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DAFTAR-KĀNA-YE HOMĀYŪN
(SUPREME SECRETARIAT),
ESPECIALLY IN SAFAVID IRAN
(10TH~12TH CENTURIES)

Hashem RAJABZADEH

ABSTRACT

The establishment of the Supreme Secretariat in the Islamic empire is attributed to 'Omar, the Second Caliph (ruled 634~644 A.D.), who organized an administration of public finance after the Sasanid tradition. The earliest mention of the Daftar-kāna dates to the 14th Century.

In the time of Il-khans (14th Century), the head of the financial chamber was assisted by two high officials: the mošref al-mamālek and the nāẓer al-mamālek.

In Safavid period (1502~1736) the bureaucracy was headed by the Grand Minister, under whom a group of officials were in charge of branches of the minister's department, called daftar-kāna. The actual operation of the financial machine was in the hands of a large staff, including Nāẓer-e Daftar-kāna and Dâruga-ye Daftar-kāna, under the comptroller of Finance (Mostawfi al-mamālek).

In the reign of Afsâr kings, especially Nâder Shâh, and later on at the time of Zands (18th Century), the main features of the Safavid administration, including the Daftar-kāna, were maintained.

Under the Qājârs (1797~1925) the departments of the Royal Secretariats were still existing, though it had lost its true functions.

BACKGROUND

Daftar-kāna (Secretariat) was an important part of the administration in Iran until the end of the 19th Century. New sources, however, have described it simply as "a part of the Supreme Court (divān) during the Safavid period... headed by the Superintendent (nāẓer) of the Supreme Royal Secretariat who had nine scribes working under him" (Dehkodā, under "Daftar-kāna-ye Homāyūn").

The establishment of the Supreme Secretariat in the Islamic Empire is attributed to 'Omar, the Second Caliph, who, following the advice of one of his Iranian commanders, organized an administration of public finance, called the "divān", after the Sasanid tradition (Ebn-e Taḡṭāqi, pp. 12-13. See also Encyclopaedia of Islam, under "Daftar"; Māwardī, p. 191; and Rajabzādeh, p. 184).

The earliest mention of the Daftar-kāna dates to the 14th Century. The author of Dastūr al-kāteb devotes a chapter of his book, titled "assigning the duties of the ministers and the officials of the Great Court", to "Daftar-dāri-ye mamālek (book-keeping of the great divisions of Persia)". In this work he gives credit to Kāja Šams al-Din Jovaini, the Great Minister (Šāḥeb-divān) for assigning a Royal Secretary (daftar-dār-e divān) to the Mongol court. Jovaini also allocated the revenues of some crown lands (moze'-e divānī) for the Secretariat's use; "... and since the Secretariat (daftar-kāna) was in perfect order, the ministers and high officials of the great provinces (mamālek) had most often their office in the Secretariat" (Nakjavānī, vol. II, pp. 125-31).

In the time of Il-khans the mostawfi al-mamālek, the head of the financial chamber, was assisted by two high officials, although both were of lesser rank: the mošref al-mamālek and the nāẓer al-mamālek. "Obviously, in directing the financial administration the primary function of the trio was to exercise mutual control... In the Safavid nāẓer-e daftar-kāna-ye homāyun-e a'lā we can recognize the older nāẓer al-mamālek; and the mošref al-mamālek was presumably the prototype of the Safavid dāruḡa-ye daftar-kāna" (Fragner, p. 554). Dastur al-kāteb (14th Century) has many references to the positions of the nāẓer-e mamālek and the mostawfi-ye mamālek (see Nakjavānī, vol. II, pp. 67-70, 108-109 & 111-13).

DAFTAR-KĀNA IN SAFAVID PERIOD

The bureaucracy was headed by the Grand Minister (wazir), under whom a group of officials of lesser ranks were in charge of branches of the minister's department, called daftar-kāna.

The actual operation of the financial machine was in the hands of a large staff of accountants, clerks, tax-collectors and financial agents under the control of the Comptroller of Finance (Mostawfi al-mamālek).

Mostawfi al-mamālek: The Comptroller of Finance was the highest financial official of the Chancery (divān). T.M. describes him as one of the Great Masters (omarā-ye 'ezām) enjoying the title of 'Āli-jāh and whose activities (šōḡl va 'amal) were very important (T.M., pp.43 & 54). "All operations (dād va setad) with the Divān revenue on the territory of the God-protected provinces (mamālek) must be carried out in accordance with the instructions which the Mostawfi al-mamālek writes from his office to all the provincial agents (ommal)..."(idem). Minorsky believes that the Grand Wazir under whose orders the mostawfi was acting, was the real Minister of Finance (idem, p. 122), but in fact, most of the technical financial activity laid on the shoulders of the mostawfi. French travellers usually call the offices of the Mostawfi al-mamālek and Mostawfi-ye kâşşa (the comptroller of crown land), "chambres des comptes." Sansom considers the Mostawfi al-mamālek as the deputy Grand Minister and the first minister (Sansom, p.45).

The approval of the Mostawfi al-mamālek was required before an order (raqam) of appointment of scribes (moḥarrerān) in the Royal Secretariat (daftar-kāna-ye homāyūn) was issued on the strength of a recommendation (ta'liqā) by the Grand Minister (idem, p.45). Additionally, all mostawfis of the provinces were appointed with the Mostawfi al-mamālek's approval. He also prosecuted (bāz-kāst) in cases of offences committed by the scribes (moḥarrers) of the Chancery (divān) (idem, pp.54-55).

OFFICIALS OF THE DAFTAR-KĀNA

The principal officials under the Mostawfi al-mamālek were: Nāẓer-e Daftar-kāna, Dāruġa-ye Daftar-kāna. Şāheb-tawjih, žābeta-nevis, and the Keepers of the avāraja books (T.M., P.122).

T.M. (pp.71-78. See also D.M., pp.482-83) in a chapter "On the function of the wazirs and mostawfis of the Royal Secretariat (daftar-kana), who are in charge of the income (jam') and expenditure (karj), and on those of Dāruġa, Azab-bāši, etc. lists the following officials:

(1) Nāẓer: D.M. describes the Nāẓer (superintendent) and Dāruġa of the Royal Secretariat as those who enjoy the title of moqarrab al-ħaẓra and have the privilege of sitting in the Paradaisic Assembly (majles-e behešt-ā'in) P. 491). From the description given in T.M. on the duties of the Nāẓer, Minorsky concludes that the official was the head of the Royal Supreme Secretariat (T.M., p. 141). According to Kaempfer, the Nāẓer was the head of three financial departments and performed the duties of accounting office (Kaempfer, pp. 110-11). The Nāẓer was appointed by the king and received some 225 tumāns of fees and salary (T.M., Pp.88-89).

Nāẓer-e Daftar-kāna was different from Nāẓere Boyūtāt. The latter was the superintendent of Royal Workshops (boyūtāt-e kâşşe-ye şarifa), of which there were eventually about thirty-three (Savory, p. 354). Our sources make a clear distinction between the Royal Workshops (boyūtāt) and the Royal Secretariat (daftar-kāna), headed by Nāẓer-e Boyūtāt and Nāẓer-e Daftar-kāna respectively (e.g. see T.M., pp. 37-38, 48-50 & 71-72). Some scholars, however, have mistaken one for the other. On the duties of the Nāẓer-e Daftar-kāna, Minorsky writes: " Chardin thought that the Nāẓer, appointed by the Shah, controlled the activities of the grand Wazir" (T.M. p. 140), whereas the official in question to whom Chardin has made frequent references was the Nāẓer-e Boyūtāt.

In his description of the crown (kâşşa) and public (mamālek) accounting system , Chardin distinguishes between the two: "the task is performed in two main centres, namely Daftar-kāna-ye Kâşşa and Daftar-kāna-ye Mamālek... each consisting of three main branches, with some sixty scribes and their supervisors" (Chardin, vol. II, pp.310-12). The writer names the three branches of each division as Kāleşa, Tawjih, and Laşkar.

The same distinction is made by Kaempfer who explains that the revenues of the state and those of the court are collected by two mostawfis (high financial officials), called Mostawfi al-mamâlek and Mostawfi-ye kâşşa respectively (Kaempfer, pp.109-10).

Nâzer-e Boyûtât (kâşşa) was in rank higher than Nâzer-e Daftar-kâna, and equal to Mostawfi al-mamâlek. T.M. describes the position of Nâzer-e Boyûtât and Mostawfi al-mamâlek together with the Grand Wazir in Chapter II, "On the Great Amirs called 'Âli-jâh (the highest dignitaries of State and Court), while "the duties of the Moqarrab al-ḥaḏra al-'alliyya al-'âliya Nâzer-e Daftar-kâna-ye Homâyûn-e 'Âlâ" are described in Chapter II, "On Financial Officers and Secretaries".

(2) Dârûga: The Dârûga-ye Daftar-kâna was second to the Nâzer within the Royal Secretariat. He used to seal many financial documents as well as the orders of employment for all army ranks. He also used to prosecute all the agents ('âmel) of the Chancery (divân) whose accounts were then cleared by the Nâzer of the Secretariat (idem, pp.71-72). The duties of the Dârûga, as described by the contemporary sources, generally were:

- A) To supervise the lower staff ('amala) of the Secretariat;
- B) To seal the inside (ẓemn) of all financial documents issued by or processed through the Secretariat, and;
- C) To prosecute all the agents, tax-collectors and other debtors whose accounts needed to be cleared by the Nâzer and the Mostawfis (accountants) of the Secretariat (see D.M., p. 426 and Kaempfer, p. 111).

The Dârûga was appointed by the king, and the historical sources indicate that he was sometimes assigned to some extraordinary missions as an envoy, executioner, mediator, etc. (see, for example, Eskandar beg, pp. 296, 324, 459, 468, 616 & 633).

The Dârûga received up to 320 tumâns or more in salary and toyûl, plus local fees (T.M., p. 90). This amount shows that he was of considerable rank. He worked in association with the Nâzer of the Secretariat, but he was subordinate to the Mostawfi al-mamâlek (T.M., p. 141).

- (3) & (4) Wazir and Mostawfi of the Qûrçiyân (Royal Guards) Department.
- (5) & (6) Wazir and Mostawfi of the Ğolâmân (non-Moslem soldiers)

Department.

(7) & (8) Wazir and Mostawfi of the Tofangčiyân (Musketeers) Department.

(9) & (10) Wazir and Mostawfi of the Tupkâna (Artillery) Department.

(11) & (12) The Laškar-nevis and the Sar-kaṭṭ-nevis of the Supreme Divân. These last two were the Wazir and the Mostawfi of the Ešik-âqâsi-bâši Department (the senior officer of all the aids-de-camps), respectively (T.M., P. 47 & 141-42). The Laškar-nevis wrote and sealed the appointment orders (raqam) for the whole staff of the Divân, from the great amirs down to the workers in the workshops. The four principal corps of army had their own Wazirs and Mostawfis (Nos.3 to 10 above), but the Laškar-nevis appointed his own representative to armies on expedition.

Both Chardin (vol.Ⅳ, pp. 311-12) and Kaempfer (pp. 109-10) consider the office of the Laškar-nevis as the third division of the Divân-e mamâlek.

The Sar-kaṭṭ-nevis was associated with the Laškar-nevis as a mostawfi to a wazir, but practically speaking, their association was limited to affairs of the Ešik-âqâsi-bâši's department (T.M. p.142).

(13) Žâbeta-nevis: According to T.M., this official dealt with all the revenues, with the exception of what passed through the Private Department (sarkâr-e kâṣṣa) and the avâreja (accounting) books. Minorsky surmises that avâreja-books registered the land taxes based on some kind of survey, while the Žâbeta books contained any other kind of revenue (idem, pp. 142-43).

In naming the staff of the Royal Secretariat, 'Ālam-ârâ referes to "Mîr abû Torâb-e Naṭanzi, the Mostawfi-ye mâl, an office which is now also called Žâbeta-nevîs and mofrada-nevîs" (Eskandar beg, p. 258).

(14) Šâheb-tawjih: Minorsky concludes that the office of tawjih was the Pay Department (T.M., p. 143). The official had, however, a kind of auditing duty. The "Āli-ḥaẓrat Šâheb-tawjih" (idem, p. 42) was under the Mostawfi al-mamâlek. "Among other duties, the Šâheb-tawjih kept the Royal instructions defining the tariffs of various casual levies and saw that they should not be arbitrarily increased" (idem, p. 143. See also Kaempfer, p. 110).

According to D.M. (p. 440), in 1712 the office had 16 scribes. T.M., however, puts the number at 12.

(15) Daftar-dâr-e Daftar-kâne-ye Homâyûn: The principal duty of the Archivist of the Royal Secretariat was to keep the archives of documents belonging to departments. He had his share of emoluments in the rosûm levied from the amirs, etc (T.M., p. 144).

(16) 'Azab-bâši: This officer was in charge of the lower personnel (azabân va farrâšân) of the Secretariat, apparently under the orders of the Dârûga-ye Daftar-kâna.

(17): Żâbet-e doşulluk-e wakîl: "This Żâbet (Collector) was appointed during the abeyance of the office of the Wakîl-e Diwân-e A'la in order to collect the fees appertaining to the said office" (idem).

(18) Avâraja-nevisân (keepers of avâraja books): According to Minorsky, the term avâraja (avâraj, avâra) is a very old Islamic (and probably Sasanian) accountancy term. The Avâraja-nevises were under the Mostawfi al-mamâlek's orders. In T.M. reference is made to the Avâraja-nevises of the four "great divisions of Persia (Iraq, Âzarbâyjân and Shirvân, Fârs, Kermân)" and an Avâraja-nevis of the Mines, each taking care of the accounts for their relevant division. The Avâraja-nevises were immediately under Mostawfi al-mamâlek, and in his absence, each of whom were the mostawfi of his own Department" (idem, p. 145). During the reign of Shah Tahmâsb (1524~1576), for a while, the duties of Mostawfi al-mamâlek were placed in the hands of Avâraja-nevisân (Eskandar Beg, p. 254).

DAFTAR-KÂNA AFTER THE SAFAVID

In the reign of the Afšâr kings, especially Nâder Shah, and later on at the time of the Zands, distinguished by the rule of Karim Kân, under whom law and order were prevalent, the main features of the Safavid administration, including the Daftar-kâna, were maintained. That these offices existed until the later part of the Qajar period is verified by several sources. The author of the History of Nâder Shah makes many references to Laşkar-nevis, the Mostawfis of the four great divisions of Persia (Moĥammad Kâzem, vol. II, pp. 33-35 & vol. III, p. 72), the position of the Superintendent of the Royal Workshops (idem, vol. II, pp. 451-53),

and the Mostawfi al-mamālek (idem, p. 458). Mirzâ Moḥammad-e Širâzî also refers to the Mostawfi of Fars and the Żâbeṭa-nevis in the administration of Nâder Shah (pp. 23 & 25-26). The office of the Dârûḡa-ye Daftar-kāna was also existing at this time (see ibid. pp.41-42 and Kāšāni, p. 2).

Under the Qajars the departments of the Royal Secretariat were still existing, though it had lost its true functions of administrating public finances. The author of Târik-e Montażam-e Nâşerî mentions the titles of Grand Wazir and Minister of Interior and Finance (Mostawfi al-mamālek), Wazir-e Daftar (for the Nâşer-e Daftar-kāna), and Amîn-e Laşkar (the senior Laşkar-nevis) (E'temâd al-Saltāna, pp. 1222-23). Early in the Nâşer al-Dîn Shâh's reign, Hâj Moḥammad Raḥîm Kân was appointed as the Dârûḡa-ye Daftar-kāna (Bâmdâd, vol.V, p. 248). Later, Nâżem-e Daftar-kāna, and subsequently Wazir-e Baqāyâ, in the person of 'Alî Âqâ Amîn-ḥożûr-e Âştîyânî, were the titles which replaced the Dârûḡa-ye Daftar-kāna. However, 'Emârat-e Daftar-kāna, the public administration building facing the Royal Citedral (ark) in downtown Tehran, remained a landmark in name.

With the inauguration of Rezâ Shah and the introduction of a new system of public finances, the old administration departments, including the Daftar-kāna, passed into history.

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