



'ALĀ'-AL-SALTĀNA



Figure 1. Photograph of 'Alā'-al-Saltāna. (Photograph courtesy of Fereydun 'Alā)

'ALĀ'-AL-SALTĀNA, MOḤAMMAD-'ALI, prime minister and diplomat of the late Qajar period (d. 14 Ramaẓān 1336/23 June 1918; [Figure 1](#)). Mirzā Moḥammad-'Ali Khan, also known by the titles Mo'in-al-Wezāra, 'Alā-al-Saltāna, and Prince, was born while his father, Mirzā Ebrāhim Mohandes, a high-ranking official of the ministry of foreign affairs, was Persia's consul general in Baghdad. His mother was the daughter of Mirzā Ġaffār, minister of public works in Azarbaijan (Šaqāqi, p. 50). Moḥammad-'Ali received his

elementary education, which included French, in Persia. He then continued his studies in Baghdad (Şafā’, p. 411). In 1275/1858 he took up a junior position in the ministry of foreign affairs, and after serving in Persia for three years was appointed consul general at Bombay. He remained in this post for ten years, served again in Persia, and in 1296/1879 was appointed to the Persian consulate in Baghdad. Soon afterwards he was given the title Mo’in-al-Wezāra and appointed consul in Tbilisi (Teflis), where in 1307/1889 he entertained Nāşer-al-Din Shah on his way back from his third European tour.

A few months later, the shah dismissed Mirzā Malkom Khan Neżām-al-Dawla, Persia’s minister plenipotentiary in London, and replaced him with Moḥammad ‘Ali Khan Mo’in-al-Wezāra, with the additional title ‘Alā’-al-Salṭana (E’temād-al-Salṭana, *Ruz-nāma-ye kāţerāt.*, p. 707; Browne, *Persian Revolution*, p. 32). During his seven years in London, he persuaded the British government to bestow the Order of the Garter on Możaffar-al-Din Shah, in recognition of which the shah awarded him the title of Prince (*prens*; this European-style title was bestowed on several Qajar diplomats in imitation of Bismarck’s ennoblement for his services to Prussia in 1871: see Bāmdād, III, pp. 446-47). Upon the proclamation of the Constitution in 1907, Prince ‘Alā’-al-Salṭana was summoned to Tehran and appointed minister of foreign affairs. He delegated his son, Moşir-al-Molk, to take his post in London (Bāmdād, III, pp. 447-48; Browne, *Persian Revolution*, p. 124). In June of the following year he was deputed to offer a formal apology to the British chargé d’affaires for the behavior of the Cossack Brigade in its implementation of martial law during the royalist coup d’état (Browne, *Persian Revolution*, pp. 208-209). During the post-constitutional period he was a member of most cabinets with various portfolios, until in 1331/1913, during the Parliamentary recess, he was appointed prime minister by the regent, Nāşer-al-Molk. During this first premiership, which lasted only seven months, he granted significant concessions to both Russia and Britain. On February 6th the Russians were given rights to construct railways from Jolfā to Tabriz and from Şufiān to Lake Orumiya; the British promptly protested, and three days later were granted concessions for a railway from Moḥammara to Korramābād (Şaqāqi, p. 54). Aḥmad Shah appointed him premier for a second time in 1917. Owing to age and infirmity, he remained in office for no more than two months, during which however his government officially recognized the South Persia Rifles, an auxiliary force levied by the British.

‘Alā’-al-Salṭana died after a short illness, and was buried at the shrine of Shah



'Abd-al-'Azim. He had been twice prime minister, eight times foreign minister, three times minister of science, twice minister of public welfare and commerce, and once minister of justice (*Eṭṭelā'āt-e sālāna* no. 3, 1341 Š./1962, pp. 22-30). In middle age he married the daughter of Majd-al-Molk Sinaki, a politician and man of letters, which was conducive to the advancement of his career. He was not interested in amassing wealth, and on his death he owned nothing but his house. 'Alā'-al-Saltāna was reserved and conservative, an honest but ineffectual person who often accepted duties beyond his capacity (*Eḥtešām-al-Saltāna*, p. 405). He was instrumental in promoting Britain's interests during a critical period in Persia.

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