



ZAND DYNASTY

ZAND DYNASTY (1164-1209/1751-94), a dynasty that ruled in Persia (excluding Khorasan) from Shiraz, from the time when [Nāder Shah](#)'s (r. 1736-47) successors, the [Afsharids](#), failed to recover western Persia until the founding of the Qajar dynasty by [Āgā Moḥammad Khan Qājār](#) (r. 1779-97).

Karim Khan, 'the Wakil' (1164-93/1751-79). The founder of the dynasty was Moḥammad Karim Khan b. Ināq Khan ([Figure 1](#); commonly known as [Karim Khan Zand](#)) of the Bagala branch of the Zand, a pastoral tribe of the Lak branch of Lors (perhaps originally Kurds; see Minorsky, p. 616), with winter ranges on the Hamadan plains near Malāyer and summer pastures in the Zagros slopes north of Kermanshah. He and many of his tribe had been deported to Khorasan in 1144/1732 by Nāder Shah and served in the latter's army. Soon after Nāder's assassination in 1160/1747, Karim Khan led his people home. In alliance with 'Ali-Mardān Khan Baḳtiāri, he captured Isfahan in 1163/1750 and installed a Safavid puppet ruler, Shah Esmā'il III (r. 1750-65, d. 1773). The next year, Karim Khan defeated a bid by 'Ali-Mardān Khan for sole power, and adopted his rival's title of *wakil-al-dowla* ('deputy of the state,' or regent). After defeating three other contestants for power, he pacified most of western and central Persia from the Caspian littoral and Azarbaijan to Kerman and Lār (Ġaffāri, pp. 42-199), and ruled at Shiraz from 1179/1765 until his death in 1193/1779.

Throughout his life, Karim Khan never assumed the title of king (*šāh*), but was known as the *wakil* ('deputy'). Moreover, he further interpreted this title as *wakil-al-ra'āyā* ('deputy of the subjects'), which was the term for a local official



appointed by the shah to investigate crimes and complaints of government abuse (Donboli, 1970-71, II, p. 31; Perry, 2007, pp. 41-43). The Safavid Esmā'īl III predeceased him in 1187/1773, and the fiction of a Safavid revival was quietly dropped. Karim Khan did not attempt to recover the Afsharid Khorasan which became a tributary of the Afghan monarch Aḥmad-Šāh Dorrāni (r. 1747-73; see [AFGHANISTAN x](#)).

Karim Khan devoted his efforts to reviving trade and agriculture in Fārs and western Persia. He rebuilt Shiraz (Ġaffāri, pp. 355-58), concluded commercial agreements with the British East India Company (see [EAST INDIA COMPANY \[THE BRITISH\]](#)) at Bušehr, and in 1775-79 he besieged and occupied Basra in Ottoman Iraq. He never fully subjugated the Qajars of Astarābād, and on his death Āġā Moḥammad Khan Qājār, his hostage for sixteen years, escaped from Shiraz and began to consolidate Qajar power in the north of Persia.

From Šādeq Khan to Ja'far Khan (1193–1204/1779–89). None of Karim Khan's five successors formally adopted his title of 'deputy' (*wakil*), nor did they take that of 'shah.' The first three of them ruled nominally for one of Karim Khan's sons, and the last two are referred to in Persian sources by a conventional imperial epithet or simply as 'khan,' but often as 'the king' by European observers (see Fasā'i, tr. Brydges, pp. cxxv-clxxxv, *passim*). Karim Khan had probably expected his capable younger brother and lieutenant, Moḥammad-Šādeq Khan (known as Šādeq Khan), to succeed him, since his two adult sons, Abu'l-Faṭḥ (see [ABU'L-FATH KHAN ZAND](#)) and Moḥammad-'Ali, were incompetent to rule. However, Šādeq Khan was administering Basra and did not return in time to forestall his rivals among the leading Zand khans. Karim Khan's half-brother Zaki Khan, allied with '[Ali-Morād Khan Zand](#)' of the Hazāra branch of the Zand and ostensibly proclaiming Karim Khan's son Moḥammad-'Ali (who was also Zaki Khan's son-in-law), treacherously killed Naẓar-'Ali Khan and Šayḳ-'Ali Khan of the Zand-e Bagala and their supporters, who had battered onto Abu'l-Faṭḥ, the eldest son of Karim Khan (see dynastic table; Ġaffāri, pp. 374-83). On Šādeq Khan's arrival at Shiraz he was deserted by his army, when Zaki Khan threatened reprisals on their families in Shiraz, and fled to Bam.

In 1779 Zaki Khan sent 'Ali-Morād Khan Zand in pursuit of Āġā Moḥammad Khan Qājār who had fled from Shiraz to Māzandarān, but 'Ali-Morād Khan rebelled at Isfahan in the name of Abu'l-Faṭḥ. Marching against him, Zaki Khan committed such atrocities at the village of Izadḳvāst that his own men mutinied and killed him. Šādeq Khan was thus enabled to return and occupy

Shiraz, but he was still opposed by 'Ali-Morād Khan. The latter was joined by Zaki Khan's youngest son [Akbar Khan Zand](#), and after an eight-month blockade Shiraz fell by treachery in February 1781. On 'Ali-Morad Khan's order, Akbar Khan killed the two surviving sons of Karim Khan (Abu'l-Fath and Moḥammad-'Ali), as well as Şādeq Khan together with all his sons except Ja'far Khan, who had come to terms privately with 'Ali-Morād Khan. However, 'Ali-Morād Khan soon became suspicious of Akbar Khan's ambitions and inspired Ja'far Khan to avenge his father and brothers by putting Akbar Khan to death in 1782 (Ġaffāri, pp. 466-71).

'Ali-Morād Khan (r. 1781-85) was faced with a resurgence of Qajar power and established his capital strategically at Isfahan. He campaigned energetically in Māzandarān, but Ja'far Khan took advantage of his absence to march on Isfahan. Hastening to defend his capital in midwinter while ill, 'Ali-Morād Khan died at Murčakur in February 1785. His reign, which saw the Zands relinquish claims to Persia north of Isfahan, may be seen as the watershed between Zand and Qajar history (Ġaffāri, pp. 471-693).

Ja'far Khan (r. 1785-89), through his energetic son Loṭf-'Ali Khan, subdued Lār and Kerman and re-occupied Isfahan, but he was driven out twice by Āḡā Moḥammad Khan Qājār and fell back on Shiraz. His treachery in dealing with his own supporters provoked a mutiny, led by Şeyd-Morād Khan, the cousin of 'Ali-Morād Khan of the Zand-e Hazāra, in which Ja'far Khan was killed (Ġaffāri, pp. 693-756). Şeyd-Morād Khan sent a force under his brother Şāh-Morād against Ja'far Khan's son Loṭf-'Ali Khan, who was then at Kerman, but these troops mutinied and Loṭf-'Ali Khan was able to return to Shiraz, which the city's mayor (*kalāntar*) Ḥāji Ebrāhim (1745-1800 or 1801; see [EBRĀHĪM KALĀNTAR ŞİRĀZĪ](#)) had secured in his favor (Ġaffāri, pp. 756-60).

Loṭf-'Ali Khan (1204-09/1789-94). Loṭf-'Ali Khan, Ja'far Khan's young son (b. 1182/1769), was the only one of Karim Khan's successors to win admiration for his courage and integrity (see Fasā'i, tr. Brydges, pp. cxx-cxci; Malcolm, II, pp. 175-201). Having recovered Shiraz from the mutineers, he then held it against a determined Qajar assault. His downfall was precipitated by a mutual distrust between him and Ḥāji Ebrāhim. On his way to attack Isfahan in 1206/1791, Loṭf-'Ali Khan was deserted by most of his army on the instigation of Ḥāji Ebrāhim's brother (commanding the infantry), and on racing back to Shiraz he found the city in the hands of Ḥāji Ebrāhim. Denied help from Bušehr, the Zand leader nevertheless continued, with the few troops still loyal to him and a few Arab levies, to fight off the Qajar advance on Shiraz, which Ḥāji Ebrāhim



had offered to surrender to Āgā Moḥammad Khan Qājār. The latter finally entered Shiraz on 1 Ḍu'l-Ḥejja 1206/21 July 1792 (Kuhmarra'i in Golestāna, pp. 353-54). Ḥāji Ebrāhim later became the first grand vizier (*ṣadr-e a'zam*) and a major political figure of the early Qajar period.

Loṭf-'Ali Khan surprised Kerman in 1794 and held it for four months before the Qajars were admitted by treachery. He then fled to Bam, whose governor seized him and handed him over to the Qajars. Āgā Moḥammad Khan Qājār had his last Zand enemy blinded and cruelly tortured before taking him back to Tehran for execution in Rabi' II 1209/November 1794. This marked the end of Zand rule, although Āgā Moḥammad Khan Qājār was not formally crowned until 1796, and even in the following year, after his death, Zaki Khan Zand's son Moḥammad Khan Zand with a [Bājalān](#) tribal army unsuccessfully attempted to seize power from the Qajars (Donboli, 1927 and 1972 pp. 33-35, 39; Donboli, tr. Brydges, pp. 46-48, 57-58).

The dynasty's reputation rests on its founder Karim Khan, who was able not only to weld together an army from the different Iranian pastoral tribes of the Zagros but also to build a measure of trust and some lasting alliances with the bureaucrats and magnates of the major cities of western and southern Persia (Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, and Kerman). His shrewd economic policies and notable humanity are recorded in many popular anecdotes. His successors destroyed his achievements through their internecine warfare; they could not inspire confidence in the urban establishment, as typified by Ḥāji Ebrāhim, and so forfeited the Zand mandate to the Qajars.

See also: [KARIM KHAN ZAND](#); [ĀGĀ MOḤAMMAD KHAN QĀJĀR](#); [ABU'L-FATH KHAN ZAND](#); ['ALI-MORĀD KHAN ZAND](#); [AKBAR KHAN ZAND](#).

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