



## ŽIĀ'-AL-SALTĀNA

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**ŽIĀ'-AL-SALTĀNA**, Šāh Begom (1799-1873), seventh daughter of [Fath-'Ali Shah Qajar](#) (r. 1797-1834), private secretary to him, calligrapher and poet. Her mother, [Maryam Khanom](#), the shah's thirty-ninth wife, was of Jewish origin and had previously been married to Āgā Moḥammad Khan Qajar (*Lesān-al-Molk*, I, p. 555; *Kāvāri*, II, p. 986; *Azod-al-Dawla*, p. 33; *Bāmdād*, IV, p. 51). Žiā'-al-Saltāna had one full sister, Solṭān Begom, and four full brothers, Maḥmud Mirzā, Homāyun Mirzā, Aḥmad-'Ali Mirzā and Jahānšāh Mirzā (see [MARYAM KHANOM](#) and [FATH-'ALI SHAH](#)). Of Žiā'-al-Saltāna's four full brothers, the eldest, [Maḥmud Mirzā](#) (1799-1835), was the most accomplished.

Fath-'Ali Shah doted on his seventh daughter, Šāh Begom. He paid particular attention to her education, gave her the title *Žiā'-al-Saltāna*, 'light of the realm' and had her raised by his mother, Āsia Khanom, the Maḥd-e 'Olyā' (*Kāvāri*, II, p. 1012; *Azod-al-Dawla*, p. 33). When Fath-'Ali Shah's mother died, all her valuables, jewellery and cosmetics were given to Žiā'-al-Saltāna (*Kāvāri*, II, p. 1012; *Azod-al-Dawla*, p. 33). Žiā'-al-Saltāna acted as her father's personal secretary, or *Monši-al-mamālek-i andarun*, and all his private letters were written in her hand (*Azod-al-Dawla*, pp. 33 and 175; *Lesān-al-Molk*, I, p. 547; *Kāvāri*, II, pp. 932 and 1012; Mošir Salimi, p. 308). She also controlled the signing and sealing of the royal decrees of the harem (*farāmin-e andarun* (*Kāvāri*, II, p.1012; Mošir Salimi, p. 308; see also [HAREM ii](#); [ANDARUN](#); [FARMĀN](#)). She was intimately involved in the financial running of the harem and the distribution of monies to younger princes, and worked closely with the meticulous Golbadan Bāji Khanom, Kāzen-al-Dawla and her assistants,



Ḳayr-al-Nesā' Khanom and Mirzā Maryam, in monitoring withdrawals of gold and jewelry from the royal treasury (Mošir Salimi, p. 308; Mas'ud Anšāri, pp. 23-24; Ažod-al-Dawla, pp. 31-32). Žiā'-al-Salṭana was often to be found in her father's presence, whether in Tehran or when traveling outside of the capital (Ḳāvāri, II, pp. 1011-12; Ažod-al-Dawla, p.34; Mas'ud Anšāri, p. 22). Faṭḥ-'Ali Shah decreed that Žiā'-al-Salṭana be given separate living quarters beyond the confines of the harem, with her own stables and *farrāšḳāna*, and her own 'vizier', Ša'bān-'Ali Khan (Ažod-al-Dawla, p. 33; Mošir Salimi, I, pp. 307-308). As the shah's favorite daughter, every year Žiā'-al-Salṭana organized the festivities in the royal palace to celebrate her father's birthday (Ažod-al-Dawla, p. 34). Just as she was trusted by her father, so Žiā'-al-Salṭana was respected by her brothers and sisters who were aware of the influence she had with the shah (Ḳāvāri, II, p. 1013).

It was Žiā'-al-Salṭana who recited poems composed in praise of the shah sent to the court by contemporary poets, and it was she who recorded many of her father's poems in writing (Ḳāvāri, II, p. 1012; Ažod-al-Dawla, p. 34; Mošir Salimi, p. 308). Faṭḥ-'Ali Shah and 'Abbās Mirzā both composed short poems in praise of Žiā'-al-Salṭana, who was an accomplished poet in her own right (Ažod-al-Dawla, pp. 34 and 124; Mošir Salimi, pp. 306-10; Bāmdād, IV, p. 78). Maḥmud Mirzā authored a number of significant anthologies of early Qajar poetry, including a lesser known work, *Noql-e majles*, an anthology of contemporary Qajar women's poetry, which Žiā'-al-Salṭana asked him to write (Maḥmud, I, introd.; Golčīn-e Ma'āni, *Tadkerahā.*, I, pp. 137-49, 728-36; II, pp. 392-93; for printed extracts from the *Noql-e majles*, see Mošir Salimi, pp. 257, 307-308).

Žiā'-al-Salṭana was also a skilled painter, musician and embroiderer, but it was as a calligrapher that Žiā'-al-Salṭana excelled (Ḳāvāri, II, p. 1012; Ažod-al-Dawla, p. 33; Mošir Salimi, p. 308; Mas'ud Anšāri, p. 22). She was taught initially by her brother Maḥmud Mirzā, but was later tutored by Mirzā 'Abbās Nuri (d. 1839, father of Mirzā Ḥosayn-'Ali, B ahā'-Allāh) surnamed Mirzā Bozorg by the shah (Nuri, p. 207). It has been suggested that Žiā'-al-Salṭana married Mirzā 'Abbās Nuri and then divorced him in a plot with Ḥāji Mirzā 'Abbās Āqāsi to ruin him financially, although there is not sufficient evidence to support this claim (Nuri, pp. 207-208; Balyuzi 1980, pp. 14-18). Žiā'-al-Salṭana wrote a number of Qur'ans. One Qur'an is now kept in the Qom Holy Shrine Museum (Ažod-al-Dawla, p. 33; Mošir Salimi, p. 308; Bāmdād, IV, p. 76).

Žiā'-al-Salṭana had numerous suitors from among the Qajar nobility, and



although she did not marry during her father's lifetime, she was engaged briefly to her paternal cousin, Ḥosaynqoli Khan (see [ḤOSAYNQOLI KHAN SARDĀR-E IRAVĀNI](#)), son of Faṭḥ-'Ali Shah's brother of the same name (Kāvāri, II, pp. 1012-13 and 1158; *Azod-al-Dawla*, p. 34; *E'tezād-al-Salṭana*, p. 441). Upon her father's death, she pleaded with her nephew, Moḥammad Shah, to be allowed to live out her days in celibacy, in her own quarters. The shah did not agree and instead forced her (by threat of execution) to marry (Mas'ud Anṣāri, p. 24; *Bāmdād*, IV, p. 77). He suggested to his aunt she marry the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mirzā Mas'ud Anṣāri Garmrudi (1790-1848), this she did in 1835 at the advanced age of thirty-seven (Kāvāri, II, p. 1013; *Azod-al-Dawla*, p. 34). As a sign of respect, Moḥammad Shah visited his aunt on the night of her wedding and all the princes accompanied her from the palace to Mirzā Mas'ud's house (*Azod-al-Dawla*, p. 34). Ḥājji Mirzā Āqāsi and Mir Moḥammad Mahdi, Tehran's *emām-e jom'a* presided over the marriage, and negotiated a dowry of some 50,000 tomans (*Azod-al-Dawla*, pp. 34-35; Mas'ud Anṣāri, pp. 25-26). Mirzā Mas'ud, son of Mirzā 'Abd-al-Raḥim Anṣāri and cousin of Mirzā Sa'id Khan, Mo'tamen-al-Molk, was first appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs by Moḥammad Shah in 1835, a position he held until 1838 and once again from 1845 to 1848 (*E'tezād-al-Salṭana*, p. 441). He was the first Iranian official to master French, a distinction that gained him entry into the entourage of 'Abbās Mirzā (*Bāmdād*, IV, pp. 75-76). Mas'ud acted as translator and personal secretary to 'Abbās Mirzā, and was an important member of the delegation headed by Kosrow Mirzā which was sent to Russia following the murder of the Russian Ambassador, [Alexander Griboedov](#) in Tehran in 1829. Mirzā Mas'ud wrote a history of the life of 'Abbās Mirzā, part of which was published together with Bahā'-al-Molk's *Safar-nāma-ye Kosrow Mirzā* (pp. 1-3; see also Mas'ud Anṣāri, pp. 12-15; *Bāmdād*, IV, p. 75; *Amanat*, pp. 76, 97, 100). Mirzā Mas'ud died in 1848 and was buried in Najaf.

Mirzā Mas'ud and Zīā'-al-Salṭana had four children, two daughters and two sons (Kāvāri, II, pp. 1150-51). Their elder son, Mirzā Ḥasan Khan, Nāyeb-al-Wezāra (1839-1906), worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran and was later appointed consul at Astrakhan and Erzurum (*Momtaḥen-al-Dawla*, p. 96; Mas'ud Anṣāri, p. 2). His son, 'Aliqoli Khan, Mošāwer-al-Mamālek (1868-1940), was first appointed Persia's Foreign Minister in 1916 (see ['ALI-QOLI KHAN](#)). Mirzā Ḥasan's younger brother, Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan, Mešbāh-al-Salṭana (b. 1843), also worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran and was later posted to Bombay (*Momtaḥen-al-Dawla*, pp. 96-97).



Žiā'-al-Salṭana's eldest daughter, Šahanšāh Begom, known as Āgā Jān (ca. 1836-1917), married Mirzā Moḥammad Hāšem Qāzi Ṭabāṭabā'i (d. 1864) (Torābi Ṭāabāṭabā'i, pp. 186-89, 202-207 and 411). Of their three daughters, the eldest, Āgā Šahzāda (1850-ca. 1910), married Sayyed 'Abd-Allāh Entezām-al-Salṭana (d. 1892), son of Mirzā Musā Wazir (1783-1865) and younger brother of Mirzā 'Isā Wazir (d. 1892) (Bāmdād, II, p. 514; IV, p. 164). A few months prior to his death, Entezām-al-Salṭana was appointed Tehran's chief of police (Bāmdād, II, pp. 282-3). Entezām-al-Salṭana's grandsons, 'Abd-Allāh (1895-1983) and Naṣr-Allāh (1899-1980) Entezām, rose high in the service of the Pahlavi state (see [ENTEZĀM](#), and [NAṢR-ALLAH](#)). Both Entezām-al-Salṭana and Āgā Šahzāda were prominent members of the Tehran Bahā'i community, and they succeeded in converting Šahanšāh Begom and her youngest daughter, 'Aḍrā' Khanom, known as Žiā'-al-Ḥajjiya (1861-1924), to the new religion (Balyuzi 1985, p. 173; Aṣḍaq, p. 36; Brookshaw, pp. 21-22). Both Āgā Šahzāda and her sister received numerous tablets (*alwāḥ*) from Bahā'-Allāh and his son, 'Abd-al-Bahā' (Bahā'-Allāh, pp. 235-300; Aṣḍaq, pp. 13, 20, 36; Brookshaw, passim). Soon after converting (ca. 1884), Žiā'-al-Ḥajjiya married the prominent Bahā'i (see [BAHAI FAITH](#)) teacher (*moballeḡ*) Ebn Aṣḍaq (1850-1928).

After the birth of her children, Žiā'-al-Salṭana performed the pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥajj*) and went on pilgrimage to the shrines of the Imams in Najaf, Karbalā' and Mashad (Kāvāri, II, p. 1013; Azod-al-Dawla, p. 195). During the reign of Moḥammad Shah, Žiā'-al-Salṭana appears to have retained some of her influence in the running of the royal treasury and was one of the shah's few paternal aunts allowed to sit in his presence (Azod-al-Dawla, pp. 192 and 248-49; Mas'ud Anṣāri, p. 24). She died in 1873 aged 76 and was buried in a room of the house she owned in Karbalā'.

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