



NAJM-AL-SALTANA

NAJM-AL-SALTANA, Malek Tāj Kānom, a Qajar princess whose life spanned the late Qajar and early Pahlavi eras (b. 1231-32 Š./1853; d. 1311 Š./1932, [FIGURE 1](#)). Najm-al-Saltana was the eldest daughter of [Firuz Mirzā](#), son of ‘Abbās Mirzā Qajar. Her mother was Ḥājia Homā Kānom, daughter of [Bahman Mirzā Bahā’-al-Dawla](#), who was the son of Fath-‘Ali Shah. Homā Kānom was deeply devout and endowed a mosque with an adjacent school, in Gozar-e Vazir Daftar in the Sangelaj district near Meydān Vaḥdat (previously Šāpur), which are still extant and known collectively as the mosque of Šāhzāda Kānom. Aside from Najm-al-Saltana, Firuz Mirzā and Homā Kānom had two daughters and a son. One daughter died young and the second, Sorur-al-Saltana, married Moẓaffar-al-Din Mirzā, the crown prince, and became known as Ḥazrat-e ‘Olyā. Firuz Mirzā and Homā Kānom’s son, [‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mirzā Farmānfarmā](#) (Farmān-Farmā’iyān [Ra’is], I, pp. 29-30), married the daughter of the crown prince. The family of Firuz Mirzā was thus closely related to that of the future Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah.

When she was about 14 years old, Najm-al-Saltana was married to Morteżā-Qoli Khan, son of Wakil-al-Molk Kermāni, the governor of Kerman. He had already been married and had several children. Morteżā-Qoli Khan and Najm-al-Saltana had two daughters, Šowkat-al-Dawla, who married Sahm-al-Molk, the patriarch of the Bayāt family, and ‘Ešrat-al-Dawla, who married Mirzā ‘Ali Movattaq-al-Saltana and became related to the family of Vazir Daftar. (Farmān-Farmā’iyān [Ra’is], I, p. 33). Upon the death of his father, Morteżā-Qoli Khan inherited his title and was known as Wakil-al-Molk Tāni. After



encountering riots in Kerman during his governorship in there (1869-79), compounded by his own serious financial difficulties, he was recalled to Tehran where he died in the same year (Aḥmadi Kermāni, pp. 244-91).

In 1881 Najm-al-Salṭana married her second husband, Mirzā Hedāyat-Āllāh Vazir Daftar, the son of Mirzā Ḥosayn Āštiāni and paternal cousin of Mirzā Yusof Mostowfi-al-Mamālek. Mirzā Hedāyat was also the brother-in-law of Mostowfi-al-Mamālek and already had grown up children (Bāmdād, IV, pp. 422-27). Najm-al-Salṭana and Mirzā Hedāyat had a daughter, Āmena Daftar-al-Moluk, and a son, Moḥammad (the future Moṣaddeq-al-Salṭana), one of the most significant political figures of 20th century Iran. Āmena married Noṣrat-al-Dowla, thereby becoming her maternal uncle's daughter-in-law, and had a son with him, Moṣaffar Qoli Mirzā, Moṣaffar-e Firuz. She divorced Noṣrat-al-Dowla and later married Abu'l-Faḏl Mirzā Azod (Azod-al-Salṭana), a son of Moṣaffar-al-Din Shah, with whom she had two daughters (Qods A'zam and Banu A'zam) and a son (Abu'l-Naṣr Mirzā Azod). Noṣrat-al-Dowla was eventually killed by Reza Shah and Moṣaffar felt a deep hatred for his son Mohammad Reza Shah. After a short period during which Moṣaffar rose in the administration of Qavām, he was sent as an ambassador to the Soviet Union. After his dismissal, he spent the rest of his life in exile in Paris and was a vociferous opponent of the Pahlavi regime (see Farmān-Farmā'iyān [Ra'is], I, pp. 199-202). When Moḥammad Moṣaddeq was about ten, his father died in the cholera pandemic of 1891-1892, leaving Najm-al-Salṭana in sole charge of her young family. In later life Moṣaddeq often expressed his gratitude towards his mother for her guidance and upbringing (Katouzian, p. 22).

In 1893, Najm-al-Salṭana was married for the third time, to Mirzā Faḏl-Allāh Wakil-al-Molk Tabrizi Ṭabāṭabā'i Dibā, secretary to the crown prince Moṣaffar-al-Din (i.e. her own brother-in-law). They had one son, Abu'l-Ḥasan Dibā (Ṭaqat-al-Dawla), who became a successful businessman and founder of Tehran Park Hotel, the first modern hotel in Iran.

When Moṣaffar-al-Din Shah ascended the throne in 1896, Najm-al-Salṭana's brother 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mirza Farmānfarmā harbored great expectations of becoming the minister of war, given his military training and the fact that he was the Shah's son-in-law. Restless and ambitious, he made many enemies at the Qajar court who accused him of plotting against the Shah and prompted his exile to the 'Atabāt in Iraq from 1898 to 1902 (Ettehadiyeh, 2004, I, pp. 191-205). Najm-al-Salṭana, who had been supported by her brother in all her troubles, now took charge of his affairs. She wrote to him often, passing along



news about events in Tehran, about his wife and sons, and about his property, and tried to comfort him during his exile. She traveled to the 'Atabāt to see him and went from there on the Ḥajj pilgrimage. She and her sister Ḥazrat-e 'Olyā pleaded 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mirza's case at the court; but when the Shah did finally albeit reluctantly give his assent, 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mirza was not allowed to reside in Tehran (Ettehadieh, 2004, I, p. 213).

The letters of Najm-al-Saltana to her brother have survived and date mostly from the year 1899, when he was in exile. As correspondence by women is something of a rarity until the twentieth century and not many examples have survived, these letters are of special significance. Besides throwing light on her somewhat rudimentary literacy, they give an insight into her personal world. She expresses her preoccupation with religion and her concern for the welfare of her children, her marriage, and their future. Interestingly she expresses her feelings about her son, Moḥammad (Moṣaddeq), and thanks God that he has turned out well; for a fatherless boy, she writes, can often go astray. She also provides an insight into complex family relationships, which is of interest as a backdrop to political events. One of her worries was her relationship with her husband's many grown up children. She also gives her views about the Shah and his courtiers, who do not escape criticism (Ettehadieh, 2009, pp. 155-92).

Misfortune once again struck when her husband Mirzā Fażl-Allāh Khan died in 1906 and she was left to take care of her young son. The [Constitutional Revolution](#), which ushered in a period of political instability began in the same year. Moṣaffar-al-Din Shah, already suffering from ill health, died a year later and was succeeded by the crown prince Moḥammad-'Ali, who was not in favor of the newly established Majles (parliament). Moṣaddeq, now 24 years old, was a liberal in favor of constitutionalism and when the Majles was bombarded and closed on the orders of the Shah, he felt unable to remain in Iran and opted for study abroad (Katouzian, p. 30).

There is little information about Najm-al-Saltana's life and her attitude towards the new changes heralded by the Constitutional Revolution, the closure of the Majles, the civil war, the abdication of the Moḥammad-'Ali Shah in favor of his young son Aḥmad Mirzā, the Regency, World War I, and the devastation and famine the country suffered as a consequence. The change of dynasty was no doubt perturbing to her, particularly when Moṣaddeq as a member of the parliament voted against it (Makki, III, pp. 445-50), although her strong religious beliefs must have provided her with some solace.



Towards the end of her life in 1928, and following the philanthropic example set by her mother, who had built and endowed a mosque and a school, and her brother, who took a more modern approach and endowed the [Institut Pasteur](#), Najm-al-Salṭana built and endowed the Najmiya hospital in Tehran. This was the first modern private hospital in Tehran with a special fund earmarked for the care of poor patients. Though by now advanced in age, she supervised the actual day-to-day process of construction of the hospital, as witnessed and narrated affectionately by one of her nieces, Mehrmāh (Farmān-Farmā'iyān [Ra'is], I, p. 32). She made Moṣaddeq and his descendants the custodians of the hospital with the proviso that the custody would go to her other son Abu'l-Ḥasan if there were no other descendants. During his lifetime Moḥammad Moṣaddeq was the custodian of the hospital, a responsibility that was passed on to his son Gōlām-Ḥosayn and later on to Maḥmud Mosadeq. Najm-al-Salṭana also took the unprecedented step of making her eldest daughter the supervisor of the hospital, to be succeeded thereafter by her other daughters (Rezā'i). She died in 1932 and was buried in Najaf.

During the oil nationalization movement of the early 1950s, when Moṣaddeq was a popular Prime Minister who had challenged the might of the British Empire, one of his supporters, Moḥammad Ḥasan Šamširi, the owner of a well-known traditional restaurant (Čelow-kebābi) by the Bazaar, built an annex to the Najmiya hospital, thus enlarging and modernizing it. The hospital remains functional to this day and is a lasting tribute to her memory.

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