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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-mamâlek and the nâzer al-mamâlek.

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 Nâzer-e Daftar-kāna and Dâruga-ye Daftar-kāna, under the comptroller of Finance (Mostawfi al-mamâlek).

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 Qâjârs(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 (divân) during the Safavid period... headed by the Superintendent (nâżer) of the Supreme Royal Secretariat who had nine scribes working under him" (Dehkodâ, under "Daftar-kāna-ye Homâyûn").

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 "divân", after the Sasanid tradition (Ebn-e Taqtaqi, pp. 12-13. See also Encyclopaedia of Islam, under "Daftar"; Mâwardi, p. 191; and Rajabzâdeh, p. 184).

The earliest mention of the Daftar-kāna dates to the 14th Century. The author of Dastûr al-kâteb devotes a chapter of his book, titled "assigning the duties of the ministers and the officials of the Great Court", to "Daftar-dâri-ye mamâlek (book-keeping of the great divisions of Persia)". In this work he gives credit to Kâja Šams al-Din Jovaini, the Great Minister (Şâheb-divân) for assigning a Royal Secretary (daftar-dâr-e divân) to the Mongol court. Jovaini also allocated the revenues of some crown lands (moze-e divânî) for the Secretariat's use; "... and since the Secretariat (daftar-kâna) was in perfect order, the ministers and high officials of the great provinces (mamâlek) had most often their office in the Secretariat" (Nakjavânî, vol. I, pp. 125-31).

In the time of Il-khans the mostawfi al-mamâlek, the head of the financial chamber, was assisted by two high officials, although both were of lesser rank: the mošref al-mamâlek and the nâżer al-mamâlek. "Obviously, in directing the financial administration the primary function of the trio was to exercise mutual control... In the Safavid nâżer-e daftar-kâna-ye homâyûn-e a'lâ we can recognize the older nâżer al-mamâlek; and the mošref al-mamâlek was presumably the prototype of the Safavid dâruğâ-ye daftar-kâna" (Fragner, p. 554). Dastur al-kâteb (14th Century) has many references to the positions of the nâżer-e mamâlek and the mostawfi-ye mamâlek (see Nakjavânî, vol. I, 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-mamalek: The Comptroller of Finance was the highest financial official of the Chancery (*divân*). T.M. describes him as one of the Great Masters (*omarâ-ye 'ezâm*) enjoying the title of 'Ali-jâh and whose activities (*šoğl* va 'amal) were very important (T.M., pp.43 & 54). "All operations (*dâd* va *setad*) with the *Divân* revenue on the territory of the God-protected provinces (*mamâlek*) must be carried out in accordance with the instructions which the *Mostawfi al-mamâlek* writes from his office to all the provincial agents (*ommâl*)..."(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-mamâlek* and *Mostawfi-ye kâşşa* (the comptroller of crown land), "chambres des comptes." Sansom considers the *Mostawfi al-mamâlek* as the deputy Grand Minister and the first minister (Sansom, p.45).

The approval of the *Mostawfi al-mamâlek* was required before an order (*raqam*) of appointment of scribes (*moharrerân*) in the Royal Secretariat (*daftar-kâna-ye homâyûn*) was issued on the strength of a recommendation (*ta'liqâ*) by the Grand Minister (idem, p.45). Additionally, all *mostawfis* of the provinces were appointed with the *Mostofi al-mamâlek*'s approval. He also prosecuted (*bâz-kâst*) in cases of offences committed by the scribes (*moharrers*) of the Chancery (*divân*) (idem, pp.54-55).

OFFICIALS OF THE DAFTAR-KĀNA

The principal officials under the *Mostawfi al-mamâlek* were: *Nâżer-e Daftar-kâna*, *Dâruğâ-ye Daftar-kâna*, *Şâheb-tawjih*, *żâbeta-nevis*, and the Keepers of the *avâraja* 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 *Dâruğâ*, *Azab-bâşı*, etc. lists the following officials:

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

Nâżer-e Daftarkâna was different from *Nâżere Boyûtât*. The latter was the superintendent of Royal Workshops (*boyûtât-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 (*boyûtât*) and the Royal Secretariat (*daftar-kâna*), headed by *Nâżer-e Boyûtât* and *Nâżer-e Daftar-kâna* respectively (e.g. see T.M., pp. 37-38, 48-50 & 71-72). Some scholars, however, have mistakan one for the other. On the duties of the *Nâżer-e Daftar-kâna*, Minorsky writes: " Chardin thought that the *Nâżer*, 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 *Nâżer-e Boyûtât*.

In his description of the crown (*kâşşa*) and public (*mamâlek*) account-keeping system , Chardin distinguishes between the two: "the task is performed in two main centres, namely *Daftar-kâna-ye Kâşşa* and *Daftar-kâna-ye Mamâlek*... 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 *Kâleşa*, *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 kâssâ respectively (Kaempfer, pp.109-10).

Nâzer-e Boyûtât (kâssâ) 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 'Ali-jâh (the highest dignitaries of State and Court), while "the duties of the Moqarrab al-ḥažra al-ṣallîyya al-`âliya Nâzer-e Daftar-kâna-ye Homâyûn-e Alâ" are described in Chapter IV, "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 ('âmels) 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 ('âmala) of the Secretariat;
- B) To seal the inside (żemn) 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 Qûrčiyân (Royal Guards) Department.
- (5) & (6) Wazir and Mostawfi of the Ȣolâmân (non-Moslem soldiers)

Department.

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

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

(11) & (12) The Laškar-nevis and the Sar-kaṭṭ-nevis of the Supreme Divān. These last two were the Wazir and the Mostawfi of the Ešik-âqāsi-bāši 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 Divān, 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. II, pp. 311-12) and Kaempfer (pp. 109-10) consider the office of the Laškar-nevis as the third division of the Divān-e mamālek.

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-âqāsi-bāši's department (T.M. p.142).

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

In naming the staff of the Royal Secretariat, 'Ālam-ârā refers to "Mīr abū Torāb-e Naṭanzi, the Mostawfi-ye māl, an office which is now also called Žābeta-nevis and mofrada-nevis" (Eskandar beg, p. 258).

(14) Šāheb-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 "‘Ali-ḥażrat Šāheb-tawjih" (idem, p. 42) was under the Mostawfi al-mamālek. "Among other duties, the Šāheb-tawjih kept the Royal instructions defining the tarrifs 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 (*azabâن* va *farrâšân*) of the Secretariat, apparently under the orders of the *Dârûga-ye Daftar-kâna*.

(17): *Žâbet-e došulluk-e wakîl*: "This *Žâbet* (Collector) was appointed during the abeyance of the office of the *Wakîl-e Diwân-e A‘lâ* 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, *Āzarbâjân* 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 *Laškar-nevis*, the *Mostawfis* of the four great divisions of Persia (Mohammad Kâzem, vol. I, pp. 33-35 & vol. II, p. 72), the position of the Superintendent of the Royal Workshops (idem, vol. II, pp. 451-53),

and the *Mostawfi al-mamâlek* (idem, p. 458). *Mirzâ Mohammad-e Širâzî* also refers to the *Mostawfi* of Fars and the *Žâbêta-nevis* in the administration of Nâder Shah (pp. 23 & 25-26). The office of the *Dâruğâ-ye Daftar-kâna* was also existing at this time (see *ibid.* pp. 41-42 and *Kâshâni*, 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 Montâzam-e Nâşerî* mentions the titles of Grand Wazir and Minister of Interior and Finance (*Mostawfi al-mamâlek*), Wazir-e Daftar (for the *Nâżer-e Daftar-kâna*), and *Amîn-e Laškar* (the senior *Laškar-nevis*) (*E‘temâd al-Saltâna*, pp. 1222-23). Early in the Nâşer al-Dîn Shâh's reign, Hâj Mohammad Rahîm Kân was appointed as the *Dârûğâ-ye Daftar-kâna* (*Bâmdâd*, vol. V, p. 248). Later, *Nâżem-e Daftar-kâna*, and subsequently *Wazîr-e Baqâyâ*, in the person of 'Ali Aqâ Amîn-hožûr-e Âştiyânî, were the titles which replaced the *Dârûğâ-ye Daftar-kâna*. However, '*Emârat-e Daftar-kâna*, 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-kâna*, passed into history.

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