



LESĀN-AL-DAWLA

LESĀN-AL-DAWLA, MIRZĀ ‘ALI KHAN (b. Tabriz, ca. 1862; d. Tehran, ca. 1920), royal librarian. His career at the royal court began in Tabriz in 1891 when his duties included that of librarian to Crown Prince Moẓaffar-al-Din Mirzā Qajar. In 1896, when Moẓaffar-al-Din succeeded Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, Mirzā ‘Ali Khan accompanied the entourage of the new Shah to Tehran, having been granted the title of Lesān-al-Dawla. He was made the librarian of the Golestān Palace (q.v.) and remained in this office until the Shah’s death in January 1907.

Lesān-al-Dawla was later accused of stealing books from the Royal library and arrested four times (August 1909, December 1909, April 1914, and February 1917). He was detained in prison for nearly three years and underwent many interrogations. Subsequent searches of his home uncovered more than 150 manuscripts of the Royal Library, which were returned to the Golestān Palace. These still bear the telltale note on the first page: “manuscript discovered at Lesān-al-Dawla’s home and returned to the Library by police authorities (*nazmiya*).” However, because of insufficient documentary evidence, Lesān-al-Dawla was never officially brought to trial and sentenced.

Released from prison by order of Aḥmad Shah on grounds of ill health, Lesān-al-Dawla was put on bail in March 1917. In July 1920, the Iranian Ministry of Justice issued him a summons to appear at the public prosecutor’s office. No further documents survive in the Iranian National Archives concerning this matter. There is a strong possibility that he died sometime around the same date, 1920, as he was addicted to opium and alcohol and was in poor health.



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