



DĀNEŠ (1)

DĀNEŠ, pen name of MO'ĪN-AL-WEZĀRA MĪRZĀ REŽĀ KHAN ARFA' (Arfa'-al-Dawla; ca. 1262/1846-1316 Š./1937), also known as Prince Režā Arfa', diplomat and poet of the late Qajar period. According to his son [Ḥasan Arfa'](#) (Arfa, p. 1), Režā's grandfather Mīrzā Ebrāhīm was the chief minister of the khan of Yerevan during the Perso-Russian war of 1241-43/1826-28. Some time after the Russian annexation of Yerevan in 1242/1827 Ebrāhīm's son Ḥasan, later known as Ḥājī Shaikh Ḥasan Ṣarrāf Īravānī, moved to Tabrīz, where he married and established a modest business. He sent Režā, his eldest son, to a religious school to be trained as a mulla, but a reverse in the family's fortunes forced Režā to leave Tabrīz and join his brother-in-law Ḥājī Āqā Režā Salmāsī in his business in Istanbul. He stayed in Istanbul for a few years, working in Āqā Režā's shop while at the same time studying Turkish and French. On his return journey to Tabrīz he stopped in Tiflis, where he found a menial job at the Persian consulate general and became acquainted with the reformist author Mīrzā [Fath-'Alī Ākūndzāda](#). Režā began his political career in 1290/1873, when the Persian consul-general in Tiflis introduced him to the court of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (1264-1313/1848-96), who needed a Russian interpreter for his journey across the Caucasus on the way to Europe; Režā was given the post. The shah expressed satisfaction with his services, and as a result he was appointed third secretary at the Persian consulate in Tiflis. In the meantime, during his stays in Tehran, Režā had cultivated the friendship of 'Alī-Aṣḡar Khan Amīn-al-Solṭān; this friendship, together with Režā's knowledge of French and Russian, helped him to win a place on the mixed commission for the delimitation of the frontier between Russia and the



Persian province of Khorasan in the 1880s (see [boundaries ii](#)). In 1307/1889 he was again included in the suite of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah, during the shah’s last trip to Europe, after which he was appointed Persian consul-general in Tiflis. In 1312/1895 he was named Persian minister to the Russian court at St. Petersburg and in 1317/1900 ambassador to the Ottoman court, a post that he held for ten years. In the same year he represented Persia at the peace conference in the Hague.

During his years of service abroad Rezā became acquainted with a number of European political leaders. He was reported to entertain Russian sympathies and was certainly instrumental in negotiating the first Russian government loan to Persia, in 1317/1900. Nevertheless, he also appears to have supported the [Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919](#) (Arfa‘-al-Dawla, 1365 Š./1986, pp. 245-49). In 1332/1914 he served as minister of justice (*wazīr-e ‘adlīya*) in Tehran for about a year.

Despite his origin as the son of a modest merchant, during his years of foreign service Rezā managed to amass great wealth, reportedly not always through honest means. He willingly used his financial resources to buy lucrative governmental positions (Arfa, p. 103; ‘Alawī, pp. 21-22; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* I, pp. 507-12; Eḥtešām-al-Salṭana, pp. 433-34 n. 4; *Tārīk-ebīdārī*, ed. Sa‘īdī Sīrjānī, I, pp. 527-28, 642). The title “prince” (*mīrzā*) was conferred upon him in 1318/1899 by Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah (1313-24/1896-1907) in appreciation of a reception held for him at Rezā’s residence in St. Petersburg (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* I, p. 511).

Rezā was the author of some mediocre poetry (under the name Dāneš), some of which has been published; a treatise on the Persian alphabet (*Resāla-ye rošdīya*) published in Istanbul in 1879; and his memoirs. He loved luxury and fame and commissioned construction of a mansion in Monaco. He also contributed to pioneering efforts to establish a system of modern education in Persia by helping to found a school called Dabestān-e Dāneš (see [education](#)). He died in Tehran in 1316 Š./1937. His son Ḥasan Arfa‘ held several key military positions under the Pahlavis.



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('Alī-Akbar Sa'īdī Sīrjānī)