khan in 1918. Sayyed Nāder had not received a formal education because of repeated family migrations. When Nāder was twenty-six, his brother Taymur died and his young son, Sayyed Šojā‘, laid claim to the leadership of the Isma‘ilis in Afghanistan. Šojā‘ was young and his claim was not supported by community elders. In 1925, the matter was referred to Sir Sulṭān-Muḥammadšāh, Āqā Khan III, the forty-eighth Nezāri Isma‘ili Imam, who entrusted the position to Sayyed Nāder (Nāderšāh, 1938, p. 37).

As the leader of the community, Nāder faced two military attacks. The first



took place in 1925 when Ebrāhim Beyg Laqqy attacked Baġlān, but was defeated. The more serious battle was waged when ḤOabib-Allāh Kalakāni Saqqāwi, popularly known as *Bačča-ye Saqqā*, who had defeated the forces of Amir Amān-Allāh Khan (d. 1961, q.v.), and had been crowned at Kabul in 1929 as Amir of Afghanistan, also attacked Baġlān. Nāder was defeated and his headquarters in Kiān were rampaged; he was forced to take refuge among the Hazāra tribes of northern Afghanistan (Nāderšāh, 1938, pp. 100-103). Bačča-ye Saqqā's days, however, were numbered; Nāder Khan Ġāzi, the future Nāder Shah, captured and sacked Kabul (October 1929), and had Bačča-ye Saqqā killed in violation of the amnesty promise he had given him. Sayyed Nāder, who had suffered huge losses of men and property in the battle with Bačča-ye Saqqā, met Nāder Shah for the last time in 1933. The king's hospitality was mere formality and his promises were never fulfilled.

In the reign of Moḥammad Zāher Shah (r. 1933-73), Nāder enjoyed royal favors and hosted the king on his annual visits to Baġlān, but he failed to accept any positions in the government. Such behavior, compared with the pageantry that he demonstrated in the royal visit of 1967, roused the suspicion of his rivals and caused his political isolation.

Sayyed Nāder had been fond of mysticism and a Sufi lifestyle since his early youth. He was generous, peace loving, and interested in keeping good relations with other communities. Some fifty-three books and treatises, mostly in poetry, such as *Emtiāz-e bašar*, *Baḥr al-ma'āni*, and *Divān-e ġazaliyāt*, are attributed to him (for a complete list, see Nikpey, pp. 131-34). Ismail Poonawala (p. 286), however, mentions only a *divān*, consisting mainly of *ġazals* and a few quatrains, and another collection of poetry called *Payām-e nasim-e šemāl*. As the representative of the Isma'ili imams, Sayyed Nāder was entrusted to manage the affairs of the Nezāri Isma'ili communities of Afghanistan, Badaḡ-šān, and, at a later date in 1909, other localities in the border of Afghanistan with Persia. Sayyed Nāder apparently succeeded in reducing religious superstitions, but he failed in educating and modernizing the Isma'ili community of Afghanistan. This was partly due to the circumstances imposed on him by the Afghan government, internal family disputes, and quite probably the feudal structure of Afghan society, which at the time was resentful of modernity and change.



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