



## AFŻAL KHAN

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**AFŻAL KHAN**, title of MOLLĀ ŠOKRALLĀH ŠĪRĀZĪ, Mughal court official (ca. 978-1048/1570-1639). Born in Shiraz, in his late thirties he went to India, where he eventually attained the position of prime minister (*dīvān-e koll*) under the Mughal emperor Shah Jahān (r. 1037-68/1628-58); the official court history gives the chronogram for this event as *šod Aflāṭūn wazīr-e Eskandar*, “Plato became the vizier of Alexander” (1038/1629; ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd Lāhūrī, *Pādešāh-nāma*, ed. K. Aḥmad and ‘Abd-al-Raḥīm, 2 vols., Calcutta, Bib. Ind., 1867-68, Ia, p. 495). Mollā Šokrallāh’s father, Qāsem, was a scribe employed in government service who probably trained both his sons in the art of calligraphy; the other son, ‘Abd-al-Ḥaqq, later titled Amānat Khan, designed the calligraphy on the famed Tāj Maḥall (W. E. Begley, “Amānat Khān and the Calligraphy on the Tāj Maḥal,” *Kunst des Orients* 12, 1978-79, pp. 5-60). Šokrallāh was a star pupil of Shah Taqī-al-dīn Moḥammad Šīrāzī; after completing his education, he joined the royal camp at Qazvīn, where his skills in literary composition gained him the patronage of the powerful noble Farhād Khan Qarāmānlū, who was then on intimate terms with Shah ‘Abbās. When his patron fell from royal favor and was executed, Mollā Šokrallāh left Herat for Hamadān, where he spent some years in the service of Mīrzā Ebrāhīm Ḥosaynī Hamadānī.

Around 1017/1608 he emigrated to India; in Borhānpūr, he became the protégé of the renowned Mughal noble ‘Abd-al-Raḥīm Kān-e Kānān (964-1037/1556-1627). Three years later he became the personal secretary of the rising young prince Korram (the later Shah Jahān), in whose service he remained until his death. He received the title Afżal Khan in 1024/1615, in



recognition of his skilled diplomacy during the campaign against the Rānā of Udaipur; his helpful role in the turbulent times of Shah Jahān’s struggle for the throne was ultimately rewarded by his appointment as prime minister at the beginning of the new emperor’s second regnal year. Finally Afżal Khan was appointed to the *manṣab* rank of seven thousand—the highest rank granted by Shah Jahān to any noble, aside from his own father-in-law Āṣaf Khan. Afżal Khan was the patron of poets and authors, like Čandar Bhān Brahman, Jalāl-al-dīn Ṭabāṭabā’ī, and Moḥammad Amīn Qazvīnī, the latter two of whom were exponents of the so-called “pure” literary style of Iran, as opposed to the “ornate” style preferred by Indian followers of Abu’l-Faẓl. None of Afżal Khan’s literary works seems to have survived, but a diplomatic letter authored by him is cited verbatim in the *Pādešāh-nāma* (Ia. pp. 357-61). Renowned for his erudition and wit, he is frequently referred to in the court chronicles by his honorific title ‘Allāmī, or “most learned.” He died in Lahore on 12 Ramaẓān 1048/17 January 1639 at the age of seventy, following an illness during which the emperor had honored him by a personal visit. Buried at Agra, presumably in the tomb known as Čīnī-kā-Rawẓa, he was survived by his adopted son ‘Enāyatallāh, called ‘Āqel Khan, the real son of his brother Amānat Khan.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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