CHAPTER ELEVEN

BETWEEN TEHRAN AND SULṬĀNIYYA.
EARLY QAJAR RULERS AND THEIR ITINERARIES

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The Qajars (1796-1925) are the last dynasty whose mother tongue was Turkish to have ruled over Iran. This might be a reason why some scholars of medieval Iran have tried to find similarities between the Qajars and the Turko-Mongol rulers they were investigating. Ann Lambton, for example, has found that the Saljuqs (eleventh-twelfth centuries) and the Qajars were very much alike as far as the role of prince governors and matrimonial alliances were concerned.\(^1\) One of the more obvious similarities, though, would seem to have been in their lifestyle. The fact that the Qajars spent a lot of time in Sulṭāniyya, the summer pasture elevated by the Mongol Ilkhan, Öljeitü, to the rank of capital, is particularly striking.\(^2\) Lambton points out that the royal court was constantly on the move, and cites the British envoy Sir Gore Ouseley, who remarked that Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, “like most members of the Kajár family, and of other northern tribes, preferred an erratic to a settled life; a village to a city, and a tent to a palace”.\(^3\) Although several researchers have already referred to the migrations of the Qajar courts, this issue has not been dealt with in any in-depth study.\(^4\) The aim of this chapter is to analyse as precisely as possible the itineraries of the early Qajars and their relationship with their capital, Tehran, and to assess the extent of these similarities. I have chosen to focus on the cases of Āqā Muḥammad Khān (from 1785 to his death in 1797) and his successor, Fatḥ ʿAli Shāh (r. 1797-1834), because their reigns were not much affected by modernisation or Westernisation.\(^5\)

\(^1\) Lambton 1988, 91-2.
\(^2\) In his article on the itineraries of the Öljeitü (end of the thirteenth century), Charles Melville mentions the regular summer migrations of the Qajar court outside Tehran. See Melville 1990, 64.
\(^3\) Lambton 1988, 91. Ouseley 1819-23, 3: 151.
\(^5\) Although Ebrahimnejad’s stimulating study on the Early Qajars contains some allusions to their residence (Ebrahimnejad 1999, 64-9), it focuses mainly on the formation of
A major problem in previous studies on early Qajar residences is that they relied heavily on European accounts and neglected Persian sources. European travellers such as Ouseley provide us with vivid eyewitness accounts, but the information is fragmented and cannot ultimately serve as a firm basis for the analysis. In contrast, the chronicles written at the Qajar court give precise data on the dates and the destinations of the royal travels. Furthermore, the chronicles, along with archival documents, provide us with a more complete list of early Qajar buildings, most of which have not survived to the present day. For Āqā Muḥammad Khān, the most important chronicle is Sārawī’s *Tārīkh-i muḥammadādī* (completed 1211/1796-7). Sārawī served as a *nadīm* (boon companion) and also as a *mullā-bāshī* (chief jurist), and he probably accompanied the shah in most aspects of his life. The *Tārīkh-i mulk-ārā* by Chūlawī also provides key dates and the Zand chronicles help us with the dates of military confrontations between the Qajars and the Zands. When there are contradictions between the sources, I have followed the *Tārīkh-i muḥammadādī* because it is the official history on Āqā Muḥammad Khān and was also compiled earlier than the *Tārīkh-i mulk-ārā*.8

For Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, the key source is Khāwarī’s *Tārīkh-i Dhu’l-qarnayn* (completed before 1255/1839-40). Khāwarī served the grand vizier Mirzā Muḥammad Shafī as *mutarassil* (secretary) for 17 years, and, after nine years in Nihāwand as the local vizier, became a private secretary to Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh in 1828.9 He had direct access to the shah and his vizier and may have accompanied them during their travels. He was also able to use earlier chronicles, such as Marwazi’s *Tārīkh-i jahān-ārā*, as sources for his work. The *Tārīkh-i jahān-ārā* is particularly useful for its description of the Qajar palaces and thrones.10 Other chronicles such as Dunbulī’s *Ma’āthir-i

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8 *Tārīkh-i mulk-ārā* was compiled in 1244/1829 on the orders of ‘Ali Qulī Mirzā Mulk-ārā, the second son of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh and governor of Māzandarān. See Chūlawī, fol. 3a-b. This work was the main source for later chronicles such as *Mulḥaqāt-i Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi nāṣiri* by Hidāyat.
9 Khāwarī a, 6-7, 697; Maḥmūd Mirzā, *Saḥīnaṭ*, 558-9.
10 We need a further survey of the manuscripts of this work. The British Library manuscript, dated 1236/1821 (= Marwazi a), only includes events up to the year of the Tiger (1806-7), while the *Maḥlīs* manuscript, dated 1243/1828 (= Marwazi b), covers events as late as the year of the Pig (1827-8). The last parts of both manuscripts contain descriptions of the palaces and thrones, which are slightly different.