



'ALAM KHAN

'ALAM KHAN 'ARAB-E QOZAYMA, AMIR, viceroy of the Afsharid state of Khorasan, 1161-68/1748-54. The son of Esmā'īl Khan, one of Nāder Shah's chief officers, 'Alam Khan campaigned for Nāder Shah with his father at the head of the contingent of Qozayma Arabs (who had been settled in Khorasan since the 2nd/8th century). After Nāder's death in 1160/1747, most of his heterogeneous army broke up when the Afghan corps (under Aḥmad Khan, later Shah) and the various tribal contingents from western Iran went home; thus 'Alam Khan and the other local amirs with their Arab, Kurdish, and Sīstānī troops were the main, and finally the sole, military power in the province. In Šawwāl, 1161/October, 1748, to legitimize their authority, they placed on the throne Šāhroḡ, Nāder's seventeen-year-old grandson by a daughter of the last Safavid shah. Two months later, Šāhroḡ felt his position challenged by the return to Mašhad of Mīr Sayyed Moḥammad, the popular and influential superintendent (*motawallī*) of the shrine; but his attempts to assassinate the sayyed misfired, and he alienated 'Alam Khan and the other amirs by withholding their expected perquisites and demanding that they get rid of his rival. They reacted by persuading the sayyed to head a coup d'état, and on 20 Moḥarram 1163/31 December 1749 occupied the palace. Šāhroḡ was imprisoned, and two weeks later the sayyed was enthroned as Shah Solaymān II Šafawī, with 'Alam Khan as his viceroy (*wakīl al-dawla*).

However, the new king's policies of subsidizing his Safavid kinsmen, curtailing the customary requisitions and extortions during the inaugural tax amnesty, and breaking up Nāder's hoard of jewels for sale, soon exasperated the



Kurdish and Jalāyer amirs on the fringe on the junta (Moḥammad-Hāšem, *Tadkera-ye Āl-e Dā'ūd*, fols. 110-11; Maḥ'ašī, *Maǧma' al-tawāriḳ*, p. 127). Presumably to insure against a counter-coup, 'Alam Khan took advantage of the shah's absence on a hunting trip to have Šāhroḳ blinded. Nevertheless the dissatisfied amirs, led by Yūsuf-'Alī Khan Jalāyer, were encouraged by Šāhroḳ's wife—who claimed that he had not really been blinded—to revolt and restore him to the throne on 11 Rabī' II 1163/17 February 1750. However, Yūsuf-'Alī found it impossible to establish his authority with a blind shah and a dwindling treasury; he and his associates absconded with the remaining jewels from Nāder's hoard towards Kalāt. 'Alam Khan intercepted them and hauled them back to Mašhad and execution. Solaymān II refused to cooperate further, and 'Alam Khan was obliged to reach a compromise with Šāhroḳ. Assaults on the other cities of Khorasan, notably Nīšāpūr (held by Bayāt tribesmen), and a marriage alliance with the Šādellū Kurds gave him a precarious control over the province (*Golestāna, Moǧmal al-tawāriḳ*, p. 66).

In 1164/late 1750 Aḥmad Shah Dorrānī of Afghanistan recaptured Herat and invaded Khorasan. Deserted by most of his allies, 'Alam Khan retired to the fortress of Tūn (Ferdaws); however, stout resistance at Nīšāpūr and a severe winter forced the Afghans to retire. For the next three years, while Aḥmad Shah was occupied with conquests in India, 'Alam Khan retained his hold over Khorasan mainly by force. In 1167/1754 he was again besieging Nīšāpūr when another incursion by Aḥmad Shah forced him to withdraw to defend Mašhad. Again his largely Kurdish army disintegrated, and 'Alam Khan fled to Sabzavār (Ḥosaynī, *Tāriḳ-eAḥmadšāhī*, fols. 18b-20b); the Čamešgazak Kurds, who had suffered at 'Alam Khan's hands, joined Aḥmad's forces to besiege Mašhad and, with the Afghan monarch's backing, extradited 'Alam Khan from Sabzavār and beheaded him (*ibid.*, fols. 28a-30b). Soon after, on 16 Šafar 1168/2 December 1754, Mašhad came to terms with the Afghans, and remained effectively a protectorate of the Dorrānī empire for the next twenty years.

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