



AMĪR ḤARAS

AMĪR-E ḤARAS “commander of the guard,” the official at the court of the ‘Abbasid caliphs and at certain of its provincial successor states who was directly responsible for policing the palace and for carrying out the caliph’s wishes, including, for instance, executions and the bastinadoing of offenders. To assist him, there was a force of guards armed with maces or clubs and under his command. Neẓām-al-molk quotes words allegedly uttered by the caliph Ma’mūn (198-218/813-33): “I have two commanders of the guard who are occupied from morn till night in cutting off people’s heads, chopping off hands and feet, beating with rods and putting men in prison” (*Sīāsat-nāma*, chap. 39, ed. H. Darke, Tehran, 1340 Š./1961, pp. 172f.; tr. idem, London, 1960, pp. 135f.). He further states that in the past, the commander of the guard was entitled to the privileges of banners, drums, and music, and he and his force of *čūbdārs* wore sumptuous uniforms. It seems that the ‘Abbasid *šāḥeb/amīr-al-ḥaras* was a separate official from the *šāḥeb-al-šorṭa* or military governor of the capital, though their functions were similar. The sources are reticent, but the office was probably retained by succeeding provincial rulers after the breakdown of caliphal central authority. Under the early Ghaznavids, the *amīr-e ḥaras* is mentioned by Bayhaqī as a prominent court figure; in one passage his *Tārīk* mentions a *ḳayma-ye ḥaras*, apparently a kind of guardroom for confining offenders. It is probable that this office came to the Ghaznavids via the Samanids, among whom there certainly existed, on the evidence of Naršakī, a *šāḥeb-e šoraṭ*. Neẓām-al-molk was nevertheless to lament that, under his own Saljuq masters, the office had lost all importance (loc. cit.)



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barthold, *Turkestan*³, pp. 227-28, 306.

Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 138.

Bosworth and A. K. S. Lambton, in *Camb. Hist. Iran V*, pp. 76, 226.