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COURTS AND COURTIERS

vii. In the Qajar period

The court (*darbār*, *darbār-e aʿẓam*, *dar(b)-e ḵāna*) in the Qajar period was essentially organized on the ancient Perso-Turkish model inherited from the Safavid and Zand courts (see vi, above) but with modifications in practice and function largely designed to accommodate the Qajars' nomadic habits. It consisted of the ruler and his household, including all the immediate and sometimes more distant members of the royal family, their dependents, and retainers. The personnel of the court, the palaces and royal buildings, and the crown properties were all considered to be the ruler's personal property, over which he could exercise full authority. Moreover, at least in the early Qajar period, the two chief organs of the government, the bureaucracy (*dīvān*) and the army (*laškar*), were considered extensions of the court (*dargāh*). Efforts to rationalize the court administration as part of the reforms of the late 19th century met with only limited success; before the Constitutional Revolution in the first decade of the 20th century the government failed either to sever its tics with the court or to bring it under control. The Ottoman distinction between the sultan's palace and the Sublime Porte (Bāb-e ʿālī) was only partially achieved in the Qajar system.

A faint reflection of this division of labor may, however, be seen in the way that titles were granted by the Qajar rulers. Following Safavid and Mughal practice, titles with the suffix *–solṭān* ([of] the king), as in *amīn al-solṭān* (lit., "confidant of the king"), were in theory supposed to denote appointees of the royal enclosure (*ḵalwat*), whereas those with the suffix *–salṭana* ([of] the kingdom), as in *eʿtemād al-salṭana* (lit., "the trust of the kingdom"), were associated with the public life of the court, and those with *–dawla* ([of] the state), as in *mošīr al-dawla* (lit., "consultant to the state"), were associated with the government. In practice, however, titles were granted in great abundance and with little attention to the recipient's actual attachment to the court or government (see alqāb va ʿanāwīn).

During the rule of Āḡā Moḥammad Khan (1200-12/1785-97), founder of the Qajar dynasty, the size and extravagance of the court were kept to a functional minimum. His nomadic habits and puritanical simplicity were reflected in his preference for life in the saddle or the tent, rather than the urbane but decadent life of the palace. Nevertheless, he remained faithful to certain courtly practices, including the public audience or levée (*salām-e ʿāmm*), and initiated few of his own. The coronation ceremony was probably based on that of Nāder Shah (1148-60/1736-47), but the use of a royal crown, the so-called *tāj-e kayānī*, seems to have been an innovation without precedent in Islamic Persia (see crown iv).

The court of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah (1212-50/1797-1834) was, in contrast, extremely elaborate and characterized by close attention to ceremonies, protocol, and the physical appearance of the monarch. His palaces, extensive harem, and all the opulence and splendor that were characteristic of his age seem to have been intended as conscious reminders of the ancient Persian monarchy. The extravagance of the outer court was a reflection of the Qajar's refined taste, whereas the enormous expansion of the royal harem signaled not only the shah's sexual license but also his effort to consolidate his position through marital alliances. The cost of maintaining the court was an enormous burden upon the Qajar state and no doubt contributed to its later bankruptcy. The court of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah's successor, Moḥammad Shah (1250-64/1834-48), was relatively modest; although it reflected his austere taste and his Sufi inclinations, it was also symbolic of the state's financial destitution, to which mismanagement by the grand vizier Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī certainly contributed.

In the reign of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (1264-1313/1848-96) there was an attempt to balance functional efficiency and royal splendor. The austerity program

adopted by the vizier Mīrzā Taqī Khan Amīr(-e) Kabīr, in spite of resistance by the shah and his courtiers, reduced court expenditures. His dismissal of some low-ranking parasites and reductions in the pensions of high-ranking courtiers were major reasons for his eventual downfall. Similarly, the administrative reforms of the 1860s and those undertaken by Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan Mošīr al-Dawla in the 1870s, though they helped to centralize the court administration and reduce the staff and expenditures, were also resisted by the courtiers and the harem. Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's palace-building projects and his artistic patronage followed a relatively stable and logical course but nevertheless resulted in overspending and eventually drained off a substantial portion of the state budget. Huge salaries and pensions had been granted from the government treasury, and tenure of land (*toyūl*s) had been assigned to courtiers and functionaries. In the early 19th century tax revenues, as well as the enormous treasures accumulated by Nāder Shah, had paid for Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah's lavish court, his own indulgences, and his wives' expenditures. Monetary offerings (*pīškeš*) from high officials and confiscation of portions of the legacies of deceased courtiers were among the shah's other sources of income. In the later part of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's reign, however, the expenses of the inner court and the harem were covered exclusively by revenue from the Persian customs (*gomrokāt*).

Whatever progress in rationalizing the budget had been achieved under Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah was lost during the reign of Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah (1313-24/1896-1907), when the domination of the entourage that had followed him from Azarbaijan led to depletion of the royal treasury and even auctioning of the royal furniture. During the Constitutional Revolution Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah's court became the nucleus of royalist plots that eventually ensured its near ruin. As a result the court of Aḥmad Shah (1327-44/1909-25) was substantially reduced in size and influence. When in 1303 Š./1924 Moḥammad-Ḥasan Mīrzā, the last Qajar heir apparent, was forced to leave the Golestān palace, little was left of the splendor of earlier times. Some magnificent palaces were demolished, and the furnishings, including royal paintings, were auctioned off or left to decay by Reżā Shah (1304-20 Š./1925-41) and his officers.

Like most state institutions of the Qajar period the administration of the court was flexible and often subject to the monarch's taste. As noted above, the ancient division between the *dargāh* and the *dīvān* was not strictly observed. The *dīvān-ḵāna*, the administrative and judicial core of the government,

located in the royal citadel (*arg-e salṭanatī*)in Tehran, consisted of the office of correspondence (*daftar-ḵāna*), the treasury (*ṣandūq-ḵāna*), and the arsenal (*jobba-ḵāna*). But as early as the 1860s the *dīvān-ḵāna* was gradually dismantled and its functions delegated to newly established ministries of justice (*ʿadlīya*), finance (*mālīya*), and war (*jang*) as the result of administrative reforms. The newly created ministry of the court (Wezārat-e darbār-e aʿẓam) was largely responsible for administration of the affairs of the private enclosure (*ḵalwat-ḵāna*). Ironically the reduction in size and functions of the *dargāh* did not lessen the shah's power but rather brought control of the government closer to the inner court.

The most enduring function of the *dargāh* was the public audience (see bār) held on important holidays like Nowrūz, the most lavishly celebrated event in the court calendar; the Islamic feasts of Ażḥā (sacrifice), Feṭr (breaking the fast), Mawlūd (birthday of the Prophet Moḥammad), and the birthday of Imam ʿAlī; and in the later reign of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah his own birthday and such special occasions as his accession (*jolūs*) and coronation (*tāj-goḏārī*), significant military conquests, and nomination of the crown prince. The public audience was a symbolic manifestation of royal authority and the ruler's primary position in the political hierarchy, the microcosm of a universal order headed by the monarchy. In a spectacle of pomp and splendor directed toward the elite, the government, and the military the shah displayed all the implements of kingship on the Marble Throne (Taḵt-e marmar), located in the veranda of the Tālār-e salām-e ʿāmm (Hall of public audience) in the Golestān palace, the earliest Qajar royal construction. In this rite of renewing allegiance to the shah the royal house, chiefs of the Qajar tribe, the *ʿolamāʾ*, high-ranking government officials and court dignitaries, military chiefs, urban notables, and the diplomatic corps were present, each positioned according to rank on either side of the throne or behind or in front of it in the spacious courtyard of the palace. The private audience (*salām-e ḵāṣṣ*), on the other hand, was held, often in the Tālār-e salām (Audience hall) in the interior of the Golestān palace, for the purpose of receiving foreign envoys, major dignitaries, or public delegations. For the protocol-conscious Qajar rulers the private *salām* for foreign envoys was a symbolic arena in which the elevated status of the shah among the world's rulers was to be underscored.

The master of ceremonies (*īšīk-āqāsī-bāšī*, lit., "lord of requests"), who was also chief of protocol (*īšīk-ḵāna*), presided over both public and private audiences and supervised the attendants at the public audience (*pīš-ḵedmatān-e salām-e*

ʿāmm). An oration (*ḵoṭba*) was read by the "addressee of the public audience" (*moḵāṭab-e salām-e ʿāmm*), a Qajar dignitary who represented the audience and was addressed in reply by the shah. The royal astrologer (*monajjem-bāšī*) announced the auspicious hour (e.g., the vernal equinox during the Nowrūz celebration), and the chief court poet (*malek-al-šoʿarāʾ*) recited the appropriate panegyric (*qaṣīda*) composed for the occasion. During Nowrūz and other court celebrations wrestlers, gymnasts, animal trainers (*lūṭī*s, lit., "rogues"), and buffoons entertained the court and the public.

The royal enclosure

The Qajar inner court was divided into three basic parts: the royal enclosure (*ḵalwat-e ḵāṣṣa, ḵalwat-sarkārī*) and associated service departments (*ḵedmat-e ḵāṣṣa*); the royal harem and associated services (*ḵāna–* or *andarūn-e ḵāṣṣa*); and the palace security and outdoor services (*rekāb-e homāyūn*). The boundaries of the *ḵalwat* divisions and the *rekāb* were fluid, and frequently several departments from different divisions were assigned to a single powerful court official from the ranks of one of them, often recognized as vizier of the "sublime court" (*wazīr-e darbār-e aʿẓam*). Moḥammad Khan Qājār Davallū, chief of the royal guards in the 1860s, and Maḥmūd Khan ʿAlāʾ-al-Dawla Qājār Davallū, Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's chief of protocol during the 1870s, were officials of the *rekāb* division, whereas the later court ministers Mīrzā Ebrāhīm Amīn-al-Solṭān and his son Mīrzā ʿAlī-Aṣḡar Khan Amīn-al-Solṭān were from *ḵalwat* backgrounds. As early as 1274/1858 efforts were made to rationalize the court administration and define the lines of authority by institutionalizing them in the Ministry of the sublime court (Wezārat-e darbār-e aʿẓam), possibly adapted from the Ottoman Tanẓīmāt. The minister of court, appointed by the shah, also oversaw the court finances. Not until the Constitutional Revolution, however, was the court administration fully integrated into the government.

General organization. The *ḵalwat* in a broader sense consisted of all officials and attendants in the private service of the court (*ajzāʾ wa ḵoddām-e darb-e ḵāna*). Specifically the royal enclosure (*ḵalwat-e ḵāṣṣa*) housed attendants in waiting (*ʿamala-ye ḥożūr*). These functionaries, essentially the shah's companions, were of diverse social backgrounds, ages, and status and included royal confidants and aristocrats, sons of the nobility at the outset of their public careers, and page boys (*ḡolām-bačča*s). The page boys were employed to move freely between the harem and the *ḵalwat*, as well as to serve as playmates for the young princes. Their number increased as Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah grew older and fonder of youthful company. In the late Qajar period

the *ḵalwat* became more notorious, as sycophants, hangers-on, idlers, and spoiled page boys, including Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's favorite, ʿAzīz-al-Solṭān, better known as Malījak II, crowded the palace. Tales of court intrigue, gossip, and harem scandals abounded, and members of the *ḵalwat* were frequently manipulated in the interests of ministers, officials, foreign envoys, and women of the harem. The shah, too, used members of his own *ḵalwat* to outmaneuver all these players in the complex game of power.

The supervision of the entire *ḵalwat* rested upon the royal chamberlain, the most senior official and often a confidant of the shah or a member of the Qajar nobility. Initially known as elder of the *ḵalwat* (*rīš-safīd-e ḵalwat*) and later as chief (*raʾīs-e ḵalwat*) and subsequently minister of attendance (*wazīr-e ḥożūr-e homāyūn*), the occupant of this post was elevated to minister of the sublime court (*wazīr-e darbār-e aʿẓam*) after 1288/1871. The superintendent of the enclosure (*nāẓem-e ḵalwat*), who was often also the headwaiter (*pīš-ḵedmat-bāšī*), was responsible for regular attendance, orderly conduct, and cleanliness of the servants in waiting (*pīš-ḵedmat-e ḥożūr*) and valets de chambre (*farrāš-e ḵalwat*). The *amīn(-e) ḵalwat*, on the other hand, served as secretary within the enclosure. The page of honor (*ḡolām-bačča-bāšī*) supervised the page boys. In 1303/1887 Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana (supplement, p. 32) identified five officeholders (*ṣāḥeb-manṣab*), often with *–e ḵalwat* added to their titles, and twenty-four other attendants (*tābīn*).

Service departments. The service functionaries (*ʿamala-ye ḵedmat*) provided for all domestic needs of the shah and his court. The culinary division was headed by the royal caterer (*ḵᵛān-sālār*, *nāẓer*), who headed the palace supervisory department (*dār al-neẓāra*) and was responsible for the supply of provisions, food preparation, and table service. In 1303/1887 forty people were employed in his office and the associated storehouse (*taḥwīl-ḵāna*): eighteen in the kitchen (*āšpaz-ḵāna*), headed by the royal cook (*āšpaz-bāšī*, *ṭabbāḵ-bāšī*); five in the bakery (*čorak-ḵāna*); twelve in the buttery (*šarbat-ḵāna*); two in the coffeehouse (*qahva-ḵāna*); and sixty-one in the pantry (*ābdār-ḵāna*) and water house (*saqqā-ḵāna*), including the chief butler (*ābdār-bāšī*), fifteen aides, and thirty-seven water carriers (*saqqā*s). The size of the pantry partly reflected its function as the private kitchen for Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah, whose gastronomic habits ensured the ascendancy of the butler Ebrāhīm Amīn-al-Solṭān to the position of royal chamberlain and later minister of court. During his tenure the *ābdār-ḵāna* was frequented by all state dignitaries seeking access to the shah through his butler. The 138 culinary employees constituted the largest

group within the *ʿamala-ye ḵedmat*. Other departments included the royal purse (*ṣarf-e jīb-e mobārak*); the royal wardrobe (*raḵtdār-ḵāna*), headed by the master of the robes (*jāmadār-e ḵāṣṣa*); and the royal chest (*ṣandūq-ḵāna*), headed by the master of the chest (*ṣandūqdār*) aided by an assessor (*moqawwem*; Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, 1303/1887, supplement, pp. 33-38).

The state treasury (*ḵezāna-ye mobāraka-ye mālīya*) was also part of the court administration, for up to the time of Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah the Qajar rulers resisted delegation of full control of the treasury to the government. Also known as the royal treasury (*ḵezāna-ye ḵāṣṣa*), distinct from the private treasury of the harem (*ḵezāna-ye andarūn*), it was staffed by accountants (*mostawfī*s). Other accountants were assigned to various court departments, though technically their appointments were to the government accounting department (*dīvān-e estīfāʾ*) and later to the ministries of interior (*dāḵela*) and finance (*mālīya*). The royal treasury, and later the royal museum (*oṭāq-e mūza-ye mobāraka*), housed the greater part of the celebrated royal treasures (*jawāherāt-e salṭanatī*), some of which, including the Peacock Throne (Taḵt-e ḵoršīd, better known as Taḵt-e ṭāwūs), were on display in the Tālār-e salām and later in the Tālār-e āʾīna (Hall of mirrors) in the Golestān palace. The royal library (*ketāb-ḵāna*) was also part of the Golestān complex. In the time of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah there were a royal librarian (*ketābdār-e homāyūn*) and a curator (*ḵāzen*). In 1302/1885 the royal atelier (*naqqāš-ḵāna*), a remnant of the royal workshops (*kārḵānajāt-e ḵāṣṣa*) of earlier decades, consisted of five artists under the direction of the celebrated royal painter (*naqqāš-bāšī*) Mīrzā Moḥammad Khan Ḡaffārī Kamāl-al-Molk. There was also a photographic department (*ʿakkās-ḵāna*), which owed its survival largely to Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's interest in photography (see ʿakkās-bāšī).

The royal translation department (*dār al-tarjama-ye mobāraka*) was headed by the chief royal dragoman (*motarjem-e maḵṣūṣ-e ḥożūr-e homāyūn*) and employed several French, Turkish, Russian, and English interpreters seconded from the Ministry of publications (Wezārat-e enṭebāʿāt). At the Qajar court, as in the administration as a whole, a single officer could hold several posts. Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana (previously Ṣanīʿ-al-Dawla), for instance, was court chronicler, chief royal dragoman, royal librarian, and for a while chief of the royal palaces and gardens and head of the municipal administration (*eḥtesāb*) of Tehran, as well as minister of publications. The court chronicler (*malek al-mowarreḵīn*) and the keeper of royal stationery (*dawātdār-e homāyūn*) were regarded as independent officials, but the keeper

of the royal seal (*mohardār-e homāyūn*) was head of the *mohardār-ḵāna* and presumably served as royal archivist, in charge of recording all royal papers and correspondence. In practice, however, this department was never established on solid foundations. Typical of their chaotic ruling habits, the Qajars remained unenthusiastic about maintaining orderly and extensive archives.

The shah's private secretary (*dabīr-e ḥożūr*) headed the department of royal correspondence (*rasāʾel-e ḵāṣṣa*), which in principle was responsible for collecting petitions (*ʿarāyeż*) and issuing royal decrees (*farmān*s), including autographs (*dast-ḵaṭṭ*s), and all other royal correspondence. The informal manner in which the Qajars attended to official business, however, allowed for several other channels through which petitions could be received and responses conveyed. Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's resistance to rationalization and his attendance to all details, public and private, combined with petty rivalries among officials and their hasty reshuffling, compounded the bureaucratic confusion at court.

A number of palace employees were unattached to any department. The royal physicians (*aṭebbāʾ-e ḵāṣṣa*), both Persian and European (see campbell; cormick, john; cormick, william), enjoyed special respect and were in close contact with the shah and his harem. As they were also able to practice privately, the shah's physicians (*ḥakīm-bāšī-ye homāyūnī*) often acted as confidants; Europeans might also serve as intermediaries between the shah and foreign missions. Such physicians had been resident at the court in Tehran as early as the 1830s, but in the later reign of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah there were only three of them, compared to ten Persians. The grandiose titles given to Persian physicians were perhaps intended to compensate for loss to Europeans of the monopoly of medical treatment. The royal barber (*ḵāṣṣa-tarāš-bāšī*) and the chief herald (*jāṛčī-bāšī*) were also court retainers, but the royal jeweler (*zargar-bāšī*) and medal maker (*nešānsāz-e mobāraka*) were honorary appointees patronized by the court. Court musicians (*arbāb-e ṭarab*) were employed either individually or as part of the court ensemble (*dasta*) under the chief musician (*rīāsat-e arbāb-e ṭarab*). Under Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah the European director of the department of military music in the Dār al-Fonūn also served as director of the court military band (*mūzīkāṇčī-bāšī*). The *naqqāra-ḵāna-ye mobāraka*, an ancient Persian institution that survived until the Pahlavi period, announced the movement of the sun in the sky five times daily with traditional military instruments and also declared the start of royal

celebrations and annual festivities. The shah's storyteller (*naqqāl-e homāyūn*) and chief court jester (*dalqak-bāšī*) were much appreciated, and the latter, who headed a group of entertainers, enjoyed remarkable liberties. The *mehmandār-bāšī* (chief host) was appointed by the shah, often from among high-ranking officials or the Qajar nobility, to oversee the reception of foreign dignitaries and to accompany them on their tours in the country.

Under Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah the maintenance and upkeep of the royal palaces, the attached gardens, and the royal *qanāt*s (subterranean channels) were concentrated in the department known as *edāra-ye bāḡāt*, *ʿemārāt wa qanawāt-e mobāraka*, also known as the *boyūtāt-e ḵāṣṣa*. Its director supervised the work of the royal gardener (*bāḡbān-bāšī*) and the chief of irrigation (*moqannī-bāšī*). The crown lands (*ḵāleṣajāt-e homāyūnī*, *dīvānī*), however, were administered by the accounting department and later the Ministry of finance on behalf of the crown. The department of construction (*bannāʾ-ḵāna*, later *edāra-ye bannāʾī*), headed by the chief architect (*meʿmār-bāšī*), carried out major construction projects.

The elevated status of the appointees in charge of maintenance and construction was particularly apparent under Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah. In addition to constructing new halls and living quarters in the Golestān complex and refurbishing old ones, they constructed new palaces, royal villas, and summer residences in and around Tehran, including ʿEšratābād, Qaṣr-e Qājār, Salṭanatābād, Ṣāḥeb-qerānīya, Aqdasīya, Sorḵa Ḥesār, Qaṣr-e Fīrūza, Dūšān Tappa, Faraḥābād, and Šahrestānak. Royal buildings were also erected at Anzalī and Ašraf (Behšahr), as well as in seats of the prince-governors in Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Fārs, Khorasan, Kermānšāh, Qazvīn, and elsewhere. Such Safavid structures as the Čehel Sotūn in Isfahan, the ʿAlī Qāpū in Qazvīn, the Ašraf in Māzandarān, and the Bāḡ-e Fīn near Kāšān were repaired, but others were neglected and occasionally even destroyed. Enormous sums were spent on the new buildings and on interior decoration and furnishing of palaces and mansions. The chief architect, often working under the close supervision of the shah, played some part in the preservation of the Persian architectural tradition and later in the emergence of a mixed style. The influence of European architecture can be seen in the ʿEmārat-e abyaż (White palace) or the ʿEmārat-e ḵᵛābgāh (Palace of rest, now destroyed), built in 1303/1886 by Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah for his private quarters in the Golestān, as well as in Kāmrān Mīrzā's Amīrīya mansion and Masʿūd Mīrzā Ẓell-al-Ṣoltan's Bahārestān. These buildings were designed according to a European

conception of royalty, in which the physical division between the inner and outer quarters was not clearly stressed. The incorporation of modern amenities also became common in the last decade of the 19th century. The lighting department (*čerāḡ-ḵāna*), which initially had been responsible for maintaining ceresin lampposts, candelabra, and chandeliers, later took charge of maintaining the gaslights that were first installed in the Golestān palace and its grounds in the 1870s and the electric lighting that appeared in the 1890s. Earlier in the 19th century there had also been a chief torchbearer (*maśʿaldār-bāšī*).

The royal harem (*ḥaram-ḵāna*, *andarūn-e ḵāṣṣa*) was the most restricted quarter of the inner court; devoid of most of the glamour attached to its image in the West, it was a golden cage housing all the women of the royal family and their female companions, maids, and retainers. The size, composition, accessibility, and influence of the harem varied substantially, depending upon the shah's appetites, his marital alliances, and his choice of companions, but as one of the "attributes of monarchy" (*aṭāṭīya-ye salṭanat*) its existence, whatever its size and composition, was essential. Āḡā Moḥammad Khan maintained a harem of mostly Qajar and Turkman women, some of them wives of his deceased brothers. The harems of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah and Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah were large (containing perhaps as many as a thousand inhabitants) and extravagant, in contrast to Moḥammad Shah's more modest harem.

As a hierarchical institution, the harem remained essentially intact throughout the Qajar period, though some minor freedoms were permitted to its members in the postconstitutional period. In compliance with the Qajar matriarchal pattern, the harem was headed by the queen mother (*mahd-e ʿolyā* "sublime cradle") and after her death by the most senior, noble, or favorite wife of the shah, though not necessarily by the mother of the heir apparent. In the early Qajar harem the highest rank was reserved for women of Qajar blood or aristocratic (mostly Turkman and Zand) background; they were often distinguished by the title *begom*. Next in rank were women of the urban and tribal nobility, with the title *ḵānom*, and after them women of the lower classes, often identified as *ḵātūn*. Slave girls, whether captured or purchased, were ranked as *kanīz*. In addition to the four permanent (*dāʾema*) wives, the shah had temporary (*moṭʿa*) wives, including concubines for sexual pleasure, female musicians (*moṭreba*), dancing girls (*raqqāṣa*), and wives of humble backgrounds with menial duties.

Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah's harem, housing several hundred wives and many of his

unmarried daughters, was a court within a court, in which he even held regular private audiences (*salām*) for the women. The magistrate of the harem (*dārūḡa-ye ḥaram*) was chosen from among the shah's senior wives to administer the women's affairs, presumably under the *mahd-e ʿolyā*. Senior wives had their own secretaries (*mīrzā-bājī*)and other female functionaries. Ṭāwūs Ḵānom Ṭaj-al-Dawla, Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah's favorite, after whom the popular name Tāḵt-e ṭāwūs was given to the throne, maintained an independent household replicating that of her husband. A private treasurer (*ḵāzen*), appointed by the shah from among his senior wives, was in charge of the private royal treasury (*kezāna-ye andarūn*), and one of the shah's educated wives or daughters often acted as his harem secretary. Other senior wives were assigned responsibilities ranging from food distribution to direction of entertainment for the harem.

The women's quarters, secluded physically as well as administratively from the rest of the palace, were guarded by the dreaded chief eunuch (*ḵᵛāja-bāšī*) and his subordinates (*ḵᵛāja-sarāyān*). Like the Ottomans the Qajars employed both white and black eunuchs. The white eunuchs, mostly second-generation Georgians whose parents had been enslaved in Āḡā Moḥammad Khan's campaign of 1208/1794, guarded the exterior gates of the harem and were permitted to enter it only in the company of the shah. In the early Qajar period several white eunuchs were promoted to high state positions, but their number and status had declined by the last years of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah. The black eunuchs, originally Abyssinian and Zanzibarian slaves, imported despite the ban on the slave trade in the 1850s, were responsible for the internal security of the harem and were permitted to enter it at all times. The lifelong service of black eunuchs could be rewarded when the young royal princes in their care reached high government position or succeeded to the throne, but more than once such hopes were shattered by maltreatment from their ungrateful masters. Nevertheless, in general both white and black eunuchs were treated with respect by the women of the harem, as well as by courtiers and the shah himself. They appeared in public only during processions of the royal women through the city streets, enforcing with great severity "prohibition" (*qoroq*), obliging bystanders to turn their backs on the procession. Their conduct, accompanied by beatings and abuse from the royal outdoor servants, often fueled public hatred and diplomatic friction. In spite of tight security and the apparent isolation associated with this symbol of royal sanctity, the women of the harem maintained contact with the outside through relatives and servants. After the death of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah it was not rare for

them to appear at horse races and on the shah's domestic tours and outdoor excursions. Tales of illicit affairs were also rampant.

The outer court

The "riding attendants" (*ʿamala-ye rekāb*, lit., "agents of the stirrup") generally encompassed the royal guards, security officers, outdoor and transport officers, and stewards whose duties took them outside the *ḵalwat*. Next to the department of protocol (*īšīk-ḵāna*) the royal guardhouse (*kešīk-ḵāna*), headed by a *sar-kešīkčī-bāšī*, often a prince or member of the Qajar nobility, was the most prominent. The royal bodyguards (*ḡolāmān-e šāhī*, *qarāvolān-e ḵāṣṣa*) were recruited from the best of the tribal regiments. Although the term *ḡolām* denoted a slave bodyguard, by Qajar times such an institution had in fact ceased to exist. Under Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah the bodyguard consisted of four regiments, of which one, the *ḡolāmān-e nāṣerī*, was headed by the chief bodyguard (*qollar-āqāsī-bāšī*). The royal escort (*yasāvolān-e ḵāṣṣa*) was responsible for the security of the shah when he was in residence and accompanied him on his official tours, as well as being in charge of the government horses (*savārān-e dīvānī*). The royal musketeers (*tofangdārān-e ḵāṣṣa*) were organized in the *tofangdār-ḵāna*, the housekeepers (*sarāydārān*) and gatekeepers (*qāpūčīān*) in the housekeeping department (*saraydār-ḵāna*), under the direction of the *saraydār-bāšī* (chief housekeeper).

Particularly important at the Qajar court were the *farrāš-ḵāna* and the *nasaq-ḵāna*, representing the executive power of the shah. The royal footmen or tent pitchers (*farrāš*, lit., "spreader of carpets"), under the influential *farrāš-bāšī*, were responsible for outdoor and camp services, carrying messages, and executing royal punitive commands for arrests, extortion, beatings, the bastinado, and the like. The sight of the *farrāš*es rushing through the streets and private houses in pursuit of supposed culprits and the humiliating treatment of those apprehended were enough to remind all subjects of the ferocity of the sovereign. The shah's most extreme wrath, however, was manifested by the executioners (*nasaqčī*s, lit., "discipliners"), generally known as "agents of torment" (*ʿamala-ye ʿaḏāb*), who were responsible for more severe punishments, including torture; blinding; severing of ears, noses, and limbs; and gruesome executions. The *nasaqčī-bāšī* was often a confidant of the shah and was perhaps the most dreaded officer in the early Qajar court. Although in the later reign of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah the most brutal practices were rare, the *nasaq-ḵāna* (sometimes merged with the *farrāš-ḵāna*) remained a symbol of the shah's punitive power. The presence of the *nasaqčī-bāšī* at the public

audience, stationed close to the throne, was often attested by foreign visitors anxious to detect implements of "oriental despotism."

The officers, aides-de-camp, and stewards of the royal camp (*ordū-ye homāyūn*), generally identified as "riding companions" (*moltazemīn-e rekāb*), constituted one of the most prominent groups at the Qajar court. In the course of the 19th century elaborate camps and military reviews gradually replaced military campaigns as potent symbols of monarchical power and legitimacy. The nomadic habits of the Qajars persisted to the end, and love of the outdoors and of riding and hunting excursions often meant days and even months away from the capital. On royal tours and in military reviews the entire court, including officials, secretaries, members of the *ḵalwat*, and some women of the harem, accompanied the shah. In reviews held at Solṭānīya and later in Lār, as well as on tours to Isfahan, Khorasan, and ʿErāq-e ʿAjam, tens of thousands of regular and irregular troops were present. Most of the transport needed for such mass movements was provided from vast camel stables (*šotor-ḵāna*) and mule stables (*qāṭer-ḵāna*), but the royal stable (*eṣṭabl-e ḵāṣṣa*), under the supervision of the equerry (*mīr-āḵor*) and staffed by the master groom (*mehtar-bāšī*) and several hostlers (*mehtar*s), was the most cherished royal possession because of the pedigreed Turkman, Arabian, and Kurdish horses housed in it. Covered litters and palanquins, mostly for women travelers, were kept in the *taḵt-ḵāna*. The saddlery (*zīn-ḵāna*, *rakīb-ḵāna*), the carriage house (*kāleska-ḵāna*), and the tent store (*ḵayma-ḵāna*) were additional travel and camping departments. As late as the turn of the 20th century the court maintained a *šāṭer-ḵāna*, employing outriders (*šāṭer*s) dressed in colorful uniforms and headgear, who ran beside the royal cavalcade, relics of an ancient institution. The master of the hunt (*mīr-šekār*), together with his men, enjoyed high status among Qajar rulers and princes proud of their hunting skills. There was also a royal falconry (*qūš-ḵāna*), which was headed by the *qūščī-bāšī*. The camp bedmaker (*raḵt-e ḵābdār-e safar*) and the boot puller (*bāšmāqčī*)were part of the outdoor retinue as well. Not infrequently camp attendants were given military responsibilities and private missions beyond their official capacities.

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