



'AẒOD-AL-MOLK, 'ALĪ REŻĀ KHAN

'AẒOD-AL-MOLK, 'ALĪ REŻĀ KHAN QĀJĀR, regent of Iran in 1327/1909-1328/1910. His father Mūsā Khan was a son of Solaymān Khan Qājār E'tezād-al-dawla and a first cousin of Maḥd-e 'Olyā, the mother of Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah. He was born circa 1263/1847, because he is said to have been 35 years old on 1 Du'l-qa'da 1298/1881 (E'temād-al-salṭana, *Rūz-nāma-ye kāṭerāt*, p. 134).

Following the usual practice, he became a court page (*golām-bača*) early in Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah's reign. Allegedly he (with or without deliberate intent) transmitted information on harem affairs to the chief minister (*ṣadr-e a'zam*), Mīrzā Āqā Khan Nūrī, and warned the latter of the impending decision to dismiss him. When this came to light, 'Alī Reżā Khan was bastinadoed and expelled from the private quarters (*andarūn*), but on the intervention of Maḥd-e 'Olyā, he was reinstated and later promoted to the rank of head page (*golām-bāšī*) (ibid., p. 301). Being simple-hearted, uneducated, and very religious, he was considered trustworthy by the shah and gradually rose in favor. In his boyhood he massaged Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah's feet, and as he was a skillful and tireless masseur, the shah spent much time with him and they became close friends. In 1283/1866, when the shah decided to send gilded bricks for the Ḥaram al-'Askariyayn (tomb of Imam Ḥasan al-'Askarī and place of occultation of the Twelfth Imam Moḥammad al-Mahdī) at Samarra, Maḥd-e 'Olyā persuaded the shah to assign the task to 'Alī Reżā Khan, who then proceeded to the holy places in Iraq while the shah departed on a visit to



Khorasan. On the shah’s homeward journey, ‘Alī ReẒā Khan rejoined the royal entourage at Fīrūz Kūh, and after the return to Tehran, he was honored with the title *‘āzod-al-molk* (the support of the state) in 1285/1868 (E‘temād-al-salṭana, *Tārīk-emontāzam-e nāṣerī* III, p. 308).

It was probably in 1288/1871 that ‘AẒod-al-molk was appointed controller (*nāzem*) of the royal household after the transfer of Amīr Aṣlān Khan Majd-al-dawla, a maternal uncle of the shah and first cousin of ‘AẒod-al-molk, to the governorship of Kūzestān (*Montāzam-e nāṣerī* III, p. 319). He is mentioned as the superintendent (*kān-e nāzer*) in 1299/1882 (E‘temād-al-salṭana, *Kāṭerāt*, p. 146). In Šawwāl, 1302/June-July, 1885, he was replaced in this position by Maḥdī-qolī Khan Majd-al-dawla (*Kāṭerāt*, p. 424) but left in possession of two other offices which he also held at that time, namely those of keeper of the signet (*mohrdār*) (*Montāzam* III, p. 309) and governor of Māzandarān, conferred on him in 1289/1872 and 1288/1871 respectively. He accompanied the shah on the latter’s visit to the holy places in Iraq and two journeys to Europe. In 1290/1873, he was appointed chief (*īlkānī*) of the Qajar tribe (*Montāzam* III, p. 332). He in effect became minister of justice on 9 Ša‘bān 1304/4 May 1887 (*Kāṭerāt*, p. 563). In 1305/1888 he held three offices in plurality: justice, the signet, and the Qajar chieftaincy (*Kāṭerāt*, p. 629). Consequently he was able to amass wealth, and being disinclined to extravagance, or according to some accounts inclined to stinginess, he grew steadily richer. He bought some large landed properties, one of which was Solaymāniya, formerly named Eṣfahānak, on the Dūlāb in the outskirts of Tehran, which he equipped with a new *qanāt* costing 14,000 *tūmāns* and renamed after his son Solaymān Mīrzā (*Kāṭerāt*, p. 292, cf. Bāmdād, *Rejāl* I, p. 352).

In his manners, ‘AẒod-al-molk was affable and very dignified. People spoke of him as the “emperor of China” (*kāqān-e Čīn*) (‘Abdallāh Mostawfī, *Zendagānī-e man*, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1341 Š./1962-1343 Š./1964, I, p. 134). One peculiar trait was his quickness to weep and ability to bring tears to his eyes at will (E‘temād-al-salṭana, *Kāṭerāt*, 1st ed., p. 134). These qualities, however, did not restrain him from beating men with intent to kill (*ibid.*, pp. 184, 384). He was a habitual gambler (*ibid.*, p. 317) and held gambling sessions at his house (*ibid.*, p. 1209).

During the Tobacco protest of 1298-99/1891-92, ‘AẒod-al-molk was one of the chief mediators between the shah and the ‘*olamā*’ of Tehran. Because of his religiosity, he enjoyed the respect of the ‘*olamā*’ and thus was a valuable asset



to the desperate monarch. In Moẓaffar-al-dīn Shah's reign, he enjoyed the monarch's special respect (Ḳalīl Khan Ṭaqafī (A'lam-al-dawla), *Maqālāt-e gūnāgūn*, Tehran, 1322/1904-05, p. 155). His relations with Moḥammad 'Alī Mirzā were not cordial (ibid., p. 157). After coming to the throne, however, the new shah was in no position to do him any harm. During the constitutional revolutions, his house was occasionally the gathering place for moderate constitutionalists (Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā II*, p. 244). Here, too, he was accepted as a mediator between the shah and the constitutionalists (ibid., p. 250) though he was sometimes heeded by the shah (Malekzāda, *Tārīk-eeṅqelāb-e mašrūṭīyat III*, p. 238). On one occasion when the shah angrily rejected his advice, he walked out of the royal presence and as an expression of his displeasure went straight to Solaymāniya (Dawlatābādī, op. cit., II, p. 261).

After the deposition of Moḥammad 'Alī Shah on 28 Jomādā II 1327/16 July 1909, a regent had to be appointed because Aḥmad Shah was a minor. The choice fell on 'Azod-al-molk. As a senior dignitary and the chief of the Qajar tribe, he enjoyed the respect of the constitutionalists and was in good relationship with the '*olamā*'. He served as regent for one year and three months until his death at the age of 65 (lunar years) on 17 Ramaẓān 1328/23 September 1910.

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