

KARIM KHAN ZAND [Moḥammad-Karim], (b. c. 1705; d. Shiraz 13 Şafâr 1193/1 March 1779;), “The Wakil,” ruler of Persia (except Khorasan) from Shiraz during 1164-93/1751-79. The Zand were a pastoral tribe of the Lak branch of the northern Lors, ranging between the inner Zagros and the Hamadân plains, centered on the villages of Pari and Kamâzân in the vicinity of Malâyer. In 1732 Nâder Shah (q.v.) deported thousands of Baḳ-tiâni and a number of Zand families to Khorasan. After Nâder’s assassination in 1747, they made their way home, the Baḳ-tiâri under ‘Ali-Mardân Khan (see BAḲTIÂRI CHIEFS) of the Čahâr Lang, and the Zand under Moḥammad-Karim Beg (also called Tušmâl Karim, and later Karim Khan). When Nâder’s successors of the Afsharids (q.v.) failed to reassert their authority over western Persia, these two chieftains, in alliance with Abu’l-Fatḥ Khan Baḳ-tiâri (q.v.), a chieftain of the Hafî Lang branch of the Baḳ-tiâri, who nominally governed Isfâhan for the Afsharids, occupied the former Safâvid capital in 1750 in the name of a Safâvid princeling, Abu Torâb Mirzâ, whom they styled Esmâ’il II (actually the third monarch of that name; Nâmi, pp. 15-17; Golestâna, pp. 171-72). While the Zand leader, as commander-in-chief was pacifying the northern Lor areas and Kurdistan, ‘Ali-Mardân staged a coup: he killed Abu’l-Fatḥ Khan, invaded Fârs, and plundered Shiraz. On his way back he was ambushed in the narrow mountain pass known as Kotal-e Pir Zan (Kotal-e Doḳ-tar in Fasâi) by local musketeers and driven into the mountains (Moḥammad Kalântar, pp. 41-44; Nâmi, pp. 17-18; Golestâna, pp. 172-74; Fasâi, I, pp. 590-91).

Karim Khan, who had meanwhile returned to Isfâhan in January 1751 with an augmented army, sought out and defeated his rival in Baḳ-tiâni country. Karim Khan recovered Shah Esmâ’il III and assumed the Baḳ-tiâri khan’s title of *wakil al-dawla* or regent. Defeated again the following year, ‘Ali-Mardân Khan fled to Baghdad, where he joined the Pasha and other political exiles from Persia including Mirzâ Mahdi Khan Astarâbâdi (q.v., Nâder Shah’s ambassador to Istanbul and official chronicler) in acclaiming a new Safâvid pretender, styled Shah Soltân-ḤOoseyn II, and marched on Kermânšâh. He was again defeated and fled, but was later killed by a band of Zands (1754), led by Şayḳ--‘Ali Khan, whom he had captured. Karim Khan was now in control of western central Persia (‘Erâq-e ‘Ajam), and was attracting more adherents, not only from the local tribes but also from contingents still returning from Nâder Shah’s army of Khorasan, such as 6,000 families of Şaqâqi Kurds (Golestâna, pp. 175-83, 197-201, 292-303).

The struggle for power, 1751-63. Three other contenders for supremacy remained: Moḥammad-ḤOasan Khan of the Qovânlu clan of the Qajars of Astarâbâd, Āzâd Khan Afġân Ġelzây (q.v., who had been in command of an Afsharid contingent of 15,000 Afghans in Azerbaijan), and Fatḥ-‘Ali Khan Afšâr of Urmia. The Qajar chief had challenged the Zands in 1752 while they were besieging the fortress of Kermânšâh. They pursued him to Astarâbâd, but were driven back; Moḥammad-ḤOasan even captured Shah Esmâ’il III, and struck coins in his name. The Zands also lost the first battle with Āzâd Khan, who had arrived in 1753, too late to join forces with ‘Ali-Mardân. Āzâd Khan, in alliance with Fatḥ-‘Ali Khan Afšâr, took Isfâhan, and Karim Khan retreated into the Kuhgiluyâ hills. The Zand khans Moḥammad and Şayḳ--‘Ali had meanwhile taken the Kermânšâh fortress and were interrupting Āzâd Khan’s communications with Urmia. Karim Khan defeated Fatḥ-‘Ali Khan at Kamârej and pursued him back to Shiraz, which Āzâd Khan had to evacuate; on 13 Şafâr 1168/29 November 1754, Karim Khan first entered his future capital of Shiraz (Moḥammad Kalântar, pp. 49-52; Nâmi, pp. 45-46).

The next few years saw several confrontations between Āzâd Khan’s forces and the Qajars, culminating in a defeat for Āzâd Khan near Urmia in April 1757. Fatḥ-‘Ali Khan joined the Qajars, who again occupied the long-suffering city of Isfâhan. After an unsuccessful siege of Shiraz, Moḥammad-ḤOasan Khan was pushed back to Astarâbâd, and on 15 Jomâdâ II 1172/14 February 1759, he was defeated by an army under the command of Şayḳ--‘Ali Khan Zand and slain by a renegade Kurd. Karim Khan spent two winters in Tehran, where he completed a massacre of the Afghans remaining in Mâzandarân (already begun by the Qajar governor of Sâri), appointed new governors (some from the rival Davallu) over the former Qajar territories, and built a fortified residence which was the nucleus of the future Golestân palace (q.v.; Nâmi, p. 96; Doḳâ’, pp. 18, 42).

In the summer of 1760 Āzâd returned from refuge in Baghdad in an attempt to regain control of Azerbaijan, but his former allies, Fatḥ-‘Ali and Şahbâz Khan Donboli of Tabriz, turned on him and defeated him at Marâġa. Karim Khan then advanced into Azerbaijan, successively defeating the Afšâr and Donboli forces and taking Tabriz and Urmia in February 1763. Āzâd Khan, who had taken refuge with his old ally the Georgian monarch Erekle (Heradius), surrendered to Karim Khan and lived thereafter in honorable retirement at Shiraz. Fatḥ-‘Ali Khan Afšâr, who had also surrendered, was executed the following year at Isfâhan, as Karim Khan returned to Shiraz with a Qajar wife (Ķadiġa Bigom, sister of Moḥammad-ḤOasan Khan), considerable booty, and hostages for his newly appointed governors of the captured provinces. On the way he had to dispatch some of his forces to quash an insubordinate rampage by his cousin Zaki Khan, which stirred up the half-subdued Feyli Lors and several Arab tribes of Khuzestan in temporary rebellion. On 2 Şafâr 1179/21 July 1765, the Wakil re-entered Shiraz and remained there until his death almost fourteen years later (Ġaffârî, p. 145; Moḥammad Kalântar, p. 63).

The Wakil at Shiraz, 1765-79. Karim Khan defied everyone’s expectations, Iranians, French, and Russians (see, e.g., Donboli, II, p. 31; Carmelites, p. 664; Anunova and Ashrafyan, p. 111) by declining to assume the title of *šâh*. Not only was he content with that of *wakil* throughout his reign, but he reinterpreted this as *wakil al-ra’ayâ* “deputy of the subjects” or *wakil al-ġalâ’eq* “people’s deputy.” The former term was the designation of a local official, documented from the Safâvid through the Zand and Qajar periods (though often an ex-officio function of the *kalântar* “mayor,” or *ġâkem*, “city governor”), who was appointed by the shah to investigate crimes and complaints of administrative abuse (Perry, 1978, pp. 209-12). “Esmâ’il III,” who was kept in comfortable

confinement at the fortress at Ābāda, predeceased the Wakil in 1773, and the fiction of a Saʿāvid revival was quietly dropped.

Karim Khan still had to mount periodic campaigns to enforce the subservience of Lār, Yazd, Kermān, and Qajar-dominated Astarābād (Gorgān) and Māzandarān. He ultimately delegated Kermān to an Ismāʿīli *sayyed*, Abu'l-Ḥoasan ʿAlīshāh Maḥallāti, grandfather of the future Aga Khan (see ĀQĀ KHAN i. MAḤOALLĀTI); the *sayyed*'s piety and charisma assured the loyalty and obedience of his subjects, and his private income from the *k-oms* (the tithe from Ismāʿīli faithful, some as far away as India) precluded any likelihood of extortion or peculation. The Qajars never fully submitted, and though Karim Khan kept Āḡā Moḥammad Khan (q.v.) and several other Qajar notables at his court (including, briefly, Bābā Khan, the future Faṭḥ-ʿAli Shah), he never retaliated against them for the insubordination of their relatives in office (see, e.g., Eʿtemād al-Saltāna, p. 314).

Karim Khan did not attempt to recover Khorasan, which became a tributary of the Afghan monarch, Aḥmad Shah Dorrāni (q.v.). Likewise, he realized that his power, and that of his vassals in the northwest, could not realistically challenge the hegemony that the Georgian king Erekle (Heracilius) had established over Armenia and Azerbaijan north of the Aras River. He had limited success in controlling the Banu Kaʿb Arabs, the most powerful tribe in Khuzestan, with an expedition against them in 1757. In 1765 an amphibious assault by the Wakil, ʿOmar Pasha of Baghdad, and the British East India Company failed through poor co-ordination; the Persians were able to exact tribute by dint of breaching the Kaʿb's irrigation dam, but the tribe continued to dominate the Šaṭṭ-al-ʿArab region until the death of their leader, Shaikh Salmān, in 1768 (Perry, 1971).

To serve the commerce of his realm, with its center of gravity in Fārs, the Wakil authorized the East India Company (q.v.) to establish a trading post at Bušehr in 1765 (Wilson, pp. 178-79), and (like previous rulers, and with limited success) sought to co-opt their naval capacity to assist in subjugating the Arab shaikhs who dominated other Persian Gulf ports (notably Bandar Rig).

In 1768, the year of Shaikh Salmān's demise, Mir Mohannā Zaʿābi, the pirate ruler of Bandar Rig and Kārg Island, who had defied and harried the Zands and both the English and the Dutch East India Companies, was ousted by a mutiny, fled to the coast near Basra, and was captured by the Ottoman governor and executed. His career had begun with a campaign against the Dutch, who in 1753 leased a commercial base on Kārg Island from Mir Mohannā's father but neglected, their landlord claimed, to pay rent. Mir Mohannā captured their fort by trickery on New Year's Day 1766 and set them adrift, thereby obtaining an impregnable stronghold and a rich haul of merchandise (Floor, Wilson, pp. 179-81). The British, trading from Basra and hoping to gain Kārg themselves, cooperated in desultory and ineffective fashion with Karim Khan's forces, but again it was only internal accident that tamed the autonomy of yet another miniature sheikhdom of the Persian Gulf (Nāmi, pp. 161-68). Having secured the coastal approaches, Karim Khan in 1769 demanded tribute from the Imam of Oman and the return of Nāder Shah's ship, the *Raḥmāni*, which the Imam had bought from the Banu Maʿīn Arabs of Hormoz without the Karim Khan's consent. These demands were contemptuously rejected, and an intermittent state of war was maintained between Persia and Oman for most of the Zand period (Lorimer, pp. 411-12).

In 1775 the Wakil sent his brother (Moḥammad) Šādeq Khan to besiege Basra in Ottoman Iraq, which after a yearlong siege was taken and occupied until Karim Khan's death in 1779. Among the *casus belli* were ʿOmar Pasha of Baghdad's confiscation of the effects of Persian pilgrims to Najaf and Karbalā who had died during the plague of 1773, and his interference in the politics of the Kurdish principality of Ardalān (a joint Zand-Kurd force also mounted a diversionary campaign in Kurdistan). However, the epidemic had already significantly reduced commerce at the port, and when Moḥammad-ʿAli Khan Zand replaced Šādeq Khan as governor of occupied Basra, his rapacity led to his defeat in an ambush by the Arab tribe of the Montafēq in June 1778, followed by anarchy in the port. In December Šādeq Khan was sent back to restore order. He was there for barely three months before he received news of Karim Khan's death (Lorimer, p. 1264).

Karim Khan died in his seventies after a six-months illness, probably of tuberculosis, on 13 Šafār 1193/1 March 1779. He was buried three days later, with scant ceremony, in a garden (the Bāg-e Naẓār) adjacent to the palace, while his kinsmen pursued a murderous struggle for supremacy (Gaffāri, pp. 376-82; ʿAbd-al-Karim, pp. 5 ff.; Fasāʿi, I, pp. 614 ff.; Francklin, pp. 294-310; Jones Bridges, pp. cx ff.). His remains were subsequently moved to Tehran by Āḡā Moḥammad Khan Qājār, and later reportedly sent to Najaf by Faṭḥ-ʿAli Shah (qq.v.), which is contradicted by the report that Reza Shah had the bones exhumed and buried in Qom (Dokāʿ, pp. 111-21). Karim Khan's resting place is no longer known for certain.

Achievements and character. Karim Khan's relatively successful efforts to revive the economy of Fārs and western Persia focused on encouraging refugees (especially Armenians and Jews) to return to their homes and lands; community leaders, such as the Kalāntar of New Julfā, bearing letters from the Prelate, were sent to Baghdad expressly for this purpose (Yovhaneanc, p. 312). In 1763 one such caravan from Baghdad was said to have numbered about 10,000 returning refugees (Carmelites, I, pp. 662-63, 672). Grain subsidies in years of poor harvest and price controls in the capital were also a factor. In autumn of 1775, for instance, a severe famine in Isfāhan and Fārs obliged the Wakil to throw open the state granaries for the relief of the poor. Grain had to be brought from as far afield as Tehran, Qazvin, and even Azerbaijan, so that on arrival at Shiraz the cost had soared to fourteen times the nominal rate at which it was sold to the needy. Despite the urgings of his ministers to cover expenses, the Wakil insisted on distributing this grain at the fixed nominal rate, and the famine was eventually beaten (Āṣaf, pp. 421-22).

While encouraging the East India Company to operate from Bušehr, Karim Khan and his financial advisers were well aware of the

chronic problem then besetting Persia's international commerce, namely, the drain of silver from the country, caused by the unfavorable balance of trade with India, Afghanistan, and other countries on the Persian Gulf, since Persia suffered from a shortage of exportable goods sufficient to cover imports, so that the balance was made up from cash. Hence it was specifically stipulated in the first trade agreement concluded at Shiraz, in July 1763, that the Company was to take a fair proportion of goods in kind, "and not export from Persia the whole Amount of their sales in ready Money, as this will impoverish the Kingdoms [sic] and in the end prejudice Trade in general" (Jones Brydges, p. cix; East India Company, XVI, p. 781; Perry, 1979, pp. 259 ff.). This policy was regarded as unduly restrictive by the Company's Directors in London, who were naturally more concerned with maximizing their immediate profits.

Not only European but also Indian merchants were welcomed in Shiraz, which the Wakil largely rebuilt. His *arg* "citadel" (q.v.), mosque, and several gardens are still standing, while the city wall, several baths, and caravanserais and half of the Wakil's covered bazaar have been demolished, either by order of Āgā Moḥammad Khan when he captured the city in 1792, or during 20th century urban reconstruction. Karim Khan repaired the neglected tombs of Šāh Šojā', ḤOāfēz, and Sa'di. Zand and other Lak and Lor officers and their families were given housing in Shiraz; the capital soon boasted a population greater than that of Isfahan (perhaps 40-50,000) and attracted poets and artisans from that city (Donboli, I, pp. 241-42, 269, 271; Ġaffāri, pp. 387-461; Afsar, pp. 181 ff.).

'Abd-al-Razzāq Beg Donboli, the Wakil's hostage-guest from Tabriz, who went on to join the Qajar court and write a pompous history of his new patrons, memorializes the Zand court of Shiraz as a happy haze of wine, women, and verse. The Wakil's wives were chosen out of political or economic considerations, such as Qadija Bigom, the sister of Moḥammad-ḤOasan Khan Qājār, and another, unnamed, whose brother owned a clothier's store (Āṣaf, p. 345; Hedāyat, IX, p. 127); but his favorite concubine, and mistress in later years, was a witty courtesan called Šāḳ--e Nabāt "Sugar-Candy" (a name also used by ḤOāfēz and popularly believed to be that of the poet's beloved). When she died, the disconsolate Wakil had her portrait painted and a verse epithet composed by the court poet (and later historian), Mirzā Šādeq Nāmi (Āṣaf, p. 341; Waring, facing p. 61, a copy of the portrait; Donboli, quoted by Bahār, III, pp. 326-28).

The Wakil kept executive authority as his prerogative; his viziers were rubber stamps rather than colleagues in government. He entrusted military command almost exclusively to his closest kinsmen among the Zand, though other Lak and Lor officers were trusted with important tasks (ḤOeydar Khan Zangana was twice sent as an ambassador to Baghdad, while 'Abd-Allāh Khan Kalhor went as ambassador to Istanbul in 1775; Perry, 1979, pp. 191, 254-55). He was able to build a measure of trust and some lasting alliances with the bureaucrats, magnates, and religious leaders of the major cities of western Persia (sometimes without the traditional expediency of taking hostages: cf. Kermān, above, delegated to the Isma'ili *sayyed*, Abu'l-ḤOasan 'Alīšāh Maḥallātī). He endorsed the majority Imami Shi'a, and approved the traditional stipends for major dignitaries such as the superintendent (*motawalli*) of the shrine of Shah 'Abd-al-'Aẓim at Ray, south of Tehran; though he seems not to have courted the support of the ulema (*olamā*), and is said to have refused pensions to religious students, *sayyeds*, and dervishes, regarding them as parasites. He declared that his regulation of prices enabled them, like everyone else, to get by on what they had. On the other hand, the same source mentions that when a courtier advised against a dervish's petition to have a hostel (*takiya*) built for him and his visitors, charging that the man was fond of wine and hashish, Karim Khan retorted that if he had such extra expenses he would need a stipend as well, and duly assigned him one (Āṣaf, p. 309).

The dramatic enactment of the martyrdom of Imam ḤOosayn (q.v.) at Karbalā, known as *ta'ziya* or *šabih-k'āni*, most likely evolved during the Wakil's reign. It is not reported during the later Safavid period, when other aspects of the Moḥarram rituals became popular; but a visitor to Shiraz in 1786, during Ja'far Khan Zand's reign, watched performances of the well-known episodes of Qāsem's wedding and the European ambassador's protest to Yazid (Francklin, pp. 248-50). It is at any rate certain that Shi'ism as a component of Iranian identity, which came under threat during Nāder Shah's attempts to make peace with the Ottoman Turks, reasserted itself fully under the Zands.

His reputation for clemency and forbearance is marred by a few executions of Zand officers and of Faḥ-'Ali Khan Afsār in the early 1760s, and his blinding of Šayḳ--'Ali Khan Zand during a quarrel. Though stories abound of his personal courage, sexual prowess, and enjoyment of wine and perhaps opium, it is his strict fairness, sense of humor, and notable humanity that are most frequently recorded in popular anecdotes. Karim Khan made it a personal rule not to appropriate windfalls: just as in his years of struggle he distributed booty among his troops and new allies, so in the period of consolidation he refused to confiscate the residue of those deceased without immediate heir, and when, during the rebuilding of Shiraz, a pot of gold coins was unearthed he shared it out among the workers on the site. As Wakil, he retained his simple tastes in clothes and furniture, wearing the tall Zand turban of yellow cashmere and squatting on a cheap flatweave rug (*zilu*) instead of a throne. He had gifts of jewelry broken down and sold to top up the treasury (see Āṣaf, pp. 310, 420, 421). He is still generally regarded among rulers of Persia as, if not the greatest by conventional criteria, undoubtedly the best. Sir John Malcolm thus characterized his reign: "The happy reign of this excellent prince as contrasted with those who preceded and followed him, affords to the Historian of Persia that description of mixed pleasure and repose which a traveller enjoys who arrives at a beautiful and fertile valley, in the midst of an arduous journey over barren and rugged wastes" (quoted by Jones Brydges, pp. cii, see also pp. cx ff.; Francklin, pp. 294-310).

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