



## DABĪR-AL-MOLK FARĀHĀNĪ

**DABĪR-AL-MOLK FARĀHĀNĪ**, Mīrzā Moḥammad-Ḥosayn (1225-98/1810-80), director of the private royal secretariat (*wazīr-e rasā'el-e kāṣṣa*) under Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (1264-1313/1848-96). He belonged to a distinguished family of officials, claiming descent from the third imam, Ḥosayn b. 'Alī, and he used the attributive al-Ḥosaynī on his seal (E'temād-al-Salṭana, p. 117). Members of the family had served both the Zand and Qajar dynasties.

Moḥammad-Ḥosayn probably began his clerical training in the household of his uncle Mīrzā Bozorg Qā'emmaqām in Tabrīz. His simple and clear prose style reveals the influence of his cousin Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsem Qā'em-maqām-e Tānī (q.v.), who is credited with having purified Persian official writing of its pompous and arabicized style. Early in his career Moḥammad-Ḥosayn must have entered the service of Mīrzā Taqī Khan Amīr Neẓām (later Amīr[-e] Kabīr, q.v.), for already in 1259/1843 he was in Erzurum with the amir, who was representing Persia on a mission to resolve border disputes between the Persian and Ottoman empires. During his four-year stay in Erzurum Moḥammad-Ḥosayn collaborated, at the amir's behest, with Žān Dāwūd (Jean David), the mission's official translator, in preparation of a two-volume work entitled *Jahān-nāma-ye jadīd*. It was the first of its kind in Persian, providing current information on the history, economy, and political institutions of many European countries and the United States, as well as useful statistical information on contemporary Tehran (Ādamīyat, pp. 71-72, 185-88).

After his accession to the throne Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah appointed Mīrzā Taqī Khan grand vizier (*ṣadr-e a'zam*), with the title Amīr-e Kabīr; Moḥammad-Ḥosayn



served as his secretary, specializing in diplomatic correspondence (Ādamīyat, pp. 214-16). He continued to serve in this capacity under the next grand vizier, Mīrzā Āqā Khan Nūrī (Eṣfahānīān, pp. 209-10), who took office after Amīr-e Kabīr's dismissal in 1268/1851. In 1270/1853 Moḥammad-Ḥosayn was given the title Dabīr-al-Molk (Kūrmūjī, p. 141). When Mīrzā Āqā Khan was dismissed in his turn, in 1275/1858, the shah left the post of *ṣadr-e a'zam* vacant. Instead he divided the duties of the office among several ministers, who were appointed to a newly created Majles-e šūrā-ye dawlatī (State consultative council), which was meant to function as an informal cabinet. Dabīr-al-Molk then entered the shah's personal service as *wazīr-e rasā'el-e kāṣṣa* (Amīn-al-Dawla, p. 17). During the greater part of the 1860s he enjoyed the shah's trust and at the beginning of 1866 was put in charge of the administration of Tehran, Kermān, and the post offices of Azarbaijan (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* III, p. 383).

In March 1869 he was sent to Mašhad as trustee of the shrine of Imam 'Alī al-Rezā, an appointment that he considered banishment. In an essay addressed to the shah during his stay in Mašhad Dabīr-al-Molk implied that the appointment had been instigated by courtiers hostile to his reformist ideas. In the essay he analyzed the major reasons for the country's decline and urged the shah to implement reforms (Ādamīyat and Nāṭeq, pp. 417-18). His ideas may have restored the shah's favor, for shortly thereafter Dabīr-al-Molk assumed a new post. Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah, in one of his periodic intervals of enthusiasm for reform, had asked Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan Mošīr-al-Dawla, his minister plenipotentiary to the Ottoman empire, to return to Tehran and to initiate wide-ranging changes. Inspired by the reforms of the Ottoman Tanzīmāt, Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan intended to reorganize various branches of the central government and provincial administration (Nashat, pp. 43-94). Not surprisingly, Dabīr-al-Molk seemed to fit into these plans. Early in 1288/1871 he once again became *wazīr-e rasā'el-e kāṣṣa* and was also appointed to the newly created advisory council, Dār-al-šūrā-ye kobrā. In January 1873 he was appointed minister of the interior (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* III, p. 383).

Dabīr-al-Molk did not hold this position for long, however. He was among the majority of members of the Dār-al-šūrā who approved the granting of massive [concessions](#) to Baron Julius de Reuter in 1289/1872, but during the shah's first European trip in the following year he joined the mounting opposition to these concessions (Teymūrī, pp. 97-142). Before returning to the capital Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah therefore dismissed Dabīr-al-Molk from his position as *wazīr-e rasā'el-e kāṣṣa* and appointed his protégé Mīrzā 'Alī Khan Amīn-al-Molk (Amīn-al-



Dawla, pp. 49-51) in his place. In order further to show his displeasure, the shah appointed Dabīr-al-Molk governor of Arāk, at that time an insignificant provincial post. Dabīr-al-Molk never regained the shah's favor; he died at the age of seventy years in Tehran.

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