



## FAYẒ MOḤAMMAD KĀTEB

**FAYẒ MOḤAMMAD KĀTEB**, Afghan court chronicler and secretary to the amir Ḥabīb–Allāh Khan (q.v.; r. 1319-37/1901-19). FayẒ Moḥammad was born in 1279/1862-63, in the village of Zard Sang in the Qarābāḡ district of Ghazni (Ġaznī), and died in Kabul in 1931. His father, Saʿīd Moḥammad b. Ḳodāydād, was of the Moḥammad Ḳvāja clan (*qawm*) of the Hazāras. FayẒ Moḥammad spent his youth in Qarābāḡ, tutored in Arabic and the Qurʾān by local mullahs, but in 1297/1880 he and his family moved first to Nāwor (also a district of Ghazni), and then, because of sectarian strife, to Qandahār in the same year. In 1305/1887 he left Qandahār for a year’s travel that took him to Lahore and Peshawar where he spent some time studying English and Urdu. He eventually landed in Jalālābād and was invited in 1306/1888 to join the administration of the Afghan amir ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Khan (r. 1297-1319/1880-1901). He was soon attached to the entourage of the amir’s eldest son, Ḥabīb–Allāh Khan, at the recommendation of one of his teachers, Mollā Sarwar Eshāqzāʿī (Shkirando, p. 13). FayẒ Moḥammad accompanied the prince from Kabul to Jalālābād in 1311/1893-94 (*Serāj al-tawārīk* III, p. 990). There is a manuscript attributed to him, dated 29 Rajab 1311/5 February 1894, which places him in Jalālābād at this time. In 1314/1896, when Ḥabīb–Allāh’s younger brother Naṣr–Allāh Khan toured England on a state visit, Ḥabīb–Allāh assigned FayẒ Moḥammad to copy and post in the Čārsūq, Kabul’s main market-place, the detailed letters sent back by Naṣr–Allāh recounting his activities, so that “noble and commoner alike would be apprised of the honor and respect that the English were according him” (*Serāj al-tawārīk* III, p. 1107).



During Ḥabīb–Allāh’s reign, Fayz Moḥammad was involved, if only peripherally, with the Young Afghan movement led by Maḥmūd Beg Ṭarzī. He is said to have been associated with the publication of Ṭarzī’s reformist journal, *Serāj al-aḵbār*, and three other journals, *Anīs*, *Ḥayy ‘alā’l-falāḥ*, and *Ā’īna-ye ‘erfān*. After the assassination of his patron in 1337/1919, Fayz Moḥammad worked for a time at the Ministry of Education on textbook revision. Some time later, he was appointed to a teaching position at the Ḥabībīya Lycée in Kabul (Shkirando, p. 13).

During the reign of Amān–Allāh Khan (q.v.; r. 1919-29), the Iranian minister in Kabul Sayyed Maḥdī Farroḵ compiled a “who’s who” of contemporary Afghan leaders. His sketch of Fayz Moḥammad characterizes him as a devout Shi’ite, highly regarded by the Qezelbāš community of Kabul, as well as a leader among his own people, the Hazāras, and an important source of information for the Persian mission about what was going on in the capital (Farroḵ, 1991, pp. 252-54).

In 1929, the Tajik outlaw Ḥabīb–Allāh Kalakānī, known to history as Bačča-ye Saqqā (son of the water-carrier; q.v.), ousted Amān–Allāh Khan and took control of Kabul for nine months (January to October 1929). During this uprising Fayz Moḥammad, who spent almost the entire period inside the city, kept a journal which was the basis for an unfinished monograph entitled *Ketāb-e tadakkor-e enqelāb* which he began shortly after the fall of Bačča-ye Saqqā.

During the occupation, Fayz Moḥammad was forced to take part in a delegation sent by Kalakānī to negotiate with Hazāra groups opposing the Tajik leader. According to his account, he managed to subvert Kalakānī’s plans and caused the mission to fail. However, he and the mission’s leader, Nūr-al-Dīn Āgā, a Qezelbāš Shi’ite from Kabul, paid a heavy price for this: both were sentenced to death by beating. Fayz Moḥammad alone survived the ordeal and was saved by a colleague. The Persian mission in Kabul, under a directive from Reżā Shah to do what it could to aid the Shi’ites of Kabul, sent medicines to his house. He eventually recovered enough to travel the following year to Tehran for more medical care. After less than a year there, he returned to Kabul, where he died on 6 Šawwāl 1349/3 March 1931, at the age of sixty-eight or sixty-nine (Shkirando, p. 24).

Fayz Moḥammad is best known for his books on Afghan history. During Ḥabīb–Allāh’s reign, he accepted two commissions to write a comprehensive



history of Afghanistan covering events from the time of Aḥmad Shah down through the reign of Ḥabīb–Allāh Khan. The first was a history of Afghanistan entitled *Toḥfat al-ḥabīb* (Ḥabīb’s gift) in honor of the amir, but Ḥabīb–Allāh Khan deemed the finished work unacceptable and ordered Fayẓ Moḥammad to start over. The revised version is the three-volume history of Afghanistan entitled *Serāj al-tawārīk* (Lamp of Histories), an allusion to the amir’s honorific “Lamp of the Nation and Religion” (*Serāj al-mella wa’l-dīn*). There were also problems in publishing it, the third volume never being completely printed. It is thought that the process of publishing the third volume lasted several years and only ended after Ḥabīb–Allāh Khan’s death (Romodin, 1969, p. 114). According to Moḥammad Ġobār (p. 396), publication on the third volume was halted at page 1,240 for unspecified reasons. Ḥabīb–Allāh Khan’s successor, Amān–Allāh Khan, was initially interested in the work and typesetting resumed in the mid-1920s, but when the amīr reviewed the material in it on Anglo-Afghan relations, he reportedly changed his mind, and ordered all published but still incomplete copies of the third volume taken from the press and burned (Shkirando, p. 17). Despite this reaction, Fayẓ Moḥammad continued work on his chronicle. The manuscript of the remainder of the third volume is widely believed to have been finished, and the autograph was reportedly turned over to the Afghan archives by Fayẓ Moḥammad’s son. Volumes devoted to Ḥabīb–Allāh Khan and Amān–Allāh Khan may also have been written. A *farmān* issued by the latter announced that Fayẓ Moḥammad had been ordered to complete the *Serāj* and then begin work on a chronicle of the reign of Amān–Allāh Khan to be entitled *Tārīk-e ‘aṣr-e amāniya*. There is some evidence to suggest he did indeed carry out these commissions, although nothing more was ever published (Shkirando, p. 18).

Besides the monumental *Serāj al-tawārīk*, Fayẓ Moḥammad wrote the following works: (1) *Tārīk-e ḥokamā-ye motaqaddem*, compiled while he was working at the Ministry of Education; (2) *Fayẓ al-foyūzāt*, a fragment of which, called “Afghan treaties and agreements (*‘ahd wa mītāq-e afḡān*) was published in Sayyed Mahdī Farroḳ’s *Tārīk-e siāsī-ye Afḡānestān* (Tehran, 1314 Š./1935) and which, in tune with the times, was a sharp critique of the late ‘Abd–al-Raḥmān’s relations with the British; (3) *Faqarāt-e šar‘iya*, which is not known to have survived; and (4) *Nasab-nāma-ye ṭawā’ef-e afāḡena wa ta’addod-e nofūs-e iṣān*, also known as *Neẓād-nāma-ye afḡān*, a description of Afghan tribes and non-Afghans residing in Afghanistan. The *Neẓād-nāma* was published in Persia in 1933 from a manuscript thought to be the autograph and held in the Ketāb-kāna-ye mellī-ye malek in Tehran (ms. no. 3730). Other works of Fayẓ



Moḥammad, many of which have been lost, are listed by the editors of *Neẓād-nāma* (pp. 29–32).

FayẒ Moḥammad was also a skilled calligrapher, a talent that first attracted the attention of Ḥabīb–Allāh Khan. Among the works he is known to have copied is a 230 folio collection of *farmāns* issued by the Mughal ruler Awrangzēb (r. 1068–1118/1658–1707) which he completed in Jalālābād in 1312/1894; the divan of Šehāb-e Toršizī, a late 18th century poet from Herat; and *Resāla-ye fūz*, a treatise on explosives (Shkirando, p. 20).

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