

Dye on the Frontier: Henna and the Military Elites of Nineteenth-Century Bam

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In the late nineteenth century, Iran's eastern borderlands around Balūchistān were a contested frontier zone, caught between the political and commercial ambitions of the British, Russian, and Qājār Empires. Boundary commissions led by British Major-General Frederick Goldsmid in Balūchistān and Sīstān between 1870 and 1872, followed by the Perso-Balūch Boundary Commission of 1896, demarcated state borders between the Qājār Empire, Russian Turkistān, and two states under British suzerainty: Afghānistān and Kalāt.¹ Over the previous century, the sparsely inhabited frontier had become an important strategic space. The Qājārs had claimed rights to those lands along with a wider region of “greater Khurasān” based on the historical precedent of Persianate rule, and attempted to begin integrating those areas into their domains with the failed siege of Hirāt in 1857. The frontier question became more pressing with the Russian advance in the north, culminating with von Kaufmann's 1867-8 conquests of the amirates of Khīva, Bukhārā,

¹Collected reports from the 1870-72 Anglo-Persian Boundary Commission were published as *Eastern Persia: An Account of the Journeys of the Persian Boundary Commission: 1870-71-72*, 2 vols., ed. Sir Frederic J. Goldsmid (London: MacMillan, 1876).

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and Kukand in the years leading up to the first Goldsmid mission. The boundary commissions put these political claims along the frontier down on paper. Balūchistān, however, was never fully integrated into the Qājār Empire, and the drawing of a boundary was more an abstract and symbolic act, delineating jurisdictions along a frontier to which imperial power did not extend in practice. Nonetheless, this had a material effect on peoples along the frontier zone, which this article will explore.

Scholarship on Iran’s frontier delineation has proceeded from its significance to the construction of national identity. Kashani-Sabet, in *Frontier Fictions*, argues that the Qājār Empire’s frontiers became sites of myth-making for an emerging community of Iranian nationalists, defining the territorial extent of the homeland, but also the ethno-cultural boundaries separating the nation from the “other.”² Arash Khazeni and Christine Noelle-Karimi followed up by analyzing Qājār travel writing across the Balūchī frontier, noting a focus on cultural and ethnic difference in descriptions of the lands and peoples of Balūchistān as a way to make sense of these new abstract lines.³ While cultural dimensions of the frontier, and its role in identity formation, are clearly significant, we know relatively little about the local effects of the Qājārs’ new boundaries along the largely pastoral eastern frontier lands.

“Map of Western Baluchistan Compiled by Order of H.M. Secretary of State for India to Show the Western Frontier of the Territories H.H. the Khan of Kalat as Determined by the Frontier Commission under Major General Sir Frederic J. Goldsmid,” British Library: Map Collections, IOR/X/3094/1-4 (1874), Qatar Digital Library



²F. Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

³Arash Khazeni, “On the Eastern Borderlands of Iran: The Baluch in Nineteenth-Century Travel Book Writing,” *History Compass* 5/4 (2007): 1399–1411; Christine Noelle-Karimi, “On the Edge: Eastern Khurasan in the Perception of Qajar Officials,” *Eurasian Studies* 14 (2016): 135-177.

From the perspective of frontier societies, heightened imperial interests along the borderlands presented numerous opportunities for powerful groups to profit from, with taxes to collect, stipendiary posts to be filled, and occasionally lucrative lands to possess. The military elites of the small fortress town of Bam positioned themselves particularly well to take advantage of the new frontier situation. Bam was a village of only about 15,000 people, more than 200km from the border, but served as a critical military site for the Qājārs. It housed one of the largest fortifications on the Iranian plateau, the famous mud brick *Arg-i Bam* from which frontier patrols were conducted and taxes collected on Balūchī tribes. Balūchistān was formally under the jurisdiction of the governor of nearby Kirmān as early as the time of Ibrāhīm Khān Ṣāhīr al-Dawlah (Governor of Kirmān, 1803-26), who successfully subjugated the Balūchī khans and incorporated these territories into the Qājār state.⁴

The Qājār imperial system operated more as an interpersonal network than a territorial state with a bureaucracy of defined jurisdictions. Tribal groupings like the Balūchī, who carried out taxable activities on marginal lands, proved both a potential source of human and material resources, and a challenging group to incorporate and control within their administrative practices. The Balūchī were under the tax authority of the governor of Kirmān and his deputies along the frontier regardless of their present location, which simplified the situation somewhat. Still, in practice, such “people who move about”⁵ proved a persistent challenge to the policy of maintaining control over the borderlands and heading off further claims by the British and Russian Empires on their diminishing lands.⁶ Calls for maintaining order and settling the unsettled were

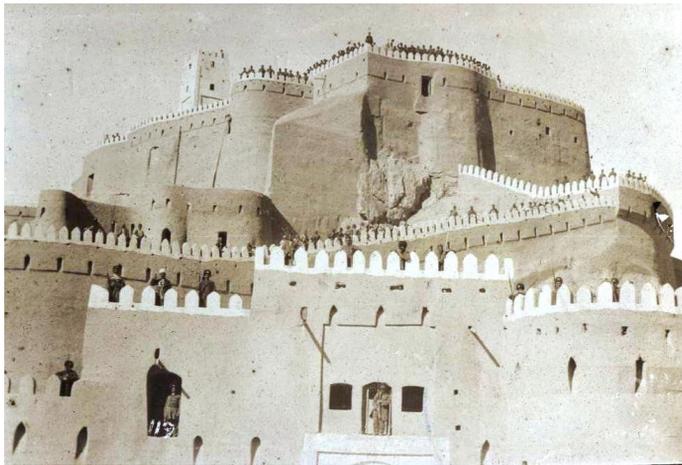
⁴Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān Vazīrī Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i Kirmān* (Tehran: Nashr-i ‘Ilm, 2006), 373.

⁵This famous quote from James Scott refers to a pattern of tensions he identified in the history of South Asia, between settled states in lowlands and along river systems, and highland peoples who used their mobility in subtle acts of resistance to control and exploitation. James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland South Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁶See, especially, the work of Arash Khazeni on the Bakhtiyārī tribe along the Zagros frontier in *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth Century Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

common precursors to military action and territorial claims. In the absence of a full-fledged standing army to deploy regularly for the task, maintaining a presence on the frontier was delegated to people on the spot, who were often successful in using their sudden political importance to gain lasting social power and economic benefits.

This article will look at the effects of the Balūchistān frontier policy on the elite military households of Bam, who asserted themselves as a dominant force among the local elite along the frontier during the late 19th century Anglo-Persian frontier settlements. One household in particular, the Bihzādīs, were rewarded for playing the part of Qājār agents in the tribal hinterlands. In the process, these families came to dominate not only the provincial military establishment but also managed to wrest from a prominent local family, known as the Mīrzā'īs, a number of major administrative posts and landed properties in around Bam, including the rich agricultural lands of nearby Narmāshīr. This article will argue that the Bihzādī family leveraged the political imperative to control the new boundaries, and obviate further Anglo-Russian incursions, to supplant Bam's existing administrative elites. In the process, the Bihzādī family gained control over the lucrative henna producing lands of nearby Narmāshīr, which helped them to further consolidate their position as masters of the frontiers.



Arg-i Bam, ca.1902

Of course, tribal and military groups rarely speak for themselves in our sources, nor is there is a systematic archive detailing the frontier experience, adding to the difficulty of filling in these peculiar gaps in our knowledge that exist on the margins of empire. There are, however, some interesting and useful sources written by various people crossing through the borderlands. In particular, a number of travelogues written by members of the Farmān Farmā family mention the activities of Bam's military elites, and incidentally the form of their household estates. As governors of Kirmān in the 1880's and 1890's, the Farmān Farmās compiled at least four known travelogues from their tours of eastern Kirmān and Balūchistān, two of which have been published only relatively recently and received very little scholarly attention as of yet. Most important for the present study of the military elites of Bam is 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Mīrzā Farmān Farmā's 1894 *Musāfaratnāmah-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, edited and published by Īraj Afshār in 2003.⁷ This travelogue provides a wealth of information on local communities in eastern Kirmān and Balūchistān, including an informal land survey which gives a snap shot of activities of local elites and administrators. It includes detailed notes on trade, the activities and structure of local administrators and military elites, the composition of private, charitable (*vaqf*), and crown lands, and the amount and type of agricultural production, irrigation systems, and tax revenues throughout the district. These are not exhaustive records, and not suitable for any detailed quantitative analysis, but are nonetheless invaluable for our purposes. There are also Persian local histories and geographies from nearby Kirmān which include notices on Bam, and a number of sources from the British imperial archives and consular service. Together, these sources provide a rough picture of a changing frontier society, and demonstrate the remarkable extent to which the Bihzādī military household and their immediate networks came to quickly dominate local administration and trade in Bam and Narmāshīr through their activities in Balūchistān in the context of a new frontier policy.

⁷ Abd al-Husayn Mīrzā Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmah-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asafīr, 2003).

Balūchistān between Empires

The late 19th century world experienced a massive intensification of exchange, economic and otherwise, driven by the totalizing impulses of industrial capitalism and imperialism. There is ample evidence from case studies around the world demonstrating that this was carried out locally in a wide variety of ways, and was not simply a process of Europeans reshaping the world at will. In southern Iran, the growth of commercial agriculture and trade was accomplished largely by native landowners, merchants and entrepreneurs who recognized and took advantage of opportunities provided by global economic conditions, improved communication and transportation routes, and access to markets. The spectacular growth of the cotton, wool, dye and opium trades with Europe, India and China were not simply foreign economic penetration; urban landowning households made necessary investments in land, irrigation and seed, reaped enormous profits, and expanded their reach and influence deep into the countryside as landlords and administrators. By the 1870s, trade was increasingly carried through maritime routes by British protected merchants, including Zoroastrians and Hindus, while overland traffic across the eastern borderlands remained steady.

Just as Qājār Iran and its constituent parts were absorbed into the global industrial economy in the late 19th century as producers of raw materials, they also emerged as important geo-political spaces in the context of growing imperialist rivalries in Central Asia and India between Russia and Great Britain. Great Britain's primary interest was in maintaining its hold on its prized colony in India. To keep peaceful borders and prevent the threat of foreign influences from reaching India, Britain maintained a "buffer zone" in Afghānistān between itself and the advancing Russian Empire. Two Anglo-Afghān Wars in 1838 and 1878 confirmed Afghānistān's nominal independence under British influence, including British prerogatives on Afghan foreign policy after 1878. Russia meanwhile expanded its influence by filling the "political vacuum" in Central Asian under the khanates of Khīvā, Bukhārā and Kukand.⁸

⁸On Russian imperialism in Central Asia, see especially Daniel Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate*

Great Britain and Russia expanded their imperial rivalries west into the Qājār domain by establishing a network of consulates in important towns to safeguard their political and economic interests. The British and Russian governments, following each other's moves step by step, set up a system of consulates in Tihṙān, Iṣfahān, Rasht, Mashhad, Tabrīz, and the Persian Gulf ports. Based primarily on the mercantile activities of firms and traders from British India, the British eventually carved out an empire within an empire in southern Iran.⁹ In the northern provinces, Tsarist Russia's expanding influence in the Caucasus and Caspian extended straight into the Qājār Empire, which was drawn into an informal sphere of Russian influence.¹⁰ This *de facto* division of the Qājār state into spheres of foreign influence was later formalized in the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907. Given Kirmān's proximity to the British Indian frontier and the Persian Gulf ports, the province became an integral piece of the British sphere by 1894 when the first British Consulate was established there by Percy Sykes.¹¹

The Qājārs' own imperial interests in Central Asia are often overlooked in literature on the "Great Game." Iran is usually seen as at best a passive observer, and more often a victim, of British and Russian colonial competition. The territories of the historical Persianate cultural sphere in eastern Khurasān and Transoxania had long been under the political authority of local Turkic amirs. The presence of European colonial powers on Iran's eastern borders coincided with an attempt by the Qājārs to extend their borders east and reactivate historical claims to this region. In an 1844 travelogue by a Qājār envoy to the Amīr of Bukhārā charged with securing the release of British traveler Joseph Wolff, he also notes a visit to Marv to press Qājār claims to the oasis to the Amir:

of the Russian Empire (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

⁹H. Lyman Stebbins, *British Imperialism in Qajar Iran: Consuls, Agents and Influence in the Middle East* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

¹⁰*Russians in Iran: Diplomacy and the Politics of Power in the Qajar Era*, ed. R. Matthee and A. Andreeva (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018).

¹¹On Qājār Kirmān, see especially James M. Gustafson, *Kirman and the Qajar Empire: Local Dimensions of Modernity in Iran, 1794-1914* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

Marv has been a part of the province of Khurasān since the era of Manuchihr and the Governor of Khurasān has always exercised authority there. It is the native soil (*mutan*) and asylum (*mu'aman*) of the Qājār tribe. By the reversals of fortune and time and its domination by oppressive rulers it separated from the province of Khurasān. It must be from here on, as it used to be, that [no one else] exercise authority there.¹²

Though the Qājārs never made a serious attempt on Marv, Muḥammad Shāh in 1838 and Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in 1856 launched military campaigns to take the city of Hirāt. Like Marv, Hirāt was considered by the Qājārs an integral part of the Persianate cultural sphere and a natural extension of their domain. This was based in part on the legacy of Ṣafāvid rule there. Balūchistān held similar geographical weight for the Qājārs, bolstered by the experience of *de jure* control over parts of the region, albeit indirect and frequently contested. By the Nāṣirī period, eastern Balūchistān had become part of the nominally independent Kalāt state under British protection, while western or Persian Balūchistān remained at least tentatively in the hands of the Qājārs, as it had since the early formation of the empire. It was only after the revolt of the Ismā'īlī Imām Āqā Khān Maḥallātī, however, that the Qājārs attempted to firmly establish their authority in Balūchistān. Āqā Khān attempted to seize power in Kirmān through forged appointment papers in 1257/1841-42, but failed. He and his followers closed themselves up in the Arg-i Bam and held off a long siege. He eventually fled through Balūchistān to Bombay, where he had a great number of followers.¹³ His brother,

¹²*Safarnāmāh-yi Bukhārā*, ed. Ḥusayn Zamānī (Tehran: Pizhūhishgāh-i 'Ulūm-i Insānī va Muṭāla'āt-i Farhangī Vābastah bih Vizārat-i Farhang va Amūzish-i 'Ālī), 37. This was published as an anonymous manuscript, but comparing the contents with the account of Joseph Wolff, the author was identified as 'Abbās Qulī Mīrẓā in James M. Gustafson, "Qajar Ambitions in the Great Game: Notes on the Embassy of 'Abbas Qoli Khan to the Amir of Bokhara, 1844," *Iranian Studies* 46/1 (2014): 51-72 and C. Noelle-Karimi "Different in All Respects: Bukhara and Khiva as Viewed by Kāḡār Envoys," in *Şehrāyīn: Die Welt der Osmanen, Die Osmanen in der Welt: Wahrnehmungen, Begegnungen, und Abgrenzungen*, ed. Yavuz Kose and Tobias Volker (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2012), 435-46.

¹³*Vazīrī, Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, 784-88.

Sardar Khān Maḥallātī, subsequently seized Bampūr in Balūchistān and attempted to maintain his independence from the Qājār state.¹⁴ This incident, and the growing threat of British interference on the eastern border, persuaded the Qājārs to secure the eastern frontier. The Governorship of Kirmān was therefore expanded in the 1840s to include authority over Balūchistān, and a responsibility for maintain order there. This was further delegated to a Governor of Balūchistān, stationed at Bam, who was subordinate to Kirmān’s governor.

There was a long history of bad blood between the Qājārs and the Balūchī tribes. The Balūchī tribes supplemented their modest means by attacking and plundering caravans, often with a debilitating effect on overland trade between Kirmān and India. The first task of many of Kirmān’s governors was the subjugation of the tribal khans in order to establish order along the frontier and secure trade and transport routes. According to Bāstānī-Pārīzī, punitive attacks on villages were undertaken regularly by Qājār troops, women and young boys carted off as slaves, and the decapitated heads of Balūchī khāns brought before governors of Kirmān as gifts.¹⁵ British travelers like Pottinger and Goldsmid commented on the extreme hostility felt for the Qājārs in Balūchistān.¹⁶ However, as maintaining order in Balūchistān increasingly became a political imperative, eventually greater attempts were made to incorporate the area peacefully into the Qājār state. After the failure of two Qājār notables to establish order while stationed in the administrative center of Balūchistān at Bampūr, the Qājārs eventually turned to Ibrāhīm Khān of the Bihzādī household from the more remote, but secure, stronghold at Bam. Over the 1860’s and 1870’s, Ibrāhīm Khān managed to subordinate the major tribes of Balūchistān and Sīstān to the Qājār state and even annex several districts on the southeastern frontier.

It was in this context, in 1870, that Great Britain took advantage of the relative peace to send a boundary commission under Sir Frederic

¹⁴Government of India, *Gazetteer of Persia* (Simla, Calcutta: 1885), 4: 32.

¹⁵Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī-Pārīzī, “Introduction” to Yaḥya Aḥmadī, *Farmāndihān-i Kirmān* (Tehran, Danish, 1975), 18.

¹⁶Sir Frederic J. Goldsmid, “Introduction,” to India, *Eastern Persia*, xlv.

Goldsmid to settle Iran's southeastern frontier with the British sphere of interests in Central Asia. The establishment of secure borders, would, in the opinion of British diplomats, help stem the spread of what was deemed the naturally chaotic and anarchic relations between Oriental despots ruling the lands north of India. With the growing threat of Russian expansion southward, and the potential for anti-British sentiment to further complicate British plans in Central Asia, diplomatic initiatives were favored to direct military intervention. In the words of Goldsmid:

The main question was how to bring about a reign of order for the bordering population, and at the same time strengthen and secure the attachment to ourselves of normally turbulent border allies, without armed or abrupt interference. Added to this consideration was the grave fact that whatever line of policy were chosen or whatever step taken, a move would unavoidably be made, on the Central-Asian board, towards completion of the game in which our play had become characterized by a discretion so tardy, and deliberation so excessive, that it was hardly clear to the outer world whether we were playing at all.¹⁷

The British government established a consulate in Kirmān City under the India Office in the 1894 to further pursue their political and economic interests. This was done under Sir Percy Sykes, a soldier in the service of the India Office with an avid interest in Persian history and culture. Sykes had spent time touring Iran in 1893, making useful connections with Qājār notables. During his travels, he made the acquaintance of 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Mīrzā Farmān Farmā, whose family had held the governorship of Kirmān, along with the Balūchī frontier lands, off and on since 1878. Sykes showed a keen interest in Kirmān, its history and geography, traveling widely throughout the area over the following years. The elites of Kirmān presented him with a copy of Vazīrī's *Tārīkh-i Kirmān* on his arrival, the contents of which he made frequent reference to in his consular reports.¹⁸ Sykes' intimate knowledge of Kirmān, and the personal relationships he cultivated with prominent local figures, aided

¹⁷Sir Frederic J. Goldsmid, "Introduction," to India, *Eastern Persia*, ix.

¹⁸Aḥmadī, *Farmāndihān-i Kirmān*, 28.

in bringing Kirmān fully into the British orbit. In this case, his interests overlapped somewhat with those of the Qājārs as he attempted to use his position and networks to pacify Balūchistān as part of a broader policy of protecting British mercantile interests in Kirmān.

Ibrāhīm Khān Sa‘d al-Dawlah and the Bihzādī Military Household of Bam

With the Balūchī frontier under the administrative control of the governor of Kirmān, the city of Bam, near the eastern frontier, served as the garrison for provincial armies. Campaigns in Balūchistān were usually carried out with the aims of collecting delinquent taxes, violently subjugating tribal leaders, and securing trade and transportation routes. Bam had long been a strategically important frontier town situated on the edge of the agricultural communities of Kirmān and the pastoral tribal lands of Balūchistān. Its military importance was evident by the sheer enormity of the Arg-i Bam. The mud brick fortress standing at the edge of the city dates to the pre-Islamic era, though rebuilt numerous times, and remained arguably the strongest fortification in all of the Qājār state.¹⁹ The citadel was used as a stronghold by Qājār rivals like the last Zand holdout Lutf ‘Alī Khān in 1794, and the aforementioned Isma‘īlī Imām Āqā Khān Maḥallātī in 1842. The Arg-i Bam was situated in a thriving agricultural region, with Bam serving as a market town and administrative hub for a wider district of dependent villages, including the noteworthy henna producing district of Narmāshīr. Bam was growing into a prosperous city at this time, with a population of between 13,000 and 15,000.²⁰ During the governorship of Vakīl al-Mulk I in Kirmān (1859-68), he ordered the construction of a large new *bāzār*, and a system of canals providing running water to many houses in the city, a rare luxury in 19th century Iran.²¹ With the accumulated resources of its hinterland,

¹⁹The Arg-i Bam, a UNESCO World Heritage Site along with the surrounding city of Bam, was destroyed and rebuilt following a massive earthquake in December 2003 that killed more than 26,000 people.

²⁰Sir Percy Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia: Or, Eight Years in Irān*, (London: Murray, 1902), 217; Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmāh-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, 53.

²¹Farmān Farmā and Ittihadīyya, *Safarnama-i Kirmān wa Balucistan*, 6.

Bam served as a supply point for a network of outposts further east in Bampūr and Sarhād.

In Vaziri's 1872-74 geography of Kirmān, he notes that a local family known as the Mīrzā'īs, had long dominated Bam's administration. He says that "for more than 100 years they have resided in Bam, and some of the time they held the headmanship (riyāsat) there. In terms of property and respect, they are orders of magnitude above all the elites there."²² It was common throughout Qajar Iran for administrative and religious scholarly families to reproduce their power over multiple generations in this way, even across the rise and fall of dynasties as the Mīrzā'īs appear to have done.²³ Generally this was reinforced by control over landed properties, held either as personal property (milk), or administered as crown lands (khalīṣah) or religious endowments (vaqf). The Mīrzā'īs were, similarly, major landowners, bolstering their prestige as dynamic, multifaceted network of notables.

The military establishment was another major element of Bam's elite. Similar to administrative, religious scholarly, and landowning elites, a patrimonial structure prevailed among military households as well. The frontier armies at Bam were soldiered mainly through levies within the district of Bam and Narmāshīr, recruited both from among the tribes and through levies on agricultural communities as part of their dues to the provincial government. These men were placed under the command of officers drawn from a core of military families tied to the provincial government. The reproduction of power among these households, as in the case of the landholding civilian elite, was based only partially on patrimonial ties; even more apparent in the case of military households than civilian elite was the emphasis placed on the personal abilities of the officeholder. Local roots were also less important in establishing oneself among the military elite. The patronage of the provincial government, particularly in the area of land grants and *khalīṣah* (crown

²²Aḥmad 'Alī Khān Vazīrī Kirmānī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān* (Tehran: Ibn Sīnā, 1974), 100-1.

²³For the most comprehensive study of elite family persistence across dynastic periods, see Christoph Werner, *An Iranian Town in Transition: A Social and Economic History of the Elites of Tabriz, 1747-1848* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2000).

land) administration, was in this case sufficient to establish the local authority of the military elite and tie it in closely to the government at Kirmān. Nonetheless, the prestige and authority of military households was built slowly, over generations, but membership in a military elite household was not sufficient to secure a position of authority in the provincial armies. This was particularly true as British-aligned rulers settled along Kirmān's eastern borders, adding to the importance of maintaining a strong military presence in Balūchistān. Altogether, this system, if effective, provided opportunities for a new military elite to supplant the civilian elite in Bam.

Kirmān maintained three regularly staffed provincial armies (*afwāj*), each officered predominantly by a local military household or tribe who passed numerous high posts from generation to generation along patrimonial lines. Kirmān's First Army (*fawj-i avval*) was dominated by the Līk tribe, an extended pastoral tribal group consisting of numerous sub-tribal groups who immigrated to Kirmān in the early 18th century.²⁴ The heads of the Līk tribe resided in Kirmān City, but many of the others were pastoralists living in black tents in Iqtā', east of the city. Many of them were soldiers in the first and second provincial armies.²⁵ They were a powerful tribal group, possessing military resources and manpower. Within the district of Iqtā', they were granted a degree of self-administration, possessing their own *āmil* and remitting taxes separately. Numerous positions in the first army were under hereditary control of the Līk in the late 19th century. Control of the first army passed from Faṭḥ Allāh Khān Līk under Vakīl al-Mulk in the 1870's to Nazar 'Alī Khān Līk in the 1890's. The latter was eventually demoted to *yavār* in the 1890's, corresponding to a general decline in the circumstances of the Līk household. The second army remained under the control of the Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān household, with numerous high posts, including command of the army, passing along patrimonial lines within the family.²⁶

This system was slowly changing. Both the first and second armies be-

²⁴Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 144.

²⁵Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 72.

²⁶Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 72.

gan hiring new engineering graduates from Tehran under the command of local officers in the late 19th century. This was part of a broader attempt of the Qājār state to introduce modernizing reforms to the military forces at the provincial level, while introducing this new element within the framework of the existing patrimonial structure. In the 1880's, the Governor of Kirmān, Nāṣir al-Dawlah, introduced new artillery shells and felt uniforms to his soldiers.²⁷ His younger brother, and successor, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Mīrzā Farmān Farmā, himself a lifelong student of military sciences, instituted new methods and organization learned from his Austrian advisors. The new exercises and maneuvers made quite an impression on the local population. Pāshā Vazīrī, observing the army in the 1890's, commented:

Never had they been so well-trained, from continuous exercises every day in the military sciences, the organization of the army, the drills with seven divisions, and the new Austrian exercises for the artillery, armies and cavalry, as well as preparations for military maneuvers. They have never been better organized in Kirmān.²⁸

Balūchistān was convenient both as a proving ground for ambitious military officers, and for experimenting with new military hardware and methods. The provincial army garrisoned at Bam was reconceived in the 1860's as a permanent frontier force, charged with maintaining Qājār authority in the tribal border regions by using their military advantage to subjugate the Balūchī tribes. Outposts were established in Bampūr and Sarhād, deep in the tribal hinterland, staffed and supplied by the garrison at Bam. The third provincial army stationed at Bam became a standing frontier force for the government, and maintained regular patrols in Balūchistān, dealing harshly with the slightest sign of rebellion or disobedience. It was in this context that contrary to the pattern seen in core agricultural districts, the military elite and the government dīvān in Bam came to supplant the locally rooted landholding households as, in the words of the Farmān Farmā, “the pillar of the a'yān, ashraf and

²⁷Alḥmadī, *Farmāndihān-i Kirmān*, 140.

²⁸Vazīrī, *Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, 824-25.

mullāk [elites and notables] of Bam.”²⁹

By the time of the Perso-Kalāt Boundary Commission’s arrival in Kirmān in 1870-72, Ibrāhīm Khān Sa‘d al-Dawlah, a member of local military elite at Bam, had been delegated the governorship of Balūchistān and had succeeded, remarkably, in subjugating the Balūchī tribes and consolidating Qājār power in the troublesome tribal hinterland. The British took a dim view of Qājār claims to the territories on their eastern frontier that had only recently begun paying taxes to the Qājār state, as claims based purely on Ibrāhīm Khān’s recent “insidious encroachments.”³⁰ Nonetheless, the British officers comprising the Boundary Commission viewed Ibrāhīm Khān with admiration for his success in Balūchistān. Major St. John, who met with him in 1872 at Bampūr, describes him as:

...a short paunchy man, of any age from forty-five to sixty, with a full and well-dyed beard and small sharp eye. He speaks Persian with the broad southern twang, and uses provincialisms not very easy to understand by any one accustomed only to the conversation of educated men... There seemed nothing in his talk or in his face to indicate the really superior man he must be, not only as having risen to his present position by sheer merit, unaided by money or interest, but as having reduced one of the most turbulent countries in Asia to a state of order and tranquility, comparing favorably not only with most of his own country but with many native states further east.³¹

The portrayal of Ibrāhīm Khān Sa‘d al-Dawlah as a self-made man who climbed to the top of Kirmān’s military establishment through sheer merit of course obscures the importance of his family networks. He began his career as a member of the elite through his connection to the Bihzādī household. His father, ‘Alī Khān Bamī, was a local baker who, through some unknown means, entered the service of the *dīvān*. He was entitled

²⁹Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmah-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, 56.

³⁰Goldsmid, “Introduction,” India, *Eastern Persia*, xx.

³¹Oliver St. John, “Narrative of a Journey,” in Goldsmid, “Introduction,” India, *Eastern Persia*, 77-78.

a *khān* and granted various administrative posts, including the *‘āmilī* of Qanāt Ghasān and Langar, and, most importantly, administration of the lucrative *khālīshah* lands of Narmāshīr. ‘Alī Khān’s appointment raised the ire of the Mīrzā’īs, a landholding household in Bam and Narmāshīr that dominated the local elite and controlled most of the important administrative posts in the district since the mid-18th century. Muḥammad Taqī Khān Bamī, a member of the Mīrzā’ī household, along with four accomplices, are said to have murdered ‘Alī Khān in his sleep one evening.³²

The political climate in Bam was turbulent and in flux by the time Vazīrī was writing his geographical memoir in the early 1870s. ‘Alī Khān’s relatives, known as the Bihzādīs, had already begun to establish themselves as a wealthy landholding household with strong connections to Kirmān City and the provincial government.³³ Ibrāhīm Khān was still a child at the time of his father’s murder. He entered Kirmān’s third army in 1269/1852-53 through his household connections and quickly rose through the ranks. Under Vakīl al-Mulk in the 1860’s he became the deputy to Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Nūrī, the brother of Vakīl al-Mulk who was delegated the governorship of Bam and Narmāshīr, and then, under Vakīl al-Mulk II, Governor of Balūchistān and *sartīp* of Kirmān’s Third Army.³⁴

Ibrāhīm Khān’s rise to power was aided by his skill in navigating the politics of elite households. In effect, the Bihzādī family was an amalgam of a number of other elite families, brought together through intermarriage. Ibrāhīm Khān married the sister of another important local military figure, Sūlīmān Khān Sartīp. Sūlīmān Khān’s parents, in turn, were leading figures in two other prestigious families in Bam. Sūlīmān’s father, Aṣḥaq Khān, was a member of the ‘Arab Bastamī household, a rather large extended tribal military group in the area, while his mother was a member of the prominent Ibrāhīmī family, as a granddaughter of Qājār prince Ibrāhīm Khan Zāhīr al-Dawlah. The ‘Arab Bastamīs were

³²Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 98.

³³Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 98-99.

³⁴Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 98-99.

already a major player in the local military elite. Sūlīmān Khān's maternal grandfather, Musá Khān, was, in fact, the Governor of Bam when Ibrāhīm Khān first entered the frontier army and oversaw his speedy promotion to sardar.³⁵ The 'Arab Bastamīs had a longstanding connection to the Ibrāhīmī family ever since Prince Ibrāhīm Khan Ṣāhīr al-Dawlah married an 'Arab Bastamī woman in the early 19th century who bore two of his sons.³⁶ Inter-marriage cemented the relationships between the up-and-coming Bihzādīs, the 'Arab Bastamīs and the Ibrāhīmīs of Bam under the powerful stewardship of Ibrāhīm Khān Sa'd al-Dawlah.

Ibrāhīm Khān Sa'd al-Dawlah's legacy grew with his leadership in expanding Qājār rule in eastern Balūchistān by subjugating local tribal khans and seizing a line of settlements on the southeastern frontier including Jalk, Kalavān and the fortress of Kūhak.³⁷ At a time when the Qājār state was seeing portions of its northern and eastern provinces falling progressively into the hands of the Russian and British Empires, this was a rare, albeit slight, territorial expansion.³⁸ It was at this time that he was granted the title Sa'd al-Dawlah ("felicity of the state") by the Qājār court for his accomplishments, an honor usually reserved for members of the royal household and high political appointees. Vazīrī lists him as one of the four wealthiest men in Kirmān province already by 1874, alongside the province's major merchants and landowners.³⁹ This underscores the significant wealth acquired by Ibrāhīm Khān Sa'd al-Dawlah while governing Balūchistān for nearly thirty years. Before his death in 1884, he succeeded in building a dominant military household from various elements of the local elite that would continue to control the provincial armies as officers and administrators for decades.

Following his death, Ibrāhīm Khān's nephew 'Abbās Khān was granted the Governorship of Bam and Narmāshīr. He too died shortly after

³⁵Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 98.

³⁶Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 55.

³⁷India, *Gazetteer of Persia*, 4:36.

³⁸Firoozeh Sabet, "Fragile Frontiers: The Diminishing Domains of Qajar Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 2 (1997): 205-234.

³⁹Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 62.

his appointment, having fallen off his horse drunk while on his way to Bam.⁴⁰ He was replaced by yet another of Ibrāhīm Khān Sa‘d al-Dawlah’s nephews, Zayn al-‘Abidīn Khān Asad al-Dawlah. This man had been Ibrāhīm Khān’s deputy governor from about 1873 to 1884 and succeeded him as *hakīm* of Bampūr, a post which was now combined with command of the frontier army.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Ibrāhīm Khān’s brother in law, Sūlīmān Khān, following a mutiny in the provincial army in 1880, became the *sartīp* (commander) of the provincial armies in Kirmān City, now merged into one entity known as the *Fawj-i Shawkat*.⁴² The merger and centralization of these offices in the hands of a small elite connected to Ibrāhīm Khān’s Sa‘d al-Dawlah and his estate was a direct consequence of his enormous personal legacy in expanding Qājār power in Balūchistān from the 1850’s to 1880’s.

Just then, a rebellion in Balūchistān, mishandled by the provincial government, threatened the continuation of Bihzādī control over the frontier. The Dāmāni khans among the Bālūchīs of Sarhad rebelled against the provincial army under Sūlīmān Khān and his deputy at Bam, Zayn al-‘Abidīn Khān. They were attempting to reassert their control over Sarhad after seeing their lands granted, but never fully incorporated into, the Qājār Empire after the 1872 Boundary Commission. In response to the rebellion, Kirmān’s governor Nāṣir al-Dawlah circumvented the Bihzādīs and sent in a Cossack cavalry officer named Abu al-Faṭḥ Khān, who was ordered to subjugate the Dāmāni tribes in Sarhad.⁴³ He did so brutally, with the use of the new artillery, and in the process destroyed numerous villages and irrigation works. When the Kurdī tribe approached Abu al-Faṭḥ Khān and swore their loyalty, even offering to

⁴⁰Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmāh-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, 56-57.

⁴¹India, *Gazetteer of Persia*, 4: 48. On Zayn al-‘Abidīn Khān’s relationship to Ibrāhīm Khān Sartīp, see Daryagast, *Safar-Nama-i Balucistan: Az Mahan Ta Cahbahar*, 54; Sykes misidentifies Zayn al-‘Abidīn Khān as Ibrāhīm Khān’s son-in-law in *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia; Or, Eight Years in Irān*.

⁴²Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmāh-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, 259; India, *Gazetteer of Persia*, 4: 38.

⁴³The Cossacks were a military force, originally trained and officered by Russian advisors, formed in the late 1870’s by Nasir al-Din Shah.

fight with him against the Dāmani tribe, the Cossack instead killed all seven of their tribal khans. Sykes reported that “not content with this, he handed over their wives to the tender mercies of his soldiery, an outrage without parallel in Baluchi warfare.”⁴⁴ This indignity incited a full-scale rebellion which brought together nearly all of the major Balūchī khans against the Qājār appointee. The chief of the Dūzak tribe, Dilāvar Khān, besieged Abu al-Faṭḥ Khān at Fahraj in Narmāshīr. He escaped only when Nāṣir al-Dawlah and the new head of the provincial armies, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Khān Hishmat al-Dawlah, arrived at the head of Kirmān’s provincial armies and rescued Abu al-Faṭḥ Khān by placing him in chains and escorting him back to Kirmān City under arrest.⁴⁵

Following the siege at Fahraj, Nāṣir al-Dawlah rounded up the major Balūchī tribal leaders including Dilāvar Khān, Shāhdūst Khān II and Ḥusayn Khān Balūch.⁴⁶ According to a British report, this was accomplished by summoning the Balūchī khans to meet with him, with false promises of their safety, after which Nāṣir al-Dawlah betrayed their trust and escorted them to prison in Kirmān City, where they remained until 1894.⁴⁷ After the dismissal of Abu al-Faṭḥ Khān, Zayn al-‘Abidīn Khān was reinstalled as the Governor of Balūchistān and his brother, Ibrahīm Khān, was appointed *sartīp* of the artillery.⁴⁸ The Bihzādīs were again in command of the important frontier armies at Bam, with their work in Balūchistān made considerably easier with the death and imprisonment of nearly all the important tribal khans in the preceding years. This experience ultimately reaffirmed the importance of having local military leaders with knowledge and connections on the frontier in service of the state at its margins.

The Henna of Narmāshīr

In 1894, Kirmān’s governor ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Mīrzā Farmān Farmā

⁴⁴FO 60/580, Sykes to Salisbury, “Report on Persian Baluchistan,” (2 April 1896).

⁴⁵FO 60/580, Sykes to Salisbury, “Report on Persian Baluchistan,” (2 April 1896).

⁴⁶Vazīrī, *Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, 820.

⁴⁷FO 60/580, Sykes to Salisbury, “Report on Persian Baluchistan,” (2 April 1896).

⁴⁸Vazīrī, *Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, 818.

made a lengthy voyage through Balūchistān, during which he compiled information on geography, transportation, local administration, landownership, tax assessment, and the local elites among the settled and tribal populations. The product of this trip, his *Musāfaratnāmah-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, is undoubtedly the most important single work on the social history of 19th century Balūchistān.⁴⁹ It also contains an abundance of information on Bam’s local military elite, their responsibilities in maintaining order in Balūchistān, and their local proprietary interests. From the overall picture presented by Farmān Farmā, it is clear how fully the provincial military was dominated by the Bihzādī household by 1894, and how successful they were up to this time in maintaining Qājār power in a region where their authority was often tenuous at best. Farmān Farmā was quick to criticize and remove ineffective agents; it attests to the effectiveness of the Bihzādīs that he noted “no one of the elite or common classes of the tribes and peoples of Balūchistān has any sort of complaint or injustice to report.”⁵⁰

It is clear, firstly, that commerce benefited greatly from the political stability of the frontier. Exports of cotton, opium, carpets, and foodstuffs were significant in the 1890s. Locally, in Bam and Narmāshīr, henna production boomed and became a source of significant wealth for local landowners. Henna is produced from the leaves of the plant *lawsonia alba* which grew especially well in the arid, but well irrigated, lands of Narmāshīr. Oliver St. John notes visiting a small henna manufactory in Bam where “the dried leaves and stems brought from the villages in bundles are ground to powder by a large stone roller driven by a camel.”⁵¹ The vast majority of the crop seems to have been sent to Yazd, however. The ground powder produced in the manufactories was then mixed to form a dye used commonly for ritual and decorative purposes, finding large markets both domestically and in India.⁵² Percy Sykes’ first commercial report on Kirmān, while impressionistic, gives a good sense

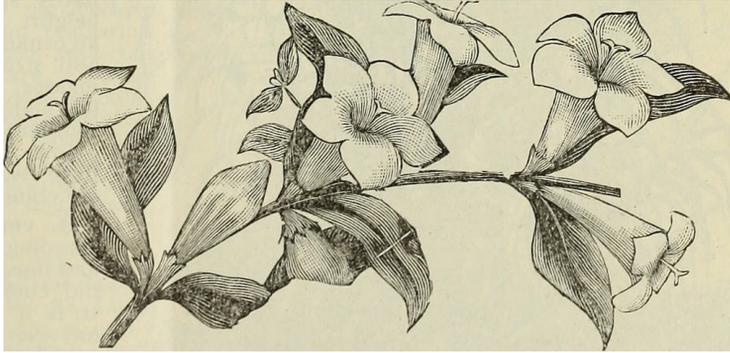
⁴⁹Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmah-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, 62-101.

⁵⁰Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmah-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, 259.

⁵¹Oliver St. John, “A Journey Through Baluchistan,” in *Eastern Persia*, 1: 86.

⁵²Husang Alam, “Henna,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

of the scope of the henna trade. He reports that 280,000 *mān* of henna valued at £28,000, which “comes entirely from Bam,” was mostly



Lawsonia Alba, from Royal Palm Nurseries, et.al., *Annual catalogue 1899*
native and exotic plants, trees, shrubs: 22

sent to processing facilities in Yazd in 1894-5. By comparison, this was more valuable than the entirety of Kirmān’s opium exports to Yazd and the Indian Ocean routes combined, and more than double the value of Kirmān’s cotton crop, of which Kirmān produced 200,000 *mān* worth £12,000 during the same year.⁵³

The commercial potential of henna lands was not lost on the elites of Bam. Some ten years after Ibrāhīm Khān Sa‘d al-Dawlah’s death, the military elites connected to his household and its immediate networks. Governing Balūchistān was a lucrative enterprise for Ibrāhīm Khān Sa‘d al-Dawlah and the Bihzādī household. Through the examination of several contemporary Persian accounts, including Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān Vazīrī-Kirmānī and ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Mīrzā Farmān Farmā’s notes on their landholdings and other economic activities, supplemented by the reports of British administrators, one can piece together a rough outline of the Bihzādī estate and its relationship to the patrimonialism of the Qājār provincial government. The primary source of the Bihzādīs’ wealth

⁵³Sir Percy Sykes, “Report on the Trade and Commerce of the Consular Districts of Kerman and Persian Beluchistan from March, 1894, to March, 1895,” *Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Trade and Finance: Command Papers; Accounts and Papers; 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers*, no.1671 (1896), 14.

was based on their right to collect taxes in Balūchistān.⁵⁴ It was only under the Bihzādīs, it seems, that any regular incomes from Balūchistān made their way to the provincial *divan*, the region remaining until the 1850's an autonomous tribal region only nominally under Qājār rule. Much like the *'āmils* in the core agricultural districts, the Bihzādīs were granted a share of these revenues before dispatching the remainder to the provincial *dīvān*. The sum they collected would undoubtedly have been enormous.

Ibrāhīm Khān Sa'īd al-Dawlah purchased, or acquired in lieu of pay, extensive tracts of land around Bam. As mentioned above, Ibrāhīm Khān was already counted by Vazīrī as one of Kirmān's four leading landholders in the early 1870s.⁵⁵ Possession of land provided the Bihzādīs not only with an additional source of revenue, but also a more substantial local rooting, landownership being a primary preoccupation of many civilian elite households. One major cluster of landholdings was a number of villages known collectively as Rīgān, which had once been in the hands of the Ra'īsī tribe. These were granted to Ibrāhīm Khān by the provincial government as *jāgīr*, a tax-free landholding.⁵⁶ Much like the more well-known *tūyūl* (land grant) system, this was a means of providing payment to military elites without the necessity, on the part of the government, of having to collect and distribute the tax revenues themselves. As was customary for tax collectors, Ibrāhīm Khān collected above the amount that would normally be remitted to the *dīvān*. According to one source, however, he did so in Rīgān so excessively that his heirs saw most of his properties there confiscated to compensate the rural notables they over-collected from.⁵⁷

His successors as Bihzādī rulers of Bam and Balūchistān, Zayn al-'Abidīn Khān and his brother Ibrāhīm Khān Sartīp, along with their immediate relatives, owned 10 villages between Bam and Bampūr, which accounted for a huge sum, roughly 1,260 kharvār, of Narmāshīr's agri-

⁵⁴Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 100.

⁵⁵Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 62.

⁵⁶India, *Gazetteer of Persia*, 4: 37.

⁵⁷India, *Gazetteer of Persia*, 4: 37.

cultural production.⁵⁸ It was his Ibrāhīm Khān Sa‘d al-Dawlah’s brother in-law, Sūlīmān Khān, who stands out most in his possession of extensive landholdings in Narmāshīr. His personal *milki* properties include 14 documented villages produced over 3,000 *kharvār* of produce in the summer, and an addition 160 *kharvār* of winter crops, chief among them the valuable henna cash crop. Sūlīmān Khān’s brother, Karīm Khān, a *sartip* in the *Fawj-i Shawkat* (Kirmān’s main provincial army), owned or rented five somewhat less productive villages.⁵⁹ It can be fairly assumed, then, that much of the property now in the hands of the Bihzādīs and the branch of the ‘Arab Bastamī household connected to Sūlīmān Khān, were inherited from what was once an extensive personal estate held by Ibrāhīm Khān Sa‘d al-Dawlah.

Even more interesting is the slightly less obvious, but no less significant, wealth acquired by new officeholders connected to the networks of the Bihzādī family. The provincial *lashkar nivīs*, or paymaster general, the link between the *dīvān* and the provincial militaries, was a certain Mirza Ghulām Riḏā who was himself a member of a local military elite family, the so-called Bamī household. Through his connection to government service, he was himself another of this small core of large landholders with seven villages producing some 1140 *kharvār* annually. Perhaps not incidentally, two of these villages were held jointly with figures connected to Ibrāhīm Khān’s estate: one with Sūlīmān Khān son Muḥammad Qāsim Khān Sarhang, and the other by the daughter of Ibrāhīm Khān himself. The state *khalīṣah* lands, too, which accounted for more than 10% of the land and agricultural produce in Narmāshīr, was also in the hands of the military elites through the *nāzim* and *mutasādī*, both hereditary offices under the control of the Bamī household.⁶⁰

While the local tribes, as well as local civilian elites from Bam and Fahraj, together continued to own significant tracts of villages and agricultural land, their holdings were rather modest individually. The head of the Sīstānī tribe held a bloc of six villages, but no other individual

⁵⁸Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmāh-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, 57, 62-101.

⁵⁹Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmāh-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, 66, 72-5, 85, 96, 98.

⁶⁰Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmāh-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, 95-101.

owned more than one or two small properties in Narmāshīr. On the other hand, this small core of Bam's military elite detailed above, along with their immediate networks, was now in control of close to 40% of the privately held (*milki*) properties between Bam and Bampūr according to the records of the provincial governor.⁶¹ While this account is certainly not a complete, exhaustive record, and many of the figures on population and agricultural yield are necessarily estimations, it does demonstrate a rather remarkable level of control over the agricultural economy in the hands of Bam's military elite in the most lucrative lands outside of the city. It also, likewise, shows that Ibrāhīm Khān's estate in Narmāshīr provided enormous wealth to his heirs and successors in the frontier and provincial armies and opportunities for network building and patronage. His legacy in the strength and importance of the Bam military elite laid not only in his personal prestige, and that of his household, but also in the enormous wealth he accumulated in his roughly thirty years on the Balūchistān frontier, which was deployed effectively by his successors to reproduce their power.

Noticeably absent among the major landholders in Narmāshīr is the Mīrzā'ī household, who, by the 1890's, represented the old guard of Bam's elite. Their decline in the mid to late 19th century is demonstrative of the general decline in the fortunes of the civilian elite in Bam connected to local religious institutions and stipendiary posts. The Mīrzā'īs were a local administrative household, holding high stipendiary posts in Bam and Narmāshīr from roughly the 1770s to the 1870s. After the death of 'Abd al-Vahhāb Khān in 1262/1845-1846, the head of the Mīrzā'ī household was Ḥājji Sayyid 'Alī Khān who was a wealthy, though profligate, man whose greatest legacy in Bam was the construction of the first of its three Qājār era *bāzārs*.⁶² He was also considered a poor administrator. Muḥammad Isma'īl Khān Vakīl al-Mulk appointed

⁶¹38 of 98 *milki* villages, excluding 12 *khalisa* properties and 3 bequeathed as *vaqf*, were held by the individuals above. This figure does not include a number of individuals who were not fully identifiable in contemporary sources, or were somewhat more distant members of these same households. Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnāmah-yi Kirmān va Balūchistān*, 95-101.

⁶²Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 95; Farmān Farmā, *Musāfaratnama-i Kirmān va Balucistan*, 54.

him the *mubāshir* of Bam and Narmāshīr in approximately 1860 along with the administration of the *khalīṣah* lands there. He was removed from these positions, it said, for abusing the position and had to sell his properties along with an additional 1000 tūmāns from other members of the Mīrzā'ī household, to pay off a rather hefty debt accrued through wasteful spending. Given the importance and prestige of the Mīrzā'īs, he eventually landed himself another position as head of the *dīvān* agents at Anār under Vakīl al-Mulk II, but again was removed after a short time for abusing his position, after which he retired and lived in relative poverty.⁶³ This hastened the decline of Bam's civilian elite, just as the Bihzādīs stepped in to take their place.

Conclusion

The importance of consolidating Qājār power in Balūchistān contributed to the emergence of a wealthy, powerful and highly centralized military elite in Bam. Ibrāhīm Khān Sa'īd al-Dawlah rose to power through his connections to two of the most prominent landowning and administrative families in the Bam region. His family came to be known as the Bihzādīs, and successfully passed down their status as heads of the frontier patrol within the family after Ibrāhīm Khān's death. What is most interesting about the Bihzādīs' frontier experience, though, is how they managed to leverage the sudden political importance of the borderlands to their material advantage. We find references in the informal land survey carried out by Kirmān's governor in 1894 that the Bihzādīs' possessed a significant share of the lucrative henna producing lands of the nearby agricultural district of Narmāshīr. This is not a systematic report, by any means, but the same general impression is given in the writings of administrators and travelers to the frontier zones. While historians have long discussed frontiers as sites of identity formation and mythmaking, this is a process rather remote from the frontier itself. While there is much more to be said about the experience of drafting, surveilling, and enforcing boundaries in the nineteenth century, this particular case study demonstrates one particular unintended consequence:

⁶³Vazīrī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Kirmān*, 101.

local players on the margins of empire skillfully took advantage of the needs of larger political networks to great reward.

This durability of Bihzādī leadership demonstrated clearly by the relative peace in Balūchistān following the assassination of Nasir al-Din Shah in 1896, just two years after Farmān Farmā's visit. Given the personal, patrimonial authority of the Shah, the death of Nasir al-Din meant essentially a lapse in government. This was exacerbated in Kirmān and Balūchistān not only by the troubled history of the province under Qājār rule, but also by a much circulated premonition attributed to the local 14th century Sufi Shah Ni'mat Allah Vālī that the last Shah of Iran would be named Nāṣir al-Dīn. Visitors also repeatedly comment on rumors that the British had eyes on annexing Persian Balūchistān. Remarkably, the immediate aftermath of the death of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh was met only by a petition to replace the governor of Balūchistān and saw no violent uprisings or confrontations. The only unrest noted by native chroniclers or British administrators was a group of 'Arab and Bahārlū tribesmen from Fārs who took advantage of the situation to raid and plunder a number of villages in Sīrjān in western Kirmān.⁶⁴ This would attest to the high level of stability achieved under the Bihzādīs and the military elite of Bam in the notoriously unstable tribal lands of Balūchistān in its relations with the Qājār state. So complete was their economic control, too, that in 1908, General Ducat, reporting on the grim commercial prospects of southern Iran, paused to marvel at the degree of prosperity in Narmāshīr, as well as the near total monopoly that the Bihzādīs enjoyed over it:

...the district of Narmāshīr... is practically divided between three or four landowners, who are millionaires already, and make large incomes yearly out of henna, though it has all to be sent as far as Yezd to be treated.⁶⁵

There are important similarities and contrasts in the roots of the social

⁶⁴Vazīrī, *Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, 828-29.

⁶⁵General Ducat, "Kerman and its Resources," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 56, no. 2918 (1908), 1021-2.

power of Bam's military elites and, for lack of a better word, the civilian elites of Kirmān's core agricultural districts. Ties to religious learning for these civilian elites provided not only socio-cultural standing, but also, by extension, access to prestigious stipendiary posts, including the administration of *vaqf* properties. On the other hand, landownership, while always a critical piece of elite household estates, became even more prominent with the rise of land prices and the size of urban household landholdings with the emergence of commercial agriculture in the mid-19th century. Religious learning and ownership of land provided these civilian elites with a base of social power independent of the Qājār state and their appointees in Kirmān City. The power of the state in collecting taxes and maintaining order was experienced by the local population through the hands of these households. This reciprocal relationship with Qājār appointees, in granting titles, offices and stipends in return for access and local knowledge, was the basis of the Qājār political system in the province.