

6. The Emergence of Fixed Boundaries

In the early 1880s, the Irish war correspondent Edmund O'Donovan (1844–1883) reacted with amusement to the perceived inability or unwillingness of the Prime Minister to delineate the exact scope of Qājār authority in the northeastern reaches of Khurāsān, even in the face of growing Russian encroachment:

I remember once at Teheran asking Hussein Khan[Husain Khān Mushīr al-Daula], the acting Prime Minister, for a passport to the frontier. He said he would give it willingly, but added that he could not be responsible for my safety outside the kingdom. I made no objection to that, as may well be imagined, but merely asked his Highness if he could tell me the boundary lines of the Shah's dominions in the direction which I proposed taking. After a moment's reflection he replied: 'Perhaps on that point I had better refer you to your own Ambassador.' I mentioned the conversation to the British Minister, who was highly amused, as he could no more inform me than the Sipah Salar Aazem could to what exact point the sway of his Persian Majesty extended.¹

In this chapter, I will investigate the contrast between far-flung territorial claims and the realities on the ground in two settings located at the northeastern and southeastern frontiers of Khurāsān. The conceptional gap between overarching notions of supremacy and the crystallization and consolidation of international borders is best understood against the backdrop of the changing texture of local power. In the oases embraced by the Qara Qum desert, the fluid concepts of sovereignty employed by the Qājārs and the neighboring Central Asian principalities lost their evocative content and were overtaken by new political realities in the late nineteenth century. With the Russian encapsulation of the khanates of Bukhārā and Khīva and the imposition of a clearly demarcated sphere of interest, Qājār territorial concepts found their expression in short-lived spurts of irredentism before eventually withering away into nostalgia. The same tension between evolving notions of boundedness and the formal adherence to an early modern cast of loosely defined loyalties may also be observed in Qājār dealings with the southeastern region of Sīstān. In this environment, however, the Iranian government successfully switched to a sustained policy of military penetration, thereby creating facts conducive to territorial consolidation.

THE SHRINKING FRONTIER: ASTARĀBĀD, SARAKHS AND MARV

While Qājār claims to authority extended as far as Marv and Khīva for the greater part of the nineteenth century, their actual sphere of influence barely reached beyond the slopes of the mountain barrier formed by the Greater and Lesser Balkhān mountains and the chains of the Kūren Dagħ and Kopet Dagħ mountains. Along the outer hem of these sterile limestone ridges a belt of fertile land known as *atek* extended all the way from the Harī Rūd to Qizil Arvāt.² In the 1820s Fraser described the landscape at the foot of the mountains in the following way:

These mountains, although they present to the desert their loftiest face, still sweep down in a manner so gradual near their base, as to afford in the vallies and ravines they include, as well at their feet, a quantity of rich land, watered by numerous rivulets, which once was well peopled and cultivated. This stripe of country has been termed by natives the *Attock* [*atek*], a word signifying a skirt (as of a garment), and it contained the considerable towns of Nissa [Nasā], Abivard [Abīvard], Diroom [Durūn], Mehineh [Maihana], with their dependent villages, all of which are now in ruins...³

¹ O'Donovan 1970 II: 11.

² Barto'ld 1984: 88–89. Napier distinguished three sections, the Kalāt Atek, the Darra Gaz Atek, and the Akhal Atek. The Kalāt Atek commenced in Āq Darband and extended about 100 miles west to Abīvard: "The Kelat range reaches the Atak in long spurs, pointing for the most part to the east, and subsiding in a maze of rough ravine-cleft undulations. Many fine streams rise in its glens and, reaching the plain, carry broad lines of pasture across the desert half-way to Tajand [Tejend]." The Darra Gaz Atek extended from Abīvard to Gavurz, a distance of about 50 miles. The Akhal Atek extended from Gavurz to Qizil Arvāt and included the settlements of Anau and 'Ishqābād (Napier 1876: 138–9). See also König 1962: 19; Lessar 1884: 281; Rawlinson 1977: 112. The region located between the northern foothills of the Alburz Mountains and the Gurgān plain was likewise known as Atek (Rabino 1928: 86, 97, 99–100).

³ Fraser 1825: 245.

Beyond this fertile strip of land, the inhospitable Qara Qum desert stretched away towards the northeast. Within this expanse, the delta oases of Marv on the Murghāb river and Khīva on the Āmū Daryā formed compact islands of fertility, which were relatively secure from invading armies.⁴ Both Persian and British authors attempted to convey the dimensions of this desert and the dangers it held in store by comparing it to an ocean. When the Iranian envoy Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat embarked on his mission to Khīva in spring 1851, the Qājār governor of Astarābād, Muḥammad Valī Khān Qājār Develū, warned him of the hazards that lay ahead:

You [are mistaken if you] think that the route ahead is like the road to Māzandarān. It is a murderous desert more dangerous than a tumultuous sea. You will have to pass forty stages without water, fodder, cultivation, accommodation, signs marking the way, or any kind of greenery. [You will be traveling] among a plundering, bloodthirsty, ferocious and warlike people (*qaum*)... No Göklen dares to pass through the Yomut territory, as these two tribes (*tāyifa*) have been at war with each other for a long time. A Yomut guide? He would have to be not an Uzbek but a demon (*ghūl*) to pass through Turkmen territory. Besides, camels cannot travel to that region unless their driver is a Turkmen himself. These people are not loyal to anybody. They move and rest as they like, and one has to proceed according to their desire. What is more, you have to anticipate the number of persons, high and low, accompanying you in order to provide sufficient water and provisions for them. You will have to take flour, bread and other necessities such as pickles and legumes... along from Astarābād. Imagine Astarābād as a port, the Turkmen desert as an endless sea, the Yomut camel drivers as boatmen, and Khvārazm as (far away as) Caluctta, Egypt or Europe. [Imagine] that you have to move across water until you reach your destination. Of utmost necessity is an abundant supply of drinking water for your travelling companions as well as for your horses, otherwise your lives will be in danger.⁵

This prediction proved true as soon as Hidāyat's party crossed the Atrak river. On the other side, the caravan entered an "endless desert", in which, according to Hidāyat's poetic rendering, not even demons, angels, beasts or fairies were to be seen. On a practical level, this expanse was devoid of any sight that might enable the itinerant to take his bearings: there were no settlements, trees, stones or other signs; nor could the distances be measured. After travelling for eleven days, Hidāyat was overjoyed to see a group of Yomut Turkmens on their migration: "We thanked God that there were some other humans also passing along this way. We took it as a sign of life on this route, an indication that there would be an inhabited world on the other side of this barren desert."⁶

In 1888, Lord Curzon saw portions of this desert during a journey by the newly-constructed Transcaspian Railway. While enjoying much greater comfort than the caravans of old, he was nonetheless affected by the bleakness of the scenery and, like Hidāyat, attempted to convey the daunting vastness of this plain by invoking its resemblance with the sea. His account begins with a description of the "howling wilderness" immediately east of the Caspian Sea and then takes a bird's eye view of the wastelands adjoining the Aral Sea and the Oxus:

Here but little vegetation is either visible, or, with certain exceptions, possible. The sand, of the most brilliant yellow hue, is piled in loose hillocks and mobile dunes, and is swept hither and thither by powerful winds. It has all the appearance of a sea of troubled waves, billow succeeding billow in melancholy succession, with the sand driving like spray from their summits, and great smooth-swept troughs lying between, on which the winds leave the imprint of their fingers in wavy indentations, just like an ebb-tide on the sea-shore.⁷

A funereal tale of destruction, both to man and beast, engulfed in their whirling crests, might these cruel sand-waves tell; and the bones of many a victim lie trampled fathoms deep under the pitiless tide. The peaks of the great Balkan range on the north, rising in points to a height of 5,000 ft., afford a welcome relief to the eye, and, after a wide depression in the surface level through which the Oxus or one of its confluent once disembogued into the Caspian, are succeeded by the inferior elevation of the Little Balkans on the south. These are presently merged in the splendid barrier of the Persian mountains...

If the mountains on the south supply a perpetual variety of shape and summit, there is a more than equivalent monotony in the spectacle that extends as far as the eye can reach to the north. Here nothing is visible but a wide and doleful plain, wholly destitute, or all but destitute, of vegetation, and sweeping with unbroken uniformity to a blurred horizon. This desert is the

⁴ Becker 1968: 10, 65; Hambly 1991b: 19–20; Holdsworth 1959: 22.

⁵ *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 48–9; Persian text: 30–1.

⁶ *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 40–43; Persian text: 63–8. See also Granmayeh 1996: 236–7.

⁷ Curzon 1967: 56.

famous Kara Kum or Black Sand, which, with intervals of dunes and interruptions of so-called oases, stretches from the Caspian to the Oxus, and from Khorasan to Khiva and the Aral Sea...

At intervals this desert is broken by belts of more or less cultivable soil, which, under the modest standards of so barren a country, are dignified by the name of oases. There are four such oases between Uzun Ada [on the eastern shore of the Caspian] and the Oxus, viz. those of Akhal, Atek (or the mountain base), Tejend [Sarakhs], and Merv. An oasis in these parts has no relation to the *a priori* picture, painted by our imagination, in which rivulets of water course through a wealth of verdure beneath umbrageous trees. It is simply a designation for such portions of the desert as have been reclaimed, by moisture naturally or artificially supplied, for the service of man...

There is a good deal of variety in the vegetation of these oases. In the more sterile parts they seem to support little but a stunted growth of tamarisk, absinthe, camelthorn, and light desert shrubs; though even here in spring-time there is a sudden and magical efflorescence of bright prairie flowers... Elsewhere, under the influence of a richer water supply, barley, rice, maize, millet, sorghum, and lucerne are succeeded in the most fertile districts by orchards and gardens, which produce an amazing crop of melons, apricots, peaches and grapes.⁸

The Qara Qum desert posed a formidable obstacle to military movement. The Iranian occupation of Marv in 1853–54 had to be given up because of overextended supply lines. In 1271/1854–55, the Iranian Prime Minister Mīrzā Āqā Khān Nūrī I‘timād al-Daula (1851–1858) dissuaded Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh from a military campaign against Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt of Khīva (r. 1846–1855) by pointing to the logistic difficulties such an enterprise would entail:

Raising the standard of war against Muḥammad Amīn Khān and sending an army there will cause great exertion and trouble: En route neither forage nor water can be obtained. The transportation of provisions, fodder and water alone will incur great expenditure. The costs of the conquest of Khvārazm bear no relation to the profits to be gained thereby.⁹

Military movements in the opposite direction were equally difficult. In 1851, the Iranian envoy Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat reported that the Khivan army required two beasts of burden to carry the provisions necessary for one horseman: “Whenever he [Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt] sets out with 5,000 men his army will seem 15,000 strong because of the great number of baggage-horses and camels. If there are 10,000 troops they will seem like 30,000. This supposed multitude of troops will impress the uninformed onlooker and will inspire fear in strangers [unacquainted with these facts].”¹⁰ According to Lisān al-Mulk, Muḥammad Amīn required a total of 30,000 camels to provide for the needs of the 40,000 men he collected for his campaigns against Marv and Sarakhs in 1855.¹¹

As a rule, caravan traffic across the desert was suspended during the hottest part of summer from early June to mid-August.¹² The Turkmen raiding parties, by contrast, traversed this expanse with considerable ease and penetrated the Qājār domains well beyond Mashhad. Moreover, they gradually filled the void created in northeastern Khurāsān by declining Iranian and Khivan influence. These developments notwithstanding, both the Qājār kings and the *khāns* of Khīva continued to consider the land between the Kopet Dagh mountains and the Oxus as their legacy, and extended overlapping but fairly loose territorial claims to the fertile regions on the fringes of the Qara Qum desert. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, the Iranian authorities even viewed Khīva as part of the Qājār dominions and ascribed generous proportions to the khanate, depicting its southern borders as contiguous with those of the districts of Astarābād and Marv.¹³ The rulers of Khīva, on their part, reckoned Marv and Sarakhs as their southernmost possessions. In the west, their claims to authority extended all the way to the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea. The northern slopes of the Üst Yurt Plateau and the Sīr Daryā formed the northern boundary. In the east, the sands of the Qizil Qum desert constituted a natural border.

⁸ Curzon 1967: 68–72.

⁹ NT 1247.

¹⁰ *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975) 179; Persian text 115.

¹¹ NT 1248.

¹² Conolly 1834 I: 150–1.

¹³ NT 1245.

THE PRINCIPALITY OF KHĪVA (KĤVĀRAZM) AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN

The oasis proper comprised a strip of fertile land along the final stretch of the Āmū Daryā south of the Aral Sea, with most of the agricultural activity and the urban settlements, including the capital Khīva, concentrated on the left bank of the river. In the 1740s, the British traveller Hanway noted the compactness of the oasis: “The dominions of Khieva [sic] are of so small extent, that a person may ride round them in three days; it has five walled cities, all within half a day’s journey of each other.”¹⁴ While the river delta immediately south of the Aral Sea was characterized by an abundance of water and swamps, the southern part of the oasis suffered from encroaching desert sands and relied on an elaborate irrigation system which was fed by six main canals ranging from 40 to 100 miles in length and was maintained by compulsory peasant service.¹⁵

The urban population of Khīva was mixed and consisted of the Uzbek elite, the original oasis inhabitants, and a strong admixture of Persians captured in raids. The Turkmens carried on a cattle economy on the southern and western fringes of the intensely irrigated and fertilized oasis areas and furnished cavalry to the Khivan army.¹⁶ In the north, the semi-nomadic Qarā Qalpāqs and Qazāqs constituted minorities.¹⁷ The ruling elite was furnished by Qunghrāt Uzbeks who seized power in 1770 after a period of *khān-bāzī* on the part of local Uzbek *amīrs* and an incursion by Yomut Turkmens.¹⁸ The rise of the Qunghrāt Uzbeks in Khīva took place parallel to the emergence of new Uzbek dynasties in Bukhārā and Khūqand. In the early nineteenth century, the rulers of all three khanates were primarily preoccupied with consolidating their dominions against the competing interests of other tribal nobles. Given the relative compactness of the Khivan oasis and its centralized irrigation system, efforts at establishing direct control over administrative matters were particularly successful as compared with the two other Uzbek khanates.¹⁹ Between 1855–1867, however, the *khāns* of Khīva were confronted with a rebellion by the Yomut and other Turkmen tribes and, after destroying their irrigation systems, forced them to return to a nomadic way of life.²⁰

In all three khanates, the process of consolidation was accompanied by thrusts at territorial expansion, which in turn generated conflict among them. Bukharan, Khivan and Iranian interests overlapped at Marv. In 1842–43, Bukhārā and Khīva clashed at Chārjūy and Marv. Further to the south, Khivan troops repeatedly made their presence felt in the frontier regions of Gurgān and Akhal. While maintaining a friendly relationship with the Qājār court, Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān (r. 1806–1825) of Khīva, his successor Allāh Qulī Khān (r. 1825–1842) and his brother Raḥmān Qulī mounted military campaigns against Khurāsān and/or the Turkmens almost on a yearly basis from 1811 on.²¹ As a rule, Khīva became active in Khurāsān as soon as the Qājār government showed signs of weakness vis-à-vis the local leadership. Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān’s

¹⁴ Hanway 1754: 241. The other important towns were Ūrganj, Qunghrāt, Hazārasb, and Kuhna Ūrganj (Basiner 1848: 169–73, 195–202).

¹⁵ Basiner 1848, 183–7; Holdsworth 1959: 23; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 132, Persian text: 89.

¹⁶ Dshikijew 1994: 133.

¹⁷ Estimates of the population and the proportions of the various ethnic categories vary. In 1842, Basiner reported the population of the oasis proper to consist of 73,500 to 93,600 families: 20,000–26,000 families of “Sarts” (Tājīks), 18,000–23,000 families of Uzbeks, 10,000–13,000 families (?) of Persian slaves, 5,000–7,000 families of freed Persians, 8,000–10,000 Qarā Qalpāq families, 7,000 Jamshīdī families, 5,000–7,000 Turkmen families, 500–600 Kirghiz families. While the Turkmens constituted a relatively small minority in the oasis proper, the Teke Turkmens of Marv and Sarakhs (40,000 families), the Akhal Tekes and the Chowdurs (40,000–50,000 families) were also considered subjects of the Khanate of Khīva at that time (Basiner 1848: 202–207). The designation of “Chowdur” possibly intended the Turkmen tribe of Chāvuldūr or Chaundūr (Sümer 1972: 210). According to Bregel, the Turkmens made up close to 25 per cent of the oasis population in the mid-nineteenth century (Bregel, “Central Asia, vii. In the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries,” *E.Ir.* V: 196). Holdsworth assumes a total population of 700,000 for the entire Khanate, one third of which consisted of Turkmens. According to her estimate, the Uzbeks numbered 40,000 persons (Holdsworth 1959: 21–2).

¹⁸ Bregel, “Central Asia, vii. In the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries,” *E.Ir.* V: 195; Boukhary 180; Persian text: p. 79; Wood 1990: 28.

¹⁹ Basiner 1848: 183, 246–7; Becker 1968: 10; Bregel, “Central Asia, vii. In the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries,” *E.Ir.* V: 196.

²⁰ Wood 1990: 28.

²¹ Basiner 1848: 254; Bregel, “Central Asia, vii. In the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries,” *E.Ir.* V: 198; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): xiv.

campaign against Khurāsān in 1812–13 and his effort to spread his influence among the Yomut Turkmens of Gurgān in 1231/1816 coincided with the ongoing rebellion of the Khurāsānī nobility.²² The Khivan rulers also used the repeated conflicts between the Qājār governors of Mashhad and the lords of Herat to further their own interests in Khurāsān. Parallel to the confrontation between Shujāʿ al-Saltāna and Fath Khān Muḥammadzai at Kāfir Qalʿa in 1233/1818, Raḥīm Khān advanced as far as Sarakhs, Maihana and Durūn but withdrew after Fath Khān's defeat.²³ In the winter of 1240/1824–25 Raḥīm Khān reached Mashhad but was forced to retreat to Sarakhs due to the harshness of winter. In Rajab 1240/March 1825 the Turkmen troops were beaten back by Shujāʿ al-Saltāna.²⁴ The following year, in Rajab 1241/February 1826, Allāh Qulī Khān pushed forward as far as Jām at the instigation of Muḥammad Khān Qarāʿī of Turbat-i Ḥaidarīya.²⁵ In Dhū al-Qaʿda 1245/April–May 1830, the rebellious leadership of Kalāt-i Nādirī and Darra Gaz entered an alliance with the Khān of Khīva, which led to a battle between Qājār and Turkmen troops at Pul-i Khātūn near Sarakhs a year later.²⁶ At the time of Muḥammad Shāh Qājār's siege of Herat in 1837–38, 1,500 Khivan troops assisted the combined forces of the Chahār Vilāyat and the Hazāra, Fīrūzkūhī and Jamshīdī leadership in combating Allāhyār Khān Āṣaf al-Daula.²⁷

Upon his accession to the Khivan throne in 1846, Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt initially gained the goodwill of the Qājār government by freeing Allāhyār Khān Āṣaf al-Daula's nephew Muḥammad Valī Khān Qājār, who had fallen into the hands of Turkmen slave traders four years earlier.²⁸ In exchange for the return of Muḥammad Valī Khān, Muḥammad Shāh Qājār sent presents to Khivan court and formally bestowed the title of “Khvārazm Shāh” on Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt.²⁹ Yet, as the relationship between Tehran and Khīva deteriorated in the 1850s, the Qājār court began to take exception to Muḥammad Amīn Khān's posturing as an independent monarch. Lisān al-Mulk reports that the Khān of Khīva referred to himself as *pādshāh-i kūchik* in relation to the “great” king of Iran in his correspondence with Tehran, a position he was not entitled to from the point of view of the Iranian government because Khvārazm formed part of Iran.³⁰ In 1267/1851, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh sent Hidāyat to the court of Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt to state his grievances concerning Khivan intervention in his territories. The negotiations between the Iranian envoy and the Khān of Khīva revolved around the respective spheres of influence in the regions beyond the Alburz and Kopet Dag mountains and the issue of slave raiding. Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt's position exemplifies the continuing gap between notions of territoriality and the idea of a corresponding degree of local control. While interpreting the ongoing Qājār activities around Astarābād and Sarakhs as acts of aggression against Khivan territory, he refused to assume responsibility for the slave raids emanating from Akhal, Sarakhs and Marv in the direction of Iran:

[The Khān asked,] ‘Why do the Iranians doubt the sincerity of our feelings for [ʿAlī's] family?’ I said, ‘The distrust of the Iranian people mainly derives from [your] taking prisoners among Muslims.’ He said, ‘When have we ever gone to Iran to take prisoners?’ I said, ‘Perhaps you did not do so yourself. But your followers, the Teke, Yomut, Salor and Sarīq Turkmens [of] Akhāl, Sarakhs and Marv engage in these unworthy acts.’ He said, ‘If the Marvīs were under my authority, why would I engage in military campaigns against them year after year? For the past several years they have killed the officials of my minister and are in a state of rebellion. The Tekes and Salors do not render any service to us. The Sarakhsīs alternate between allegiance and resistance.’³¹

²² *Dhū al-qarnain* 419–21; NT 271; König 1962: 22.

²³ *Dhū al-qarnain* 479, 484–7; KR 29; Patterson 1988: 28; NT 295, 300–2; ST 95–6; McChesney/Khorrami 2013 I: 156–8.

²⁴ NT 360–1. See also Wood 1998: 92.

²⁵ Conolly 1834 I: 379; NT 376. See also Wood 1998: 92–7.

²⁶ *Dhū al-qarnain* 757–8, 781; NT 442, 451.

²⁷ NT 638.

²⁸ NT 763. See also *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): xiv–xv.

²⁹ *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): xiv–xv.

³⁰ NT 1246.

³¹ *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 109, Persian text: 71.

THE TURKMEN PHENOMENON

In the memoirs of his mission, Rīzā Qulī Khān Hidāyat described the Turkmens as the most volatile element in the region:

It should be mentioned that the Turkmen population is innumerable. It is difficult to ascertain their (exact) number because they do not have a city where they take shelter, nor do they permanently reside in one place... They are scattered in the plain of Gurgān and the endless desert of Khvārazm. Some say they number 30,000, others arrive at smaller or larger figures. They traverse the distance across the desert between Astarābād and Khīva, a distance of forty stages, in twenty days by covering two stages in one day. The Göklen, who reside on the other side of Astarābād, are at enmity with this tribe [the Yomut]. It would take up too much space here to mention all the branches and lineages (*shu 'ba va tīra*) making up these two groups (*tāyifa*) by name. Everyone is entitled to leadership and commands obedience within his own tribe (*īl*). No tribe is subservient to the other, in fact even the lowest camel driver of a tribe will not pay attention to his leader or *khān*. They resemble the desert Arabs in every respect except for the fact that they speak Turkī instead of Arabic... They make their living by stealing and plundering. Besides raising and driving camels, they subsist on their milk and meat... In principle, they belong to the Hanafī school of law but barely know anything about it (*az ān nīz khabarī nadārand*).³²

Compared with the well-established tribes of central Khurāsān, the Turkmens displayed a high degree of mobility for the greater part of the nineteenth century. At the same time, their changing circumstances highlighted the dwindling scope for economic and military action in the Central Asian frontier region. In the sixteenth century, these groups had occupied the regions along the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea as far south Gurgān. In the eighteenth century, the simultaneous decline of the Safavids in Iran and the Arabshahids in Khīva opened up the opportunity for a large-scale eastward expansion into the oases lining the Qara Qum desert.³³ A century later, the Turkmens were dreaded by the Iranian government and the local population for their frequent incursions into the eastern regions of the Qājār realm. From a regional perspective, however, these tribes were tied into current economic processes in a twofold manner, as they supplied the slave markets of Khīva and Bukhārā and served as mercenaries for local potentates. The Turkmen leadership was entwined with the local elites, such as the *khāns* of Khīva and the chiefs of Khabūshān and Darra Gaz, in a system of service grants. With the Russian occupation of Khīva and Marv and the following establishment of a fixed boundary line between Khurāsān and the Russian *oblast* of Transcaspia, these activities ground to a halt. Internally, the shrinking economic niche of the Turkmens is exemplified by repeated phases of migration and resettlement accompanied by sequences of mutual displacement. The Turkmen threat felt in Khurāsān thus represented final spurts of large-scale movement in an environment that was about to be fitted into narrowly defined boundaries and to be constrained by an unprecedented degree of government control.

The Turkmens' dual role as mercenaries and slave raiders is also revealed by the exchange between the Iranian envoy and the Khān of Khīva in 1851. Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt's rejection of Rīzā Qulī Khān Hidāyat's request to prohibit slave trade highlights the complex nature of the relationship between the khanate and its Turkmen subjects. While blaming the Shādillū Kurds of Buynūrd as the real perpetrators, the Khān freely admitted that he exercised little control over the Turkmens of Marv and Sarakhs. What is more, he insisted that it was not for him to interfere with the commercial enterprise of his subjects: "If the Khivans don't engage in slave trade, the Bukharans will."³⁴ This ostentatious protectiveness of mercantile interests points to the fact that there was more at stake for the Khivan rulers than notions of territorial control. Apart from extending their sphere of authority, they also sought to incorporate the Turkmens into the administrative machinery. In the oasis proper, Yomut Turkmens were employed as a counterbalance to the rival Uzbek leadership from the 1780s on, and efforts to settle these and other Turkmen groups, such as the Göklen, in the western parts of the oasis continued well into the nineteenth century.³⁵ Claims to authority were also upheld among the Turkmens of Marv, Sarakhs and Akhal but generally had to be asserted by force

³² *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 62–3, Persian text: 39–40. See also Granmayeh 1996: 243.

³³ Barto'ld 1984: 91; Bregel, "Central Asia, vii. 12–13/18–19 Centuries," *E.Ir.* V: 194.

³⁴ *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 98–100, 109–11; Persian text: 64–5, 71–3. See also NT 1128–9.

³⁵ Basiner 1848: 205; De Bode 1980: 50; Conolly 1834 I: 37; Wood 1990: 28: 33.

of arms.³⁶ At the same time, the Turkmens' "unruliness" played a vital role in supplying the slave markets of Khīva, Samarqand and Bukhārā while simultaneously depleting the resources of Iran's northeastern frontier.

Covering distances of 400–500 miles, the Turkmen raiding parties preyed on Māzandarān, Astarābād and Khurāsān, severely disrupting the caravan trade and steadily draining away the population of the rural areas and local towns. In the early 1820s, Fraser gave a vivid account of the swift and relentless nature of a typical Turkmen plundering sortie (*chapāv*):

They unite together in larger or smaller bodies, according to the nature and remoteness of their object, under some leader, whose known conduct and courage has inspired them with confidence, and who for the time is absolute in his authority; and carrying a stock of barley for their horses, and bread for themselves, equal to the very sparing consumption of seven or eight days, they sally from their haunts in the desert, often upwards of two hundred miles beyond the inhabited country; and ascending the passes, move with astonishing celerity, probably at least two hundred miles more, upon the point to be attacked, which may be in the neighbourhood of Shahrood, Subzawār, Nishapore, or even a much greater distance. They lie in wait near the gates of the village (if such be their object), and wait in perfect silence until morning dawns, and the unsuspecting inhabitants come forth from gates, to labour, to drive their cattle afield, or for other purposes; when they start from their lurking place, seize all they can catch, murder those who resist, rapidly plunder the village, and binding their booty upon such cattle as they may have secured, hastily retreat before the neighbourhood have caught the alarm. If their object be a caravan, they conceal themselves in some hollow near its course, having scouts stationed unseen, but watchful of its movements, upon all the heights around, and when it has reached the ambuscade, they dart upon it with a force and rapidity that defies resistance or escape, bear down all opposition, and bind as prisoners all whom they lay hands upon; then begins the work of plunder and often of blood; the old, and unfit for work are massacred, the cattle unlikely to be of use in their retreat, or unable to keep up with them, are disabled, or cut to pieces: such goods as may be thought worth the carriage are laden upon the rest, and they commence a rapid return to their fastnesses.³⁷

The highroad connecting Shāhrūd, Sabzavār, Mashhad and Herat regularly suffered Turkmen raids. Between Mazīnān and Shāhrūd, the eastern wing of the Alburz mountains provided excellent cover for Turkmen bandits, causing this stretch of the road to be known as the 'Stages of Terror' in the early nineteenth century.³⁸ Eastern and southern Khurāsān were likewise seriously affected, as the Teke Turkmens of Akhal and Marv regularly poured across the mountain passes along the Iranian and Herat frontiers. The repeated battering of the surroundings of Turbat-i Ḥaidarīya, Ṭabas and Qāyin caused the local population to reckon history in terms of Teke forays.³⁹ In 1862, the Qājār prince Murād Mīrzā Ḥusām al-Saltāna described the entire region north of the trade route between Mashhad and Herat as a scene of desolation: "throughout that space will be found villages and towns, with their forts, their mosques, their baths, and houses standing, but utterly deserted, the population having been exterminated, or driven gradually south."⁴⁰

Raiding and trading in slaves was by no means limited to the Turkmens but also furnished an additional means of income for the Qarā'īs, Jamshīdīs, Fīrūzkūhīs, Tāymanīs and Sunnī Hazāras located on the eastern fringes of Qājār control. Aside from Sarakhs, the four Uzbek strongholds of Maimana, Andkhūd, Shibarghān and Sar-i Pul served as entrepôts for the traffic in Persian and Shiite Hazāra slaves.⁴¹ While all the groups involved in the slave trade were Sunnī and justified their raids with the heretic beliefs of their Shiite victims,⁴² the definition of "heresy" was rather loose. In the 1820s, Fraser reported that the sedentary Göklen

³⁶ Basiner 1848: 206–7.

³⁷ Fraser 1825: 274–5.

³⁸ Curzon 1966 I: 275. See also Eastwick 1976 II: 167; Polak 1860: 50–1.

³⁹ Marvin 1880: 128. See also De Bode 1980: 51.

⁴⁰ Eastwick 1976 II: 250.

⁴¹ Forrest 1906: 38; Stirling 1991: 286; Lee 1996: 126–8, 139, 184. In the early nineteenth century, the Hazāras of Bākhār were known to sell "travellers and passers-by to the Uzbeks and Turkmens" (*Riyāz al-siyāḥat* 150). In the 1820s, the prominent Hazāra leader Bunyād Khān derived his income from plundering raids into the region of Bākhār (*Dhū al-qarnain* 529). Up to 1832, Jamshīdī, Tāymanī, Hazāra and Tīmūrī traders engaged in slave trade at Sarakhs (*Dhū al-qarnain* 826, 830). In 1837, Shīr Muḥammad Khān Hazāra was an important stakeholder in the regional slave trade (Forrest 1906: 38; McNeill to Macnaghten, Tehran, 22 January 1837, IOL, L/PS/20/A/7/1 No. 50, pp. 46–7). His brother Karīmdād Khān Hazāra carried out frequent slave raids in the region of Qāyin during the governorship of Allāhyār Khān Āsaf al-Daula (1834–1847) (Ferrier 1857: 191–2). In the early 1830s, Muḥammad Khān Qarā'ī was accused of having sold a total of fifty thousand persons to the Turkmens during his seventeen-year rule in Turbat-i Ḥaidarīya (1816–1833) (Conolly 1834 I: 291).

⁴² De Bode 1980: 51; NT 1129.

Turkmens of the Gurgān basin, who acknowledged the supremacy of the Qājār government, received the same treatment as other Persian subjects and were publicly sold in the slave bazaars of Khīva.⁴³

In addition to the raids penetrating deeply into Khurāsān, there also was a local pattern of mutual plundering that involved the Turkmens and their neighbours located along the northern rim of the Kopet Dag mountains. From the early nineteenth century, the low-scale warfare with the Teke and Yomut Turkmens provided the Za‘farānlū Kurds of Khabūshān and the Shādillū Kurds of Bujnūrd with a steady source of income in terms of plunder and ransom obtained in exchange for Turkmen prisoners.⁴⁴ While conceding that the ongoing exchange of raids with the Teke Turkmens worked to the detriment of the local population, the Chāpushlū leadership of Darra Gaz and their officials also pointed out that the booty obtained from the Tekes provided a substantial part of their livelihood as late as 1881.⁴⁵ The local raids were thus by no means a one-sided affair. Nor were they directed by the Turkmens as a whole against tribal outsiders. Conflicts among the various tribes were common. In the nineteenth century, the Yomut Turkmens were reported to be at constant war with the Göklen and Teke Turkmens on the basis of a long-standing enmity.⁴⁶ Turkmen raiding in Khurāsān reached a final peak in 1870–1872, when the resistance of the Persian population was further weakened by a terrible famine.⁴⁷ Subsequently, the lucrative trade in slaves was put an end to by Russian intervention.

THE RUSSIAN EXPANSION IN CENTRAL ASIA

Russian interest in the region dated back to the eighteenth century. As early as 1715–1717, Peter the Great had made a first, ill-fated attempt to open the trade route to India via Central Asia. For most of the eighteenth century, however, Russian activities aimed at containing the threat emanating from the Kazakh nomads. In the nineteenth century, Russia continued its southward push in several settings. Up to the Crimean War of 1853–1856, the expansion into the Caucasus was a primary concern. Roughly during the same period, Russian troops competed with Khīva and Khūqand for influence in the Kazakh steppe. From 1856 on, Russia directed its energies towards Central Asia with renewed vigor. During the two following decades, the agenda evolved from the immediate aim of closing the line of fortifications in the Kazakh steppe to a sequence of conquests moving up along the course of the Sīr Daryā.⁴⁸

The establishment of the Russian fortress of Raimovskoe (from 1851 Aral’skoe) at the mouth of the Sīr Daryā in 1847 brought Russia in contact with the khanates of Khīva and Khūqand. Russian activities initially focused on Khūqand. In 1853, Czarist troops occupied Āq Masjid on the lower Sīr Daryā and renamed it Fort Perovskii. With the annexation of Tāshkand and Khujand in August 1866, Khūqand was reduced to the Farghāna valley and was eventually absorbed by governorate-general of Turkestan in 1876. In June 1868, the Amīr of Bukhārā capitulated and accepted the Russian occupation of Samarqand along with the middle and upper Zarafshān valley. Henceforth Russian activities were directed against Khīva, which had evaded sustained efforts at direct intervention so far. Following the establishment of the Russian post of Krasnovodsk on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea in 1869, Khīva was occupied on 29 May 1873. As a result, Khīva lost its entire territory on the right bank of the Āmū Daryā and the Üst Yurt plateau to Russia.⁴⁹

Russian control over Khīva was more extensive and more intrusive than in Khūqand and Bukhārā. The Russo-Khivan treaty of August 1873 rendered Khīva a protectorate, the foreign relations of which were controlled by the Russian government. The khanate further suffered a direct occupation by Russian troops

⁴³ Fraser 1825: 260.

⁴⁴ Fraser 1825 Appendix B: 47–52; O’Donovan 1970 II: 10; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 98; Persian text: 64.

⁴⁵ O’Donovan 1970 II: 31, 35–6.

⁴⁶ De Bode 1980: 53; Fraser 1825: 260–1; König 1962: 27; O’Donovan 1970 II: 72; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 62; Persian text: 39.

⁴⁷ Marvin 1880: 129; Sārli 1994: 161–3.

⁴⁸ Dahlmann 1991: 52–6.

⁴⁹ Becker 1968: 13–14, 25–27, 36, 42, 45, 72; Bregel, “Central Asia, vii. In the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries,” *E.Ir.* V: 199–202; Carrère d’Encausse 1989: 143–5; Holdsworth 1959: 24.

and a temporary intervention with its internal administration. The Yomut Turkmens located in the western part of the khanate felt the impact of the Russian administration most profoundly. Unable to raise their part of an exorbitant fine imposed on all the Turkmens of Khīva by the Governor General of Turkestan Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman (1818–1882) in July 1873, they and their livestock were subjected to a “wholesale slaughter” by the Cossack troops.⁵⁰

Subsequent to the conquest of Khīva, the Russians used their Caspian outposts on the Mangishlāq peninsula and in Krasnovodsk to make their influence felt among the remaining Turkmen groups. The conquest of Qizil Arvāt in 1877 primarily affected the southern branch of the Yomut Turkmens. In January 1881, the troops under General Skobelev occupied Gök (Geok) Tepe, killing 15,000 Teke Turkmens in the aftermath. In the same year the lands of the western Turkmens were divided between Russia and Iran on the basis of the Treaty of Tehran, according to which the boundary coincided with the Atrak river up to the Sumbar river (Chāt) and then followed the base of the Kopet Dag mountains to Luṭfābād in Darra Gaz. Further east, a similar division took place between 1884 and 1885, as the old city of Sarakhs and the Murghāb oases of Marv, Yolotan and Panjdih became Russian possessions and a large number of Turkmens sought refuge in Afghanistan. Between 1884 and 1888, the northern boundary of Afghanistan from the Āmū Daryā to Iranian Khurāsān was fixed.⁵¹

The Russian expansion in Central Asia effectively suppressed the slave trade. The conquest of Khīva in 1873 led to the abolition of slavery as such, and the Russo-Bukharan treaty concluded the same year prohibited slave trade. At this point, it was assumed that there were more than 100,000 slaves in the Khivan, Bukharan and Turkmen territories. Of the 30,000 slaves present in Khīva at the time of the Russian conquest, 6,300 were returned to Iran within three months. In spite of these measures, about 10,000 Iranian slaves were reported to be present in Khīva during the mid-1870s.⁵² The prohibition of slave trade affected the patterns of Turkmen raiding. While still a frequent occurrence in the regions bordering upon Iranian dominions, the plundering was more limited in scope. Thus the Tekes near Darra Gaz carried off cattle, horses and camels rather than human beings.⁵³ In their raids on the Kurdish population in the vicinity of Bujnūrd, the Yomut south of the Atrak focused on children and only took adults if they could expect to collect a worthwhile ransom within a short period of time.⁵⁴

The diminishing scope of Turkmen movements was symptomatic of the “freezing” of national frontiers that took place in the late nineteenth century. As part of this process, the individual Turkmen groups became fixed entities identified with a certain territory. Like other groups in the region, they had experienced large-scale relocations earlier in the century as part of their interaction with rival tribes and local centers of power. Their shifting alliances with the Qājār government, the Khān of Khīva and the Amīr of Bukhārā occasioned voluntary migrations as well as forcible resettlements. A case in point are the Göklen who, fleeing reprisals from the Iranian army in the early nineteenth century, were forcibly settled in Khīva.⁵⁵ In 1881, the meeting with a Teke elder who had seen his tribe shift from the Tejend river to Sarakhs and from Sarakhs to Marv in his lifetime caused O’Donovan to conclude that “the idea of a definite centre seems foreign to the Tekké mind.”⁵⁶

The fate of the individual Turkmen tribes has already been traced in a number of studies.⁵⁷ As my work is concerned with regional shifts of power and conceptions of state, I will take the opposite approach and examine the developments in four of the major Turkmen settlements along the fertile fringes of the Qara Qum desert.

⁵⁰ Becker 1968: 73–5. See also Carrère d’Encausse 1989: 145, 147.

⁵¹ Barto’ld 1962: 169; Bregel, “Central Asia, vii. In the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries,” *E.Ir.* V: 202; Carrère d’Encausse 1989: 147–9; Fraser-Tytler 1953: 158–9; Irons 1975: 10–11; Khazeni 2012: 146; Planhol, “Boundaries, ii. With Russia,” *E.Ir.* IV: 405.

⁵² Becker 1968: 73–4, 77; Levi 2002: 68.

⁵³ O’Donovan 1970 II: 34.

⁵⁴ Irons 1975: 67.

⁵⁵ Bregel, “Central Asia, vii. In the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries,” *E.Ir.* V: 198; Wood 1990: 33.

⁵⁶ O’Donovan 1970 II: 196.

⁵⁷ Bregel 1987; Dshikijew 1994; Irons 1975; Wood 1990.

ASTARĀBĀD

The Setting

Located three miles north of the richly wooded foothills of the eastern wing of the Alburz mountains, Astarābād commanded the Gurgān plain watered by the Gurgān and Atrak rivers, both of which flow to the Caspian Sea. In the early seventeenth century, Iskandar Munshī described the Atrak river as the divide between Gurgān and Khvārazm.⁵⁸ The space between the two rivers was taken up by the Dasht-i Gurgān, which extended towards the Qara Qum desert, with the Greater and Lesser Balkhān mountains and the Kūren Dagħ as the only obstacles at a distance.⁵⁹ Modern-day accounts attest to the remarkable flatness of the desert, the terrain of which only rises 60 meters between the coast of the Caspian Sea and Gunbad-i Qābūs, undisturbed by a “single elevation”.⁶⁰ In the 1830s, the British traveller Conolly recorded his impressions of this barren expanse in the following way:

The Caspian desert is generally of a light soil, white, and inclined to be sandy, yet so firm, that in dry weather camels barely leave the print of their feet upon it. This soil produces light thorns and weedy bushes, much of the juicy camel-thorn... and stunted tamarisk bushes; and in parts spring patches of coarse grass, probably where water is near the surface. Much of the ground is hard, and quite bare, showing occasionally patches of salt, doubtless the cause of the sterility. A third feature is the sand:—this is either spread loosely over the plain, or it is gathered in broad ridges, which assume some consistency. Near such spots the Toorkmuns prefer to pitch their tents: their camps are more private and sheltered, and good water is found at no great depth.⁶¹

The southern part of the plain adjoining the Gurgān river, by contrast, was very fertile. Rīzā Qulī Khān Hidāyat praised the abundance of water and the strength and potential of the soil. Noting with regret that the local Turkmens only sowed and reaped according to their own needs, he ventured the opinion that the region (*vilāyat*) might feed an entire kingdom (*mamlakat*) if properly cultivated.⁶² Located 25 miles or one day’s march from the Caspian Sea, Astarābād served as an important trading post.⁶³ At the time of Rīzā Qulī Khān’s visit in 1851, it housed a citadel, as well as a number of convents, public baths, mosques and colleges of religious learning.⁶⁴

The Historical Developments

Iskandar Munshī described the mountains and woods bordering on the Gurgān plain as a setting conducive to rebellions.⁶⁵ Even so, Shāh ‘Abbās I (r. 1588–1629) was able to establish Safavid authority by defeating the Turkmens on the Atrak in 1598. During his reign, Astarābād became a Safavid province (*iyālat*) in its own right.⁶⁶ In the first half of the seventeenth century, the province was governed by men of Circassian, Georgian and Armenian background.⁶⁷

⁵⁸ *Āb-i Atrak... miyāna-yi vilāyat-i Jurjān va Khvārazm fāšila ast* (IM 933).

⁵⁹ Conolly 1834 I: 43–4; Rabino 1928: 97.

⁶⁰ Ehlers, “Gorgān, ii. Dašt-i Gorgān,” *E.Ir.* XI: 142.

⁶¹ Conolly 1834 I: 147–8.

⁶² *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 57; Persian text: 37.

⁶³ Barto’ld 1984: 115–17; Bosworth, “Astarābād, i. History,” *E.Ir.* II: 838; Conolly 1834 I: 26; Rabino 1928: 88, 90–1.

⁶⁴ *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 45; Persian text: 29.

⁶⁵ IM 174. See also IM 932.

⁶⁶ Barto’ld 1962: 146; Neyestani, “Gorgān, vii. From the Safavids to the End of the Pahlavi Era,” *E.Ir.* XI: 155. See also Röhrborn 1966: 17.

⁶⁷ The governorships of Astarābād from 1606 to 1661 can be fairly well reconstructed from Persian sources:

Until 1015/1606–07, Yūsuf Khān Mīr-i Shikārbāshī (IM 1328);

1015–1030/1606–1621, Farīdūn Khān, a Circassian (Muḥammad Ṭāhir Bisṭāmī, *Futūḥāt-i farīdūnīya*, Introduction, 9–11);

1621–1636, Khusrau Khān, a *ghulām* (Rettelbach 1978: 57, 418; IM, *Dhail* 22, 24; *Khuld-i barīn* 242, 354);

1636–1639, Qazāq Khān, a Circassian (Rettelbach 1978: 232, 275, 467; IM, *Dhail* 192, 294; *Khuld-i barīn* 120, 203, 234, 242; 289–90, 294, 354–5; Rota 2009: 243, 416);

Shāh ‘Abbās I’s policy of “cossackization” had a lasting impact on the political configurations in Astarābād. In order to ward off incursions from the northeast, he settled one section of the Qājārs of Qarābāgh here.⁶⁸ In addition, he created five Kurdish districts along the border from Astarābād to Chinārān.⁶⁹ Shāh ‘Abbās I also encouraged the influx of Turkmens, whose tents reportedly dotted the entire plain for a ten days’ journey in either direction.⁷⁰ The infrastructure was greatly improved in this period: Shāh ‘Abbās I constructed a paved road linking Astarābād with Māzandarān in the west and Herat in the east.⁷¹

For the remainder of the seventeenth century, the Safavid hold over Gurgān was relatively stable. With the decline of Safavid power in the early eighteenth century, Marv and Astarābād fell to Khivan control. Between 1730–32, Ṭahmāsp Qulī (to become known as Nādir Shāh in 1736) used his position as governor of Khurāsān to possess himself of Astarābād on behalf of the Safavid pretender Ṭahmāsp II.⁷²

Along with these events, Astarābād witnessed the rise of the Qājārs against the backdrop of the rivalry between two prominent tribes, which dominated the two constituent branches of the confederacy. The forefathers of the Qājār dynasty belonged to the Quyūnlū tribe (“the flock-keepers”), which was part of the Ashāqabāsh branch commanding the pasture grounds below the Mubārakābād fortress of Astarābād. Within in the Yukhārībāsh branch holding the pastures above this fortress, the Develū Qājārs (“the camel-herders”) formed the most powerful section.⁷³ During his rise to power, Nādir Afshār considered Fath ‘Alī Khān Quyūnlū his most dangerous adversary and conspired to have him put to death at the shrine of Khvāja Rabī‘ near Mashhad in Ṣafar 1139/October 1726.⁷⁴ Subsequently, Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Develū served as *bēglerbēgī* of Astarābād.⁷⁵ In Dhū al-Ḥijja 1156/January 1744, Fath ‘Alī Khān Quyūnlū’s son Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Quyūnlū briefly gained control of Astarābād with the help of Yomut Turkmens but was later defeated by Nādir Shāh’s troops and forced to flee.⁷⁶ Upon his return to power, Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Develū eliminated a great number of his Qājār rivals, making Astarābād a “scene of desolation”, as Nādir Shāh’s biographer Muḥammad Mihdī, a native of the region, puts it.⁷⁷

The political unrest engulfing Khurāsān after Nādir Shāh’s death in 1160/1747 allowed Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Quyūnlū to return to Astarābād.⁷⁸ In 1163/1750, he was appointed *bēglerbēgī* of Astarābād and

1639–1641, Ḥusain Khān, a *ghulām* (Rettelbach 1978: 275, 288, 416–417, *Khuld-i barīn* 234–5, 253, 271, 289; Rota 2009: 251, 419);

1641–1649, Mihrāb Khān Charkhchībāshī, a *ghulām-i khāṣṣa-yi sharīfa* of Georgian background; in 1649 he gained the governorship of Qandahār in addition to that of Astarābād and died in the same year while defending the city against the Mughal prince Aurangzīb (Rettelbach 1978: 289, 441; *Khuld-i barīn* 253, 289; *Abbāsnāma* 127, 137–8; *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī* I: 334);

1649–1652, Allāhvirdī Bēg Amīr-i Shikārbāshī, an Armenian (*Abbāsnāma* 140, 149);

1652–1653, Muḥammad Qulī Khān b. Siyāvush Khān Qullarāqāsī (*Abbāsnāma* 149, 162);

1653–1654/55 (1065), Hājji Manūchīhr Khān, brother of Mihrāb Khān, of Georgian background (*Abbāsnāma* 134, 162, 216);

From 1065/1654–55 on, Jamshīd Khān, still in charge in 1071/1660–61 (*Abbāsnāma* 216, 287).

I am grateful to Giorgio Rota for sharing his expertise on Safavid administrative and military affairs with me.

⁶⁸ TRSN IX: 5; NT 8–9; Avery 1991: 4–5; Hambly 1963: 162; Savory 2002. Shāh ‘Abbās I appointed Ḥusain Khān Qājār as governor of Astarābād (IM 973; see also Tumanovich 1989: 142).

⁶⁹ Barto’ld 1984: 91; Farmayan 1981: 50–3; Fraser 1825, Appendix B: 42; Ma’ṭūfī 1995: 247.

⁷⁰ Röhrborn 1966: 18.

⁷¹ According to Barto’ld, the road to Sārī and Āmul was built in 1622: “it made Māzandarān accessible in any season of the year” (Barto’ld 1984: 241–2). This so-called *khiyābān* had fallen into disrepair in Nādir Shāh’s time but was still used in the nineteenth century. In 1851, the Persian envoy Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat travelled by this route (Hanway 1754: 198; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 25, 34, 36, 38, 43 (Persian text: 17–18, 22, 24, 26, 28)). See also Tumanovich 1989: 192–3.

⁷² Lambton, “Kādjar,” *E. I.*, 2 IV: 390; Rabino 1928: 72.

⁷³ Lambton, “Kādjar,” *E. I.*, 2 IV: 390; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 59–60, 97; Persian text: 38, 64.

⁷⁴ Lockhart 1938: 14–16.

⁷⁵ During the Afsharid period, Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Develū was a prominent military leader. From 1736 on, he was in the service of Rizā Qulī Mīrzā Afshār. In 1739, he instigated Rizā Qulī Mīrzā to put Ṭahmāsp II to death and strangled him personally in Sabzavār (Kāzīm 8, 66, 397, 543, 587, 590, 598, 767–70, 959; Lockhart 1938: 177).

⁷⁶ Kāzīm: 959–65; Hanway 1754: 129–31. See also Lockhart 1938: 243–4.

⁷⁷ Jones 1771 II: 89–90.

⁷⁸ NT 15–17; Neyestani, “Gorgān, vii. From the Safavids to the End of the Pahlavi Era,” *E.Ir.* XI: 154; Perry, “Āgā Moḥammad Khan Qājār,” *E.Ir.* I: 603.

Gurgān by Sulaimān II, who occupied the throne in Mashhad from 5 Šafar-11 Rabī‘ 1163/14 January–20 March 1750.⁷⁹ In the following years, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Quyūnlū became virtually independent and extended his authority into Māzandarān and Gīlān. Military confrontations with Karīm Khān Zand of Shīrāz, Aḥmad Shāh Sadūzai of Qandahār and Āzād Khān Ghilzai of Azerbaijan followed. In 1172/1759, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Quyūnlū’s dominion broke up due to the renewed rivalry with Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Develū, who joined Karīm Khān Zand’s ranks. After being defeated by the Zand army near Ashraf, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān was killed in flight.⁸⁰ His sons Āqā Muḥammad Khān and Ḥusain Qulī Khān Quyūnlū, who had sought refuge with the Yomut Turkmens, were captured and delivered to Karīm Khān Zand as hostages. Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Develū regained his appointment as governor of Astarābād and held his post until his death in 1176/1762–63, when he was succeeded by his younger brother Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Develū.

Meanwhile, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Quyūnlū’s sons were placed under the custody of the Zand court. Among them, Ḥusain Qulī Khān Quyūnlū temporarily gained the government of Dāmghān.⁸¹ Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān’s elder son Āqā Muḥammad Khān Quyūnlū, on his part, remained in Shīrāz until the death of Karīm Khān Zand in 1193/1779 allowed him to escape. After gaining a foothold in Gurgān, Māzandarān and Gīlān, Āqā Muḥammad Khān established Tehran as his capital in 1786 and was enthroned there in 1203/1788–89. With the removal of the last Zand representative Luṭf ‘Alī b. Ja‘far Khān from Shīrāz and Kirmān in 1791 and 1794 respectively, the Quyūnlū Qājār leader imposed his authority on the greater part of Iran except Khurāsān. In Ramaẓān 1210/March 1796, he was crowned *shāh* of Iran in the Mughān steppe and subsequently girded the ceremonial sword of the Safavid kings in Ardabīl, thus claiming both the Safavid and the Afsharid heritage.⁸² During his subsequent campaign to Khurāsān, Āqā Muḥammad Shāh desecrated Nādir Shāh’s grave and brutally abused his grandson Shāh Rukh Afshār in revenge for the assassination of his grandfather, and his own castration at the hands of Nādir Shāh’s successor ‘Alī Qulī Khān Afshār.⁸³

The frictions between the Quyūnlū and Develū Qājārs were paralleled by local rivalries and determined the strategies adopted. As mentioned above, Āqā Muḥammad and his relatives repeatedly received support from the Yomut Turkmens. In exchange, they entered marriage alliances with the Yomut leadership and gave them privileged access to lands in the fertile Gurgān plain.⁸⁴ In the light of the traditional loyalty of the Yomuts to the Quyūnlūs, Mīrzā ‘Alī Khān, the Develū governor of Astarābād, favored an alliance with the Göklen in 1189/1775.⁸⁵ After his rise to power, Āqā Muḥammad Khān sought to enhance the standing of the newly established Qājār ruling house by seeking reconciliation with the Develū tribe.⁸⁶ When he took control over Astarābād in 1196/1782, he appointed Raḥīm Khān Develū as governor (*bēglerbēg*). Efforts to contain unrest among the various Turkmen segments followed.⁸⁷ Āqā Muḥammad’s enthronement in 1788–89 was accompanied by Turkmen uprisings in Astarābād. In Rabī‘ II–Jumādā I 1207/November–December 1792, Āqā Muḥammad went to Astarābād to combat the Šā’inkhānī Yomuts. Aside from collecting a rich booty of cash, livestock, horses and slaves, he had a minaret of Yomut skulls erected outside the Sabz Mashhad gate on the northern face of the city wall of Astarābād.⁸⁸ In Dhū al-Qa‘da 1210/May–June 1796,

⁷⁹ *Mujmal al-tavārīkh* (Mann) 58; *Mujmal al-tavārīkh* (Raḥavī) 47. See also Perry 1979: 7.

⁸⁰ NT 17–26; Bosworth, “Astarābād, i. History,” *E.Ir.* II: 839; Lambton, “Qādjar,” *E.I.*, 2 IV: 389–90.

⁸¹ For a detailed account of Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Quyūnlū’s death and the career of his son Ḥusain Qulī Khān Quyūnlū, see Komaki 1989.

⁸² Hambly 1991a: 129; Perry, “Āgā Moḥammad Khān Qājār,” *E.Ir.* I: 603.

⁸³ Lambton, “Qādjar,” *E. I.*, 2 IV: 390–1.

⁸⁴ Hambly 1991a: 137; Ma‘tūfī 1995: 250; Rabino 1928: 80; Schneider 2003: 185–6.

⁸⁵ TRSN IX: 109.

⁸⁶ To this end, he arranged a marriage for his nephew Bābā Khān (Fath ‘Alī b. Ḥusain Qulī Khān Quyūnlū) with the daughter of Fath ‘Alī Khān Develū in 1196/1781–82 (Hambly 1991: 142).

⁸⁷ Schneider views Āqā Muḥammad Shāh’s activities against the Yomut Turkmens as occasioned by the recent alliance with the Develū tribe, which in effect relegated the Yomuts to an inferior position (Schneider 2003: 192–3).

⁸⁸ Sāravī 230–8; NT 65–7. See also Schneider 2003: 188–90. Hidāyat attributes the rebellion of 1207/1792 to the unpopularity of Mihr ‘Alī Khān Dāshlū, who was appointed to the government of Astarābād after the death of the erstwhile governor Muḥammad

Āqā Muḥammad Shāh personally enforced his authority among the Göklen Turkmens by destroying their fields.⁸⁹

This pattern of intermittent rebellion and ensuing government interference continued under Āqā Muḥammad Shāh's successors. At the time of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh's accession to the throne in 1797, the local *bēglerbēgī* Imām Qulī b. Muḥammad Riżā Khān Qājār Quyūnlū faced the task of reining in the Turkmens.⁹⁰ In 1802–3, the Shāh moved to Māzandarān and Astarābād to suppress disturbances among the Yomut and Göklen Turkmens along the Gurgān river. In 1228/1813, royal troops quenched a revolt among the Yomuts and Göklen, which was instigated by Khvāja Yūsuf Kāshgharī, a descendant of the Central Asian *shaikh* Makhdūm A'zam.⁹¹ In 1229/1814, contemporaneous with the rebellion of the Khurāsānī leadership, the newly appointed governor Muḥammad Zamān Khān Qājār 'Izz al-Dīnlū collaborated with the Yomut and Göklen Turkmens in an uprising, which Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh quickly put an end to by mobilizing the urban leadership of Astarābād. As the rebellion in Khurāsān continued in 1815–16, the Yomuts under the leadership of Qurbān Qilīch Khān cultivated contacts with the court of Khīva.⁹² From the early 1820s until the death of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh in 1834, the Qājār prince Badī' al-Zamān b. Muḥammad Qulī Khān Mulk Ārā administrated Astarābād in conjunction with his father, who held the government of Māzandarān.⁹³ At that time, the Qājār musketeer regiments stationed in Astarābād were considered the best of Iran.⁹⁴ In the course of the Perso-Russian war of 1826–28, Badī' al-Zamān was confronted with a rebellion of the Ja'farbāy Yomut Turkmens on the Caspian coast, which was apparently instigated by the Russians.⁹⁵

In the 1830s, the government of Astarābād was held by 'Abbās Khān Qājār. In Rabī' I–Jumādā II 1252/July–September 1836, Muḥammad Shāh Qājār moved to the Gurgān region in person to enforce revenue payments from the Yomut and Göklen Turkmens. The majority of the Yomuts, however, seem to have evaded these demands by withdrawing towards the Balkhān mountains.⁹⁶ The campaign dragged on until the winter and underlined the difficulty of maintaining Qājār authority in the outlying provinces. As the British minister McNeill pointed out at the time, Muḥammad Shāh Qājār's military ambitions were primarily hampered by lacking resources, which made it next to impossible to control the soldiers under his command, let alone combat the Turkmens:

The dearth of food is so great, that the soldiers have plundered even the provisions destined for His Majesty's own use. Barley sells in camp for ten times the price at which it can be purchased here, and wheat is not procurable at any price. A great number of the baggage cattle have been carried off by the Turcomans, whose light horsemen hover around the encampment and keep up a continual alarm from dusk to daylight. Amongst the cattle carried away were forty belonging to the Shah, and one hundred and eighty which carried the baggage of the Russian minister. The troops are so much dissatisfied, that the Shah has been obliged to promise them that he will return to Teheran. In the meantime having received no pay, and almost no rations, and having been disappointed in their hopes of plunder, they attacked and pillaged the Goklan tribe of Turcomans which had for many years been subject to Persia, a large portion of which was settled in villages, whose hostages were in the camp, and who had not only not

Riżā Khān Qājār Quyūnlū (1200–1207/1785–1792). When the disturbances had been quelled, Riżā Khān's son Imām Qulī gained the government of Astarābād (TRSN IX: 252–3). However, Sāravī and Lisān al-Mulk do not mention a gubernatorial appointment of Mihr 'Alī Khān Dāshlū and merely report that he accompanied Āqā Muḥammad Khān to Astarābād (Sāravī 233, NT 66). According to the *Tārīkh-i muntaẓam-i nāṣirī*, Imām Qulī b. Muḥammad Riżā Khān Qājār Quyūnlū held the government of Astarābād from 1207–1214/1792–1799 (TMN 1420–1). I would like to thank Zahir Bhalloo for directing my attention to the information TMN furnishes on the gubernatorial appointments to Astarābād in the late eighteenth century.

⁸⁹ Sāravī 285–6; NT 80; TMN 1432.

⁹⁰ Neyestani, "Gorgān, vii. From the Safavids to the End of the Pahlavi Era," *E.Ir.* XI: 157.

⁹¹ *Dhū al-qarnain*: 352–6, 820–1; NT 120, 225–7; TMN 1516–17; Bāmdād 1992 I: 154. See also Wood 1998: 31.

⁹² NT 254–5; Farmayan 1981: 54–5.

⁹³ *Dhū al-qarnain* 820–1; NT 481; Bāmdād 1992 I: 187; Fraser 1825: 203.

⁹⁴ Fraser 1825: 228. The troops furnished by Astarābād assisted Shujā' al-Saltāna in the Herat campaign of 1818, and supported Nā'ib al-Saltāna in establishing control over Khabūshān, Sarakhs and Turbat-i Ḥaidarīya in the autumn of 1248/1832 (NT 297–8, 481, 484).

⁹⁵ TMN 1573–4; Bāmdād 1992 I: 187.

⁹⁶ NT 657–60; TMN 1635–6; Busse 1972: 251; Farmayan 1981: 56.

fled on the advance of the army, but had supplied it with the greater part of its provisions it received. The Shah has disavowed the act, but the evil is irreparable, for all idea of accommodation between the Shah and the refractory tribes is now at an end.⁹⁷

Muḥammad Shāh Qājār's endeavor to strengthen the Qājār presence in the province of Astarābād thus backfired in a twofold manner. The depletion of provisions occasioned by his campaign precluded the stationing of further Qājār troops there. Rather than containing the Turkmen threat, this campaign ultimately left the province unprotected and enhanced the opportunities for raiding. Shortly after the withdrawal of the Qājār troops, the Turkmens of the region were reported to have recommenced their depredations on the trade routes leading to Mashhad.⁹⁸ In 1257/1841–42, Muḥammad Shāh Qājār dispatched troops from Māzandarān and Khurāsān to assist the governor of Astarābād, Nāṣir Khān Qājār Quyūnlū in subduing a rebellion by the Yomut, Göklen and Teke Turkmens under the leadership of a Naqshbandī *pīr*.⁹⁹

From 1267/1850 on, Muḥammad Valī Khān Qājār Develū served as the *bēglerbēgī* of Astarābād and was ordered to rebuild the dilapidated fortress of the town to forestall Turkmen incursions.¹⁰⁰ His military campaign against the Yomut Turkmens during that year coincided with Ḥusām al-Saltāna's activities in Sarakhs and Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat's mission to Khvārazm.¹⁰¹ These measures apparently only met with limited success. When Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat passed through Astarābād on his return journey from Khīva in October 1851, the erstwhile loyal Ātābāy Yomut were in a state of rebellion, and Hidāyat himself narrowly escaped captivity. Subsequently he advised the *bēglerbēgī* of Astarābād to adopt a conciliatory stance to this group. Given his recent experience of Khivan politics, he argued that repeated government reprisals would only serve to drive this group into the arms of Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt of Khīva and thus lead to perpetual unrest in the Gurgān region.¹⁰²

In 1857, the relationship with the Qājār government seemed to take a turn for the better when the Yomut cavalry of Astarābād offered to support Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's troops in the war effort against the British at Bushire. This was taken by the Prime Minister as a sign that Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's authority among the Turkmens far exceeded that once exercised by Nādir Shāh.¹⁰³ At the same time, Astarābād was subject to as much unrest as in earlier times.

From 1271–1275/1854–1858/59 Ja'far Qulī Khān Shādillū held the governorship of Astarābād in addition to his domain in Bujnūrd.¹⁰⁴ Ja'far Qulī Khān instilled obedience in his Turkmen subjects by resorting to very much the same methods of raiding common among them. According to Hidāyat's flattering description, the dread of his ongoing night attacks caused the sleep in his enemies' eyes to turn into thorns and made their hair stand on end like snakes.¹⁰⁵ In 1272/1855–56, Ja'far Qulī Khān mounted a successful campaign against the Teke Turkmens which, according to Hidāyat, caused all the neighboring Turkmens to turn in their captives voluntarily.¹⁰⁶ The following year, confrontations with the Ja'farbāy Yomut Turkmens followed.¹⁰⁷ In 1858, however, the Shādillū leader was defeated by a confederacy of Teke, Yomut and Göklen Turkmens at Qara Qal'a on the upper course of the Sumbar river.¹⁰⁸

⁹⁷ McNeill to Palmerston, Tehran, 3 November 1836, IOL, L/PS/20/A7/1, No. 47, p. 39.

⁹⁸ McNeill to Palmerston, Tehran, 2 December 1826, IOL, L/PS/20/A7/1, No 48, p. 40.

⁹⁹ The Khurāsānī troops were led by Ja'far Qulī Khān Shādillū of Bujnūrd (NT 767–8; TMN 1657).

¹⁰⁰ Neyestani, "Gorgān, vii. From the Safavids to the End of the Pahlavi Era," *E.Ir.* X1: 158; Sārli 1995: 55. For details of the governorship of Muḥammad Valī Khān Qājār Develū, see TRSN X: 496–7; Khūrmūjī 1984: 118; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 45; Persian text: 29; TMN 1716.

¹⁰¹ NT 1129; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 84; Persian text: 53–4.

¹⁰² *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 185–95, 199; Persian text 120–7, 130–1.

¹⁰³ NT 1375.

¹⁰⁴ MB 1326; NT 1282, 1372, 1375, 1482; TMN 1781. For his services in guarding the Atrak border, Ja'far Qulī Khān Shādillū was exempt from paying land tax on his possessions in Bujnūrd (Lambton 1999: 491).

¹⁰⁵ *Az saṭyat-i shabākhūn va ilghār-i vay dushmanān-rā khvāb dar dīdahā khār va mūy dar andāmā mār gasht* (TRSN X: 613).

¹⁰⁶ TRSN X: 623.

¹⁰⁷ Khūrmūjī 1984: 231–2.

¹⁰⁸ König 1962: 28; Sārli 1995: 76–77.

In the 1860s, Astarābād witnessed a quick succession of governors.¹⁰⁹ In 1866, the British diplomat Augustus Mounsey was unable to travel from the Russian base on the Caspian island of Ashurada to Astarābād because of mounting insecurity in the region. He described the Yomuts as the most volatile element on the southern shore of the Caspian:

Even in quiet times, this journey to Astarabad ought never to be undertaken without strong escort, for the Turkmens are irrepressible; while on their swift, powerful horses, they are here, there, and everywhere. Nor is it only on land that they are so formidable; they make descents, in their long canoes, on the coast of Mazandaran, and are so much dreaded that the peasants till their rice fields and gather their mulberry beans with firearms slung on their shoulders.¹¹⁰

In Ṣafar 1284/June 1867, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's visit to Mashhad coincided with a Yomut revolt in Astarābād. Instigated by an *ishān* of Afghan provenience, the Yomuts besieged the Qājār fort of Āq Qal'a, located thirteen miles north of Astarābād on the Gurgān river.¹¹¹ On his subsequent visit to Bujnūrd in Rabī' II 1284/August 1867, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh ordered Ja'far Qulī Khān Shādillū's brother Ḥaidar Qulī Khān Sihām al-Daula (d. 1288/1871–72) to mount a retaliatory campaign against the Yomut and Göklen Turkmens of Gurgān. The available accounts of this raid illustrate the fact that the strategies the Qājār king employed coincided with local methods of warfare. The troops under the leadership of Ḥaidar Qulī Khān and Amīr Ḥusain Khān Za'farānlū briefly descended on a number of Yomut camps near Gunbad-i Qābūs and retreated after cutting off 200 Turkmen heads, taking 1,000 prisoners (mostly women and children) and plundering all moveable property. The captives were distributed among Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's courtiers or released in exchange for ransom.¹¹² In 1286/1869–70, Ḥaidar Qulī Khān Shādillū conquered Qara Qal'a, resettled its population in Bujnūrd and moved Göklen Turkmens into the fort.¹¹³

In 1888–89, as many as 13,000 troops under the command of the governor of Khurāsān, the *khāns* of Bujnūrd and Khabūshān, and the governor of Astarābād were dispatched against the Yomut Turkmens of Gurgān.¹¹⁴ This pattern of intermittent conflict between the Qājār representatives and the local population continued until the early twentieth century and reached a final climax in 1908, when the Turkmens reacted to the bombardment of the National Assembly by attacking Astarābād.¹¹⁵

Allowing for some variations in the absolute population figures, the proportions between the Yomuts and Göklen and the lands they occupied remained relatively stable. The two major branches of the Yomuts had migrated to Khīva and Gurgān respectively during the second half of the seventeenth century. Settling on the

¹⁰⁹ In 1275/1859, Kayūmarth Mīrzā Īlkhānī Qājār was appointed to the government of Māzandarān and Astarābād and received the title of "Mulk Ārā" (TMN 1815). Sulṭān Mas'ūd Mīrzā Yamīn al-Daula (Zill al-Sulṭān) succeeded Kayūmarth Mīrzā Īlkhānī Qājār in Ramaẓān 1277/March–April 1861 and held the government of Māzandarān, Astarābād, Ṣaḥrā-yi Turkman, Simnān and Dāmghān until Dhū al-Ḥijja 1279/May–June 1863 (Bāmdād 1992 IV: 81, 103–4). During this period, Aḥmad Mīrzā Mu'in al-Daula served as deputy governor (*nāyib al-ḥukūma*) of Astarābād (TMN 1839, 1843; Bāmdād 1992 I: 103–5; IV: 14). In late 1279/spring 1863, 'Ain al-Mulk Khvānsālār was appointed to the government of Māzandarān and Astarābād (TMN 1851; Bāmdād 1992 IV: 104). In 1280/1863, Anūshīrvān Khān Qājār I'tizād al-Daula's brother Muḥammad 'Alī Khān was appointed *bēglerbēgī* of Astarābād (TMN 1857; Bāmdād 1992 V: 279). In 1281/1864, Muḥammad Valī Khān Qājār Develū, the commander-in-chief of the army of Khurāsān, was appointed to the government of Astarābād (MB 1463; TMN 1864; Bāmdād 1992 V: 279). In 1283/1866, Kayūmarth Mīrzā Īlkhānī Qājār Mulk Ārā was appointed to the government of Astarābād for a second time (TMN 1887). In 1284/1867, Anūshīrvān Khān Qājār I'tizād al-Daula was appointed to the government of Astarābād (TMN 1895; Bāmdād 1992 II: 117). Upon his death in 1285/1868, he was succeeded by his son I'timād al-Daula, who held this post until 1294/1877–78 (TMN 1905; personal communication from Zahir Bhalloo). In 1298/1881, Astarābād was one of the numerous governorships held by Kāmrān Mīrzā b. Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (Bāmdād 1992: III: 153; Sheikholeslami 1997: 147). For the year 1894 Yate mentions Kayūmarth Mīrzā as governor of Astarābād (C. E. Yate 1900: 285).

¹¹⁰ Mounsey 1872: 325; quoted in Granmayeh 1996: 244.

¹¹¹ Kashmīrī 1970; TMN 1894.

¹¹² MB 1555, 1558; TMN 1894; Tavaḥḥudī 1985 II: 378–90. See also TMN 1895. Here, the text omits the name of Ḥaidar Qulī Khān.

¹¹³ Napier 1977: 76; Sārli 1995: 138–9, 144–6. For Ḥaidar Qulī Khān's campaign to Qara Qal'a in 1285/1868–69, see MB 1593. Ḥaidar Qulī Khān was also employed against the Turkmens of Akhal and checked Turkmen raids in Jājarm and Sarakhs (Tavaḥḥudī 1985 II: 391).

¹¹⁴ Curzon 1966 I: 190. See also KR 236; Shākīrī 1986: 110.

¹¹⁵ Rabino 1928: 95.

lower Gurgān river, the Yomuts forced the Göklens, who had lived in the area since the sixteenth century, to move to the upper course of the river.¹¹⁶ In the 1830s, Conolly reported that the Yomuts occupied the banks of the Gurgān river and the lands to the north and outnumbered the Göklens.¹¹⁷ In 1872, Stebnitzky arrived at a figure of 15,500 tents for the Yomuts and 3,000 tents for the Göklens. Twenty years later, Charles E. Yate reduced this estimate to 7,000 tents for the Yomuts and 2,000 tents for the Göklens.¹¹⁸ These figures were confirmed by the British vice consul Rabino in the early twentieth century.¹¹⁹ While the Göklens were entirely sedentary, one third of the Yomuts were nomads, *chārvā*, as opposed to the *chumūr*, who rarely moved their camps. During his visit to the region in November 1894, Yate noted the geographic distribution of these two groups and observed a matching socio-economic hierarchy:

Travelling from east to west, we had gone through three distinct varieties of the Yamut Turkoman race. First came the wild, lawless, and poor Charwas or graziers round Gumbad-i-Kabus. These were poorly dressed, and had nothing but bare necessities in their *kibitkas*, such as bedding and an iron cooking-pot. Next we came to the cultivating Chumurs amongst the Daz and Diaji sections opposite Findarisk and Katul, where the people were better off... Finally we arrived amongst the Jafarbai Chumurs, the sailors, fishermen, and traders of the tribe. These were the best off of all. Their *kibitkas* were well and even luxuriantly furnished, and the teapot and sugar-bowl were everywhere in evidence; the women were well dressed and covered with silver ornaments and kran [*qirān*] pieces... The men as a rule seemed all well-to-do. All of them looked comfortably off, wore cloth clothes, and many of them were even dressed in fur-lined overcoats. The majority of the traders spoke Persian, played chess, and showed various signs of civilisation.¹²⁰

Because of the animosity between the Göklens and the Yomuts, their territories were separated by a stretch of neutral terrain.¹²¹ But the Turkmens' relationships with their other neighbors were equally strained. The Göklens carried on a small-scale war with the Kurds of Bujnūrd, and they and the Yomuts exchanged hostilities with the settled population along the foothills. To contain the danger of raiding, many of the villagers entered an agreement whereby they furnished local Yomut leaders with quantities of rice in exchange for protection. Throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, it was unthinkable for Persians to move freely into the plain between the Gurgān and Atrak rivers, or for individual Turkmens to approach Astarābād. In 1881, O'Donovan captured the prevailing sense of danger produced by the ongoing mutual hostilities in the following way:

No single Turcoman will venture into the pomegranate jungles, amid which are situated the fortified Persian villages which constitute the suburbs of Asterabad. To do so would be to incur almost certain death, for these outlying Persians invariably go about armed and in groups, and never lose an opportunity of 'potting' a nomad, and *vice versa*.¹²²

In the 1830s, Conolly cited an idealized revenue account according to which the 12,000 Yomut tents were assessed at a rate of four *riyāls* each. He noted, however, that the reality was bleaker: "[The Yomuts] are very independent liegemen, pay their slight tribute only when it suits them, and carry off their fellow subjects the Persians whenever they can catch them."¹²³ In 1894, Yate recorded that the enforcement of revenue payments increased with the proximity to the administrative seat at Astarābād.¹²⁴ Yet government presence was limited to the towns, and the soldiers of garrisons like Āq Qal'a were reported to be "practically prisoners within the walls of their fort," unable "to ensure the safety of communications with Astarabad, although they are actually within sight of it."¹²⁵

In the early twentieth century, the Yomut nomads reportedly paid little or no tribute, while the Göklens were subject to a "light" tax assessment. In addition, all Turkmen tribes were required to furnish a quota of

¹¹⁶ Bregel 1987: 157, 161; Wood 1990: 27–8.

¹¹⁷ Conolly 1834 I: 35–6, 41.

¹¹⁸ C. E. Yate 1900: 236, 280.

¹¹⁹ Rabino 1928: 98, 101.

¹²⁰ Yate 1900: 270–1.

¹²¹ Rabino 1928: 97–100.

¹²² O'Donovan 1970 I: 198. See also Conolly 1834 I: 44; Rabino 1928: 99.

¹²³ Conolly 1834 I: 44.

¹²⁴ C. E. Yate 1900: 252.

¹²⁵ C. E. Yate 1900: 260, 281. See also Ehlers, "Gorgān, ii. Dašt-i Gorgān," *E.Ir.* XI: 143–4.

horsemen when the need arose.¹²⁶ Some of the reports about the danger emanating from the Turkmens seem to have been exaggerated. In an undated letter, the commissioner of Gunbad-i Qābūs, the Qājār official Iḥtishām al-Vuzarā, primarily attributed the Turkmens' supposed rebelliousness to a deliberate misrepresentation on the part of the local administrators, who stood to gain from projecting them as dangerous enemies: "Governors and persons in authority, in the interest of their own pocket and to increase their reputation, have always represented some section or other of the Turcomans as being in open rebellion, and the Persian government has immediately sent instructions for the punishment of the rebels." According to this letter, accusations that the Göklens had refused to submit their taxes for three years in a row were equally unfounded. The next lower level of administration bred a different form of corruption. The government agents (*sarkarda*) in charge of revenue collection reportedly used their hereditary position to form raiding partnerships with the Turkmens to the detriment of the villagers of Astarābād.¹²⁷

AKHAL

Extending for about 160 miles between Qizil Arvāt and Darra Gaz, the oasis of Akhal formed a narrow strip of fertile land bounded on one side by the northeastern slopes of the Kopet Dag mountains and the Qara Qum desert on the other. Varying from two to sixteen miles in width, it was plentifully watered by small streams and subterranean irrigation channels (*kārīz*) issuing from the mountains.¹²⁸ In the middle of the nineteenth century, it was reported to have 36 forts.¹²⁹ One of the major settlements was 'Ishqābād (Ashgabat). Once of considerable proportions, the town was in a state of decay and merely housed 500 tents at the time of the Russian conquest in 1881.¹³⁰ In the early nineteenth century, Fraser attributed the ruined state of the historical towns of Nasā, Abīvard, Durūn and Maihana to continual Turkmen incursions.¹³¹ Indeed, successive waves of Turkmen immigrants caused a constant reshuffling of local power relations. This expansion became in large part possible as anarchy spread in Khurāsān during the wars between the Zands and Qājārs in the late eighteenth century. The ensuing Iranian-Khivan competition for the possession of the southern fringes of the Qara Qum desert wrought further destruction.¹³²

In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the region of Akhal witnessed a number of demographic changes, the most profound of which was the advent of the Teke Turkmens. The Qaradashlī, Ali-eli, and Emreli Turkmens, who had inhabited the oasis in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,¹³³ were severely weakened by Nādir Shāh's military campaigns in the 1730s and 1740s. Later in the century, they were either absorbed or displaced by Teke Turkmens, and many of them migrated to Khvārazm at the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹³⁴ A great part of the Teke Turkmens likewise moved on to other destinations. This onward movement can partly be attributed to the fact that the Akhal oasis could only accommodate a limited number of settlers. At the time the Tekes arrived in the region, most of the former irrigation works had fallen into disrepair and large parts of the oasis had become uninhabitable swamps. Another factor that propelled the Tekes onwards was Iranian interference with the border regions of Khurāsān. As will be seen below, the Tekes were able to expand into Sarakhs in 1832, when the Iranian army inflicted a decisive defeat on the Salor Turkmens living there. A quarter-century later, the Tekes of

¹²⁶ Rabino 1928: 95, 97, 100. According to Conolly, the majority of the 400 Turkmens Fath 'Alī Shāh retained at Tehran were Göklens. The remainder were furnished by the Yomuts (Conolly 1834 I: 36).

¹²⁷ Rabino 1928: 95–96.

¹²⁸ Rawlinson 1977: 112. See also König 1962: 35, 161; Stewart 1977: 154.

¹²⁹ NT 1480; König 1962: 26, 33.

¹³⁰ O'Donovan 1970 II: 71–2; Spuler, "Ashkhabad," *E.Ir.* II: 750.

¹³¹ Fraser 1825: 245.

¹³² *Gaz. Iran* II: 139.

¹³³ According to Bregel, the Qaradashlī Turkmens came to Akhal in pre-Mongol times. The presence of the Ali-elis there is documented for the late sixteenth century (Bregel 1987: 150, 157). The Qaradashlīs played an active political role under Shāh 'Abbās I (Sümer 1972: 242). See also Dshikijew 1994: 83, 99, 119.

¹³⁴ Bregel 1987: 157; Dshikijew 1994: 89–91, 96, 131–2, 176–7; König 1962: 18–19; Wood 1990: 34–5.

Sarakhs faced mounting Iranian pressure. In 1274/1858, they sought refuge in Marv and displaced the Sarīq Turkmens from this region. These migrations seem to have involved a cross section of the Tekes, as the constituent branches of Otamīsh¹³⁵ (Āqtamish)¹³⁶ and Toqtamīsh and their subsections were present in Akhal, Sarakhs and Marv.¹³⁷

Even prior to these large-scale movements, the Akhal Tekes suffered loss and displacement in their confrontations with the Khanate of Khīva. Between 1816 and 1820, Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān mounted three expeditions against the Akhal Tekes to enforce revenue payments among them. A part of the local population evaded the reprisals by withdrawing to the mountains. Others fled to Marv and Sarakhs. A number of Akhal Tekes were resettled in Khvārazm.¹³⁸ Khivan efforts at control did not focus on the Akhal Tekes alone. Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān and his successors resorted to a policy of divide and rule with respect to the various Turkmen groups, switching back and forth between punitive and conciliatory measures as the need arose. Their harsh efforts to impose control alternated with periods of little or no government presence. While requiring the Tekes to furnish troops for their campaigns to Khurāsān, they employed the rival Yomut and Göklen Turkmens to further their authority in Akhal. In 1830, Allāh Qulī Khān resettled the Ali-elis of Atek and gave their lands to the Teke Turkmens. In 1836, he restored the fortress of Maihana in Akhal and garrisoned it with Göklen troops as part of his effort to counterbalance the growing Qājār pressure on Sarakhs. In 1847–1848, the Tekes of Akhal and Sarakhs supported the rebellion of Ḥasan Khān Sālār and suffered Khivan and Iranian intervention in the aftermath. In 1855–56, the Khān of Khīva summoned Teke contingents to suppress an uprising by the Yomuts in his principality. As this rebellion dragged on for another decade, Khīva's ability to make its presence felt in Akhal diminished dramatically.¹³⁹

Compared with Khivan activities, Qājār intervention in the Akhal oasis was even less sustained. Iranian interests focused on the fort of Nukhūr,¹⁴⁰ which commanded the communications between Akhal and Bujnūrd and served as a staging point for Turkmen incursions south of the Kopet Dagħ. East of 'Ishqābād, the population of the towns of Anau and Gavurz accepted Iranian authority. In the summer of 1854, the Qājār governor Farīdūn Mīrzā undertook a military campaign to Kalāt, 'Ishqābād and Akhal, levelling the aforementioned 36 forts in the process.¹⁴¹ In 1857, Ja'far Qulī Khān Shādillū, governor of Bujnūrd and Astarābād, made a vain attempt to contain the Turkmen raids emanating from Akhal, the frequency of which had increased greatly subsequent to the Iranian siege of Herat.¹⁴² In 1861, following the disastrous Iranian defeat at Marv, the Akhal Tekes took possession of Anau and Gavurz but, according to Iranian sources, were beaten back by Ḥusām al-Saltāna.¹⁴³ In 1285/1868–69, the chiefs of Khabūshān and Bujnūrd, Amīr Ḥusain Khān Za'farānlū Shujā' al-Daula and Ḥaidar Qulī Khān Shādillū Sihām al-Daula inflicted great losses on the local Teke population.¹⁴⁴

In the course of their settlement in the Akhal oasis, the majority of the Teke Turkmens switched from animal husbandry to farming or a combination thereof. In 1881, it was estimated that the sedentary population (*chumūr*) amounted to 18,000 *kibitkas*, while the nomads (*chārvā*) counted 3,300 tents.¹⁴⁵ The structure of landownership reflected the pattern of migration. The choice lands were controlled by those segments of the Tekes which had been on the forefront of conquest.¹⁴⁶ The Teke expansion led to conflicts

¹³⁵ Dshikijew 1994: 165; König 1962: 23.

¹³⁶ *Safarnāma-yi Bukhārā* 28.

¹³⁷ NT 1237; Barto'ld 1962: 167; Dshikijew 1994: 165; König 1962: 20–21; Lessar 1884: 281; O'Donovan 1970 II: 170–1; *Safarnāma-yi Bukhārā* 28; William 1990: 30.

¹³⁸ König 1962: 22–24.

¹³⁹ König 1962: 23, 25–7.

¹⁴⁰ NT 1373.

¹⁴¹ NT 1239–40; Khūrmūjī 1984: 280–1. NT and Khūrmūjī read Anau as Atū and Atāū respectively.

¹⁴² NT 1373–4.

¹⁴³ Khūrmūjī 1984: 280–1. See also Dschikijew 1994: 89–91; König 1962: 28–29.

¹⁴⁴ MB 1594.

¹⁴⁵ König 1962: 37. According to Stewart, the Akhal Tekes numbered 25,000 tents in the 1880s (Stewart 1977: 154).

¹⁴⁶ König 1962: 30, 35, 42.

with the chiefdoms of Khabūshān (Qūchān) and Darra Gaz, the leadership of which maintained claims to the fertile lands in the foothills. In the early nineteenth century, the Tekes forcefully deprived the chief of Khabūshān, Amīr Gūna Khān Za‘farānlū, of his dependency of Maihana. Teke efforts to exert pressure on the dominions of Darra Gaz under Bēgler Khān Chāpushlū were less successful.¹⁴⁷ But at times the Teke leadership also enjoyed service grants awarded by the Chāpushlū and Za‘farānlū leadership. In 1816–1817, the Teke leader Murād Sardār formed an alliance with Bēgler Khān Chāpushlū of Darra Gaz and was awarded lands along the stream of Gavurz. Another Teke leader received lands at Giani from Bēgler Khān. Amīr Gūna Khān’s son Rizā Qulī Khān Za‘farānlū (d. 1833) bestowed a service grant on Nafas Bēg (Nepes Bek) Toqtamīsh Teke.¹⁴⁸

While pursuing a game of fluctuating friction with the neighboring powers, the Akhal Tekes witnessed the inexorable progress of the Russians from the Caspian Sea during the 1870s with a sense of paralysis. Immediately prior to the final stand off with General Skobelev’s troops at Gök Tepe in 1881, the Akhal leader Makhdūm Qulī Khān Toqtamīsh Teke complained to O’Donovan that the Teke were isolated in their resistance towards the encroachment by Russian troops:

[The Akhal Tekes] had seen the Turcoman khanates one after the other practically deprived of their independence, and their own immediate brethren, the Western tribes of the coast and intermediate plain, become Russian subjects, and now even arrayed in arms against themselves. Russia assailed them; the Persian government refused to accept them as subjects or tributaries, or give them any protection; their friends the Osmanlis were powerless to help them; neither could the Afghans give them any aid.¹⁴⁹

Indeed, about 2,000 Yomut irregular cavalry supported the Russian campaign against the Akhal Tekes.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, the Akhal Tekes could not expect any sustained support from their relatives in Marv, who, apart from sending some volunteers to Akhal, pretty much minded business as usual:

[T]he tribes of Merv were but little concerned by the danger threatening their neighbours. They were too far from the scene of hostilities to dread any immediate danger; and so they lived much in their usual fashion, with occasional cattle-lifting among themselves as a matter of course, and having every now and then a brush with the still wilder tribes to the west and south of their own territory.¹⁵¹

As late as 1879, it looked as if the Akhal Tekes might be able to beat off the Russian forces. In 1878, they erected the mud fortress of Yangī Shahr near the old village of Gök Tepe, and in August 1879, they inflicted a sounding defeat on the Russian forces under General Lomakin. In 1880, General Skobelev embarked on a new campaign against this fort and, in an effort to secure his supply lines, extended the railway towards Teke territory. In January 1881, almost the entire population of Akhal, estimated by O’Donovan at 50,000 to 60,000 tents, concentrated in the fort of Yangī Shahr under the leadership of Makhdūm Qulī Khān. After a siege of three weeks, the fort fell to the Russian forces on January 24, 1881. O’Donovan, who witnessed the battle from the Mārkhū mountain twelve miles south of Gök Tepe, offers what seems a bird’s eye view account of the battle that ultimately rendered Akhal part of the Trans-Caspian province of Russia:

With my double field-glass I could easily make out the lines of the Turcoman fortress, and the general position of its besiegers... I could plainly see, by the smoke of the guns and the movements of the combatants, that the attack had begun in earnest... The Russian assault was directed against the southerly wall of the fortifications, and, after what was apparently a desperate conflict there, it was evident that they had forced their way. A crowd of horsemen began to ride in confusion from the other side of the town, and spread in flight over the plain. Immediately afterwards, a mass of fugitives of every class showed that the town was being abandoned by its inhabitants. The Turcoman fortress had fallen, and all was over with the Akhal Tekkés.¹⁵²

While Makhdūm Qulī Khān withdrew to Tejend and later joined his kinsmen in Marv, the Akhal Tekes not only fell victim to Russian violence; they were also helplessly exposed to raids by their own kinsmen, as well as Turk and Kurdish riders descending from the mountains:

¹⁴⁷ Fraser 1825: Appendix B, 46–7.

¹⁴⁸ König 1962: 23, 34.

¹⁴⁹ O’Donovan 1970 II: 4.

¹⁵⁰ O’Donovan 1970 II: 72.

¹⁵¹ O’Donovan 1970 II: 2.

¹⁵² O’Donovan 1970 II: 67.

Meanwhile the direst confusion prevailed throughout the country. The Tekkés who had escaped from Geok Teppé were everywhere robbing and murdering. The Russian pursuing parties were also active... Moreover, the moss-troopers of Derguez [Darra Gaz], and the Kurds from Kuchan [Qūchān], were abroad like flocks of sea-gulls in troubled waters, seeking what they could pick up, and mercilessly harrying the unarmed fugitives of Geok Tepé especially.¹⁵³

SARAKHS

The town of Sarakhs was located immediately north of the eastern end of the Kopet Dag mountains, near the point where the Harī Rūd, known as Tejend in this region, met the Qara Qum desert after passing through the mountainous regions between Dahana-yī Dhū al-Faqār and Pul-i Khātūn. The historical town of Sarakhs was located on the eastern bank of the river, which only contained water during winter and early spring and was lost in the desert sands a little way to the north.¹⁵⁴ Running parallel to the Kopet Dag Mountains, the final stretch of the Tejend formed a swamp which, according to O'Donovan, presented an impenetrable barrier to travellers: "[I] found it partially covered with jungle, in which the wild boar and leopard abounded, and tigers were not uncommon. The marsh is a treacherous expanse, and men and horses are often swallowed in its depths while attempting its passage at night."¹⁵⁵

South of the Kopet Dag Mountains, a number of trade routes fanned out into Khurāsān. The immediate destinations to the south were Kūsūya and Kārīz. To the southwest, the Kashaf Rūd valley led to Mashhad. Given its strategic location half-way between Mashhad and Marv and commanding the approach to Herat, Sarakhs had been the frontier zone between competing Safavid and Uzbek interests since the early sixteenth century.¹⁵⁶ In the nineteenth century, the town primarily served as a gateway for Turkmen incursions into Khurāsān, while the Qājār government repeatedly sought to revive its historical claims to authority there.¹⁵⁷ The changing political dynamic also affected the role of Sarakhs as a commercial center. While it had traditionally served as an important entrepôt in the overland trade, Iranian captives had become the most important trade item in the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁸ In 1828, the British traveller Stirling described Sarakhs as a "perfect den of murderers and slave sellers".¹⁵⁹ Although the local Salor Turkmens reportedly did not engage directly in slave raids, they had entered a business relationship with the Teke, Sarīq and Ali-eli Turkmens, whereby they received half of all slaves captured in exchange for furnishing the weapons necessary for the raids.¹⁶⁰

In the course of the nineteenth century, Sarakhs underwent a number of demographic shifts which reflected the rivalry among the local Turkmen tribes and were enhanced by intermittent Iranian intervention. Until the early 1830s, the Salor Turkmens constituted the dominant population of Sarakhs proper, while the Teke Turkmens inhabited the lower Tejend oasis.¹⁶¹ According to local traditions, the powerful Teke leader Mopak [Muvaffaq] (d. 1810) established the irrigation system of Qārī Band in the early nineteenth century and warded off Iranian military interference in Tejend. Later in the century, in 1812 and 1834, the Tekes temporarily evaded Qājār pressure by seeking refuge in Marv. For the period between the 1830s and 1850s, Urāz Khān and Khvājam Shakūr are mentioned as the two most powerful Teke leaders. Around 1830, Urāz Khān is said to have led 10,000 Toqtamish Tekes from Gavurz southeast of 'Ishqābād to the Tejend, where

¹⁵³ O'Donovan 1970 II: 74.

¹⁵⁴ Bosworth, C. E., "Sarakhs," *E.I.* 2 IX: 34. See also Barto'ld 1984: 62; Gachet 1882: 494; Lessar 1884: 283; Radde 1989: 139–41; Stewart 1977: 152.

¹⁵⁵ O'Donovan 1970 II: 75.

¹⁵⁶ IT 391; *Safarnāma-yi Bukhārā* 30; TRSN X: 479; Bosworth, C. E., "Sarakhs," *E.I.* 2 IX: 34. On the eve of a military confrontation with the Safavid army in 1510, Muḥammad Khān Shībānī had the city's population of 160,000 families evacuated to Transoxiana (*Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 85n). For the strategic importance of Sarakhs in the late nineteenth century, see Marvin 1884: 170–1.

¹⁵⁷ TRSN X: 479.

¹⁵⁸ *Dhū al-qarnain* 826.

¹⁵⁹ Stirling 1991: 236

¹⁶⁰ *Dhū al-qarnain* 826; NT 483. See also Farmayan 1981: 55.

¹⁶¹ See, for instance, *Ashraf al-tavārīkh* 397.

they erected a fort named *Urāz Qal‘a*.¹⁶² Khvājam Shakūr, the leader of the Otamīsh Tekes, moved to Sarakhs after ‘Abbās Mīrzā Nā‘ib al-Saltāna’s successful campaign against the Salors in 1832. Another famous Teke leader was Qaushīd Khān Toqtamīsh (d. 1878), who played an instrumental role in the Teke migration to Marv in 1274/1858.¹⁶³

In the early nineteenth century, contact between the Salor Turkmens and Mashhad was limited to occasional expressions of fealty and support during military campaigns.¹⁶⁴ From the 1830s on, however, Qājār efforts to establish a direct presence in Sarakhs intensified. In August 1830, Aḥmad ‘Alī Mīrzā’s *vazīr* Mīrzā Mūsā Gīlānī mounted a campaign against Sarakhs and Darra Gaz. Yet within two weeks, the army returned to Mashhad “weary and disconsolate”, as Conolly reports, after losing 150 men in skirmishes with the Turkmens and facing starvation in the desert. To make things worse, the campaign had been stifled by dissensions among the tribal leaders assisting the *vazīr*, among them Najaf Qulī Khān Shādillū of Bujnūrd, Rīzā Qulī Khān Za‘farānlū of Khabūshān and Yār Muḥammad Khān Alakūzai of Herat.¹⁶⁵

The first decisive step against Sarakhs was undertaken by ‘Abbās Mīrzā Nā‘ib al-Saltāna. When fifty Salor leaders arrived at the provincial court of Mashhad to present tokens of loyalty in the summer of 1832, Nā‘ib al-Saltāna did not allow them to depart for their home town and subsequently embarked on a military campaign against Khabūshān and Sarakhs. During the short-lived siege of Sarakhs in Jumādā I 1248/October 1832, the local population lived up to their evil reputation as slavers by using their Shiite prisoners as human shields against Qājār artillery fire. On his conquest of the town on 23–24 Jumādā I 1248/18–19 October 1832, Nā‘ib al-Saltāna freed 3,000 Shiite slaves and deported 3,000 Salor families. What is more, he had 450 slave traders executed at the hands of former Shiite captives.¹⁶⁶ These figures seem rather large in the light of contemporaneous British sources. In 1828, Stirling noted that no more than “five or six despicable shops” were to be found in the bazaar of Sarakhs.¹⁶⁷ Immediately prior to Nā‘ib al-Saltāna’s campaign, Burnes had reported the entire local Salor population to consist of 2,000 families.¹⁶⁸

Although Nā‘ib al-Saltāna razed the citadel of Sarakhs, he was unable to establish a permanent government presence there, and his successors had to content themselves with occasional military campaigns to the region. His victory over the Salors of Sarakhs and their subsequent deportation worked to the benefit of the Teke Turkmens. According to some sources, the Otamīsh subsection moved to the town and its environs shortly thereafter, while the Toqtamīsh under Urāz Khān stayed in Tejend.¹⁶⁹ In 1844, ‘Abbās Qulī Khān, the Iranian envoy to Bukhārā, reported that the Teke population of Sarakhs amounted to 20,000 families, the greater part of whom (12,000 families) belonged to the Toqtamīsh subsection under the leadership of Nafas Bēg while the remainder formed part of the Otamīsh division under Turāb Bēg.¹⁷⁰ At that time, the allegiance of the local Turkmen chiefs seems to have been split threefold. While the Toqtamīsh leader Urāz Khān had joined Allāhyār Khān Āṣaf al-Daula in Mashhad and was on his way to the Qājār court

¹⁶² The exact dates of this migration are not clear. According to Dshikijew, Urāz Khān arrived in the Tejend region in 1829 or 1830 (Dshikijew 1994: 166–9). In König’s account, this migration took place in the mid-1830s (König 1962: 21). Lessar’s opinion that Urāz Khān was the leader of the Otamīsh Tekes is not borne out by other sources (Lessar 1884: 291).

¹⁶³ Dshikijew 1994: 169–171. See also Wolff 1848: 322.

¹⁶⁴ NT 303; TRSN X: 479.

¹⁶⁵ Conolly 1834 I: 321, 336, 355.

¹⁶⁶ *Dhū al-qarnain* 829–3; NT 481, 483–6, 495–6; TRSN X: 479. See also *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer) 1975: 173; Persian text: 110; Wolff 1848: 321–2. According to I‘tizād al-Saltāna, 4,000 Shiite slaves were freed and 5,000 Sarakhsi families were deported (IT 390–1). During his visit to Mashhad in June 1833, Fraser noted a “prodigious number of beggars”, many of whom were remnants of the “three or four thousand” Salor taken prisoner at Sarakhs. They were initially confined in the Uzbek caravanserai of Mashhad without food until ransomed by their kinsmen. The remaining prisoners, mostly women and children whose close relatives had died during the war with the Qājārs, were left to fend for themselves in Mashhad (Fraser 1973: 213–19).

¹⁶⁷ Stirling 1991: 239.

¹⁶⁸ Burnes quoted in Dshikijew 1994: 227.

¹⁶⁹ Dshikijew 1994: 169; König 1962: 25; O’Donovan 1970 II: 171.

¹⁷⁰ *Safarnāma-yi Bukhārā* 28.

in Tehran, the Otamīsh leader Khvājam Shakūr was allied with the Khān of Khīva. Other local chiefs were in league with Bukhārā.¹⁷¹

In 1845, Allāhyār Khān Āṣaf al-Daula totally destroyed the Teke settlements in Tejend.¹⁷² Even so, Urāz Khān Toqtamīsh gave shelter to Allāhyār Khān Āṣaf al-Daula's son Ḥasan Khān Sālār in the winter of 1847–48. In the following year, Urāz Khān and Qaushīd Khān actively supported Ḥasan Khān Sālār's assumption of power in Mashhad which lasted until the spring of 1850.¹⁷³ According to Hidāyat, the Turkmen reinforcements sent from Sarakhs to Mashhad during this period were paid in slaves, at the rate of one slave per horseman.¹⁷⁴

While unable to establish direct control over Sarakhs, the Qājār governors Ḥusām al-Saltāna and Farīdūn Mīrzā managed to make Qājār presence felt in the early 1850s. In Ramaẓān 1267/June–July 1851, Ḥusām al-Saltāna attacked Sarakhs and beat back Turkmen insurgencies on Turbat-i Ḥaidarīya. Yet his subsequent attempt to appoint 'Abbās Qulī Khān Darra Gazī as governor to Sarakhs proved to be in vain.¹⁷⁵ Between 1852 and 1854, Urāz Khān and the nobles around him repeatedly approached the provincial court of Mashhad, signaling their willingness to furnish 50 cavalry to the army of Khurāsān and to protect the trade routes passing through their territory. In Jumādā II 1271/March 1855, Urāz Khān played a leading role in warding off a Khivan invasion under Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt with the assistance of Farīdūn Mīrzā.¹⁷⁶ Muḥammad Amīn Khān's subsequent defeat and death encouraged a decade-long rebellion among the Turkmens of Khīva.¹⁷⁷

With the onset of the siege of Herat in 1856, however, the Sarakhsis threw off their allegiance to Mashhad. While about 200 cavalry from Sarakhs actively supported the besieged Heratis, the greater group of Turkmens from Akhal, Sarakhs and Qarayāb near Marv resumed their raids into Khurāsān and primarily targeted the supply lines linking Mashhad with the troops encamped before Herat. Further raids on Khurāsān coincided with the military showdown between Qājār and British troops in Bushire in the spring of 1857.¹⁷⁸ These incursions caused Ḥusām al-Saltāna to detain a number of Teke nobles in Mashhad in 1274/1857–58. In the same year, he launched a campaign against the Tekes of Sarakhs and pursued them as far as Marv.¹⁷⁹ This time, the Teke withdrawal to Marv proved to be of a permanent nature. Qaushīd Khān and his compatriots settled in Marv, displacing the local Sarīqs, who in turn drove the Salors out of Panjdih.¹⁸⁰

A decisive blow against Sarakhs followed shortly thereafter. In order to put an end to the ongoing Turkmen attacks on residents, travellers and pilgrims in Khurāsān, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh ordered the newly appointed governor of Khurāsān, Ḥamza Mīrzā Ḥishmat al-Daula, to establish a permanent government presence in Sarakhs. From Shavvāl 1275–Rabī' II 1276/May–November 1859, Ḥamza Mīrzā devoted all his energies to the construction of a new settlement and fort called “Nāṣirīya-yi Sarakhs” on the left bank of the Tejend and made efforts to bring in settlers from Khurāsān. Muḥammad Valī Khān Qājār Develū, the *sardār* of Khurāsān, was placed in charge.¹⁸¹ Throughout their stay near Sarakhs, Ḥamza Mīrzā's troops faced daily

¹⁷¹ *Safarnāma-yi Bukhārā* 24–5, 28, 73. Joseph Wolff, who accompanied 'Abbās Qulī Khān on his return from Bukhārā in August/September 1844, reported that Khvājam Shakūr Otamīsh “threatened to smite with the edge of the sword the whole caravan if they did not give him tribute, after the other Tūrkomauns had taken it [along the route via Marv]” (Wolff 1848: 322).

¹⁷² Dshikijew 1994: 169.

¹⁷³ NT 889, 972, 976, 1047; Khūrmūjī 1984: 35.

¹⁷⁴ TRSN X: 394, 480.

¹⁷⁵ TRSN X: 480–5; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975) 84, 98; Persian text: 54, 64. 'Abbās Qulī Khān Darra Gazī was appointed to the government of Sarakhs in 1268 (27 October 1851–14 October 1852) (*Sifāratnāma* Persian text 110; TMN 1727).

¹⁷⁶ NT 1121–4, 1237–40, 1248, 1251–2; Khūrmūjī 1984: 118, 138, 142–5; TMN 1741, 1769; Dshikijew 1994: 170–1.

¹⁷⁷ Evans 1984: 17.

¹⁷⁸ NT 1317, 1347–9, 1352, 1470, 1481; TRSN X: 709–10, 712–13; Khūrmūjī 1984: 191–2; 230–1.

¹⁷⁹ The campaign against the Tekes of Sarakhs was concluded in Ramaẓān 1274/April–May 1858 (Khūrmūjī 1984: 236). See also O'Donovan 1970 II: 170; Sārī 1995: 92–3.

¹⁸⁰ Dshikijew 1994: 227; Sārī 1995: 95; Lumsden, IOL, L/PS/18/A 53 Pt. 3, p. 13.

¹⁸¹ Khūrmūjī and I'timād al-Saltāna state that Ḥamza Mīrzā settled 4,000 families in Nāṣirīya-yi Sarakhs (Khūrmūjī 1984: 249; TMN 1815–16, 1823). According to reports of the late nineteenth century, however, the population amounted to no more than 300 houses and 150 Arab cultivators. The garrison consisted of one company of infantry and a detachment of artillerymen (*Gaz. Iran* II: 593; “The New Russian-Persian Frontier East of the Caspian Sea,” in Cumming 1977: 184). In the early 1870s, it was

attacks by an alliance of the Turkmens of Marv and Tejend. In Šafar 1276/Juli–August 1859, the government troops retaliated by destroying the fields, irrigation works and grain stores of the Tejend Tekes.¹⁸² In May 1276/1860, Ḥamza Mīrzā followed Nāšir al-Dīn's order to embark on a campaign against Marv, which ended with a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Teke Turkmens in October.

Ḥamza Mīrzā's successor Ḥusām al-Saltāna (1861–1863) endeavoured to maintain a military presence in Sarakhs and repeatedly sent provisions there. Even so, the Qājār position in Sarakhs was by no means secure. Ḥusām al-Saltāna himself was confronted with a Turkmen attack while on his way there in Rabī' II 1278/October 1861.¹⁸³ An important figure in the Turkmen raids emanating from the environs of Sarakhs in the 1850s and 1860s was Muḥammad Shaikh Marvī, who repeatedly took the lead of the Turkmens of Sarakhs and Qarayāb and threatened the environs of Mashhad as well as the trade route to Herat.¹⁸⁴ The situation of the Qājār garrison in Sarakhs remained precarious for the next decade. The difficult position of this government outpost was highlighted in 1870–71, when Khurāsān was in the grips of a serious famine. In Rajab 1287/November 1870, Nāšir al-Dīn Shāh painted a grim picture of the situation:

The affairs of Sarakhs are once again disturbed. Firstly, the fort, its towers and bastions are in need of repair. Secondly, the arsenal is devoid of ammunition. Thirdly, there are no provisions. Fourthly, the Turkmens have carried off all the sheep and donkeys. Of what use then is a fort and its garrison under such circumstances? The fort is in grave danger. [Ḥamza Mīrzā] Ḥishmat al-Daula [governor of Mashhad, 1869–1871] needs to assemble ammunition and provisions, he needs to send men there and to repair the damages. Otherwise, the Turkmens may gain strength and—God forbid—all of a sudden take over the fort.¹⁸⁵

In the early 1870s, Sarakhs briefly witnessed the return of its previous population, the Salors. After their defeat and forceful removal at the hands of Nā'ib al-Saltāna in 1832, the Salors had settled on the Murghāb river between Yolotan and Panjdih. With the arrival of the Tekes in Marv and the following southward push of the Sarīqs, the Salors initially migrated to Mārūchāq in 1860 and then moved on to Zūrābād located 40 miles south of Sarakhs.¹⁸⁶ In 1871, the Salor leader Murād Khān entered an agreement with Ḥamza Mīrzā whereby his tribe was allowed to move back to Old Sarakhs in exchange for protecting the border against Sarīq and Teke incursions. Government endeavours to buy security for Sarakhs by playing on tribal divisions worked to the detriment of the Salors. The Marv Tekes violently objected to the new government-sponsored role of the Salors, and within six months, Qaushīd Khān Toqtamīsh Teke mounted an expedition of 6,000 cavalry and infantry against them. As a result, a great part of the Salors were forcefully resettled in Marv and dispersed among the Tekes.¹⁸⁷ In 1881, there were about 400–700 Salor tents in Marv. Another thousand families migrated along the upper part of the Murghāb river.¹⁸⁸ In the same year, the Salors of Marv accepted

reported to be garrisoned by Qarā'ī soldiers (Sārli 1995: 162–3). Ḥamza Mīrzā also erected another fort called Ḥishmatābād on the Harī Rūd at a short distance from Sarakhs (Shahīdī 1971: 47–8).

¹⁸² Khūrmūjī 1984: 249–50.

¹⁸³ Khūrmūjī 1984: 264, 280–1.

¹⁸⁴ TRSN X: 535, 706–7; NT 1192, 1241, 1347, 1470; Khūrmūjī 1984: 118, 194, 229, 281.

¹⁸⁵ Sārli 1995: 162–3. For the precarious position of the garrison of Sarakhs during this period, see also Lessar 1881: 283.

¹⁸⁶ The information concerning the Salor migrations is contradictory. Dshikijew quotes Lessar's statement that the Salors moved from Yolotan to Zūrābād as early as 1855 and stayed there for twelve years (Dshikijew 1994: 227). Yet according to a Persian eyewitness account of Ḥamza Mīrzā Ḥishmat al-Daula's abortive campaign to Marv, the Salors were still in possession of the fort of Yolotan in the summer of 1860. After altercations with the Iranian army, they evacuated the fort of Yolotan and migrated to Panjdih. At this juncture, a number of Salor families settled among the Tekes, with whom they had formed an alliance against the Persians (Za'farānlū 1968: 107–8, 110–111, 114–18; see also Barto'ld 1962: 169). While giving no date for the expulsion of the Salors from Yolotan, the son of I'timād al-Saltāna claims that they initially went via Panjdih to Mārūchāq, where they stayed for four years. Subsequently, they split up into three groups, one staying behind in Mārūchāq, one moving on to Qara Tepe twenty *farsangs* from Herat, and one moving to Zūrābād with the permission of Ḥamza Mīrzā Ḥishmat al-Daula. The remaining Salors of Mārūchāq were later expelled by the Sarīqs, joined their fellow tribesmen in Qara Tepe and convinced them to move to Zūrābād together (Sārli 1995: 110–111; see also pp. 158, 161–2). Writing in Rajab 1299/May 1882, Muḥammad 'Alī Munshī reported that 1,500 Salor families had arrived in Zūrābād the previous year (*Safarnāma-yi Rukn al-Daula* 70, 88–9, 93).

¹⁸⁷ Sārli 1995: 110–111. As Ḥamza Mīrzā Ḥishmat al-Daula's third and final governorship of Khurāsān ended in 1871, this is the latest date the migration of the Salors to Sarakhs can have taken place.

¹⁸⁸ Dshikijew 1994: 227–9; O'Donovan 1970 II: 173.

an invitation extended by the Iranian government to return to Sarakhs but were prevented from leaving by the Teke leadership.¹⁸⁹ With the Russian conquest of Gök Tepe in January 1881, however, the power constellations in the region changed again. With Russian backing, the Salor leader Teke Khān united the various Salor groups of Marv, Yolotan and Zūrābād under his command and settled them in Sarakhs.¹⁹⁰ In 1884, Old Sarakhs on the right bank of the Tejend became a Russian possession, whereas Nāṣirīya-yi Sarakhs on the left bank of the river remained under Iranian control.¹⁹¹

In 1894, Charles E. Yate described Iranian Sarakhs as a forlorn government outpost with a governor (*ḥākim*), an agent (*kārgudhār*), a telegraph clerk, and 200–300 infantry. The local population consisted of 150 families of Arab descent and 60 Sīstānī families, who had been settled there in 1874 and 1888 respectively. Yate attributed the relative poverty of the local population to the Russo-Persian boundary settlement of 1884, which only left one-sixth of the water available from the Tejend to Iranian Sarakhs, while the remaining five-sixths went to Russia.¹⁹²

MARV

Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat emphasized the ancient Iranian origins of Marv.¹⁹³ Located at the crossroads of the trade routes leading to Khīva, Bukhārā, Mashhad, Andkhūd, Maimana and Herat, Marv formed one of the major urban centers in the region up to the Mongol invasion. It was also famed for its fertility, which it owed to its position on the final stretch of the Murghāb river. The water of this stream, which was also known as Rūd-i Shahd, is described as “bright green” in its upper reaches¹⁹⁴ and “muddy but sweet” further down.¹⁹⁵ Originating in the Safīd Kūh mountains, it entered the Qara Qum desert about 100 miles further east than the Tejend and took a parallel northerly course until it lost itself in the desert sands. Along its course, the river watered several separate oases. After irrigating the valley of Mārūchāq, the Murghāb river rushed through a region enclosed by steep banks. Further north, the oasis of Panjdih formed a two-mile wide strip of fertile land which extended along the river for twenty-five miles. Joined by its main tributary, the Kushk Rūd, the Murghāb river flowed through a sand desert before reaching the oasis of Yolotan and eventually fanning out into the irrigation system forming the oases of Marv and Qarayāb.¹⁹⁶ The land along the final stretch of the river was considered most fertile, and, in the eyes of the Teke leader Qaushīd Khān, it was like gold as compared to the silver and copper of the territories lying further upstream.¹⁹⁷

The trade route from Marv to Herat ran parallel to the course of the Murghāb river to Panjdih, where it bifurcated west into a passage along the Kushk Rūd and east into a passage which continued along the Murghāb to Pul-i Tābān. The proximity of the trade route and the river did not imply easy access to water. A member of the Qājār military campaign to Marv in 1860 describes the terrain as difficult:

The route from Marv to Herat follows the bank of the Rūd-i Shahd. But the road runs at an elevation of fifteen *dhar*. The river flows below and is situated in such a way that cavalry and infantry cannot approach its banks. If water is needed, it has to be drawn up in a bucket [like water] from a well. Every twelve to fourteen *farsang* along the route, a path to the river bank becomes visible and [this place] also serves as a halting-place (*manzilgāh*). All along the river banks trees, reeds, tamarisks and weeds abound.¹⁹⁸

¹⁸⁹ O'Donovan 1970: 361–3.

¹⁹⁰ Dshikijew 1994: 229; Lessar 1885: 520; Wood 1990: 33. In June 1882, Rukn al-Daula, the governor of Khurāsān, had employed Teke Khān and 100 cavalry as border post (*qarāvul*) (*Safarnāma-yi Rukn al-Daula* 93–4).

¹⁹¹ Bosworth, “Sarakhs,” *E.I.*, 2 IX: 34.

¹⁹² C. E. Yate 1900: 34.

¹⁹³ TRSN X: 540–1.

¹⁹⁴ Vámbéry 1990: 285.

¹⁹⁵ Radde 1898: 142. See also; Stirling 1991: 248; Vámbéry 1864: 257, 261.

¹⁹⁶ Barto'ld 1984: 39–40; Stewart 1977: 145–6.

¹⁹⁷ Dshikijew 1994: 171–2.

¹⁹⁸ *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 79.

When the Qājārs renewed their historical claims to Marv in the middle of the nineteenth century, not much was left of its former splendour. The “citadel” of Marv mentioned in the Persian sources of the time properly referred to the seat of the Teke Turkmen leader Qaushīd Khān, while the ancient settlements of Marv lay in ruins.¹⁹⁹ Despite the decline it had suffered, the name of Marv continued to evoke associations of grandeur that were entirely out of proportion to its strategic or economic value. No doubt these overblown assumptions had their part in fanning Qājār irredentist claims to the region up to 1860; they also enhanced Britain’s fixation on the strategic necessity of barring Russia’s eastward progress in the 1880s. Yet in a lecture addressed to the Royal Geographical Society in 1882, O’Donovan portrayed this region as a forlorn bit of no-man’s-land in the middle of the desert:

And now let me pause to dispel a delusion that has existed for a long time, namely, that Merv is a great Asiatic city, the possession of which would make the fortune of the possessor at the present time. There is no such city as Merv. Merv is only a ‘geographical expression.’ It means a certain amount of cultivated territory where half a million Tekke-Turkomans manage to eke out an existence by pastoral pursuits, plunder, and thievery, combined with the caravan service between Bukhara and Meshed. There is no central point which you can call Merv now...except... Koushid Khan Kala [Qaushīd Khān Qal‘a].²⁰⁰

Like other cities in the region, Marv suffered a decisive blow during the Mongol invasion of 1219. Formerly housing as many as 90,000 soldiers and a population large enough to throng three Friday mosques, Marv became the abode of hyenas and wolves and afforded no shadow of repose to the itinerant traveller for the subsequent two hundred years, as Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū stated in the early fifteenth century. The town was rebuilt and experienced a considerable revival under Tīmūr’s son Shāh Rukh from 1409 on. Shāh Rukh’s greatest achievement was the restauration of the irrigation system, which in turn infused the city with new life: “When the dam was closed and the water began to flow in this region, people from all regions came to settle, enlivening the bazaars, endowing the mosques with splendor and laying the foundations of public baths and inns. During his auspicious reign, convents, theological schools, caravanserais, and bridges were built”²⁰¹

According to Isfizārī, the Timurid rulers favored Marv as a winter camp on account of its mild climate and the abundance of firewood available. Among the products of the region, he mentions grain and cotton but devotes a special description to the rich harvest of melons (*kharbuza*). He praises their exceeding sweetness and delicacy, which is only surpassed by the fine melons of Langar-i Amīr Ghiyāth in Bādghīs. The high quality of the local melons is illustrated by the fact that the king and some of the notables (*akābir*) of Herat ordered their melons to be brought from Marv despite the long distance of 60 *farsakh* or 240 miles separating the two towns. As elsewhere in Isfizārī’s account, melons symbolize the affluence associated with Timurid rule. The image of a seemingly inexhaustible supply of melons serves to highlight the fertility of this flourishing oasis: Even in winter, there were sufficient amounts to feed the population and the numerous soldiers encamped there, a whole donkey load costing only two silverlings (*tangcha*).²⁰² Isfizārī also seeks to demonstrate the high state of agricultural development by claiming that the entire region extending between Marv and Murghāb, a distance of 30 *farsakh* or 120 miles, as well as that between Marv and Sarakhs, a distance of 25 *farsakh* or 100 miles, was cultivated.²⁰³

Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū’s and Isfizārī’s optimistic accounts notwithstanding, Marv apparently did not recover from the Mongol invasion in the same measure as other towns in the region. It lost its former commercial importance in the overland trade between western and eastern Asia and was increasingly eclipsed by Herat.²⁰⁴ This development continued in the sixteenth century as the oasis formed the bone of contention between the nascent Safavid dynasty on the one hand and the Abu al-Khairid (Shibanid) khanate on the

¹⁹⁹ Khūrmūjī 1984: 259; Shahīdī 1971: 57, 62; Stewart 1977: 150; Za‘farānlū 1968. For descriptions of the historical settlements of Marv, see Barto‘ld 1984: 41–3; Zhukovskii 1894.

²⁰⁰ O’Donovan 1977: 196. O’Donovan’s estimate of the Tekes at 500,000 souls seems rather high. In 1878, Grodekov assumed the Tekes to number 48,000 families or 190,000–240,000 souls (Marvin 1880: 135–6). In 1880 Stewart reported that the Teke population consisted of 40,000 families or 200,000 souls (Stewart 1977: 154).

²⁰¹ Krawulsky 1982: 59–60; 1984: 46–7. See also Saif al-Haravī 1943: 53.

²⁰² Isfizārī I: 173–5.

²⁰³ Isfizārī II: 374–5. See also Subtelny 1993: 187.

²⁰⁴ Barto‘ld 1984: 43, 45; Bosworth, “Marw al-Shāhidjān,” *E.I.*, 2 VI: 621.

other. In December 1510, Shāh Ismāʿīl I inflicted a decisive defeat on the Uzbek army at Maḥmūdābād, located twelve miles from Marv. To underline his victory, the Safavid ruler had the head of the slain Uzbek leader Muḥammad Khān Shībānī mounted in gold to serve as a drinking cup. When Marv proper fell into Safavid hands shortly after, the entire Uzbek population there was killed or sold into slavery.²⁰⁵ In 1517/1511, Shāh Ismāʿīl I fixed the Āmū Daryā as the border between the Safavid and Uzbek spheres of interest.²⁰⁶

For most of the sixteenth century, however, the Safavid rulers were unable to give substance to their claims to the entire cis-Oxus region.²⁰⁷ Balkh passed to the Abu al-Khairid rulers as early as 1516, and Marv reverted to their control after Shāh Ismāʿīl I's death in 1524. Subsequent Uzbek endeavours to penetrate further into Khurāsān were cut short with the accession of the new Safavid ruler Shāh Ṭahmāsp I (r. 1524–1576). Although the Uzbek general ʿUbaidullāh b. Maḥmūd Shībānī briefly gained control of Mashhad and Astarābād in 1524, his forces suffered a decisive defeat near Turbat-i Shaikh Jām in 1528. From this time onwards, Uzbek activities in Khurāsān were confined to those intervals when Safavid energies were devoted to combating the Ottomans in the west. In 1531, ʿUbaidullāh again exerted pressure on Herat, Mashhad, Sabzavār and Astarābād. After attaining khanship in 1533, he briefly established control over Herat in 1535. His death in 1540 was followed by a power struggle between two leading clans, which in turn eased Uzbek pressure on Khurāsān until the 1580s.²⁰⁸

The rise of the powerful Abu al-Khairid leader ʿAbdullāh Khān (r. 1583–1598) coincided with a period of internal weakness in the Safavid realm and military preoccupations in the west. The death of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I in 1576 and the ensuing power struggle within the royal family and among the Qizilbāsh and Tājīk elites allowed the Uzbeks to gain control of Herat and Mashhad as well as most of the smaller towns of Khurāsān for close to a decade. ʿAbdullāh Khān also advanced against Khvārazm and its dependency of Marv, eventually conquering the region in 1593. The period of Uzbek supremacy in Khurāsān ended with the deaths of ʿAbdullāh Khān and his son ʿAbd al-Muʿmin in February and June of 1598. During the following contentions among the Uzbek leadership, Khurāsān, Khvārazm and Badakhshān slipped from Bukharan control. As a result, the balance of power in the region again shifted in favor of the Safavids.

For Shāh ʿAbbās I (r. 1588–1629), the battle of Pul-i Sālār on 6 Muḥarram 1007/9 August 1598 provided a turning point in the affairs of Khurāsān. After inflicting a decisive defeat on the Uzbek forces, he regained control of Herat and subsequently re-established Safavid authority over the other regions of Khurāsān as well. Shāh ʿAbbās I also reinstated the Chingizid lords of Khvārazm and Marv, both of whom had sought asylum in Iran during ʿAbdullāh Khān's ascendancy. Khvārazm reverted to the control of the Arabshahid dynasty, which was to remain in power until the end of the 11th/17th century. In 1598, Nasā, Abīvard and Marv were reclaimed by their erstwhile ruler, Nūr Muḥammad Khān Marvī, the adopted son of ʿAbdullāh Khān's brother-in-law Abū al-Muḥammad, with Iranian support.²⁰⁹ Within two years, however, his uncertain loyalty caused him to be deported to Iran. Shāh ʿAbbās I occupied Abīvard and Marv. In the latter, a *khuṭba* in the name of the twelve Imāms was read for the first time in eighty years, and Biktash Khān Ustājīlū was appointed as the first governor there.²¹⁰ He was succeeded by Miḥrāb Khān Qājār in 1608, who was the first of a long succession of Qājār leaders in Marv.²¹¹ Shāh ʿAbbās I's effort to install his own nominee in Balkh,

²⁰⁵ Aubin 1970b: 237; Hajianpur 1966: 171; Lee 1996: 29–30; Savory 1978: 61–3; Vambéry 1990: 268–70.

²⁰⁶ See Chapter 2. The first Safavid governor of Marv was ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Bēg, a member of Shāh Ismāʿīl I's early entourage, who also received control of Abīvard and Khabūshān at that time. His governorship lasted until shortly after the battle of Ghijduvān in November 1512 (Aubin 1984: 15, 22).

²⁰⁷ Burton 1997: 71; Röhrborn 1966: 15–16; Szuppe 1992: 81.

²⁰⁸ Szuppe 1992: 111–13; Vambéry 1990: 277–81.

²⁰⁹ IM 646–7; 705–6; 906, 927–8; Burton 1997: 64, 69–70, 73–6, 95, 98–104. See also Mitchell 2009: 188; Navāʿī 1973 I: 147–66; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): xiii–xiv.

²¹⁰ Biktash Khān Ustājīlū had held the governorship of Mārūchāq up to that point (IM 969–75, 999, 1015, 1324–25; TRSN 8: 317, 326; TRSN X: 451). See also Burton 1997: 113–14; Tumanovich 1989: 142. To ensure the pacification of the region, Shāh ʿAbbās I razed the fortresses of Abīvard, Nasā, and Marv (Matthee 1996: 401).

²¹¹ Miḥrāb Khān Qājār (d. 1032/1622–23) served as governor of Marv from 1017–18/1608–10 (Savory 2002: 25). In 1614 and 1617, he is again referred to as governor of Marv (Tumanovich 1989: 146–7). In 1051–1052/1641–1642 Murtaẓā Qulī b. Miḥrāb Khān Qājār is mentioned as the governor of Marv (Rota 2009: 253, 263–5, 419, 423–4).

by contrast, met with no success. In 1602, a military campaign there ended in a stalemate, and Mārūchāq remained the furthest Safavid outpost in that direction.²¹²

The re-establishment of Safavid control over Marv coincided with the rise of the dynasty of the Tuqai-Timurids, who controlled the affairs of Bukhārā until the 1740s. For most of the seventeenth century, Marv continued to be incorporated into the Safavid administration. At that time, a great part of the local population consisted of Qājārs, who had been resettled there by Shāh ‘Abbās I from Tabrīz and also furnished the local governors.²¹³ In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a period of economic and political decline set in, which manifested in crumbling central governments and a dwindling caravan trade.²¹⁴ Reduced to an insignificant border town, Marv slipped from Iranian control, and the local Qājār leadership assumed an increasingly independent position. From 1127/1715–16 on, the Qājār leader Muḥammad ‘Alī Bēg, whose family had held the post of *ishik āqāsībāshī* in Marv throughout the Safavid administration, expelled three successive governors appointed by Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusain (r. 1694–1722). The fall of Isfahān in 1722 and the subsequent dismemberment of Iran into several regional centers allowed Muḥammad ‘Alī Bēg to abandon all tokens of allegiance. In 1723, Malik Maḥmūd, the self-proclaimed ruler of Khurāsān and Sīstān, made a vain attempt to establish his own governor in Marv. Malik Maḥmūd’s candidate shared the fate of the earlier Safavid appointees and was forced to make a hasty retreat to Malik Maḥmūd’s capital at Mashhad.²¹⁵

Malik Maḥmūd Sīstānī’s claims to Khurāsān were challenged by Nādir Khān Afshār, who used his appointment as *ishik āqāsī* of Abīvard to extend his control over the neighboring regions of Atek and Khabūshān.²¹⁶ In 1136/1723–24, Nādir also interfered with the affairs of Marv on behalf of the local Qājār leadership. His campaign coincided with deteriorating political and economic conditions within the oasis. At the beginning of the year, a plague epidemic had reduced the population of the town by 30,000–40,000 persons. Coinciding with this epidemic, the death of Muḥammad ‘Alī Bēg Qājār brought about anarchic conditions. According to Nādir’s chronicler Muḥammad Kāẓim Marvī, the inability of Muḥammad ‘Alī Bēg’s successor Fūlād Bēg to impose his authority brought about a general state of rebellion: “Everyone became his own *kadkhudā* and nobody listened to anyone else [anymore].”²¹⁷ This state of affairs allowed the Tātārs and Turkmens occupying the environs of Marv to make inroads into the oasis. Qājār power reached its lowest point when the Tātārs removed Fūlād Bēg from power, repeatedly plundered Marv proper and cut off the water supply, thus causing general starvation which “filled the azure skies with the sighs and moans of [dying] children.”²¹⁸

During his first intervention in Marv, Nādir attempted to stabilize the situation by reinstating Fūlād Bēg as governor and removing the Tātār leadership to Zāghcha near Abīvard. Furthermore, he raised one thousand soldiers among the Qājār population and resettled one hundred prominent families in Abīvard proper.²¹⁹ Within two years, however, Nādir’s authority in Marv was challenged once again when the Tātārs killed his appointee Fūlād Bēg and did away with the entire local leadership and the majority of the Qājār population. This development occasioned a military campaign in late 1139–early 1140/1727 by Nādir’s brother Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Khān, who destroyed the *band-i sulṭān(ī)*, the main dam of which had secured the agricultural wealth of the oasis since ancient times.²²⁰ Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Khān removed the remaining Qizilbāsh to Mashhad, allowing Marv to be occupied by the Tātārs. Shortly after, Nādir appointed ‘Alī

²¹² IM 997–1013, 1019; Burton 1997: 116–17; Riazul Islam 1970: 87; Roemer 1986d: 267; Tumanovich 1989: 143–44.

²¹³ TRSN IX: 5; NT 8–9. See also Avery 1991: 4–5; Dshikijew 1994: 184.

²¹⁴ Bregel, “Central Asia, vii. 12–13/18–19 Centuries,” *E.Ir.* V: 193, 195; Matthee 1999: 241.

²¹⁵ The Safavid governors driven away by *ishik āqāsī* Muḥammad ‘Alī Bēg were Ḥusain ‘Alī Khān, Yaḥyā Khān and Muḥammad Amīn Khān. In 1723, Malik Maḥmūd Sīstānī tried to establish Mīhdī Bēg Rīkā as governor in Marv (Kāẓim 55–57). See also Avery 1991: 22–3.

²¹⁶ Kāẓim 41–2; Avery 1991: 23–24.

²¹⁷ Kāẓim 57.

²¹⁸ Kāẓim 57–8.

²¹⁹ Kāẓim 59–60; Avery 1991: 23–4.

²²⁰ Barto’ld 1984: 45.

Mardān Bēg Afshār as *nā'ib* of the frontier and weakened Tātār hold over Marv by ordering seventeen of their most influential leaders to be given up to the Qājārs at Mashhad in revenge for the massacre the Tātārs had conducted among their kinsmen.²²¹ In the following years, Nādir made several fruitless attempts to repair the *band-i sulṭānī*. In 1145/1732–33, the newly appointed governor of Marv, Ismā'īl Khān Sabzavārī employed 2,000 militiamen and an irrigation expert with equally little success.²²² Two years later, the dam was finally restored after a steady exertion of five and a half months and the employment of 1,000 laborers.²²³

Later on in his career, Nādir focused on the strategic position of Marv as the “gateway to Turkistan” (*sarḥadd-i dahana-yi Turkistān*) and the need to rebuild it as a commercial and agricultural center.²²⁴ In the winter of 1147/1734–35, Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Khān, by then governor of Mashhad, restored the irrigation works with great difficulty.²²⁵ Four years later, Nādir Shāh ordered the Qājārs of Marv to separate from his troops busy in the Mughal province of Kābul and to return to their erstwhile hometown. While they had rendered valuable military service, he insisted that it was necessary that they now restore the agriculture of Marv with the help of 3,000 peasants to be resettled there from other regions of Khurāsān. According to his chronicler Muḥammad Kāzīm, Nādir Shāh’s decision was in great part motivated by his plan to conquer Transoxiana and the necessity to provide sufficient supplies for his huge army during its return to Iran.²²⁶ When the Qājār troops reached Marv in early Ramaẓān 1151/December 1738 under the leadership of their appointed governor Kalb ‘Alī Khān Afshār and his *ishīk āqāsī* Shāh Qulī Bēg Qājār b. Muḥammad ‘Alī Bēg, the oasis presented a scene of desolation and isolation. Having decayed even further since their departure twelve years earlier, the town looked to the returnees as “hapless and destroyed as the heart of a prisoner,” bearing no trace of construction or cultivation.²²⁷ While the citadel of Marv remained impressive as compared to other fortifications in the Iranian realm, the oasis itself seemed like a forlorn island in a sea of hostile Turkmens: “Whoever gets caught in this region (*vilāyat*) has no way out. If he tries to go in the eastern, northern, or southern direction by himself, he will fall into the hands of Turkmens. If he wants to go west, that is, to the holy land [*arḡ-i aqdas*, of Mashhad], he first has to cross the great river Murghāb and after that a waterless desert...”²²⁸ Despite these seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Kalb ‘Alī Khān Afshār was able to revive the irrigation system to such an extent that Marv flourished like the “highest Paradise” after a short time. Moreover, the military pressure exerted on the Turkmens induced them to give up their incursions and to enter the oasis solely for commercial purposes.²²⁹

The strategic importance of Marv was highlighted during Nādir Shāh’s retreat from the banks of the Oxus towards Mashhad in in Shavvāl 1153/December 1740–January 1741. In order to secure the maintenance of his army in the desert extending between Chārjūy on the Oxus and Marv, Nādir Shāh ordered the chiefs of Marv to dig 1,500 wells and to store provisions en route.²³⁰ Even so, a great number of Yūsufzai Afghāns

²²¹ Kāzīm 68–73. See also JN 66, 69, 93; Jones 1771 I: 73, 99.

²²² Kāzīm 205.

²²³ These works were supervised by Kāzīm’s father, who was an official in Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Khān’s employ (Kāzīm 431–5).

²²⁴ Kāzīm 610.

²²⁵ Kāzīm 434. See also JN 336.

²²⁶ Kāzīm 610–12.

²²⁷ Kāzīm 614.

²²⁸ Kāzīm 612–13.

²²⁹ Kāzīm 615–16. ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, who visited Marv along with Nādir Shāh’s troops after the conquest of Khvārazm, gave a less enthusiastic appraisal of Marv: “Marv used to be a pleasant city, but like Herat, it has been abandoned owing to the oppression exercised by its governors. The [former] courtyards of the houses are used for agriculture.” (*Bayān-i vāqī* ‘93–4). See also Gladwin 1788: 69.

²³⁰ Kāzīm 821. According to ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, Nādir Shāh divided the march from Chārjūy to Marv into four stages. On the first stage, the troops would carry water from the Āmū Daryā. He instructed the governor of Marv to dig thirty wells at the second stage, and eighty wells at the third stage. At the fourth stage, the population of Marv was expected to extend one of the irrigation channels of Marv by three *farsakh* into the desert and dig a reservoir at its end. In addition, Nādir Shāh ordered water skins to be filled and carried to a distance of five *farsakh* towards the army from this point. According to Kashmīrī, the governor executed all these tasks adequately (*Bayān-i vāqī* ‘79–81; Gladwin 1788: 52–3).

died on the march through the desert.²³¹ Reprisals against the local elite followed. Before departing for Mashhad, Nādir Shāh ordered the execution of almost all the high-ranking officials of the Marv administration. Among them, Shāh Qulī Bēg Qājār formed a notable exception. With his appointment as governor, Nādir revived the hereditary position the family of Muḥammad ‘Alī Bēg Qājār had enjoyed in Marv.²³² At the time of Naṣrullāh Mīrzā’s campaign against the rebellious leadership of the Aral region in 1155/1742–43, Marv again served as a depot for 30,000 troops.²³³ During the final phase of Nādir Shāh’s government, Shāh Qulī Bēg Qājār engaged in an unsuccessful rebellion against inordinately high revenue demands and was apprehended and blinded.²³⁴

With the crumbling of the Afsharid empire, Marv again slipped from Iranian control. In 1164/1750–51, the local *bēglerbēgī* ‘Alī Naqī Khān Qājār interfered with the affairs of Khurāsān and briefly occupied Mashhad, which at that time was formally under the control of Nādir Shāh’s grandson Shāh Rukh Afshār, but in reality formed an embattled zone between the competing interests of the Jalāyir chiefs of Kalāt, the Za‘farānlū Kurds of Khabūshān, and the Khuzaima Arabs of Qāyin.²³⁵

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Marv increasingly found itself in the orbit of Bukharan interests. The oasis received a severe blow in 1200/1785–86, when the newly crowned Bukharan ruler Shāh Murād Bī Manghīt (r. 1785–1800) advanced to Marv and defeated the local governor Bairām ‘Alī Qājār ‘Izz al-Dīnlū b. Shāh Qulī Bēg.²³⁶ Shāh Murād’s father Dāniyāl Bī (r. 1758–1785) had maintained a paternal friendship with Bairām ‘Alī Qājār, addressing him as his son (*farzand*). Shāh Murād, by contrast, had Bairām ‘Alī Qājār’s severed head nailed to the gallows in Bukhārā. The ensuing three-year effort to establish Bukharan control over Marv was accompanied by a large-scale destruction of the oasis and its environs. While Bairām ‘Alī Qājār’s son Ḥājji Muḥammad Ḥusain managed to hold the town with the help of troops and provisions sent by Tīmūr Shāh Sadūzai, Shāh Murād Bī occupied the southern part of the oasis. When Marv fell to the Bukharan army in 1788, a systematic deportation followed. According to Boukhary, a total of 17,000 Qizilbāsh families were forced to resettle in Bukhārā and convert to Sunnism in the aftermath of the conquest. Another 2,000 families accompanied the Durrānī troops during their withdrawal to Herat. Ultimately, only 3,000 families of the original population were left in Marv, one third of which were Sunnī.²³⁷ Shāh Murād’s hold over Marv proved to be precarious. Within two years he faced a rebellion by his

²³¹ *Bayān-i vāqi* ‘93, Gladwin 1788: 68–9. Nādir Shāh’s camp followers who passed through the stretch of desert between Chārjūy and Marv subsequent to the conquest of Bukhārā in Rajab 1153/October 1740 likewise suffered great hardships. En route lack of water, intense heat and the shifting sands of Shīr-i Shutur forced them to discard their valuable merchandise of decorated bottles and fine cloth (*sīsha-yi guldār va aqmisha-yi bisyār*) and to feed lemon juice to their riding animals. Upon their arrival in Marv, they found to their dismay that they could have sold a bottle of lemon juice for 300 *dīnārs*, while the decorated bottles would have fetched 200 *dīnārs* (Kāzīm 803).

²³² Kāzīm 821–2.

²³³ Kāzīm 862–5.

²³⁴ Kāzīm 1114–19.

²³⁵ TA (Humāyūn): 139, 163–4.

²³⁶ TRSN IX: 282. See also Barto’ld 1962: 161; Wood 1998: 46. For Bairām ‘Alī Qājār’s friendly relationship with Nādir Mīrzā Afshār of Mashhad in the late 1770s, see *Gulshan-i murād* 644.

²³⁷ Boukhary 141–2; Persian text 61–2. The figure of 3,000 inhabitants after Shāh Murād Bī’s conquest is confirmed by Kinneir, who bases his account on oral information received from a member of Amīr Ḥaidar Tūra’s retinue (Kinneir 1813: 179–80). Ḥājji Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Qājār ‘Izz al-Dīnlū himself reports that “[n]early 1000 families were forced to leave Marv to settle in Bokhara” at the time of his submission to Shāh Murād in 1788. (Ouseley 1846: 334). Later Persian accounts quote much higher figures of deportation. The *Tārīkh-i ḥusainshāhī* contains the copy of a letter Tīmūr Shāh allegedly addressed to Shāh Murād in 1204/1789–90. According to this letter, Shāh Murād himself claimed to have carried 30,000 persons to Bukhārā in order to bring them to the fold of Islam, i.e., Sunnism (T Hu 195–6, Fūfalzā’ī 1967: 274). Shāh Murād’s deportations to Bukhārā are also depicted in later Persian sources (TRSN X: 541; T Su 156). Faiz Muḥammad mentions Shāh Murād’s intention to repopulate Marv with groups from Bukhārā and Shahr-i Sabz (ST 41; McChesney/Khorrami 2013 I: 64–5). See also Hambly 1991b: 192; Marvin 1880: 127; O’Donovan 1970 II: 241; Stewart 1977: 148.

appointed governors, his brothers ‘Umar Bī and Fāzil Bī, who had formed an alliance with the local Turkmens. In the course of these events, Shāh Murād destroyed and rebuilt the vital *band-i sulṭānī* twice.²³⁸

In the nineteenth century, British observers interpreted Shāh Murād’s invasion of Marv and the destruction of its irrigation system as an attempt to make this region inaccessible to Iran.²³⁹ His activities in Khurāsān certainly elicited protests from the Sadūzai and Qājār rulers, who were too far removed to interfere with the affairs of Marv directly. From his base in Kābul, Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī used the Bukharan conquest of Marv as a pretext to enforce Durrānī sovereignty in the Balkh region, an enterprise that put his resources to a severe test.²⁴⁰ In the 1780s, Qājār efforts at state building concentrated on the western part of the empire. When Āqā Muḥammad Qājār took control of Mashhad in 1210/1796, he contented himself with a letter to Shāh Murād, in which he threatened to retaliate for his depredations and demanded the return of Iranian prisoners.²⁴¹

With the death of Shāh Murād Bī in 1800, Nāṣir al-Dīn Bēg, his son and appointed governor of Marv, assumed an increasingly independent position with respect to the new ruler of Bukhārā, his brother Amīr Ḥaidar Tūra (r. 1800–1826). The ensuing conflict over the control Marv continued until Ḥaidar Tūra was able to displace Nāṣir al-Dīn Bēg in late 1222/early 1808.²⁴² Once again, the oasis suffered. Ḥaidar Tūra destroyed the *band-i sulṭānī* and left it unrestored upon taking possession of Marv. He also resorted to large-scale deportations, in effect depopulating the city.²⁴³ In 1820, the Russian official Meyendorff stated that the city population consisted of 500 inhabitants, and thus barely exceeded the Bukharan garrison of 400–500 men.²⁴⁴ In the course of these events, the composition of the population changed dramatically. The Sarīq Turkmens, who had earlier nomadized in the region between Khīva, the middle course of the Āmū Daryā and Marv, became the dominant group in the oasis.²⁴⁵ While the Sarīqs partly switched to agriculture after their arrival at Marv, most of them remained pastoralists until the late nineteenth century. Displaced by the Tekes in 1858, they migrated south to the area of Yolotan and Panjdih.²⁴⁶

Whatever was left of Marv after the Bukharan invasions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century passed to Khivan control in 1238/1822, when the Sarīq leaders of Marv transferred their allegiance to Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān Qunghrāt.²⁴⁷ Under Khivan auspices, the oasis served as “a major staging and

²³⁸ Boukhary 22, 126–45; Persian text, 11, 56–64. For a detailed account of Shāh Murād’s campaigns to Marv on the basis of Boukhary, see Wood 1998: 50–9.

²³⁹ Stewart 1977: 148.

²⁴⁰ Boukhary 22–3; Persian text 11; ST 41; McChesney/Khorrami 2013 I: 64–6; T Su 156. In his letter to Shāh Murād in 1204/1789–90, Tīmūr Shāh objected to Shāh Murād’s interference with the affairs of Marv which, in his opinion, formed part of the territories enjoying his protection (*mamlakat-i mahṛūsa-yi sulṭānī*). He further demanded that the deported population be released (T Hu 196; Fūfalzā ī 1967: 274).

²⁴¹ NT 81–2. See also TRSN IX: 283. Shāh Murād had advanced as far as Mashhad in 1209/1794 (Malcolm 1829 II: 253).

²⁴² Meyendorff 1826: 155; Wood 1998: 60–3. For Nāṣir al-Dīn Bēg’s appointment as governor of Marv, see Boukhary 144; Persian text 63. According to *Ashraf al-tavārīkh*, Nāṣir al-Dīn Bēg arrived in Mashhad on 14 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1222/12 February 1808. He had entertained regular contacts with Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā, the Qājār governor of Mashhad (1803–1816) since the winter of 1220/1805–06. During this period, Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā repeatedly sent gifts in cash and kind to assist him with the maintenance of the dam and ensure the protection of the Shiite population of Marv (*Ashraf al-tavārīkh* 211–15, 269–74, 329, 372–3, 444–6, 457). According to I’timād al-Saltāna, Nāṣir al-Dīn Bēg already established contact with Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā in 1219/1804–5 (TMN 1472). After his arrival in Mashhad, Nāṣir al-Dīn Bēg entered a marriage alliance with Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā. He traveled to Istanbul in 1245/1829–30 and onward to Russia in 1246/1830–31, where he eventually died (Boukhary 129, 158–9; Persian text 57, 70; TMN 1489–90).

²⁴³ TMN 1490; Wood 1998: 62, 90.

²⁴⁴ Meyendorff 1826: 155. Meyendorff reports that Amīr Ḥaidar Tūra ordered the entire population of Marv, a total of 25,000 souls, to be deported to the realm of Bukhārā.

²⁴⁵ Wood 1990: 33; Wood 1998: 69–72. According to Barto’ld, the Sarīqs migrated from Chārjūy to Marv at the time of Bairām ‘Alī Qājār ‘Izz al-Dīnlū’s government, that is, before 1785. When Shāh Murād Bī took control of the region, he assigned Marv to the Sarīqs and gave Yolotan to the Salors (Barto’ld 1962: 166n; see also Stewart 1977: 148).

²⁴⁶ Dshikijew 1994: 252; O’Donovan 1977: 172, 200; Wood 1990: 33; Wood 1998: 75, 171–7, 253. According to Stewart, the Sarīq population of Panjdih and Yolotan amounted to 11,000 families (Stewart 1977: 154).

²⁴⁷ Wood 1998: 87–9. See also Barto’ld 1962: 166; Bregel, “Central Asia, vii. 12–13/18–19 Centuries,” *E.Ir.* V: 197; O’Donovan 1977: 198.

supply area for regular raids into Iranian Khurasan”.²⁴⁸ Although the service in the Khivan army promised economic benefits for the local population, Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān’s successor Allāh Qulī Khān encountered hostilities in Marv. In the summer of 1827, a group of Sarīqs killed the Khivan governor and entrenched themselves at the fortress of Bairām ‘Alī Qājār. The attempt to fend off Khivan supremacy was not entirely successful. As overtures to Bukhārā failed, a group of local dignitaries under the leadership of the Naqshbandī *shaikh* ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Khalīfa (d. 1854) declared their loyalty to Khīva.²⁴⁹ Although the rebels continued to hold the fortress, the losses inflicted in the course of three Khivan campaigns were so great that the entire Sarīq leadership formally submitted to Allāh Qulī Khān in the winter of 1828–29.²⁵⁰ During the decade from 1832–1843, the Khivan presence in Marv consolidated. In response to ‘Abbās Mīrzā Nā’ib al-Salṭana’s campaign to Sarakhs in the summer of 1832, Allāh Qulī Khān erected the fort of Porsu Qal‘a and established a permanent garrison there. Until his violent death in 1843, the chief of artillery, Niyāz Muḥammad Bāy, served as commander of the fortress and was in charge of collecting *kharāj* and *zakāt*.²⁵¹ Efforts to revive the irrigation system followed. James Abbott, who passed through Marv in 1840, noted that the main dam had been restored.²⁵² Even so, he took a dim view of the state of the former metropolis:

During the misrule and anarchy of the last sixty years the ancient dam of the Moorghaub [Murghāb river] was neglected and carried away. The city in consequence became uninhabitable, and was utterly abandoned. The dam is again set up, and the lands are brought under culture, but the ancient site continues a desert ruin. The present Merv is an assemblage, upon the Moorghaub, of about one hundred mud huts, where a considerable Bazaar is held.²⁵³

In 1259/1843, the Turkmens of Marv rebelled and entered an alliance with Bukhārā, which primarily served to keep Khīva at bay.²⁵⁴ On his part, Amīr Naṣrullāh of Bukhārā (r. 1242–1277/1827–1860) harbored few illusions as to his ability to establish direct control there. The situation in Marv was reflected by the exchange between the Iranian envoy ‘Abbās Qulī Khān and the Amīr in May/June 1844. While ‘Abbās Qulī Khān attempted to revive ancient Iranian claims to Marv,²⁵⁵ the Amīr pointed out that under present circumstances, it was difficult to establish any authority whatsoever in the region:

[Recently, t]he Sarīq, Salor and Teke tribes united and killed the Khivan appointee Niyāz Bāy and 1,200 men. The Khān of Ūrganj [Khīva], on his part, began hostilities against us. When I was away on a campaign to Khūqand and not a single soldier remained at Bukhārā and its environs, he entered my realm (*vilāyat*), besieged Chahārjūy and deported 40,000 families. This happened at a time when we were about to conquer Khūqand. Upon receiving this news, I returned and marched to Chahārjūy. [The Khān of Khīva] fled and went to Ūrganj. After that, we collected troops, moved against Hazārasb and besieged it for eighteen days. The Turkmen leaders used this opportunity to kill Niyāz Bāy. They submitted his head and those of the other killed men to us at Hazārasb and asked for the appointment of a [Bukharan] governor. I did not trust their word because they had repeatedly adopted the same conduct towards us and had killed our appointees. However, I had no choice because the country (*mamlakat*) was falling apart and the trade routes were disrupted. In order to secure the roads, I appointed a governor and sent him [to Marv].

As this governor saw nothing trustworthy in the actions of the Turkmens, he feared for his life and fled to Bukhārā within three months... Subsequently, apprehending [renewed interference by] the Khān of Ūrganj, the Turkmens once again came and requested the appointment of a [Bukharan] governor. We appointed the present governor, Aurāq Khvāja, and sent him to Marv.

²⁴⁸ Wood 1998: 125. See also *ibid.* 94.

²⁴⁹ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Khalīfa was a disciple of Ṣūfī Islām. For his activities in the region of Herat, see Chapter 4.

²⁵⁰ Wood 1998: 97–9, 118–31.

²⁵¹ Wood 1998: 136, 141–7.

²⁵² The irrigation works, or part thereof, were apparently restored by 1838. For this year, the Khivan historian Muḥammad Rizā Āgāhī mentions the Band-i Jān ‘Alī as a dam on the Murghāb (Wood 1998: 154). There also are indications that the *band-i sulṭānī* was in operation in the winter of 1849–50 (Wood 1998: 223).

²⁵³ Abbott 1843 I: 51–2. On the basis of Abbott’s description, Stewart concluded that Porsu Qal‘a and the settlement around represented the “last and most wretched of places which have borne the name of Merv” (Stewart 1881: 531).

²⁵⁴ Bregel, “Central Asia, vii. 12–13/18–19 Centuries,” *E.Ir.* V: 198.

²⁵⁵ In the words of the Persian envoy, Marv had formed part of Khurāsān since the time of Manūchīhr; it had always belonged to the sphere controlled by the governor (*vālī*) of Khurāsān; it had formed the homeland and refuge of the illustrious Qājār tribe; due to revolutions and conquest by oppressive governors this region had become separated from Khurāsān; henceforth, as in old times, nobody [other than the Iranian government] should interfere there (*Safarnāma-yi Bukhārā* 37).

The funds covering his expenses (*ikhrājāt*) have to be sent there from Bukhārā. If a representative of the high imperial government [of Iran] had ever come to administer the affairs there, we certainly would not have resisted or withheld our approval. The truth of the matter is that, as long as the city of Marv does not reach its former level of cultivation, no Turkmen can engage in [revenue-generating] agricultural pursuits (*ra'iyatī*) and no governor – regardless of his affiliation – can govern there.²⁵⁶

The validity of Amīr Naṣrullāh's assessment of the political situation in Marv was proven shortly after. When the Iranian envoy passed through Marv on his way back to Iran in late August 1844, the Bukharan appointee Aurāq Khvāja did not have the means to protect the Iranian caravan consisting of freed slaves from heavy tax demands imposed by the Salor and Sarīq *kadkhudās* of Marv. Unable to render practical assistance to the Iranian envoy, Aurāq Khvāja exclaimed that he had practically no authority over the population of Marv: "They do not listen to me! No matter how hard my officials strive to make them give up their mischievous ways, they will not take any advice." This conflict also highlighted the fact that the Turkmens considered Khīva an alternative source of power. The Salor and Sarīq leadership even threatened to plunder the Bukharan governor and to hand him over to Khīva if he sided with the Iranian envoy.²⁵⁷

Beginning with his enthronement in Ṣafar 1262/January–February 1846, the Khivan ruler Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt began to exert unprecedented pressure on Marv.²⁵⁸ This earned him the enmity of the Naqshbandī *shaikh* 'Abd al-Raḥmān Khalīfa, who eventually solicited the aid of the Qājār government in the summer of 1269/1853.²⁵⁹ Ḥusām al-Saṭṭana, the Qājār governor of Mashhad, named 'Abbās Qulī Khān Darra Gazī as the new governor of Marv and deputed him there with a force of 150 cavalry. After successfully defending Marv against a Khivan force of 10,000 troops, 'Abbās Qulī Khān fell ill and died. For the next few months, the governorship passed to his son Bahādur Khān,²⁶⁰ whose initial force of 400 cavalry was reinforced by another 500 cavalry as well as three regular Khurāsānī contingents and six cannons. While unable to take the oasis of Marv itself, the Khān of Khīva and his representatives ruled over the surrounding country. When the outbreak of cholera in the Khivan ranks hastened Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt's departure from Marv, he appointed Mīr Aḥmad Khān Jamshīdī as the governor of Qarayāb on the northwestern fringe of the oasis, thus maintaining a foothold in the region. The ensuing rivalry between the Qājār and Khivan appointees disrupted the trade between Bukhārā and Mashhad and denuded the countryside of whatever provisions might have been left behind by the Khivan army. Prior to his departure for Tehran in May 1853, Ḥusām al-Saṭṭana deputed further reinforcements to Marv and underlined Qājār claims to this region by sending the royal lion-and-sun flag there.²⁶¹ The Qājār presence in Marv lasted until May 1854. The decision to withdraw was occasioned by continuing Khivan pressure, lack of provisions, and crumbling Sarīq support after the death of 'Abd al-Raḥmān Khalīfa in the spring of the same year.²⁶² Iranian control of the region was briefly renewed after the defeat and death of Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt near Sarakhs in Jumādā II 1271/March 1855.²⁶³

Three years later, in 1274/1857–58, the oasis underwent yet another forceful demographic change occasioned by the influx of Teke Turkmens from Sarakhs. The Tekes did not settle in Porsu Qal'a, which had turned into a "howling waste of mud ruins" at the time of O'Donovan's visit in 1881. Under the leadership of Qaushīd Khān, they removed their stronghold to a point 25 miles northward of the dam from which the irrigation system of the Murghāb river spread out. Compared to the former Sarīq capital, the new

²⁵⁶ *Safarnāma-yi Bukhārā* 38–39. See also pp. 30–1. For the perspective of Khivan and Khūqandī historians on these events, see Wood 1998: 184–91.

²⁵⁷ *Safarnāma-yi Bukhārā* 56–7. For a slightly different account of the events in Marv, see Wolff 1848: 312–13.

²⁵⁸ Rīzā Qulī Khān Hidāyat's visit to Khīva in the summer of 1267/1851 coincided with Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt's return from a two-month siege of Marv (*Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 71, 85, 88, 91, 98; Persian text: 45, 54, 56, 58, 65).

²⁵⁹ TRSN X: 542; TMN 1745–6, 1754.

²⁶⁰ TRSN X: 542.

²⁶¹ NT 1202–4, 1235–6. See also *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 213; Persian text, p. 140–1.

²⁶² Wood 1998: 245, 249–52.

²⁶³ Bregel, "Central Asia, vii. In the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries", *E.Ir.* V: 196–8. See also Barto'ld 1962: 166; *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): 109, 159, 171; Persian text, 71, 106, 109.

fort called Qaushīd Khān Qal'a bore even less resemblance with any urban setting. In 1880, Stewart observed that the Tekes had not made the transition to fixed habitations:

There is no sign of a town about Kala Kaushid Khan. There are about 6000 tents of the Beg tribe generally pitched near it, and each chief man has a guest-house of mud or sun-burnt brick, but they themselves live either in felt tents, or in places where reeds are plentiful, in reed or mat-huts, which can be carried away on camels. Near Kala Kaushid Khan there is a boys' school, with five or six houses for the mollahs or priests who teach in it... A market is held on the river bank, near the fort, and here the Jew traders who frequent the place, each trader being under the protection of some powerful Turkoman, have built small open enclosures without any roofs, where they expose their goods for sale on the two days in a week when a market is held.²⁶⁴

Despite efforts to restore the *band-i sulṭānī*, the oasis of Marv never regained its former importance and the extent of irrigated land shrank dramatically. The water supply to Dāsh Ribāṭ on the western fringe of the oasis dried up, rendering the caravan journey to Sarakhs more cumbersome than it had formerly been.²⁶⁵ Upon his arrival in 1858, Qaushīd Khān picked out the location for a new dam a two days' journey north of the *band-i sulṭānī*.²⁶⁶ A hundred yards north of the new main dam, two major canals branched off and formed a right angle bisected by the Murghāb river. The Alasha canal watering the lands on the western bank of the river provided the water supply of the Otamīsh branch of the Tekes.²⁶⁷ The Novur canal watering the lands on the eastern bank was reserved for the use of the Toqtamīsh branch. Reflecting the political weight of Qaushīd Khān's kinsmen, this canal enjoyed priority over the remainder of the irrigation system and was always filled first.²⁶⁸ At Egri Gudhar located fifteen miles north of Qaushīd Khān Qal'a, two further canals branched off from the Murghāb stream, the Malyāb to the west and the Qarayāb to the east: "At this junction, owing to the exhaustion of the waters for irrigating purposes, the Murgab has diminished to a very inconsiderable thread of stream, and struggles forward eight or nine miles further before it totally disappears."²⁶⁹

In its entire extent, the irrigation system around Marv covered an area of 50 to 55 miles in length and 35 to 40 miles in breadth. Located a two to three days' journey south of the main dam of Marv, the *band-i qāzīqlī* secured the water supply of the oasis of Yolotan.²⁷⁰ With the arrival of the Tekes in Marv, the Sarīqs had been forced to relocate to this area and Panjdih five marches further south. In the 1880s, the Sarīqs of Yolotan were reported to have reconciled themselves with their new environment and to be on "speaking terms" with the Tekes. The Sarīqs of Panjdih, on the other hand, still harbored an inveterate hatred towards the new overlords of Marv.²⁷¹ During this period, the entire group of Sarīq Turkmens was estimated to number 12,000 tents.²⁷² The region between Sarīq and Teke lands was occupied by 400–700 Salor families, which in part represented the former population. Others had been removed from Sarakhs and now lived interspersed with Otamīsh Tekes, who treated them as their subjects. 150 Salor families were settled on the lands along the Sukhtiyap canal in Otamīsh territory. Their state of subservience was demonstrated in 1881, when the Otamīsh chiefs forcefully prevented them from relocating to Sarakhs.²⁷³

O'Donovan's account of the affairs in early 1881 provides some insights into the internal organization of the Tekes. Policing actions such as the one required to rein in the fugitive Salors were carried out by a tribal militia called *yasāvul*. Reflecting the tribal structure of the Tekes, this force of about 1,000 horsemen was commanded by two officers (*yasāvulbāshī*) representing the Toqtamīsh and Otamīsh divisions. Among the duties of the *yasāvul* was the protection of the caravans passing through Marv on their way to Bukhārā and

²⁶⁴ Stewart 1881: 532; Stewart 1977: 150.

²⁶⁵ Shahīdī 1971: 55; Za'farānlū 1968: 94.

²⁶⁶ O'Donovan 1970 II: 185, 197; Za'farānlū 1968: 108.

²⁶⁷ The Alasha canal apparently corresponded to the present-day Sukhtiyap canal.

²⁶⁸ O'Donovan 1970 II: 160, 190; Stewart 1977: 166–7.

²⁶⁹ O'Donovan 1970 II: 192.

²⁷⁰ O'Donovan 1970 II: 197–8, 244.

²⁷¹ O'Donovan 1970 II: 173, 197–8. See also Stewart 1977: 167.

²⁷² Dshikijew 1994: 252.

²⁷³ O'Donovan 1970 II: 173, 361–3; Dshikijew 1994: 227.

Mashhad.²⁷⁴ They were also charged with the execution of the decisions reached in the tribal council (*majlis*) composed of the *khāns* of the two major divisions, the *kadkhudās* representing the 24 constituent subsections and a number of respected elders (*āq saqāl*). While the *majlis* was convoked to deliberate on matters of grave impact such as the impending Russian invasion, the *khāns* adjudicated minor disputes on market days:

On each alternate bazaar day, the Khan of the Otamish and Toktamish hold a kind of court for the settlement of claims and disputes among their respective clansmen... The court was held upon an earth mound, about forty feet in length and fifteen in height. It was the remnant of a battery erected by the Turcomans to protect a ford of the Murgab during the fighting with the Persians [in 1860]... The Khan sat upon a carpet placed on the summit of the mound, surrounded by some of his Kethkodas, and aided by a *cadi* [*qāẓī*—an old man, learned in the law, named Moullah Safa, who decided all cases in which technical knowledge was required.²⁷⁵

The *khāns* implemented their judgments by imposing fines or resorting corporal punishment:

[T]he Khān in person usually administers justice in public, and often inflicts summary punishment with his stick. For neglected duties, for instance, such as not working due to time on the fortifications, fines are imposed, and if the offender cannot pay, his hat is taken off, his hands bound to his sides, and he is exposed in this position to the sun for an hour or two. Thieves are tied to a stake and their heads similarly exposed.²⁷⁶

Apart from the maintenance of the fortifications, communal action was devoted to the operation of the irrigation system, which required particular attention in spring when the snowmelt of the Afghan mountains caused the water in the Murghāb to rise dramatically. At such times, up to 700 men were engaged in adjusting the working of the sluice of the main dam to prevent it from being swept away by the torrent.²⁷⁷

Given the political weight of the Toqtamīsh branch, it comes as no surprise that this division furnished the prominent Teke leaders. One noted leader was Nūrvirdī Khān of the Vakīl subsection, whose son Makhdūm Qulī Khān led the resistance of the Akhal Tekes against the Russian siege of Gök Tepe in January 1881.²⁷⁸ The most powerful Teke leader Qaushīd Khān belonged to Bēg subsection. Qaushīd Khān's fame derived from his leading role in the affairs of Sarakhs, the Teke migration to Marv and their military success against the Qājār troops in 1860. He died due to poisoning in 1878.

While the Sarīqs of Marv had cultivated friendly relations with the Qājār court in order to counterbalance Khivan pressure in the early 1850s,²⁷⁹ the Teke Turkmens did everything in their power to evade Iranian overlordship. When a Qājār army consisting of 21,000 cavalry and infantry²⁸⁰ set out from Kāl-i Yāqūtī near Mashhad on 1 Dhū al-Qa'da 1276/21 May 1860, it seemed as though the days of Teke independence were over. Yet on 17 Rabī' 1277/3 October 1860, this mighty army was scattered "like locusts" before a Teke entrenchment.²⁸¹ During this battle and the subsequent flight, the majority of the Iranian troops fell into the hands of the Tekes, who sold them at the much debased rate of three *tūmān* per head at the slave markets of the region. The final Qājār attempt to assert authority over Marv thus ended with an ignominious defeat and merely served to enhance notions of Teke invincibility.²⁸²

There is a tendency in the Iranian chronicles to gloss over the dramatic failure of the Marv campaign. Muḥammad Ja'far Khūrmūjī, who admits the Iranian defeat, is an exception. Writing in 1284/1867–68, he compares the blow Ḥamza Mīrzā Ḥishmat al-Daula suffered at Marv with the crushing defeat the Tekes inflicted on the Khivan ruler Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt and his mighty army at Sarakhs in 1855.²⁸³

²⁷⁴ O'Donovan 1970 II: 161–4, 192.

²⁷⁵ O'Donovan 1970 II: 329. See also Stewart 1977: 166–7.

²⁷⁶ O'Donovan 1970 II: 161.

²⁷⁷ O'Donovan 1977: 198.

²⁷⁸ Dshikijew 1994: 172; O'Donovan 1970 II: 73, 83, 204, 207; Stewart 1977: 167.

²⁷⁹ TMN 3: 225; Za'farānlū 1968: 13.

²⁸⁰ Za'farānlū 1968: 86. According to Couliboeuf de Blocqueville, the Qājār army was not as formidable as the official roll call suggested. He estimated it to consist of 12,000 to 15,000 men, including personal attendants and camel drivers (Couliboeuf de Blocqueville 1980: 48).

²⁸¹ Shahīdī 1971: 43, 46; 49; Za'farānlū 1968: 79, 83, 86, 135.

²⁸² Marvin 1880: 128–9.

²⁸³ Khūrmūjī 1984: 259–63.

In his *Tārīkh-i muntazam-i nāṣirī*, I'timād al-Daula, by contrast, offers a rather daring interpretation of the events and even speaks of an Iranian victory.²⁸⁴ The rather skimpy official statements concerning the Marv campaign are complemented by the eyewitness accounts of two army officials who participated in the action. In 1301/1883–84, the former army scribe Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrī published a work which became known as *Safarnāma-yi Marv*.²⁸⁵ Four years later, an officer closely associated with Ḥamza Mīrzā Ḥishmat al-Daula wrote down his version of events in the *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā*.²⁸⁶

The two reports largely agree on the sequence of events and highlight the range of problems besetting the Iranian venture. The authors identify the discord between the military leaders, which often evolved along “Khurāsānī” and “Irāqī” demarcations, as the main reason for the eventual military disaster. In combination with the ineptitude of the army leadership, the logistic problems of maintaining a large army in a hostile desert environment proved deadly. Both accounts give substance to the reservations Prime Minister Āqā Khān Nūrī had voiced earlier to the idea of extending military activities into the Qara Qum desert. Travelling at the height of summer, the Iranian army was afflicted with a severe scarcity of water and provisions. While trade caravans with laden camels ordinarily covered the route from Mashhad to Qaushīd Khān Qal'a via Sarakhs in ten days, the Iranian troops proceeded at a leisurely pace and took six weeks to arrive at the outskirts of Marv.²⁸⁷ This delay was in great part caused by the attempt to extend the water supply of the Tejend river into the desert. In the nineteenth century, the route from Sarakhs to Marv passed through 85 miles of desert, the first part of which was practically devoid of water. On the final stretch towards Marv, a few wells yielded brackish water. In order to safeguard the water supply of the troops, the military leadership decided to revive an abandoned canal, which formerly branched off north from the Tejend near Sarakhs, making the first stages of the journey to Marv comparatively easy.²⁸⁸

One major problem with Ḥamza Mīrzā's canal project was timing. The troops charged with constructing the necessary dam at “Sar-i band” on the Tejend began their work only one week prior to the arrival of the entire army. The troops were thus delayed for twelve days near Sarakhs, waiting for the completion of the necessary dam. Finally, the water began to flow towards Shūra Kāl, and the soldiers fell to the old canal with picks and shovels to remove all obstacles en route. For the next seventeen days, the army ambled along, adjusting its pace to the progress of the water. Unfortunately, the “exceedingly sweet” water of the Tejend turned bitter and salty as it was conducted through the desert. Near the old fort of Shūra Kāl, the canal thinned to a trickle, and the idea of carrying it further was abandoned.²⁸⁹ The remainder of the march became a nightmare. The water filled into the skins of freshly slaughtered animals turned foul. Innumerable snake and rat holes rendered the desert a “sieve”, causing 2,000 beasts of burden to break down and the artillery to get hopelessly stuck.²⁹⁰

The luck of the Iranian army turned when the Sarīq leader Imām Qulī Mīrzā from Panjdih joined the camp at Dāsh Ribāṭ and offered to lead Ḥamza Mīrzā's men to Qarayāb.²⁹¹ The arrival at Qarayāb coincided with harvest time, and the soldiers had ample opportunity to make up for the privations suffered in the desert. At the sight of the fertile oasis, they “gave up combating the enemy and devoted themselves to cucumbers

²⁸⁴ TMN 1826. See also Bāmdād 1992 I: 465.

²⁸⁵ Za'farānlū 1968: 75–144. For a partial edition of a different copy of the same text see Shahīdī 1971: 35–63. Shahīdī gives the name of the author of this book as Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ḥusainī.

²⁸⁶ As the first and the final pages of the manuscript are missing, little is known about the author. He was apparently a son of Mīrzā 'Abd al-Karīm, the *atābak* of Ḥamza Mīrzā, and served as commander of the royal guard (*sarkishikchībāshī*) during the Marv campaign. On the basis of information provided by the *Safarnāma-yi Marv*, the editor Muḥsin Raḥmatī tentatively identifies him as Muṣṭafā Khān Sartīp-i Avval (“Muqaddima,” *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 26–28).

²⁸⁷ Traveling with a Turkmen escort in December 1861, Couliboeuf de Blocqueville covered the entire route from Marv to Sarakhs in 38 hours (Couliboeuf de Blocqueville 1980: 133).

²⁸⁸ Stewart 1977: 167–8.

²⁸⁹ Shahīdī 1971: 43, 48, 50, 52; Za'farānlū 1968: 78–79, 85, 87–8, 90. See also *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 34–7.

²⁹⁰ Shahīdī 1971: 52–55; Za'farānlū 1968: 90–94. See also *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 37–42.

²⁹¹ Shahīdī 1971: 56; Za'farānlū 1968: 95. On the role of the Sarīq Turkmens as the “fifth column” of the Iranian army see also O'Donovan 1970 II: 171; Sārī 1995: 96.

and pumpkins”.²⁹² The following events are quickly told. On 17 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1276/6 July 1860, the army moved to Marv and occupied Qaushīd Khān Qal‘a.²⁹³ While the conquest of Yolotan from the Salor Turkmens in the middle of Muḥarram 1277/early August 1860 met with little resistance, Ḥamza Mīrzā’s decision to leave Qaushīd Khān Qal‘a and to besiege the Teke entrenchment at Yūrt Khān Kachan²⁹⁴ one day’s march distant proved fatal. A Teke offer of allegiance was peremptorily turned down and belittled as an attempt at buying time. On 27 Ṣafār 1277/14 September 1860, the main body of the army arrived before the Teke entrenchment and cut short the Teke endeavor at negotiations by opening cannon fire. A war of attrition followed, in which the Teke adversaries proved much superior to the Iranian troops and scored one victory after the other. Within twelve days, the Iranian camp ran out of provisions while the foraging parties sent out were invariably cut to pieces by the Turkmens. On 17 Rabī‘ 1277/3 October 1860, the Iranians withdrew helter-skelter towards Qaushīd Khān Qal‘a, running headlong into the Turkmen lines of attack. The Tekes pursued the army up to a distance of five miles from the fort, taking numerous prisoners and capturing the entire Iranian artillery.²⁹⁵

In their analysis of the events, the authors apportion responsibility to different actors. Nūrī credits the commander in chief Ḥamza Mīrzā Ḥishmat al-Daula with clutching defeat out of the jaws of victory. One aspect he comments on throughout his narrative is the lack of discipline in the Iranian army. During the march, the army officers made no effort to keep the individual contingents together or to maintain a discernable order with a vanguard and rear guard.²⁹⁶ Upon the arrival in Qaushīd Khān Qal‘a, the troops again faced the task of gathering provisions, this time in an environment of constant small-scale warfare with the Teke Turkmens. Even so, the officers in charge mostly failed to offer protection to the parties searching for supplies outside of the fort. Another marked feature were the ongoing dissensions among the various military leaders and the endless discussions between them and the supreme commander Ḥamza Mīrzā. Early on during the campaign, Ḥamza Mīrzā complained about the disorderly conduct of the army, inadvertently revealing his own inability to enforce discipline.²⁹⁷ To make things worse, the supreme commander generally showed poor judgement in strategic questions. Some senior officers were in favour of using the relatively strong position of the army at Qaushīd Khān Qal‘a to cut off the water supply of the Tekes and to starve them into submission. But Ḥamza Mīrzā lent his ear to the inflated proposition of gaining a glorious victory over the Tekes in the open field. Furthermore, Nūrī provides a moral frame for his narrative. In the introduction, he attributes the weakness of the Iranians to their reliance on numerical strength rather than organization. As this was the biggest army the Qājārs had ever sent against the Turkmens, all parties involved expected an Iranian victory, and it never occurred to the officers in charge to take precautions against a possible defeat. In Nūrī’s words, the Iranian army was one of unbelief, the members of which were blind with pride, self-worship, insolence, and heedlessness. Confronted with overwhelming odds, the Teke Turkmens, on their part, accepted God as their only refuge and eventually earned victory by placing all their trust in Him.²⁹⁸

The author of the *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā*, by contrast, is more sympathetic to Ḥamza Mīrzā. He reserves his criticism for the self-serving attitude of the *vazīr* Mīrzā Muḥammad Āshtiyānī Qivām al-Daula and the military leadership. According to his account, the army officers placed their personal interests above military success. Much of the inactivity was caused by their refusal to cooperate with ‘Abd al-‘Alī Khān Sartīp-i Tūpkhāna, who conducted the successful campaign against Yolotan and was a strong proponent of confronting the Teke Turkmens in open battle. In order to prove him wrong and to diminish his fame, the

²⁹² *Mujādila bā ‘aduv-rā andākhta ba khiyār u kadū pardākhtand* (*Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 43). See also Za‘farānlū 1968: 96.

²⁹³ Shahīdī 1971: 56–8; Za‘farānlū 1968: 95–7.

²⁹⁴ Za‘farānlū 1968: 119.

²⁹⁵ Za‘farānlū 1968: 107–35. Estimates of the Iranian losses vary. According to Grodekov, the Tekes took 20,000 Persian prisoners (Marvin 1880: 128–9). Turkmen accounts claim that only 100 cavalry of the Iranian army of 80,000 (!) soldiers were able to get away (Dshikijew 1994: 172).

²⁹⁶ Shahīdī 1971: 44–5; 53; Za‘farānlū 1968: 80–1, 91–2.

²⁹⁷ Shahīdī 1971: 44–6; 53; Za‘farānlū 1968: 80–3, 91–2, 106.

²⁹⁸ Shahīdī 1971: 41–2; Za‘farānlū 1968: 76–7.

opposing faction ceased all action after the army had moved to Yūrt Khān Kachan. The bastions vital for the operation of the artillery were not even erected when the camp followers, showing greater zeal (*ghairat*) than the officers, collected one thousand *tūmān* among themselves to pay the soldiers.²⁹⁹ When the first cannons were lost to the Tekes, none of the leaders obeyed Ḥamza Mīrzā's order to retrieve them. "In the middle of the night," the author of the *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* reports, "we could clearly hear... the Turkmens fire volleys with those very cannons and celebrate." Meanwhile, in the Iranian entrenchment, "peals of laughter and singing rose from the leaders' tents to the sky, and they were shouting, 'Let 'Abd al-'Alī go and bring in the cannons!'"³⁰⁰

In casting Ḥamza Mīrzā as the aggrieved victim of these machinations, the author also highlights his lack of leadership and growing isolation. Utterly unable to break the stalemate and to motivate the soldiers into action, he was increasingly ignored by the officers, who assembled in the tent of Qivām al-Daula instead. According to this portrayal, Ḥamza Mīrzā acknowledged his weakness by visiting the tent of his *vazīr* and soliciting the advice of the leaders present: "I have given up my superior status as commander and prince, and, like an ordinary being, now find myself in a broken boat, about to drown in a stormy sea."³⁰¹ This plea brought about the decision to retreat to Qaushīd Khān Qal'a.

As far as they are extant, both narratives conclude their account with the breakup and the flight of the army towards Iran. Once again, they assign different roles to the same protagonists. According to Nūrī, Ḥamza Mīrzā was primarily concerned with his own safety and even considered abandoning his troops. Once inside the fort, he and Qivām al-Daula made no effort to reorganize the remnants of their army but resolved to leave on their own. All appeals of the second in command, Muqarrab al-Khāqān, to their responsibility for the soldiers under their command went unheard. When they rode out of Qaushīd Khān Qal'a, with Yūsuf Khān Hazāra and Mīr 'Aṭā' Tīmūrī as their guides, the last vestiges of order broke down, as the remaining troops desperately tried to keep up with their fugitive leaders. Nūrī informs us that Ḥamza Mīrzā and Qivām al-Daula initially intended to return to Iran via Sarakhs but were prevailed upon to move toward Herat by Yūsuf Khān Hazāra. The latter feared that ten to fifteen thousand unmounted soldiers following them would perish in the Qara Qum desert.³⁰² The author of the *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā*, by contrast, solely takes Qivām al-Daula to task: According to his account, the *vazīr* bought the support of Yūsuf Khān Hazāra and was intent on moving to Sarakhs. Ḥamza Mīrzā, on the other hand, refused to countenance the prospect of several thousand foot soldiers perishing in the desert and opted for the route via Panjdih to Herat.³⁰³

Pursued by 400–500 Teke Turkmens, the Iranian troops struggled southward along the Murghāb river towards Panjdih. Here, the initially hostile Sarīqs consented to supply provisions after being reminded of their long-standing relationship with the Qājār government. Both authors report that a minor commotion in the Sarīq market near Panjdih triggered the onward flight of the Qājār army: The dispute over the price of a melon (*kharbuza*) turned into a melee and created the impression of a Turkmen attack. As the Qājār troops dropped their belongings and made headlong for the desert towards Chaman-i Bīd, they found themselves pursued by the Sarīqs, who took between 2,500³⁰⁴ and 4,000 prisoners.³⁰⁵ During the following marches to Shakībān, the Iranian troops subsisted on horse and camel flesh, another 200 men falling victim to hunger.³⁰⁶ Highlighting his close companionship with Ḥamza Mīrzā, the author of the *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* adds

²⁹⁹ *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 61–2.

³⁰⁰ *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 65.

³⁰¹ *Man az haqq-i sardārī va shāhzādagī-yi khud gudhaztam. Man ham mithl-i āḥād-i nās aknūn bā jam'ī hastīm dar kishī-yi shikasta dar daryā-yi mutalāṭīm dar shuraf-i gharq shudan* (*Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 65–6).

³⁰² Za'farānlū 1968: 135–7.

³⁰³ *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 77–8.

³⁰⁴ Za'farānlū 1968: 139–40.

³⁰⁵ *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 84–5.

³⁰⁶ Za'farānlū 1968: 140.

a dramatic note to their flight through the desert. Together, they brave the hail of Turkmen bullets and survive the heat of the sandy desert by quenching their thirst with melons (*kharbuza*).³⁰⁷

Despite the decisive blow the Qājār government had suffered at the hands of the Turkmens, it refrained from punitive action against them and thus practically abandoned its historic claims to Marv. Immediately after the battle, the Teke leadership attempted to bolster their position vis-à-vis Tehran by entering an alliance with Khīva. Qaushīd Khān reportedly submitted one-fifth of the booty he obtained from the Iranian army to the Khivan ruler Sayyid Muḥammad Khān (r. 1856–1864).³⁰⁸ When the Teke leader proposed a rapprochement with Ḥamza Mīrzā in 1286/1869–70, his advances were roundly rejected by Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, who insisted on the return of all Iranian prisoners and weapons as a precondition for any sort of alliance with the Turkmens.³⁰⁹ As Russian pressure on Akhal and Marv mounted in the 1880s, the Qājār government finally adopted a more active policy towards the Teke Turkmens. Iranian envoys began to arrive in Marv, offering financial and military assistance in exchange for the submission of hostages in recognition of Qājār supremacy. Distrustful of the motives of the Qājār government, the Teke leadership responded by setting up a fictitious leader and sending him to Tehran as a straw man to sound the waters at court.³¹⁰ With the Russian occupation of Marv in March 1884, the region was removed from the political horizon of the Iranian government once and for all.

CONCLUSION

Beyond mere military defeat, the loss of Marv exemplified a shift in territorial perceptions. Up to this point in time, the Qājār rulers had viewed northeastern Khurāsān as a place they were entitled to by historical precedent, a space they could expand into, an ancient sphere of dormant allegiances they could reanimate at will. Prior to the military campaign of 1860, active Qājār involvement in Marv had been limited to two brief interludes in 1853–54 and 1855. Even so, the flag and the minor garrison Ḥusām al-Saltāna stationed there in 1853 revived Iranian claims to the region at least symbolically and bore the promise that these might gain further substance sometime in the future. The disastrous battle of 1860, by contrast, drove home new political realities to the Qājār government. Apart from the poor performance of the royal troops and the logistic problems that beset the Marv venture, it became clear that the Iranian government did not command the wherewithal to establish direct control over the Teke Turkmens, whose rise to power on the western fringe of the Qara Qum desert had roughly coincided with the Qājārs' ascent to supremacy from their basis in Astarābād.

The contrast between far-flung territorial claims and brittle alliances in the northeastern territories became increasingly pronounced as the nineteenth century wore on. Until the 1850s, both the rulers of Tehran and Khīva attempted to give substance to their territorial notions by accusing each other of infringing on sovereign territory and engaging in military campaigns against Marv, Sarakhs and Akhal, thus creating a patchwork of punctual occupation alternating with local rebellion. Yet Khīva's interference in these regions effectively ceased after the violent death of Muḥammad Amīn Khān Qunghrāt and his son in 1855–56, as for the next twelve years the core of the Khanate was shaken by Turkmen unrest.

For the Qājār government, the Marv campaign of 1860 proved a turning point. During the interlude when Khīva and Iran faded out of the picture and the Russians were not quite on the horizon yet, the local leaders of Marv and Akhal were left to their own devices.³¹¹ Sarakhs, which housed an Iranian garrison on the left

³⁰⁷ *Safarnāma-yi Ḥamza Mīrzā* 85–6. The role of melons as vital resource in the desert is a recurrent theme. See Noelle-Karimi 2001: 142.

³⁰⁸ Barto'ld 1962: 166.

³⁰⁹ Sārli 1995: 141.

³¹⁰ O'Donovan 1970 II: 3, 211, 335.

³¹¹ The interaction of the Turkmens of Marv and Sarakhs with the court of Khīva during this period deserves further investigation. While Lessar maintains that even the minting of coins, ordinarily an expression of fealty to the central powers, passed to local craftsmen (Lessar 1884: 294), there are indications that the local leadership maintained contact with the Khān and his courtiers

bank of the Tejend river, became the last, precarious outpost of Qājār authority in an entirely hostile environment. Stability was imposed only in 1884, when the Russian government occupied the right bank of the Tejend, effectively turning the Iranian garrison into a border post.

Within the regions discussed, Astarābād was most firmly incorporated into the Iranian domain, and the situation there reflects both the potential and limits of Qājār administration. Portraying Astarābād as the cradle of the Qājār dynasty, the available Iranian chronicles suggest a degree of continuity that is not borne out by closer analysis. In fact, the region reflected the general state of instability affecting all of Iran in the eighteenth century. The local power struggles between the two most prominent Qājār subdivisions were enhanced and instrumentalized by Nādir Shāh (r. 1736–1747) and Karīm Khān Zand (r. 1751–1779) from their bases in Mashhad and Shīrāz respectively. Although the imposition of Qājār authority in the nineteenth century faced no sustained challenges, there were ongoing tensions between the rural Turkmen population and the local governors based in the towns and government garrisons. While the Turkmens posed no imminent danger to government authority, they continued to live up to their reputation of unruliness. The patterns of conflict also show that it would be misleading to assume a clear juxtaposition between the forces of government and the tribal population. The methods of coercion the Qājār and Shādillū Kurd administrators employed strongly resembled the raids perpetrated by the Turkmens, and there were even instances of collaboration between these two groups against the Persian village population. Military action thus had no lasting impact on the local balance of power.

It is noteworthy that the administration of Astarābād passed to the leadership of the Shādillū Kurds of Bujnūrd from 1854–1858/59. This development is even more striking in the light of the fact that this family had played a leading role during Ḥasan Khān Sālār's rebellion against Tehran during the previous decade. While Najaf Qulī Khān Shādillū had entered alliances with the Tekes of Akhal and Sarakhs at the time of his rebellion, his son Ja'far Qulī Khān used his government of Astarābād to strike out both against the local Turkmens and the Akhal Tekes. Other important actors in this region were the Za'farānlū Kurds of Khabūshān and the Chāpushlū leaders of Darra Gaz, who were likewise intertwined with the Akhal Tekes in a medley of mutual raids. It was this entrenched elite that the Qājār governor at Mashhad had to negotiate with for the maintenance of order. Its members mediated administrative concerns locally while shielding the territories under their control from sustained government interference. As Marv was practically removed from the map of Qājār authority, even the core possessions in Khurāsān could barely be kept together by a bundle of fragile alliances. Another instance of the indirect exercise of power is the southeastern region of Sīstān, which was placed under the authority of the Khuzaima chief of Qāyin in the 1860s.

THE FRONTIER ACHIEVED: SĪSTĀN

In the early nineteenth century, European observers described Sīstān with a note of nostalgia for past times of grandeur, harking back to times when this region had served as the “cradle of the Persian nation”.³¹² In this vein, Elphinstone commented:

There is no country to which the admirer of Persian poetry and romance will turn with more interest than to Seestaun, and there is none where his expectations will meet with so melancholy a disappointment... the numerous ruins which it still contains, testify Seestaun to have been a fertile country, full of cities, which in extent and magnificence are scarcely surpassed by any in Asia: nor are the causes of its decline less apparent than the proofs of its former prosperity. Except on the north, where it joins the southwestern border of the Dooraunee [Durrānī] country, the province is surrounded by wide and dismal deserts [sic], whence every wind brings clouds of a light shifting sand, which destroys the fertility of the fields, and gradually overwhelms the villages. The only parts which still retain their fertility are those on the banks of the Helmund [Hilmand] and Furra Rood [Farāh Rūd], and of the lake which is formed by those rivers.³¹³

after 1860. A cursory survey of the Turkmen correspondence to the court of Khīva suggests that individual leaders continued to submit petitions and reports on local affairs (Central Historical Archives of Uzbekistan, Fond 125/2, courtesy of Yuri Bregel).

³¹² Khanikoff 1864: 394.

³¹³ Elphinstone 1992 II: 219. See also Christie 1986: 407.

In a similar vein, a Persian report from 1856 notes:

The weather of Sīstān is very warm, its sand very fine, and its harsh wind continuous. Its greater part is taken up by tamarisk and [other] thorny bushes, in other parts there are reed beds (*naizār*), desert (*rīgistān*) and a great sea (*baḥr-i 'aẓīm*)... Its wheat and bread are very good, its water wholesome. It only yields little fruit but water melon (*hindivāna*) thrives there. Despite the existence of the requisite water and soil it has no rice fields and only few orchards. The region abounds with ancient buildings and ruined citadels of amazing size which were erected by the Kayanids in former times, among them the famous city of Zāhidān, the citadels of Nād 'Alī and Jalālābād, as well as the fort of Rustam located on the mountain Kūh-i Khvāja, which is surrounded by water.³¹⁴

Both the Persian and foreign observers contrasted Sīstān's former greatness with signs of present decline. Overall, the available nineteenth-century accounts document a shift in regional concepts implying a dramatic process of shrinkage. The territorial designation of Sīstān dates back to Sasanian times.³¹⁵ Medieval authors assigned vast proportions to the region, including the entire Hilmand valley, Ghaznī and Tig'nābād (Qandahār) in its limits. In the fourteenth century, Vaṣṣāf also counted Ghūr among its territories.³¹⁶ Five centuries later, the Russian explorer Khanikoff contrasted the accounts of the tenth-century Arab geographers with the status quo and noted that not much was left of the formerly vast region of Sīstān, which had been superseded by modern political entities:

The limits of this province as described by Istakhry used to be natural ones and they included the entire depression of Khurāsān, the lowest point of which is formed by the Hamoun Lake. Nowadays, the subdivision of Lach Djouvein [Lāsh-Juvain] has become a district in its own right; Zamin-Davar [Zamīndāvar], Roudbar [Rūdbār] and Ferrah [Farāh] have formed part of Afghanistan for a long time... In the strict sense, the region the modern Persians and Afghans designate as Seistan has been reduced to a small district located at the point where the Hilmand enters the Hamoun or Zireh... it has a population of 10,000 to 12,000 families, half of whom are nomads.³¹⁷

On his visit in 1810, Christie stated that, while the region bore "marks of former civilization and opulence," it was now "only inhabited by Uffghans and Belooches in felt tents".³¹⁸ From nineteenth-century reports, Sīstān emerges as a remote and inhospitable place at best: Miasmas emitted by the extensive marshlands and swarms of white flies and mosquitoes afflicting horses, mules and camels alike made the region next to uninhabitable for most of the year except during the cold winter months.³¹⁹ Despite these uninviting prospects, Sīstān became the bone of contention between Iran and Afghanistan in the 1860s and 1870s. In this context, the Qājār government again failed in its avowed plan to reclaim the former limits of the Safavid realm. It nevertheless scored a victory over Afghanistan in the Sīstān arbitration undertaken by the government of British India in 1872. In the aftermath of the losses at Herat and Marv, the Iranian government managed to push the "boundary line of Persia nearly five degrees of longitude to the eastward," and to establish realities that profoundly influenced the outcome of the Sīstān arbitration.³²⁰ In the following, I will proceed from the natural setting of Sīstān to a description of its position within the larger political framework of the Safavid, Afsharid and Durrānī empires. The final section will be concerned with the events of the nineteenth century and the inevitable conflict between historical memories of imperial greatness and

³¹⁴ Jamālzāda 1964: 203. See also Sīstānī 1990 IV: 13.

³¹⁵ Fragner 1999: 15.

³¹⁶ Aubin 1969: 91. It should be borne in mind that territorial designations were elastic and subject to constant reinterpretation. On the basis of tenth-century Arab geographers, Le Strange describes Sīstān as the "lowland country lying round, and to the eastward of, the Zarah lake, which more especially included the deltas of the Helmund and other rivers which drain into this inland sea." He includes Bust, Zamīndāvar, Qandahār, Sībī and Mastūng in its limits. According to Le Strange, Ghaznī formed part of Zābulistān, that is, the upper waters of the Hilmand and the "Qandahār rivers", at that time. Even further north, Kābulistān extended towards the frontiers of Bāmiyān (Le Strange 1905: 334–49). In the twelfth century, Al-Idrīsī stated that Sīstān was bounded by Ghūr and (Zamīn) Dāvar on the north (Holdich 1910: 205).

³¹⁷ Khanikoff 1864: 394–5.

³¹⁸ Christie in Pottinger 1986: 407.

³¹⁹ Büchner, "Sīstān", *E.I.*, I: 491; Greaves 1986: 90; Khanikoff 1864: 393.

³²⁰ Markham 1977: 517. See also Kashani-Sabet 1999: 33.

the corresponding conceptions of the “proper” state of affairs on the one hand, and the political facts created by the delimitation of a fixed border on the other.

Bounded in the southwest by the low mountain chain of the Kūh-i Palangān, Sīstān forms a shallow basin at an average altitude of 482 m/1,580 feet above sea level. In the nineteenth century, its main feature was the Hāmūn lake, which was fed by the Hilmand and Khāsh Rūd rivers in the northeast and the Farāh Rūd and Hārūt Rūd in the northwest. Fringed with marshes and reed beds in the south, the Hāmūn was only filled in May when the rivers entering it brought in snowmelt from the mountains of Ghūr. Travellers of that time described it as an extensive “pool” of little depth, the outlines of which greatly fluctuated in the course of the year. In the summer, when most of the river water was used up for irrigation and high temperatures as well as the “wind of 120 days” took their toll, the Hāmūn shrank rapidly and was separated into three separate shallow sheets of water. During the drought of 1870–72, its southern part dried up entirely.³²¹ At times when the water level reached its peak, the surplus water was discharged into the Shīla channel leading to the depression of Gūd-i Zira in the southeast.³²²

Both the Hilmand delta and the southern fringes of the Sīstān basin contain traces of former urban centers and extensive irrigation systems.³²³ In the nineteenth century, a number of small settlements were concentrated in the peninsula created by the final stretch of the Hilmand river, the Hāmūn, the Shīla canal and the Gūd-i Zira, which Goldsmid described as “Sīstān Proper” in 1872.³²⁴ A central meeting place was the Kūh-i Khvāja, a reed-ringed rock near the southeastern shore of the Hāmūn, on which the Naurūz festivities including racing competitions were held.³²⁵ Comprising the region between Chakhānsūr in the north and Rūdbār in the south, the northeastern reaches of the Hāmūn and the region on the right bank of the Hilmand were categorized as “Outer Sīstān” by Goldsmid.³²⁶ The region to the north of the Hāmūn was taken up by the district of Lāsh-Juvain, the country of which descended to the south in terraces intersected by deep ravines formed by erosion and the rivers flowing towards the lake.³²⁷ The annual inundation along the Hilmand river allowed the cultivation of large quantities of wheat and barley, the surplus of which was exported to Qandahār, Farāh, Herat in the north and Bīrjand and Qāyin in the northwest.³²⁸ The trade route from Sīstān to Bīrjand crossed the Hāmūn with reed rafts serving as a means of conveyance.³²⁹

In the nineteenth century, the exercise of power was highly segmented. Local leaders of Kayanid and Balūch extraction operated from a number of different bases, effectively preventing a lasting concentration of power.³³⁰ This development coincided with the decline of the former Kayanid elite. Tracing their descent to the ancient Kayanid princes of Iran,³³¹ this family of Sīstānī nobles had controlled the affairs of Sīstān well into the eighteenth century. While Sīstān had been incorporated in the governorship of Khurāsān during the early Safavid period, the Kayanid rulers were able to enhance their position from the late sixteenth century on. Between 943–985/1537–1577, Qizilbāsh *amīrs* and princes ruled over Sīstān. Shāh Ṭahmāsp I (1524–1576) awarded Sīstān to Shāh Ismā‘īl I’s grandson Badī‘ al-Zamān b. Bahrām Mīrzā. After a local rebellion in 1578/79, the Kayanid Malik Maḥmūd I (r. 1579–1587) assumed authority in Sīstān and signalled his

³²¹ Markham 1977: 469; Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen 1873: 150.

³²² Bosworth, “Sīstān,” *E.I.* 2 IX: 682; Büchner, “Sīstān,” *E.I.*, I: 490; Khanikoff 1861.

³²³ Schlagintweit 1877: 171.

³²⁴ Goldsmid 1876 I: 407, 412.

³²⁵ Büchner, “Sīstān,” *E.I.*, I: 491; Merk 1886: 155; Schlagintweit 1877: 173.

³²⁶ Goldsmid 1876 I: 407–8, 412.

³²⁷ Khanikoff 1864: 392.

³²⁸ Rist 1981: 49; Wynne 1870a: 23.

³²⁹ Merk, who travelled across the Hāmūn in 1885 left the following account of this means of transportation: [Such a reed raft, called *tutin*] “carries four or five passengers who have to sit, one behind the other, in a row, as a ‘tutin’ is not more than three feet wide, gradually tapering to a pointed bow with a length of about 20 feet. In the stern stands the raftsmen who, with a long pole, punts the little craft through the Hamoon. Where the water is too deep for punting, the crew and passengers have to paddle with their hands and legs... it is possible to transport horses on these rafts, but one at a time only per raft... There appear to be no boats on the Hamoon” (Merk 1885: 155).

³³⁰ Christie 1986: 408. See also Rist 1981: 15.

³³¹ Avery 1991: 15.

submission to Safavid overlordship by submitting revenues to Qazvīn.³³² Shāh ‘Abbās I (r. 1588–1629) accepted the Kayanid ruler Malik Jalāl al-Dīn I as governor of Sīstān. During this period, Sīstān served the Safavids as a logistic base in their struggles with the Mughals over the possession of Qandahār.³³³

In the early eighteenth century, the declining strength of the Safavid government under Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusain (r. 1694–1722) encouraged disturbances in the outlying provinces of the empire. In this process, a number of regional centers of power emerged in the immediate neighborhood of Sīstān. The Hūtak Ghilzai Pashtūns of Qandahār proclaimed their independence in 1709, and conquered Iṣfahān on 11 Muḥarram 1135/22 October 1722. Parallel to the Hūtak conquest of the Safavid heartlands, the Abdālī Pashtūns, already in possession of Herat and Farāh, besieged Mashhad.³³⁴ Against the backdrop of Afghān and Balūch depredations, two sets of Kayanid cousins rose to prominence. In Sīstān, Malik Asadullāh b. Ja‘far Khān, who had been appointed by Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusain in 1124/1712, continued to hold his own. His paternal cousin Malik Ḥusain b. Faṭḥ ‘Alī served as Safavid governor of Kirmān until he was displaced by Maḥmūd Hūtak in 1130/1717–18.³³⁵ Subsequently, his younger brother Malik Maḥmūd II carved out a power base for himself in Tūn and Ṭabas, which ultimately allowed him to reach for the possession of Mashhad in Jumādā II 1135/March 1723.³³⁶ His self-proclaimed kingship lasted until 16 Rabī‘ II 1139/11 December 1726, when Nādir, alias Ṭahmāsp Qulī, conquered Mashhad.³³⁷ In Rajab 1139/February 1727, Malik Maḥmūd II was put to death amid allegations that he had instigated a “Tātār” rebellion in Marv from his sanctuary at the shrine of Imām Rizā. Maḥmūd’s younger brother Muḥammad ‘Alī and his nephew Iṣḥāq were likewise done away with.³³⁸

In 1143/1730, Ṭahmāsp Qulī received Sīstān, Kirmān, Khurāsān and Māzandarān as a grant from Ṭahmāsp II.³³⁹ Even so, the control of local affairs in Sīstān seems to have remained in the hands of the ruling Kayanid family. Following Malik Maḥmūd II’s execution, Nādir confirmed Malik Maḥmūd II’s cousin and rival Malik Asadullāh as governor of Sīstān.³⁴⁰ Subsequent to the conquest of Iṣfahān in 1729, Malik Maḥmūd II’s nephew Luṭf ‘Alī Khān Sīstānī b. Malik Ḥusain gained this post and assisted Ṭahmāsp Qulī during his campaign against Herat and Farāh in 1731–32 and his second campaign against the Ottomans in 1733.³⁴¹ Furthermore, he proved his Kayanid descent by engaging in a heroic and successful effort to rid Mārūchāq of an infestation of wild boars and a man-devouring snake in 1732, as Nādir Shāh’s chronicler Muḥammad Kāzīm relates.³⁴² In the winter and spring of 1736–37, when Sīstān served as a staging ground

³³² Klinkott 1982: 87–8.

³³³ Röhrborn 1966: 42, 73, 81–2; Sīstānī 1990 III: 325–334. See also Tate 1970: 77–78. In 1003/1594–95, Malik Jalāl al-Dīn I erected the fort of Qal‘a-yi Sabz, which was to become known as Jalālābād later on (Sīstānī 1990 III: 329).

³³⁴ Muḥsin 175; T Su 100.

³³⁵ Muḥsin 170.

³³⁶ During his tenure as governor of Kirmān, Malik Ḥusain secured the governorship of Tūn and Ṭabas for Malik Maḥmūd II (Vārid, *Mir‘āt* 118). Despite subsequent Safavid attempts to remove him from the region, Malik Maḥmūd II was able to entrench himself there. In 1132/1719–20, Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān Afshār, the *bēglerbēgī* of Mashhad, was killed in a military confrontation with Malik Maḥmūd II on the outskirts of Tūn (JN 12–13, Tate 1970: 80). During Maḥmūd Hūtak’s siege of Iṣfahān, Malik Maḥmūd II took possession of Yazd (Vārid, *Mir‘āt* 129–30, 144–5; Tate 1970: 81). In the winter of 1722–23, the assassination of ‘Alī Qulī Khān, the *bēglerbēgī* of Mashhad, allowed Malik Maḥmūd II to establish himself there. Muḥsin alternatively dates the assassination of ‘Alī Qulī Khān on 7 Rabī‘ I 1135/16 December 1722 and 13 Jumādā II 1135/19 February 1723 (Muḥsin 176–7; see also Kāzīm 38–9). Malik Maḥmūd II entered Mashhad on 6 Jumādā II 1135/14 March 1723 (Muḥsin 177–9; see also Vārid, *Mir‘āt* 133–9).

³³⁷ JN 82; Muḥsin 183.

³³⁸ JN 93–6; Tate 1970: 88. Muḥsin dates this event on 4 Rajab 1139/25 February 1727. He identifies both Malik Iṣḥāq and Malik Muḥammad ‘Alī as Malik Maḥmūd II’s nephews (Muḥsin 184). See also Kāzīm 67; Avery 1991: 15–19, 27; Elphinstone 1992 II: 222; *Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 151 Tate 1970: 88. According to Sīstānī, Nādir Shāh killed 22 members of the Kayanid family (Sīstānī 1990 III: 339).

³³⁹ Malcolm 1815 II: 50.

³⁴⁰ JN 97; Tate 1970: 88.

³⁴¹ Kāzīm 181, 183. After the execution of Malik Maḥmūd II, Luṭf ‘Alī Khān Sīstānī had joined the court of Ashraf Hūtak at Iṣfahān, where he was initially received with honor but was subsequently placed into confinement (JN 98; *Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 151; Tate 1970: 88–9).

³⁴² Kāzīm 204–5.

for Nādir Shāh's pending campaign against Qandahār, Luṭf 'Alī Khān lost his life while defending Afsharid interests in Makrān.

Luṭf 'Alī Khān Sīstānī was succeeded by his brother Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān Sīstānī, who served under Nādir Shāh during the campaigns to Qandahār in 1738, as well as to India and Bukhārā in 1739–40.³⁴³ Nādir Shāh's rising tax demands towards the end of his reign caused Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān Sīstānī to rebel. In Dhū al-Qa'da 1159/November–December 1746, he reportedly assumed an independent position in Sīstān, and, "huffed up with pride", asserted his Kayanid descent and his close relationship with Malik Maḥmūd II Sīstānī.³⁴⁴ Plundering raids to Farāh, Fīrūzkūh, Lāsh-Juvain, and Garmsīr followed. After initial successes against the Nādirīd army near Farāh, Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān Sīstānī and 'Abbās Bēg b. Malik Maḥmūd II fell into the hands of the Afshār commander Muḥammad Rīzā Khān and were subsequently put to death in Mashhad.³⁴⁵

After Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān Sīstānī's defeat and death, his allies Mīr Kūchik Sarbandī and Mīr Rustam took position at the mountain fortress of Kūh-i Khvāja. Nādir Shāh's nephew 'Alī Qulī Khān Afshār was sent against them from Mashhad but found much of Sīstān deserted. As he proceeded to besiege Kūh-i Khvāja he received message after message concerning Nādir Shāh's increasingly deranged state of mind, which caused the king "to turn away from the people of Iran, to ignore the difference between friend and foe, and to kill confidants and strangers alike". When 'Alī Qulī Khān Afshār discovered that Nādir Shāh also targeted his own kinsmen and had confiscated his family's possessions, he decided to make common cause with the Sīstānī leadership.³⁴⁶ After extending his authority from Sīstān to include Farāh and Herat, he gained the support of the Kurds of Khabūshān, which in effect allowed him to seize power in the aftermath of the king's assassination on 11 Jumādā II 1160/20 June 1747.³⁴⁷

In the turmoil that followed Nādir Shāh's death, the Kayanid family initially interacted with the lords of Mashhad but increasingly found itself in the orbit of Sadūzai interests. Nādir Shāh's grandson Shāh Rukh Afshār awarded the government of Sīstān to Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān's brother Malik Sulaimān b. Ḥusain Khān. Herat was temporarily held by Malik Maḥmūd II's son Ja'far. Malik Sulaimān assisted Aḥmad Shāh in his campaigns into Khurāsān and was awarded the government of Qāyin in Sha'bān 1167/May–June 1754.³⁴⁸ He further demonstrated his allegiance to Aḥmad Shāh by entering a marriage alliance and formally undertaking to pay tribute and to furnish soldiers.³⁴⁹ Despite this loose allegiance to Qandahār, local circumstances were affected by the competition between different elite groups in the center. This fostered the emergence of rival factions in Sīstān, foremost among them the chiefs of the Persian-speaking Shahrakī tribe. The conflict came to a head when both the Kayanid and Shahrakī leaders inserted themselves into the power struggle unfolding after Aḥmad Shāh's death in 1772. While the Kayanids backed the unsuccessful pretender Sulaimān Mīrzā, Mīr Bēg Shahrakī sided with the victorious contender Tīmūr Shāh and received the governorship of Sīstān in exchange. Four years later, the Kayanid family regained the governorship of Sīstān but was placed in a subordinate position to Muḥammad Zamān Khān Pūpalzai Durrānī, who governed the province of Lāsh adjoining Sīstān in the north.³⁵⁰

³⁴³ In 1740, Nādir Shāh appointed Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān Sīstānī as governor (*ṣāhib-i ikhtiyār*) of "Nīm-rūz" (Kāzīm 765). See also Kāzīm 543, 1015.

³⁴⁴ Kāzīm 1184. See also Lockhart 1938: 113–14, 253. According to Avery, Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān Sīstānī's rebellion began in March 1746 (Avery 1991: 50).

³⁴⁵ Kāzīm 1184–7. See also *Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 151–2; Tate 1970: 90–1.

³⁴⁶ Kāzīm 1189.

³⁴⁷ Jones 1771: 123–7.

³⁴⁸ TA (ed. Humāyūn): 171. See also *Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 152; Tate 1970: 91–2; Tumanovich 1989: 173.

³⁴⁹ TA (ed. Humāyūn): 211–12. See also Elphinstone 1992 II: 222; Mann 1898: 335; Sīstānī 1990 IV: 3.

³⁵⁰ Markham 1977: 469. The available sources differ on the question of which member of the Kayanid family was in power in 1776. According to Tate, Malik Sulaimān controlled the affairs of Sīstān until his death in 1196/1781–82 and was succeeded by his sons Malik Muḥammad Nāṣir (d. 1208/1793–94) and Malik Bahrām (Tate 1970: 92–3; see also *Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 152). Other accounts place the beginning of Malik Bahrām's rule in the reign of Tīmūr Shāh (r. 1772–1793) (Wynne 1870a: 27).

Subsequent to the breakup of the Sadūzai Empire into a number of independent principalities in 1818, Sīstān formally acknowledged the supremacy of Herat under the rulership of Shāh Maḥmūd b. Tīmūr Shāh and his son Kāmṛān Sadūzai. In keeping with the developments in Afghanistan, Sīstān underwent increasing political segmentation. Kayanid power dwindled during this period. While Malik Bahrām Khān b. Sulaimān reportedly continued to “affect the style and pageantry of a king... his nobles were every day encroaching on his land and power”.³⁵¹ Based in Jalālābād in the northwest of Sīstān proper, the Kayanid leader and his son Jalāl al-Dīn II faced the competition of a number of powerful tribal leaders, foremost among them the chiefs of the Persian-speaking Sarbandī and Shahrakī tribes.³⁵² From his fortress at Sikūha, Muḥammad Rizā Khān Sarbandī held sway over the western and southwestern parts of Sīstān proper, while Hāshim Khān Shahrakī controlled Dashtak in the central part. Dūst Muḥammad Khān Nārūy Balūch (d. 1855–56) and his followers were based in Burj-i ‘Alam Khān in the southeastern corner.³⁵³ Outer Sīstān formed the domain of ‘Alī b. Khān Jahān Khān Sanjarānī Balūch, who had received his domain in Chakhānsūr from Shāh Maḥmūd’s Muḥammadzai minister Fath Khān in 1810.³⁵⁴

In 1834, Malik Bahrām’s son Jalāl al-Dīn II was expelled from Sīstān by the leaders of the Shahrakī and Sarbandī tribes. After a vain attempt by Kāmṛān b. Shāh Maḥmūd, the Sadūzai ruler of Herat (r. 1829–1840/41), to reinstall Jalāl al-Dīn II in Sīstān, he became a “beggar and exile” living on the “precarious bounty” of the court at Herat.³⁵⁵ Muḥammad Rizā Khān Sarbandī occupied the Kayanid stronghold of Jalālābād. The ensuing efforts of Kāmṛān’s minister Yār Muḥammad Khān Alakūzai to regain control of Sīstān were cut short by Muḥammad Shāh Qājār’s siege of Herat in 1837–38, and the Sarbandī and Balūch leaders remained undisturbed in their possession of Sikūha and Chakhānsūr.³⁵⁶

With the conclusion of the Iranian siege of Herat and the First Anglo-Afghan War of 1839–42, southern and western Afghanistan largely reverted to the division of power that had prevailed in the early nineteenth century. The territorial claims of the rulers of Herat and Qandahār overlapped in Sīstān. While Kāmṛān Sadūzai of Herat tried in vain to reinstall the former Kayanid ruler Jalāl al-Dīn II to his erstwhile possessions, Sardār Kuhandil Khān Muḥammadzai of Qandahār (r. 1839–1855) extended his sphere of influence as far as Rūdbār on the lower Hilmand river. Muḥammad Rizā Khān Sarbandī at Sikūha and Ibrāhīm b. Khān Jahān Khān Sanjarānī Balūch at Chakhānsūr remained the two most powerful leaders in the region.³⁵⁷ Passing through this region in 1845, Ferrier described Muḥammad Rizā Khān’s fortress at Sikūha to be “the strongest and most important of Seistan... It contains about twelve hundred houses, each of which would furnish one and in some cases two fighting men. I have called it the capital of Seistan, but it is

³⁵¹ Wynne 1870a: 28. According to Tate, Malik Bahrām formally acted as regent of Sulaimān b. Muḥammad Nāṣir (d. 1217/1802–03) but held power in actuality (Tate 1970: 93).

³⁵² The Sarbandīs and Shahrakīs are said to have entered Sīstān at the time of Chingiz Khān. During the reign of Tīmūr Lang, both groups were driven out of the region. The Sarbandīs were resettled in the region of Hamadān but reentered Sīstān under Nādir Shāh in 1730 and established themselves at Sikūha (*Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 265–6). Khanikoff reports that Nādir Shāh transferred the Sarbandīs from Shīrāz to Sīstān (Khanikoff 1864: 395, 397).

³⁵³ Tate 1970: 94.

³⁵⁴ Forrest 1906: 36; Tate 1970: 97; Wynne 1870: 31; Todd to Macnaghten, 2 October 1839, IOL, L/PS/20/G10/3 No.4, p. 10. The Sanjarānī Balūch arrived in Garmsīr during the reign of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī. During the final decade of the eighteenth century, they were able to enlarge their holdings in the region at the expense of the Nūrzai Durrānīs. While Khān Jahān Khān Sanjarānī occupied the Khāsh district with its chief town Chakhānsūr, his brothers Navvāb Khān and Islām Khān held forts in the Rūdbār region (*Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 254–5).

³⁵⁵ Wynne 1870a: 28. See also KR 73 (Patterson 55–6). According to Todd, Malik Jalāl al-Dīn II was finally expelled from Sīstān in the fall of 1838 (Todd to Macnaghten, 2 October 1839, IOL, L/PS/20/G10/3 No. 4, p. 10).

³⁵⁶ Goldsmid 1876 I: 408; Sīstānī 1990 IV: 4; Wynne 1870a: 28–31. See also Afshār “Sīstānī” 1991: 253, 314–15; T Su 283; Ellis to Palmerston, 30 December 1835 (IOL, L/PS/20/A7/1, p. 12); McNeill to Macnaghten, Tehran, 22 January 1837 (IOL, L/PS/20/A7/1 No. 50, p. 47). According to Tate, Jalāl al-Dīn II’s brother Malik Ḥamza (d. 1263/1847) remained in Sīstān but only enjoyed nominal power. He was linked by a marriage alliance to the Sarbandī chief of Sikūha (Tate 1970: 94).

³⁵⁷ *Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 266; Tate 1970: 98–99; Wynne 1870a: 31–34; Todd to Macnaghten, 2 October 1839, IOL, L/PS/20/G10/3 No.4, p. 10. One of the daughters of Muḥammad Rizā Khān Sarbandī was married to a son of Yār Muḥammad Khān Alakūzai. (Ferrier 1857: 415; Wynne 1870a: 31). Afshār “Sīstānī”’s claim that one of Kāmṛān Sadūzai’s daughters was married to the son of Muḥammad Rizā Khān’s daughter is not borne out by other sources (Afshār “Sīstānī” 1991: 315).

impossible to say how long it may enjoy that title...”³⁵⁸ Ten years later, in Muḥarram 1273/September 1856, a Persian observer identified Sikūha, Dashtak and Chakhānsūr as political centers. According to this account, the population of Sikūha amounted to 1,000 families, and its citadel was protected by a moat and three cannons. The same source depicts Dashtak as the stronghold of the Shahrakī tribe under Muḥammad ‘Alī Khān. Ibrāhīm Khān Sanjarānī Balūch’s fortress at Chakhānsūr was reported to have strong fortifications including a moat and parapeted trenches (*shīr ḥājī*), which contained a citadel and three hundred houses. Another two hundred houses were located outside its walls.³⁵⁹

In the late 1840s and 1850s, Sīstān witnessed an increased interference by the rulers of Herat and Qandahār, as well as the entry of Iran as a third, powerful force. When Muḥammad Rizā Khān Sarbandī of Sikūha died in 1848, both Qandahār and Herat intervened in the ensuing power struggle by backing different sets of contenders within the leading Sarbandī family. Muḥammad Rizā Khān’s brother ‘Alī Khān Sarbandī successfully solicited assistance from Qandahār and was installed as the chief of Sikūha.³⁶⁰ By contrast, the efforts of Vazīr Yār Muḥammad Khān Alakūzai of Herat to intervene on behalf of the sons of Muḥammad Rizā Khān were cut short by his death near Lāsh in 1851. The power vacuum created by the death of the Herati ruler allowed Kuhandil Khān of Qandahār to occupy the contended territories of Farāh and Lāsh-Juvain and to exert temporary pressure on Herat.³⁶¹

The outcome of the siege of Herat in 1856 dealt a severe blow to the Qājār endeavor of recovering the former eastern territories of the Safavid kingdom. The Treaty of Paris concluded in 1857 stipulated that the old limits of the province of Herat were to be reestablished. The district of Lāsh-Juvain, which had been occupied by the Iranian forces during their advance on Herat, reverted to its erstwhile governor, Aḥmad Khān Ishāqzai Durrānī in 1858.³⁶² In Sīstān, by contrast, Iranian intervention increased steadily. Even prior to the siege of Herat, the provincial government of Khurāsān had established a formal relationship with ‘Alī Khān Sarbandī of Sikūha. While British sources report that ‘Alī Khān, “wearied of being the bone of contention” between Herat and Qandahār, made overtures to the governors of Kirmān and Mashhad as late as 1857,³⁶³ Iranian accounts point to earlier contacts between the leadership of Sīstān and Mashhad. According to Lisān al-Mulk and I’timād al-Saltāna, ‘Alī Khān Sarbandī of Sikūha already contacted Ḥusām al-Saltāna in 1269/1852–53 and offered to protect from Balūch depredations the 72 (!) trade routes passing through his region, in the name of the Qājār government. Shortly after, Ḥusām al-Saltāna dispatched Mīr ‘Alam III Khuzaima of Qāyīn with the Qājār lion-and-sun flag to Sīstān. Apart from raising the flag at his fort of Sikūha, ‘Alī Khān sent his son along with the sons of Dūst Muḥammad Khān Nārūy Balūch and Ibrāhīm

³⁵⁸ Ferrier 1857: 419. In 1872, Major Euan Smith gave the following description of Sikūha: “The town of Sekuha, which derives its name from three clay or mud hills in its midst, is built in an irregular circular form around the base of the two principal hills. The southernmost of these hills is surmounted by the *ark* or citadel, an ancient structure known as the citadel of Mīr Kuchak Khān [Mīr Kūchik Sarbandī] (the grandfather of Sardār Ali Khān); which is at present neither armed nor garrisoned, though kept in excellent repair. Adjoining this and connected with it, is the second hill called the Būrij-i-Falaksar, on which stands the present Governor’s house; and about 150 yards to the west is the third hill, not so high as the other two, undefended and with no buildings on it but a mud caravanserai. The two principal hills thus completely command the town lying at their base, and are connected with one another by a covered way. Sekuha is quite independent of an extra-mural water supply, as water is always obtainable by digging a few feet below the surface anywhere inside the walls, which are twenty-five feet high, strongly built of mud and in good repair. The houses are half dome-shaped and half flat-roofed, and we noticed that in almost every courtyard were tethered two or more excellent donkeys. The population, which is somewhat migratory, numbers about 5000 all told, living in 1200 houses. The inhabitants are entirely engaged in agriculture, there being no manufactures of any kind, and are grossly ignorant of all matters unconnected with Sīstān (Goldsmid 1876 I: 258–9).”

³⁵⁹ Jamāl-zāda 1964: 200. See also Afshār “Sīstānī” 1991: 454–5; Sīstānī 1990 IV: 7, 10.

³⁶⁰ Both Muḥammad Rizā Khān Sarbandī and ‘Alī Khān Sarbandī maintained a close relationship with the rulers of Qandahār. Upon the conclusion of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–1842), ‘Alī Khān had entered the service of Sardār Kuhandil Khān (*Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 266). According to Khanikoff, ‘Alī Khān initially requested assistance from the Qājār court. After being turned away by Prime Minister Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī, he entered the service of Kuhandil Khān (Khanikoff 1864: 398).

³⁶¹ Kabul Wakil, 30 March 1858, IOL, L/PS/5/265, p. 39. See also Afshār “Sīstānī” 1988: 35; 1991: 315; *Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 266.

³⁶² Khanikoff 1864: 386, 389–90; Kabul Wakil, 30 March 1858, IOL, L/PS/5/265, p. 39.

³⁶³ Wynne 1870a: 41.

Khān Sanjarānī Balūch of Chakhānsūr as hostages to Mashhad. During the Iranian siege of Herat of 1856, ‘Alī Khān joined the Iranian camp with 4,000 troops.³⁶⁴

“Sardār” ‘Alī Khān Sarbandī’s relationship with the Qājār court was put on a firm footing in 1857, when the Sarbandī leader was invited to Tehran, where he was awarded a subsidy and the title of Ḥusām al-Mulk and married a paternal cousin of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh.³⁶⁵ On his return to Sīstān, ‘Alī Khān was accompanied by 300 Iranian cavalry, who, ostensibly serving as an escort for the Qājār princess, also transported uniforms and coining utensils to Sikūha. The transition of Sīstān from an independent entity to a Qājār province seemed perfect when ‘Alī Khān raised a regiment and had coins struck in the name of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh.³⁶⁶

The incorporation of Sīstān into Iranian dominions was subsequently called into question by ‘Alī Khān Sarbandī’s violent death at the hands of his nephew Tāj Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Rizā Sarbandī.³⁶⁷ Yet his assassination seems to have been motivated less by opposition to Iranian interference as such than local resentment at ‘Alī Khān’s career and mode of government. Upon his assumption of power, Tāj Muḥammad Khān Sarbandī, whose two elder brothers had been blinded by ‘Alī Khān, enjoyed the support of the other chiefs of Sīstān. What is more, he immediately renewed ‘Alī Khān’s agreement with the Qājār government. In exchange for submitting his brother as hostage to Tehran, he was recognized chief of Sīstān and received the same title and pay initially conferred on ‘Alī Khān. The remaining leaders of Sīstān, including Ibrāhīm Khān Sanjarānī Balūch of Chakhānsūr, backed this contract by sending their sons to reside at the Qājār capital.³⁶⁸

The 1860s were characterized by a mixture of setbacks and successes for the Qājār government. On the one hand, Amīr Dūst Muḥammad Khān Muḥammadzai’s conquest of Herat on 27 May 1863 removed this highly prized object from the Iranian map once and for all. On the other hand, the Amīr’s territorial consolidation was called into question by his death barely two weeks later. As Afghanistan was engulfed by a painful war of succession between 1863 and 1868, Tehran was able to advance into Sīstān. This signalled a marked departure from the situation a few years earlier. At the time of Amīr Dūst Muḥammad Khān’s westward push in 1862–63, Qājār hold over Sīstān had seemed more than uncertain. In the summer of 1862, the Qājār government reacted to the arrival of the Amīr’s agents in Sikūha by despatching dresses of honor and gifts as a symbolic inducement to Tāj Muḥammad Khān Sarbandī to honor his alliance with Tehran. Offers of military support were extended to the governor of Lāsh-Juvain, Aḥmad Khān Ishāqzai Durrānī, who had taken refuge with the Qājār court in Mashhad at the time.³⁶⁹

In June 1866, as the Afghan heir apparent Shīr ‘Alī Khān found his sphere of influence restricted to Qandahār and Herat, 6,000 Qājār troops entered Sīstān. The official reason given for this move were Tāj Muḥammad Khān Sarbandī’s failure to prevent Balūch depredations on Qāyin and territorial strife between him and Ibrāhīm Khān Sanjarānī Balūch of Chakhānsūr concerning their respective possessions on the left bank of the Hilmand.³⁷⁰ When Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh traveled to Khurāsān in spring 1867, Tāj Muḥammad Khān Sarbandī and Aḥmad Khān Ishāqzai Durrānī of Lāsh-Juvain were summoned to court and deported to Tehran.³⁷¹ In July of the same year, the Qājār troops present in Sīstān were replaced by a force of 4,000 men under the command of Mīr ‘Alam III Khuzaima Ḥishmat al-Mulk of Qāyin.³⁷² Acting in the name of the Qājār government, Mīr ‘Alam III deprived Ibrāhīm Khān Sanjarānī Balūch of his possessions on the left

³⁶⁴ NT 1195, 1311, 1313–14; TMN 1741.

³⁶⁵ Khanikoff 1864: 398–9; Markham 1977: 470. See also Migeod 1990: 103.

³⁶⁶ Wynne 1870a: 32, 41–46. See also Afshār “Sīstānī” 1991: 316; C. E. Yate 1900: 88.

³⁶⁷ Wynne 1870a: 46. According to Tate, ‘Alī Khān Sarbandī was assassinated two years after his return from Mashhad (Tate 1970: 96).

³⁶⁸ Wynne 1870a: 46–8. In 1862, the Persian government paid a total of 7590 rupees in subsidies to the chiefs of Sīstān. For a detailed statement see Eastwick to Alison, 10 October 1862, IOL, L/PS/5/265, p. 56.

³⁶⁹ Wynne 1870a: 54, 58.

³⁷⁰ Tate 1970: 98–9; Wynne 1870a: 70.

³⁷¹ Wynne 1870a: 70–72. See also Afshār “Sīstānī” 1991: 317.

³⁷² Wynne 1870a: 71. This figure seems exaggerated. According to Euan Smith, Mīr ‘Alam III Ḥishmat al-Mulk only had 400 cavalry at his disposal in 1872 (Goldsmid 1876 I: 268).

bank of the Hilmand and conquered Nād ‘Alī near the right bank of the Hilmand.³⁷³ The destruction of Tāj Muḥammad Khān Sarbandī’s former fort at Sikūha and the construction of a Qājār garrison to the north of it by the name of Nuṣratābād in 1870 (present-day Zābul) signalled the incorporation of Sīstān into the Qājār domain.³⁷⁴

The late 1860s and early 1870s witnessed competing claims to Sīstān, which focused on the territories on the right bank of the Hilmand river. Having regained control of Kābul with British backing in the winter of 1868–69, Amīr Shīr ‘Alī Khān reacted to the news of ongoing raids by Balūch groups and the forces of Mīr ‘Alam III of Qāyīn on Chakhānsūr, Khāsh and Farāh with confidence. In March 1869, he wrote to the governor of Farāh: “The real question relates to all of Seistan, which from old belonged, and belongs, to the Afghans... I am interesting myself in this question of territory, and am writing to the English Government [about it].”³⁷⁵ Much of the following discussion between Kābul and Mashhad revolved around Chakhānsūr, whose chief Ibrāhīm Khān Sanjarānī Balūch complained to Shīr ‘Alī Khān in late 1869 that, due to Iranian encroachment, he only retained one-fourth of his ancestral possessions.³⁷⁶ Ḥamza Mīrzā, at that time governor of Mashhad, on his part, expressed surprise at the notion that Ibrāhīm Khān, who had submitted his son as hostage to Tehran and received a subsidy of 2,000 *tūmān* a year, should consider himself part of the Afghan state.³⁷⁷

British sentiments towards Iranian claims to Sīstān underwent several shifts. As late as October 1862, the foreign secretary Lord Russell had coolly informed the Iranian Minister at Constantinople that “Her Majesty’s Government do not recognize the sovereignty of Persia over Seistan.” Yet a year later, he signalled his permission for the Iranian government to assert authority over this region: “Her Majesty’s Government, being informed that the title to the territory of Seistan is disputed between Persia and Affghanistan, must decline to interfere in the matter and must leave it to both parties to make good their possessions by force of arms.”³⁷⁸ Another switch of policy followed in 1870, when the Government of India decided to settle the Iranian-Afghan dispute over the possession of Sīstān and appointed a commission under the leadership of Major General Frederic Goldsmid. While the parting Viceroy Lord Mayo (1869–1872) was sympathetic to Afghanistan’s claims to Sīstān, his successor Northbrook (1872–1876) concurred with the position of the British government that it was impossible to undo the facts created by Lord Russell’s earlier permission to Iran to assert its authority. In accordance with Northbrook’s views, the Government of India sent the following instructions to Goldsmid in April 1872: “Government gathers from papers received that the position is this: Persia holds the chief part of Seistan so firmly that arbitral opinion must be in favour of Persia.”³⁷⁹

While the current configurations of power formed the point of departure for the Goldsmid arbitration, the local representatives attempted to press their point on the basis of historical evidence. The Iranian side emphasized “ancient rights” in Sīstān dating back to prehistoric times. This projection of an uninterrupted chain of authority from Rustam’s ancestors to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh entailed the conclusion that the Afghan claims to Sīstān were an aberration. From the Iranian perspective, the role of the Sadūzai dynasty in founding a separate empire was negated and the Muḥammadzai kings were reduced to rebellious subjects. The Afghan Prime Minister Sayyid Nūr Muḥammad Shāh, on his part, based his argumentation on the incorporation of Sīstān into the Sadūzai Empire after 1747.³⁸⁰ One of the proofs he adduced for his reasoning was a quote

³⁷³ TMN 1896–7. Nād ‘Alī (30° 59’ N 61° 50 E) henceforth served as a Persian frontier post. It is not to be confused with the present town by that name located in the Hilmand Province (*Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 207–11).

³⁷⁴ Büchner, “Sīstān,” *E.I.*, I: 491; Wynne 1870a: 71–3; Rist 1981: 4, 16.

³⁷⁵ Political A, Proceedings June 1869, Nos. 368–9, IOL, L/PS/5/265, p. 77.

³⁷⁶ Wynne 1870a: 81.

³⁷⁷ Wynne 1870a: 81, 84, 87. The amount mentioned by Ḥamza Mīrzā seems to be an exaggeration. According to British sources, Ibrāhīm Khān Sanjarānī Balūch received a yearly subsidy of 500 rupees (Wynne 1870a: 56).

³⁷⁸ Wynne 1870a: 64–5.

³⁷⁹ Chakravarty 1976: 112–14.

³⁸⁰ Goldsmid 1876 I: 396, 399, 401–2.

from Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat's *Tārīkh-i rauzat al-ṣafā-yi nāṣirī* to the effect that Sīstān lay beyond Fath 'Alī Shāh Qājār's reach in 1214/1800.³⁸¹

Goldsmid based his arbitration on a mixture of geographical and historical reasoning. Yet, while the argumentations he adopted in both fields seemed to favor the claims of the Afghan government, he ended up awarding the more populous and fertile region of Sīstān proper to Iran. In his search of "a good natural frontier," he reached the conclusion that "[g]eographically, Sīstān is clearly part of Afghānistān". Reviewing the historical claims of both sides, he also dismissed any "abstract right" of Iran on the basis of ancient associations. As for the more recent history, the Sadūzai occupation of the region seemed on a par with the authority the Safavids had enjoyed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Concerning the developments of the nineteenth century, Goldsmid felt that neither Afghanistan nor Iran had been able to substantiate their claims to authority:

Persia has exercised no interference in the internal administration of Sīstān from the days of Nadir Shah until a very recent date... But while, in my opinion, Afghānistān has the advantage in claims on the score of an intermediate tenure, superseding that of Nadir Shah or the Safavian Kings, it cannot be denied that from year to year she has been relaxing her hold over Sīstān; and this has been evinced in a marked manner since the death of the Wazīr Yar Muhammad [Yār Muḥammad Khān Alakūzai of Herat in 1851].³⁸²

Goldsmid's decision to regard the final stretch of the Hilmand as the dividing line between the Iranian and Afghan spheres of influence was in great part guided by the facts the Iranian invasion of 1866–67 had created. While Iran had established "absolute possession" over Sīstān proper, it was required to evacuate its garrison in Nād 'Alī. Upriver from the Band-i Sīstān, both banks of the Hilmand were to remain with Afghanistan.³⁸³

On the basis of Goldsmid's arbitration, 300 km of frontier were delineated but not demarcated.³⁸⁴ The results met with little enthusiasm by either of the parties concerned. Although Iran gained control of a major portion of the contested territory which Curzon later described as "the only really valuable and lucrative portion of the country", her representatives were deeply dissatisfied with the result.³⁸⁵ Perhaps in a last-ditch attempt at bargaining, they rekindled the lost cause of recreating the frontiers of the Safavid Empire: "Persia... must have the whole of the Province as it existed in the time of the Safavean monarchs, or none at all." The Afghan commissioner, on his part, bitterly remarked that "it was quite impossible that an Afghan and a Persian should live in the same house together."³⁸⁶ Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, Amīr Shīr 'Alī Khān bristled at Northbrook's plan to sweeten the loss of the lands on the left bank of the Hilmand by the award of a compensatory one-time allowance of 500,000 rupees.³⁸⁷ Eventually, the Afghan ruler signed the treaty in October 1873, after receiving an indemnity of 1.5 million rupees.³⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

Goldsmid's endeavor to delimit the respective spheres of influence in Sīstān highlighted the difficult transition both the Iranian and the Afghan governments were undergoing. Both states experienced a political reality that stood in a stark contrast to earlier, imperial notions of power that had involved the loose incorporation of far-flung territories with a minimum of administrative penetration. From a historical perspective, Iran and Afghanistan grappled with a dramatic process of shrinkage, in the course of which

³⁸¹ Kashani-Sabet 1999: 35–36. The passage in question concerns the mission of Shāh Zamān's envoy Ṭurra Bāz Khān to the court of Fath 'Alī Shāh in early 1214/summer 1799 to discuss the position of Khurāsān (TRSN IX: 361). See also Chapter 4.

³⁸² Goldsmid 1876 I: 411.

³⁸³ Goldsmid 1876 I: 412–13. Also known as Band-i Kuhak, the Band-i Sīstān (30° 48' N 61° 46' E) was a seasonal dam and served to divert the waters of the Hilmand river into the Rūd-i Sīstān, one of the main arteries of the oasis. (*Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 126).

³⁸⁴ Balland, "Boundaries," *E.Ir.* IV: 413.

³⁸⁵ Curzon 1966 I: 233. For a recent assessment of the Goldsmid arbitration, see Hopkins 2007.

³⁸⁶ Kashani-Sabet 1999: 35–36, footnote 122.

³⁸⁷ Chakravarti 1976: 114–15; Curzon 1966 I: 233.

³⁸⁸ Balland, "Boundaries," *E.Ir.* IV: 413.

memories of past grandeur gave way to a tight corset of fixed borders. In the light of the territorial losses to Russia embodied by the treaties of Gulistān and Turkmānchāy in 1813 and 1828 respectively, the famed Prime Minister Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim Qā'im Maqām (1834–1835) described Iran as a “constricted kingdom” (*mulk-i mukhtaṣar*) exposed to pressure from Russia in the north and from the Ottoman empire in the west.³⁸⁹ For Afghanistan, the Sīstān arbitration coincided with the Clarendon-Gorchakov Agreement, which designated the Āmū Daryā as border between Afghanistan and the Russian spheres of influence without soliciting Amīr Shīr 'Alī Khān's opinion.

In the course of the Sīstān negotiations, both the Afghan and the Iranian commissioners faced the odd task of adducing historical evidence to back up their governments' territorial claims. As part of their endeavor to fill the required space with instances of control, the negotiators attempted to tap historical eras of either “Afghan” or “Iranian” expansion. The evidence thus provided ironically harked back to times when Sīstān was only loosely incorporated into early modern polities which could and would not penetrate local power structures. The Qājār and Muḥammadzai governments, by contrast, needed to redefine the workings of government in a setting increasingly circumscribed by linear borders.³⁹⁰

The Qājār attempt to extend control into Sīstān passed through a quick succession of phases. During the period from 1851–1857, the government contented itself with a token presence expressed by the dispatch of the royal flag and, shortly thereafter, the conclusion of a “package deal” comprising the bestowal of royal favors in exchange for expressions of fealty such as the minting of coins. After 1866, the Iranian government assumed direct control over the region by dispatching soldiers, removing the Sarbandī leadership, and establishing a permanent garrison at Nuṣratābād. Muḥaffar al-Daula,³⁹¹ who headed the first Qājār campaign to Sīstān in 1866, attempted to consolidate Qājār dominance by eradicating all written evidence which, reflecting earlier constellations of power, might pose a challenge to the territorial claims advanced by the court of Tehran. On the pretense of honoring the existing pattern of landownership, Muḥaffar al-Daula ordered the leaders of the “old families” to submit all available documents to prove their hereditary rights. The documents thus gathered were torn up and allowed to be scattered by “the wind of 120 days” characteristic of the region.³⁹² Sīstān and Balūchistān were declared crown lands.³⁹³

All the same, the Qājār endeavor to establish central control in Sīstān highlighted the limited capacities the state had at its disposal. Far from strengthening the central hold over this outlying region, the government in Tehran continued to rely on local intermediaries as administrators and thus enhanced the position of existing tribal elites. From 1867 on, the administration of Sīstān rested with Mīr 'Alam III Khuzaima of Qāyīn, who thus added nine and a half districts to his dominion and became one of the most powerful local leaders within the Qājār realm.³⁹⁴ At the time of his death in 1891, his possessions were divided up between his sons Mīr 'Alī Akbar Khuzaima, who inherited his title of “Ḥishmat al-Mulk” and the government of Sīstān, Tūn and Ṭabas, and Mīr Ismā'īl II Khuzaima, who received the title of “Shaukat al-Mulk” and the government of Qāyīn.³⁹⁵ Afghan Sīstān, by contrast, was left to its own devices until Amīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān Khān (r. 1880–1901) embarked on a forceful policy of territorial consolidation. As Ibrāhīm Khān Sanjarānī Balūch staunchly refused to acknowledge the new state of affairs, the Amīr deposed him in 1882 and established an army garrison in Chakhānsūr. Ibrāhīm Khān became a “wanderer” in Iranian Sīstān and, after a vain attempt to stir up a rebellion against 'Abd al-Raḥmān Khān in 1893, he died on Iranian territory later

³⁸⁹ Kashani-Sabet 1999: 30.

³⁹⁰ Hopkins aptly describes this process as a “fundamental transformation of political order from tributary to territorial” (Hopkins 2007: 251).

³⁹¹ This title was also awarded to the Qandahār Sardār Sultān 'Alī b. Kuhandil Khān by Naṣīr al-Dīn Shāh in 1269/1852 (NT 1206).

³⁹² Sutūda, Introduction, *Iḥyā' al-mulūk* 16–17.

³⁹³ Lambton 1999: 484. In 1889, Sīstān contributed 26,000 *tūmān* in cash and 24,000 *kharvārs* of grain to the total revenue of Khurāsān (Curzon 1892 I: 201).

³⁹⁴ Curzon 1966: I: 200; Stewart 1886a: 139–40. See also Afshār “Sīstānī” 1991: 460; Merk 1886: 157; Migeod 1990: 63 Wynne 1870a: 71–2.

³⁹⁵ *Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 256; Sykes 1902b: 150–1; C. E. Yate 1900: 66.

in the same year.³⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the Amīr imposed a system of government appointed *kadkhudās* (headmen) and *sarḥadd-dārs* (frontier officers). As a result, the Balūch of Afghan Sīstān, formerly dreaded for their wide-range depredations on camelback,³⁹⁷ were pacified to such a degree that even children could drive their lambs along the frontier in safety without risking depredations of any kind.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ *Gaz. Afghanistan* II: 256–8.

³⁹⁷ Ferrier 1857: 280.

³⁹⁸ Yate 2003: 146. See also Kakar 1979: 65.