



A'ZAM KHAN

A'ZAM KHAN, AMIR MOḤAMMAD, the fifth son of Amir Dōst Moḥammad Khan and the third amir of the Moḥammadzay line, ruler of Afghanistan in 1284/1867-1285/1868. Born at Kabul in 1236/1820 from a daughter of Mollā Ṣādeq 'Alī, the *sardār* of the Bangaš tribe, he received a thorough education under his father's supervision (Fayẓ Moḥammad, *Serāj al-tawārīk*, p. 251; Kāfi, *Pādešāhān-e mota'akker* I, p. 197). A'zam Khan was with his father at the time of the latter's defeat in the first [Anglo-Afghan war](#) on 1 Jomādā II 1255/12 August 1839 and his subsequent flight to Bukhara. In 1256/1840 Dōst Moḥammad returned to Afghanistan and was eventually sent in exile to Calcutta, while A'zam Khan worked with other Afghan chiefs to stir the Andar and Solaymān-kēl tribes around Ġazna against the British domination, later joining his father in India (*Serāj*, p. 160; Farroḳ, *Tārīk-esiāsī*, p. 133). When general uprising forced the British to evacuate Afghanistan, Dōst Moḥammad Khan was allowed to return to Kabul, where he re-ascended the throne in 1259/1843 and appointed his sons to governorships of provinces, making A'zam Khan governor of Lōgar, south of Kabul. In 1268/1851, during the amir's absence on a campaign to subdue a revolt of the Tūkī and Hōtakī tribes, A'zam Khan was acting governor of Kabul (*Serāj*, p. 200; *Tārīk-esiāsī*, p. 169). In 1272/1855 he subdued members of the royal family who were resisting his father at Qandahār. Later he was governor of Kūram (Kurram) and Kōst, south of Kabul. In 1274/1857 he was commissioned to pacify the lands north of the Hindu Kush range and to help his brother [Amir Moḥammad Afzal Khan](#) (*Serāj*, pp. 220-31; *Tārīk-esiāsī*, p. 173; *Pādešāhān-e mota'akker* I, p. 200). In Šawwāl, 1278/1862 he accompanied his father on the successful expedition to Herat,



where Amir Dōst Moḥammad died on 21 Du'l-ḥejja 1279/9 June 1863. From among his twenty-seven sons, Šēr-'Alī was chosen on 24 Du'l-ḥejja to be the next amir. Although Moḥammad A'zam Khan is said to have obtained oaths of allegiance to Šēr-'Alī from the people in the Great Mosque of Herat, he secretly wrote to his elder brother Afzal Khan at Balk urging the latter to seize Kabul, he himself assuming governorship of Kūram and Kōst (*Pādešāhān-e mota'akker* I, p. 40; *Serāj* I, p. 252; *Tārīk-esiāsī*, p. 202). Amir Šēr-'Alī Khan faced opposition from brothers and relatives on all sides, not least from A'zam Khan in Kūram who marched against Kabul in 1281/1864, but was defeated by a strong force sent out under the command of Moḥammad-Rafīq Khan Lūdīn, forcing him to escape to Rawalpindi in India (*Serāj* I, p. 264; *Tārīk-esiāsī*, p. 203). When his nephew Sardar 'Abd-al-Raḥmān Khan, who had gone to Bukhara after suffering defeat in a battle at Bājgāh in Moḥarram, 1281/1864, sent a letter urging him to proceed to Balk, he immediately left Rawalpindi and made his way thither through Swat, Chitral, and Badaḳšān, arriving just at the time when Balk fell to 'Abd-al-Raḥmān (*Serāj* II, pp. 268, 278, 281, 289; Aṣaf Khan, *Tārīk-eSwāt*, p. 116). The two then marched on Kabul, captured the city, and released Afzal Khan from imprisonment at Ġazna and placed him on the throne (*Serāj*, p. 289; Ġobār, *Afḡānestān*, p. 591; *Tārīk-esiāsī*, p. 210). A'zam Khan also captured Qandahār in Ramazān, 1283/1866; but facing resistance from Šēr-'Alī at Herat and hearing the news of A'zam Khan's illness he had to return to Kabul. Afzal Khan died at Kabul in Jomādā II 1284/1867 and Moḥammad A'zam Khan succeeded him as the amir (*Serāj*, p. 295; *Tārīk-esiāsī*, p. 215; *Pādešāhān-e mota'akker* I, p. 197; Afḡānī, *Tatemmat al-bayān*, p. 135; *Afḡānestān*, p. 591); and his accession was officially recognized by the Governor General of India on 26 Ša'bān 1284/1867 (Lahore Archives). At this time Sayyed Jamāl-al-dīn Afḡānī (Asadābādī) was attached to his court at Kabul (Afḡānī, *Asnād o madārek*, p. 156).

A'zam Khan's rule was marked by civil war and atrocities committed by his sons (Nūrī, *Golšan-e emārat*, p. 127). Šēr-'Alī marched from Herat against Qandahār and Kabul, defeating A'zam in battles at Šeš-gāv and Zana-ḳān. A'zam left Kabul in Jomādā I 1285/1868, escaping to Sīstān and eventually reaching Mašhad (1286/1869) via Bīrjand (*Serāj* II, pp. 296, 307, 314). Late in the same year he set out for Tehran, but fell ill when he reached Šāhrūd and died there at the age of fifty. His remains were buried in the nearby cemetery of Bāyazīd Beštāmī (*Serāj* II, p. 325; *Tārīk-esiāsī*, p. 228). The length of his reign was eleven months.



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