



ANĪS-AL-DAWLA

ANĪS-AL-DAWLA (d. 1314/1896-97), the most important wife of Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah Qājār. Named Fāṭema-solṭān at birth (probably 1258/1842; C. Serena, *Hommes et choses en Perse*, Paris, 1883, p. 187), she was the daughter of an impoverished peasant from a village in Lavāsān, northeast of Tehran. After her father's death and her mother's remarriage, she was adopted by her paternal aunt and uncle and moved with them to Dūlāb, a village outside Tehran (Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan E'temād-al-salṭana, *Rūz-nāma-ye Kāṭerāt*, ed. Ī. Afšār, Tehran, 1345 Š./1966, p. 126). She began her career in the royal harem as a maid to Jeyrān Forūg-al-salṭana, the favorite wife of Nāṣer-al-dīn; he married her as a *ṣīgā* (temporary wife) in 1276/1859 (*ibid.*), and she became his favorite after Jeyrān's death a few months later. He soon conferred on her the title of Anīs-al-dawla (Companion of the Sovereign) and on several occasions offered to change her status from that of *ṣīgā* to *'aqdī* (permanent wife). She refused, saying that she did not wish to temper with the good fortune that her temporary status had brought her (D. Mo'ayyer-al-mamālek, *Yāddāsthā'ī az zendagānī-e Koṣūṣī-e Nāṣer-al-dīn Šāh*, Tehran, 1351 Š./1972, p. 17). Despite stiff competition from wives (there were eighty-five at the time of the ruler's death in 1313/1896), Anīs-al-dawla remained the favorite. Hearing she was critically ill in 1308/1891, an observer wrote, "The shah's harem is limited to this woman. If she dies, woe on Iran" (E'temād-al-salṭana, *Rūz-nāma*, p. 841). She was the only wife to take meals with Nāṣer-al-dīn and to join him regularly at bedtime after he received visits from other wives (Mo'ayyer-al-mamālek, *Yāddāsthā'ī*, pp. 32, 34). She was also the only wife who spoke her mind openly and criticized the ruler publicly (E'temād-al-salṭana, *Rūz-nāma*, p.



963). Although she accompanied Nāṣer-al-dīn regularly on his frequent travels within the country, her great desire to visit Europe with him was only partially realized: In his trip of 1873 she was sent back from Moscow after it became apparent that the presence of veiled women in the entourage would create problems of protocol for the host governments. Her disappointment is revealed by the grudge she held against Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan Mošīr-al-dawla, the prime minister, whom she held responsible for her interrupted journey. On reaching Tehran, she offered support and encouragement to his enemies, and a coalition of powerful notables succeeded in having him removed from his post after the shah's return (G. Nashat, *The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran*, Urbana, Ill., 1982, pp. 91-93).

Contemporaries considered Anīs-al-dawla the de facto queen: her supremacy over all other wives is attested to by some of her functions. She received the wives of heads of foreign legations and visiting dignitaries and assumed the ceremonial duties performed by Mahd-e 'Olyā, the ruler's mother, after the latter's death. Unlike other wives, who received a salary and usually shared quarters, she drew revenues from several districts and maintained an independent establishment staffed by many eunuchs, guards, servants, and maids (Mo'ayyer-al-mamālek, *Yāddāsthā'ī*, p. 22). Her great influence over the shah meant that many appealed to her for help (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* III, p. 315); most contemporaries praise her piety and benevolence, not to mention her tact and intelligence (S. G. W. Benjamin, *Persia and the Persians*, London, 1887, p. 205. E'temād-al-salṭana, *Rūz-nāma*, pp. 856, 929). There is little evidence for Curzon's allegation that she used her position to secure lucrative posts for her relatives (G. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, London, 1892, I, p. 409). She survived her husband by only a few months; she is said to have died from an illness brought on by grief over his assassination (Mo'ayyer-al-mamālek, *Yāddāsthā'ī*, p. 17).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text.