



## ‘AYN-AL-DAWLA, ‘ABD-AL-MAJĪD

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‘AYN-AL-DAWLA, SOLṬĀN ‘ABD-AL-MAJĪD MĪRZĀ ATĀBAK-E A‘ẒAM (1261-1345/1845-1926) son of Solṭān Aḥmad Mīrzā ‘Azod-al-dawla, Faṭḥ-‘Alī Shah’s forty-eighth son and a prominent political figure of Moẓaffar-al-dīn Shah’s reign (1313-24/1896-1907). He is mainly remembered in modern Iranian history for his “reactionary stubborn character” which, as pointed out by Sykes (*History* II, p. 399), was often considered a major cause of the conflicts leading to the Constitutional Revolution. Although opinions on him generally remained negative, recent reappraisals (see below) tend to partly rehabilitate him and his political actions which continued, on a lesser scale, after the granting of a constitution.

He was educated by a private tutor but his lack of academic motivation led to his removal from Dār al-Fonūn (the Tehran Polytechnic). He was then sent to Tabrīz to the crown prince’s service where he learnt administrative skills and calligraphy (Sykes, *ibid.*; Mostawfī, *Zendagānī* II, pp. 54f.; Şafā’ī, *Rahbarān* II, p. 357). He was proud of his royal descent and renowned for his haughtiness, ostentatiousness, extortions, and meanness (Mostawfī, *op. cit.*, p. 56). Reportedly, he was a hot-tempered, rude, and greedy courtier (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, p. 93). In 1289/1872-73, he married one of the crown prince’s daughters, Anīs-al-dawla, who died without giving him any children. His only son was from a temporary (*şīġa*) wife (see below).



He began his career at Moẓaffar-al-dīn Mīrzā court at Tabrīz as *nāyeb-e eṣṭabl*, a deputy to the *amīr(-e) ākōr* (stable-master) whom he eventually replaced in 1303/1885-86. He then obtained several governorates in Azarbaijan (Mostawfī, *ibid.*; Bāmdād, *ibid.*). In 1306/1890, while he held the governorate of Qarājadāg (Arasbārān), Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah on his return from his third European tour fell ill in Azarbaijan and was saved *in extremis* by Doctor Feuvrier (September, 1890). Allegedly ‘Ayn-al-dawla announced the shah’s imminent death to the crown prince and was severely castigated for his rashness after the shah’s recovery (E’temād-al-salṭana, *Rūz-nāma*, p. 665; Molkārā, *Šarḥ-e ḥāl*, p. 107; Bāmdād, *op. cit.*, pp. 93 ff.; Feuvrier, *Trois ans*, pp. 66f.). In 1309/1891-92, along with the post of stable-master, he received the governorship of Ardabīl, Mešgīn and Qarājadāg with the rank of *amīr(-e) tūmān* as well as being in charge of the crown properties (*kāleṣajāt*) in Azarbaijan. In 1310/1892-93, he was given the title ‘Ayn-al-dawla by Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah (Bāmdād, *op. cit.*, p. 95).

By the time of Moẓaffar-al-dīn Shah’s accession (Du’l-ḥejja, 1313/May-June, 1896), he had been for some time the head of the crown prince’s court in Azarbaijan (Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā I*, p. 150). Already in September, 1895, he was reluctantly given by Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah the *pīškārī* of Azarbaijan (Şafā’ī, *Rahbarān II*, pp. 258ff.; according to Amīn-al-dawla, *Kāṭerāt*, p. 263, his *pīškārī* was only semi-official). Although he enjoyed Moẓaffar-al-dīn’s confidence and was influential among the Azarbaijani retinue of the new king (the Turk of the Tabrīz party, according to Mostawfī, *op. cit.*, p. 56), his ascendancy was temporarily barred by powerful rivals. ‘Alī-Aṣḡar Khan Amīn-al-solṭān (*ṣadr-e a’zam* until Jomādā II, 1314/November, see [ATĀBAK-E A’ZAM](#)) managed to send him as governor to Māzandarān. But under Farmānfarmā’s cabinet (November, 1896-April, 1897), he resigned and left his governorate unexpectedly to go on pilgrimage to the *atabāt* (Dawlatābādī, *op. cit.*, I, p. 168; Amīn-al-dawla, *op. cit.*, pp. 232f.; Şafā’ī, *op. cit.*, p. 361). In 1317/1899, he was governor (*wālī*) of Lorestān and Kūzestān where he was able to bring about a degree of stability (Şafā’ī, *op. cit.*, pp. 362f.). His decisive step to power came with his appointment as the governor of Tehran (1319/1901). Together with his brother Wajīhallāh Mīrzā Amīr Khan Sardār (then *sephsālār*), they were considered the most powerful enemies of Amīn-al-solṭān Atābak-e A’zam. During Moẓaffar-al-dīn Shah’s second European tour (1902), the two brothers were entrusted with the task of vice regency. ‘Ayn-al-dawla was in contact with anti-Atābak *‘olamā’* and journalists and was considered as the “prime instigator” of the anti-Atābak drive. While the shah promised him the premiership, he tried to bar Moḡammad-‘Alī Mīrzā from the succession



(Dawlatābādī, op. cit., pp. 299, 317; Keddie, “Iranian Politics,” I, p. 26, II, p. 153; Şafā’ī, op. cit., pp. 363f.; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, p. 96). Whereas popular discontent continued, he made profit by putting arbitrary taxes on bakeries and slaughterhouses. Through his contacts with the *atābak*’s opponents, he was involved in the circumstances leading to the latter’s second dismissal (Jomādā II, 1321/September 1903), notably the *takfīr-nāma* (text in Kasravī, *Mašrūta*<sup>2</sup> I, p. 45). He also incited the *atābak* to dismiss his rival Ḥakīm-al-molk (Dawlatābādī, op. cit., I, p. 317; Malekzāda, *Tārīk-eenqelāb* I, p. 272; Amīn-al-dawla, op. cit., p. 317; Keddie, op. cit., II, p. 156; see also [ATĀBAK-E A’ZAM](#)). Having abandoned the *atābak*, their former faithful supporter, the British now favored his enemies, notably ‘Ayn-al-dawla and his brother Wajīhallāh Mīrzā who both convinced the shah that they could maintain security and order. Appointed minister of the interior (September, 1903), ‘Ayn-al-dawla was made *wazīr-e a’zam* (chief minister; January, 1904) and *şadr-e a’zam* (prime minister; September, 1904). Shortly afterwards, he was granted his predecessor’s title of Atābak-e A’zam (Bāmdād, *ibid.*).

His firm hand on court and provincial affairs at first enabled him to prevent a general spread of disorders. Although he could then enjoy the support of some of the opponents of Mīrzā ‘Alī-Aşğar Khan Atābak, his rough attitude towards the clergy, notably the *ṭollāb*, undermined his position. Leading ‘*olamā*’ were soon divided into ‘Ayn-al-dawla’s partisans and opponents, some of the latter working for the ex-*atābak*’s restoration. His authoritative measures to resolve the inherited financial crisis (such as reduction of court expenses, imposition of new taxes), the increasing influence of Belgian officials on customs and other departments, and his own greediness and private hoarding were factors which made him meet, like his predecessors, the opposition of many vested interests (Keddie, op. cit., II, pp. 234ff.). Opponents to the Russians, the Belgians, and ‘Ayn-al-dawla’s policy were encouraged by the news of Tsarist Russia’s difficulties (defeat against Japan in 1904-05, revolution of 1905). A vast campaign united merchants, modernists, and ‘*olamā*’ (some of whom being regrouped in secret societies) against ‘Ayn-al-dawla and the Belgian Joseph Naus who held several top-level official positions (Naus’s photograph in a *mollā*’s dress taken at a costume ball caused great uproar among the clergy). News of a third royal European tour added to the discontent. This time (summer 1905), ‘Ayn-al-dawla accompanied the shah while government at Tehran was secured by the harsh measures introduced by the crown prince Moḥammad ‘Alī Mīrzā. From the beginning of 1905, secret societies helped to provoke further discontent among merchants and ‘*olamā*’, notably at Mašhad,



Tabrīz, and Tehran (*bast* at Shah ‘Abd-al-‘Azīm, April, 1905). Disturbances sometimes took a racial or religious character against the Jews, the Babis, the Armenians, and others. A factional strife raged at Kermān between *šaykīs* and *bālāsariīs* (see G. Scarcia, “Kermān 1905: la “guerra tra šeiḥī e bālāsariī,” *AION*, N.S. 13, 1963, pp. 195-238).

There were serious demonstrations against the construction of a new building for the Russian Bank on *waqf* land at Tehran (November, 1905) and revolutionary activities began to flare up throughout Iran. After his return, the *bastinado* inflicted on some Tehran merchants (mostly sugar dealers) by the governor Mīrzā Aḥmad Khan ‘Alā’-al-dawla, applying ‘Ayn-al-dawla’s policy (December, 1905), initiated the chain of events leading to the granting of a constitution. Repression of demonstrations provoked a massive *bast* of the ‘*olamā*’ in Tehran and at Shah ‘Abd-al-‘Azīm (January, 1906) which resulted in ‘Alā’-al-dawla’s dismissal and the promise of an *‘adālat-kāna* (house of justice). Further protests and repressions in Tehran and the provinces led to the great emigration (*hejrat-e kobrā*) of the ‘*olamā*’ to Qom and the massive *bast* of merchants, *ṭollāb*, preachers, and others at the summer quarters of the British Legation at Golhak (July-August, 1906). Along with the demands for an *‘adālat-kāna* and eventually a *majles-e šūrā-ye mellī*, national consultative assembly, and a constitution (*mašrūṭa*), ‘Ayn-al-dawla and Naus’s dismissal were consistently insisted upon. Even before the issuing of the *mašrūṭa* decree, ‘Ayn-al-dawla was dismissed (9 Jomādā II 1324/31 July 1906) and replaced by Mīrzā Naṣrallāh Khan Nā’inī Mošīr-al-dawla (Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 240ff.; Browne, *Revolution*, pp. 105ff.; Kasravī, op. cit., I, pp. 31 ff.; Keddie, op. cit., II, pp. 234-50; Nāẓem-al-eslām Kermānī, *Bīdārī-e Īrānīān* I, pp. 243ff.; Šafā’ī, op. cit., pp. 368f.).

‘Ayn-al-dawla then went to Mobārakābād and Varāmīn and finally settled at Farīmān, his personal estate in Khorasan, and remained politically inactive for nearly two years. After the bombardment of the Majles (June, 1908) and the intensification of the resistance at Tabrīz, he was sent to Azarbaijan as governor together with Moḥammad-Walī Khan Tonokābonī Sepahdār-e A’ẓam to quell the revolt. His efforts to induce the nationalists to surrender or negotiate failed and on a few occasions governmental forces were defeated by nationalists on the outskirts of Tabrīz (October, 1908). Moḥammad-Walī Khan Sepahdār-e A’ẓam joined the nationalists and ‘Ayn-al-dawla was not even recognized as governor by the provincial *anjoman* and was forced to settle at Bāsmenj. When after months of siege Tsarist troops entered Tabrīz, ‘Ayn-al-



dawla went to Tehran and reported to Moḥammad-‘Alī Shah about the provincial *anjoman*’s attitude and Tabrīz diplomats’ lack of support (June, 1909). He then retired to his house in expectation (Şafā’ī, op. cit., pp. 369ff.; Browne, op. cit., pp. 256ff.; Kasravī, op. cit., I, pp. 198ff.).

When Tehran was captured by constitutionalist forces (July, 1909), ‘Ayn-al-dawla refused any foreign protection and dearly bought his liberty by giving his estates in Qarabāg to the revolutionary government. He was, however, promised the government of Fārs for which he gave a heavy *pīškeš*. But his appointment was canceled because of Taqīzāda’s strong protest (Şafā’ī, op. cit., p. 371; Browne, op. cit., pp. 315ff.). Although he was invited to the opening of the second Majles (November, 1909) he had to remain out of office for four years while being prosecuted on the ground of forgery for the purchase of his Farīmān estate. In Şafar, 1331/January, 1913, in Mīrzā Moḥammad-‘Alī Khan ‘Alā’-al-salṭana’s cabinet, he was appointed minister of the interior and paid particular attention to news given about Iran in European newspapers. He kept his office under the subsequent government of Mostawfī-al-mamālek but was again idle after the latter’s resignation (March, 1913). He was appointed prime minister and minister of war (Jomādā II, 1333/April, 1915), but after he granted his support to his minister of the interior Farmānfarmā (who committed a political error by being hostile to the Ottomans), he was interpellated and compelled to resign (July, 1915). During the famine of 1915, he had bread made from the wheat of his own estates baked in Tehran and distributed freely among the needy. In Şafar, 1336/November, 1917, he was again chief minister, but because of the British disapproval, the hostility of the Tehran democrats, and criticism of his ministers by Azarbaijani deputies, he again resigned (Rabī’ I, 1336/January, 1918). Under Woṭūq-al-dawla’s second cabinet (1297-99/1918-20), he was again Azarbaijan’s governor and had to cope with Shaikh Moḥammad Kīābānī’s rebellion. He had no further official appointment (Şafā’ī, op. cit., pp. 371ff.; Kasravī, *Ādarbāyjān*, pp. 51ff.).

In the coup d’état of 1299 Š./1921, he was among the officials who were arrested and was heavily fined. Although he had gathered a certain amount of wealth through inheritance and official appointments, he was deep in debt from having borrowed money to cover state expenses during his first tenure. Contrary to the customs of the Qajar government, Moḥammad-‘Alī Shah held him personally responsible for these debts, which were said to amount of three *korūr* (1,500,000) tomans. This paralyzed his life, for his creditors kept harassing him, especially after his loss of influence. He died on 7 Jomādā I,



1345/10 Ābān, 1306 Š./23 November, 1926.

‘Ayn-al-dawla was dismissed by most of his contemporaries, and still is by modern authors, as a mere reactionary, being generally described as an unscrupulous “Russian creature” whose fortune came from speculation, extortions, and malversations. Although he was less friendly to Naus than Atābak Amīn-al-soltān, he still embodied Qajar autocracy and symbolized the past which had to be destroyed by revolutionary forces (Destrée, *Les fonctionnaires*, pp. 5f., 113ff.). But he had to pay more dearly than Naus—who retained his position for some time—for his stubborn resistance to both foreign influence and internal rebellion. Although he was later somewhat more liberal and showed a certain courage, his contemporaries only saw in his change of attitude (notably towards the poor, which included the foundation of an asylum in Tehran) a means to maintain his political influence (Şafā’ī, op. cit., pp. 373f. quoting Mostawfī). There have been recent attempts at his partial rehabilitation, including praise for his courage and chivalry (*Javānmardī*, see Şafā’ī, *ibid.*), his opposition to foreign influence, his partial success on the economic plan notably by cutting down court expenses. His repression was mainly directed against discontented *bāzārīs* rather than radical intellectuals (Ādamīyat, *Īde’olożī*, pp. 126ff., cf. Bagley, “New Light,” pp. 49ff.).

‘Ayn-al-dawla’s only son Mīrzā Moḥammad Šams-al-molk ‘Azod-al-dawla was a pleasure-seeking courtier who dissipated what remained from his father’s fortune and ended as a pauper (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, p. 99, V, p. 198; Şafā’ī, op. cit., p. 376). Photographs of ‘Ayn-al-dawla have been published many times (see, e.g., Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yahyā* I, p. 150; Nāẓem-al-eslām Kermānī, *Bīdārī-e Īrānīān* I, opposite p. 169; Malekzāda, *Tārīk-eenqelāb* I, p. 269; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 93ff., IV, p. 122, V, p. 144; Şafā’ī, op. cit., p. 356). A street in Tehran was named after him (Mostawfī, *Zendagānī* I, p. 258).

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*Search terms:*



أَیْنَ أَلْدَوْلَا، أَبْدْ أَلْمَاجِیدْ  
أَبْدْ أَلْمَاجِیدْ

ayna al doleh,  
abd al majid

ayn al dawleh,  
abdolmajid

ayn aldouleh,  
abdol majid