



AMIR-A'LAM

AMIR-A'LAM, AMIR (b. Trabzon, 1861; d. Tehran, 2 Ordibehešt 1340 Š./22 April 1961, [FIGURE 1](#)), university professor, representative and deputy speaker of the Majles, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, senator, minister, and founder of the Red Lion and Sun (Jam'iyat-e šir o koršid-e sorḡ-e Irān), an organization corresponding to the Red Cross (Šaji'i, 1965, p. 303). His father, Mirzā 'Ali-Akbar Khan Mo'tamen-al-Wozarā', was a cousin of Nāšer-al-Din Shah's prime minister, Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan Sepahsālār Qazvini, and a ranking officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Wezārat-e omur-e kāreja). Amir A'lam studied medicine at the French School of Medicine in Beirut for two years until 1900, when he received a government scholarship to continue his medical studies in France. He went to Paris the same year but, due to the lack of necessary documents, had to wait for three years before he was admitted to the École de Santé Militaire de Lyon, where he eventually received his doctorate and was hired with the rank of captain (Nāṭeq, pp. 261-62; Eḡtešāmi, pp. 113-14). He returned home in 1906 on the eve of the [Constitutional Revolution](#) in Persia and took the position of professor of anatomy at the medical school of [Dār-al Fonun](#), which in 1934 was turned into the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy, and Dentistry (Daneškada-ye ṭebb wa dāru-sāzi wa dandān-sāzi) of the University of Tehran. Amir A'lam, as one of the old faculty members, led a faction that often clashed with the one led by Moḡammad-Ḥosayn (Loqmān-al-Dawla) Adham, often hampering the systematic development of this new institution (see [FACULTY of MEDICINE](#)).

Amir A'lam represented Mašhad in the Second Majles and was responsible for



the passing of the Health Protection and Smallpox Vaccination Act (*Qānun-e ḥefẓ al-ṣeḥḥa wa ābela-kubi*) of 1910 and the Medical Practice Act (*Qānun-e ṭebābat*) of 1911. He was, at the same time, appointed by the then minister of war, Aḥmad Qawām-al-Salṭana, as the director of the army's health services with the rank of a brigadier general (*sartip*) without relinquishing his seat in the Majles. In 1912 he became the head of the gendarmerie health services, and during his tenure there he established several hospitals and pharmacies. In 1916, in recognition of his efforts in the promotion of medicine and public hygiene, he was selected, with the honorary title of *sardār*, as the personal physician of Aḥmad Shah and the chairman of the Council for Public Health Protection (Majles-e ḥefẓ al-ṣeḥḥa). Three years later, he joined the cabinet of Mirzā Ḥasan Woṭuq-al-Dawla, his father-in-law, as the minister of trade and public welfare (*wazir-e tejārat wa fawā'ed-e āmma*) and in 1921 held the position of minister of education (*wazir-e ma'āref*) in the two cabinets of Aḥmad Qawām-al-Salṭana (Mas'udi, pp. 32-33). He represented Mašhad in the Majles four more times and for a while served as its deputy speaker (*nāyeb ra'is*) in the Fourth Majles (Šajī'i, 1965, p. 303; idem, 1993, IV, p. 547). In 1923, following an earthquake in Bojnurd, Amir A'lam, who was then the head of the public health bureau in Khorasan, obtained Aḥmad Shah's permission to found the Red Lion and Sun Organization (Hedāyati, pp. 274-75) and actually ran it as its deputy director for thirty-eight years. He remained active in the public services of this organization until his death, always being among the first people to rush to the aid of the victims of natural disasters. As the personal physician of Rezā Shah, he belonged to the inner circle of his associates, seeing him daily during the first few years of his reign, accompanying him on his trips, and joining him for a gambling bout (Ṭolu'i, p. 350; Golšā'iān, I, p. 253).

In 1939 Amir A'lam was selected to become a permanent member of the Persian Academy ([Farhangestān](#)) and three years later became one of its two deputy directors (Šadiq, II, pp. 246, 249). In 1948 he was appointed the minister of health (*wazir-e behdāri*) in the cabinet of Moḥammad Sā'ed, but he resigned a few days later due to his poor health. In 1949, when the Persian Senate was first established, Amir A'lam was appointed by Moḥammad-Rezā Shah as a senator from Tehran. He remained an appointed senator (*senātor-e entesābi*) from Tehran during the second and third sessions of the Senate (Mas'udi, pp. 1-2). He died on the 22nd of April 1961 in Tehran following a stroke (Sepehram, p. 623).

Amir A'lam was one of the most important contributors to the advancement and expansion of public health services in the country. He founded the first women's hospital in Persia and, with his brother's assistance, built a large general hospital (Bimārestān-e Aḥmadiya, later renamed Bimārestān-e Sepah) in Tehran (Hāšemiān, p. 461; Nāṭeq, p. 262). He taught medicine for many years at Dār al-Fonun and the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Tehran, where he also served as its dean for over a year (Āḍar 1321-Bahman 1322 :Š./Nov.-Dec. 1942-Jan.-Feb. 1943; Hedāyati, p. 123). After his death, a hospital was named after him in Tehran (Bimārestān-e Amir A'lam). Amir A'lam was married twice. He had a son, Faṭḥ-Allāh Amir A'lam, from his first and a son, 'Abd-al-Majid A'lam, and four daughters from his second marriage. 'Abd-al-Majid studied architecture in Paris and became one of the leading contractors in Persia; he also founded the Labor Bank (Bānk-e kār) and served as the chairman of its board of directors. Of his daughters, one, Irān A'lam, studied medicine and another one, Homā, married Gōlām-Rezā Pahlavi, a brother of Moḥammad-Rezā Shah.

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