



AMĪNA AQDAS

AMĪNA(-YE) AQDAS or **AMĪN-E AQDAS** (d. 1311/1893), one of Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah's most powerful wives. Named Zobayda at birth, she was the daughter of an impoverished shepherd in a village near Garrūs in Kurdistan. She was brought to the capital, Tehran, in 1276/1859 by Anīs-al-dawla, the shah's favorite wife, who had accompanied her husband on a trip to that province. Anīs-al-dawla took pity on "the ugly orphan whose skin was partly scarred by childhood burns," and bought her at the bargain price of a few tomans (Amīn-al-dawla, *Kāṭerāt-e sīāsī*, ed. Ḥ. Farmānfarmā'īān, Tehran, 1341 Š./1962, p. 19). Within two decades of her arrival in Tehran, Zobayda rivaled Anīs-al-dawla in power and influence, becoming one of the shah's wives and being given the title of Amīna Aqdas "Trusted of the Sovereign." Although she was only a *ṣiġa* or temporary wife, she enjoyed high status, with her own private apartment, official salary drawn from revenues of several districts, many servants and eunuchs, and a private secretary. She was one of the few wives who accompanied Nāṣer-al-dīn on his trips within the country. Eventually she was entrusted with wide responsibilities, including supervising the shah's private apartment, where the crown jewels were kept, and keeping the shah's most important seal. She was also in charge of all presents given to the shah (E'temād-al-salṭana, *Kāṭerāt*, ed. Ī. Afšār, Tehran, 1345 Š./1966, pp. 254, 301, 413, 458, 545).

Contemporaries attributed her rise from being "a maid in the royal coffeehouse" to being "one of the uncontested queens of Iran" to her shrewd manipulation of the shah's weak spots. Like Mīrzā Ebrāhīm Amīn-al-solṭān, to



whom she was compared, she catered to the shah's whims, encouraged his obsessions, and appealed to his parsimony by her seeming honesty and loyalty (Amīn-al-dawla, *Kāṭerāt*, pp. 86-87; E'temād-al-salṭana, *Kāṭerāt*, p. 458). But her power was enhanced by Nāṣer-al-dīn's intense attachment to her nephew, Gōlām-'Alī, Malījāk-e Tānī, also known as 'Azīz-al-solṭān. Although a rift had developed between Amīna Aqdas and her brother, Mīrzā Moḥammad, Malījāk-e Awwal, she undertook personal supervision of her nephew and thus benefited from many of the privileges conferred on him (E'temād-al-salṭana, *Kāṭerāt*, pp. 270, 432).

During the last decade of her life, Amīna Aqdas became blind in one eye and her other eye began to deteriorate. When all the Iranian and European doctors in Tehran failed to arrest the cataract, the shah sent her to Europe for an operation, thus making her the first royal wife to go to the West (Amīn-al-dawla, *Kāṭerāt*, pp. 134-35). But her departure coincided with the granting of the tobacco concession in 1890, so her trip was publicly criticized by several members of the 'olamā', who considered it "an affront to the glory of Islam" (E'temād-al-salṭana, *Kāṭerāt*, pp. 792-93). Shortly after her return from Europe, she suffered a stroke that paralyzed her body, though her physical infirmity did not diminish her responsibilities within the harem or her involvement in court intrigue. She was closely allied with Mīrzā 'Alī-Aṣḡar Khan Amīn-al-solṭān, to whom she referred as her son. She may already have been instrumental in advancing his career after the death of his father, Mīrzā Ebrāhīm Amīn-al-solṭān, in 1300/1883. Although, according to Amin-al-dawla (*Kāṭerāt*, p. 86), the shah did not consummate his marriage with her, he remained extremely attached to her. He was distressed enough by her death to forgo his usual practice of confiscating part of a deceased wife's fortune; he turned over everything, including 300,000 tomans in cash and many villages, shops, gardens, and other possessions in Tehran and in Garrūs, to her surviving heirs, her brother, and his children (E'temād-al-salṭana, *Kāṭerāt*, p. 1007).



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text.