



ĠOLĀM-REŽĀ ĶOŠNEVIS

ĠOLĀM-REŽĀ ĶOŠNEVIS Eşfahāni, Mirzā (b. Tehran, 1245/1829-30; d. Tehran, 1304/1886-87), a calligrapher and epigraphist of late 19th-century Persia. He was a master of the *nasta'liq*, *şekasta-nasta'liq*, and *şekasta* scripts (see [CALLIGRAPHY](#)) and signed his works with the invocation “*Yā 'Ali madad*” or “*Ġolām-Rezā, Yā 'Ali madadast*.”

Little is known about Ġolām-Rezā's life. A handful of letters, petitions, and a biographical note by one of his students found in a large *moraqqa'* or album (now in the Central Library of Tehran University) provide a glimpse into his career (Bayāni, *Ķoşnevisān* II, pp. 550-56). His father, Mirzā Jān, had moved to Tehran, where he had a confectionery store. Ġolām-Rezā was still an adolescent when his distinct talent for calligraphy was brought to the attention of Moḥammad Shah Qājār (1250-64/1834-48), who took a special interest in his work and, after a series of examinations, assigned him to train a number of princes, princesses, and court officials. Under Moḥammad Shah's patronage, he penned a fine manuscript of the *Toḥfat al-wozarā'* (probably identical with *Toḥfat al-moluk* of the 19th-century author Ja'far b. Eşhāq Musawi), which bears the date 1259/1843-44 and is preserved in the former Imperial Library (*Ketāb-kāna-ye salţanati*) in Tehran (Bayāni, *Ķoşnevisān* II, p. 555).

Moḥammad Shah's death was a turning point in Ġolām-Rezā's career. He remained active and continued to train young calligraphers in the privacy of his home. Among his outstanding pupils, Shaikh Moḥammad Majd-al-Kottāb and Mirzā Ebrāhim Ṭehrāni, known as Mirzā 'Amu, are noteworthy (Rāhjiri,



1976, p. 88). As a gesture of respect, many of his students signed their works with the same invocation as their master.

Although Ġolām-Rezā obtained commissions from Moḥammad Shah’s son and successor, Nāṣer-al-Din Shah (1264-1313/1848-96), he did not receive the same favorable treatment from him and his court. He lost his teaching job when he was accused of involvement in the Babi movement (see BABISM), which almost cost him his life. He was pardoned, however, after pleading to Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, but his classes were closed down. In a letter to Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, he mentioned his lack of income and asked to be appointed as the librarian of the crown prince (Bayāni, *Ķošnevisān* II, pp. 553-54).

Ġolām-Rezā also worked under the patronage of Dust-Moḥammad Khan Mo’ayyer-al-Mamālek, who, along with other members of the Qajar ruling elite, commissioned Ġolām-Rezā to pen several copies of the extempore prayers (*monājāt-nāma*) of Imam ‘Ali. Although this association was initially rewarding, he was accused of forgery, which would have cost him the loss of his hands if Dust-Moḥammad Khan had not pleaded on his behalf to the king.

Ġolām-Rezā’s large corpus of works includes numerous copies of manuscripts, *moraqqa*’s or albums, single pages of calligraphy, and epigraphic works. They can be found in major libraries in Tehran, in the Biblioth que Nationale in Paris, and in private collections (Bayāni, *Ķošnevisān* II, p. 556; Rāhjiri, 1976, pp. 87-88). The best-known examples of his work are the calligraphic friezes he made for the Madrasa-ye Sepahsālār in Tehran.

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