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COURTS AND COURTIERS

viii. In the reign of Reżā Shah Pahlavī

When Reżā Shah (r. 1304-20 Š./1925-1941) acceded to the throne he retained a number of lower officials from the royal court of the Qajars (see vii, above), specifically those who had not been vocal in support of republicanism. They included Ṣādeq Homāyūn, keeper of buildings (*sarparast-e ʿemārāt*), and Ḥājj ʿAdl-al-Salṭana, master of the wardrobe (*raʾīs-e ṣandūq-ḵāna*). The shah's intent was probably not to reward their loyalty to the royal family but to surround himself with officials committed to upholding royal authority (for a list of the earliest office holders at Reżā Shah's court, see Behbūdī, pp. 163, 174). The inner circle of courtiers included members of his secreteriat during his service as prime minister and minister of war, including Faraj-Allāh Bahrāmī Dabīr Aʿẓam, and Solaymān Behbūdī. Military ties were particularly important to Reżā Shah (see cossack brigade), and many of his court officials were officers on active duty. These men and other, newly appointed officials were placed under the authority of ʿAbd-al-Ḥosayn Teymūrtāš (Daštī, pp. 135-51; Ḵᵛājanūrī, pp. 29-70), minister of the Pahlavi court (*wazīr-e darbār-e pahlavī*). Indeed, in the early years the court of Reżā Shah was largely controlled by this ambitious

and powerful man. It was he who set the formal, ceremonious royal style, which survived his tenure. Unlike the shah he came from a family of provincial notables with a tradition of land ownership and authority. He had been educated at the military academy in St. Petersburg, where he became familiar with Europe and sophisticated in matters still foreign to Persian society. The respect for the social hierarchy engendered at the academy reinforced his already strong class identification, which caused him to look down even upon the shah, who came from humble origins (Rezun, pp. 66-69; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 239-40).

On the other hand, Teymūrtāš shared the shah's vision of Persia's future, and he used the court ministry as an instrument of social change and the nucleus of a modern centralized bureaucracy. As the second most powerful man in the kingdom, he attended cabinet meetings, a practice that was not provided for in Persian law and did not survive him; he even dictated cabinet decisions and influenced the conduct of foreign affairs. His commands were considered to be those of the shah, who announced at one cabinet meeting: "Teymūr speaks for me" (Hedāyat, p. 472). "Teymurtash was not only the eyes, but the very ears and mouth of the shah" (Wipert von Blücher, cited by Rezun, p. 71). From his experience in the military and in the ministries of justice and public works Teymūrtāš was better prepared and informed than the shah in several crucial areas (Farroḵ, pp. 635-36; Rezun, pp. 69-72).

For example, he personally approved candidates for parliamentary elections, and the minister of the interior reported to him (Colonel Jahānbānī to minister of the interior, decoded telegraph from Kāzerūn, with the minister's reply in the margin, 7 Ābān 1311 Š./29 October 1932, Iranian national archives [Asnād-e mellī-e Īrān, I.N.A.], no file box [f.b.] no., registration [reg.] no. 1198; cf. Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥya*@ IV, pp. 390-92).

During his tenure Teymūrtāš organized the Ministry of the court along modern functional lines. It comprised two protocol offices, one dealing with Persian citizens (*tašrīfāt-e dāḵelī*), the other with royal protocol and procedures for foreign nationals (*tašrīfāt-e ḵārejī*); an accounting department (*moḥāsebāt*); a secretariat (*kābīna-ye darbārī-e pahlavī*); and separate offices for the chamberlain (*raʾīs-e farrāš-ḵāna*), the stables (*eṣṭabl-e ḵāṣṣa*), the royal gardens (*bāḡāt-e salṭanatī*), the royal hunts (*šekārgāh-e salṭanatī*), the shah's personal secretary (*daftar-e maḵṣūṣ-e šāhanšāhī*), affairs of the crown prince (*sāzmān-e pīškārī-e welāyat-e ahd*), and logistics (*ḵīām-ḵāna*). Nevertheless, in 1311 Š./1932, when Teymūrtāš, on his way home from a mission to negotiate

with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, stopped off in Moscow, he apparently aroused the shah's suspicion. "To Reżā Shah he was simply gathering immense prestige as the result of his successful diplomacy and internal reform, and the ruler most probably regarded this as a manifestation of an unbounded ambition where his Court Minister was concerned" (Rezun, p. 144; cf. Taqīzāda, pp. 223-35). In 1311 Š./1932 Teymūrtāš was dismissed; he was subsequently tried by the order of the shah and convicted of corruption and embezzlement. Five months later he was murdered in his prison cell (Taqīzāda, pp. 223-24; ʿAbbāsqolī Ḡolšāʾīān in Ḡanī, pp. 519-20; Daštī, pp. 135-51; Rezun, pp. 144, 160-61).

The administrative structure that Teymūrtāš had initiated remained substantially unaltered after his dismissal (*Sāl-nāma-ye rasmī-e kešvar*, Tehran, 1309 Š./1930, pp. 67-68; *Sāl-nāma-ye Pārs*, Tehran, 1310 Š./1931, p. 76, and subsequent issues until 1320 Š./1941). The crown prince's office was expanded into a kind of parallel court, with distinct branches, including one devoted to military matters. The accounting office also became more complex as the shah's holdings were enlarged to include more than 3,000 villages, as well as a number of factories and hotels. In fact, in 1315 Š./1936 a new office was created within the court ministry to deal solely with the maintenance of the shah's landholdings (Dāʾera-ye amlāk-e šāhanšāhī; *Sāl-nāma-ye Pārs*, 1316 Š./1937, p. 176).

Other court officials were less ambitious than Teymūrtāš and more submissive to the shah's will. Wary of creating a rival for power, the shah decided not to appoint another court minister. Ḥosayn Šokūh (Šokūh-al-Molk), director of the private secretariat (*raʾīs-e daftar-e maḵṣūṣ-e šāhanšāhī*) throughout Reżā Shah's reign, typified his courtiers. Šokūh's long tenure can best be explained by his internalization of bureaucratic norms: He did not offer political advice, carried out his duties as the ruler instructed, and did not arouse the shah's ire by interceding for anyone. Although he controlled access to the shah, he is not known to have used his authority for his own benefit (Daštī, pp. 138-41). Another representative courtier was Ḥosayn Adīb-al-Salṭana Samīʿī, who came from a family of rank and was known for his personal integrity and competence. After Teymūrtāš's downfall he was appointed director of protocol, a position that placed him above Šokūh, and in 1314 Š./1935 he became chief of staff for the court (*raʾīs-e darbār*), serving for four years. In 1318 Š./1939 the shah again appointed a court minister, Maḥmūd Jam, his daughter's father-in-law and a former prime minister, knowing that he would

not become another Teymūrtāš (*Sāl-nāma-ye Pārs*, 1319 Š./1940, p. 141).

The shah, in the tradition of Persian kingship, was eager to commemorate his reign by means of a major building program. His desire for distance from the public, space, and formality necessitated new constructions on a less intimate scale than those of his Qajar predecessors. The finest of his palaces was the Marble palace (Kāḵ-e marmar) in Tehran. The shah's study measured 6 x 8 m; its lofty ceiling was completely faced with exquisite inlaid wood (*ḵātam*). One hundred fifty master inlayers and their assistants worked on this room alone. Master craftsmen were brought from the provinces to make the palace gates; Behbūdī, who was in charge of the building program, provided an extensive description of the shah's palaces and the names of the master artisans who worked on them (pp. 213-23). Reżā Shah took a personal interest in every detail of the work, even marking the trees to be cut. He took particular pleasure in overseeing the progress of construction (Behbūdī, pp. 159-60). The queen, Tāj-al-Molūk, lived with her children in separate quarters in a series of new palaces.

Among the functions of the court ministry were those of ombudsman. Court officials served as arbiters among government institutions with overlapping responsibilities. They also received complaints and petitions from the public and dispensed royal justice. Complaints were carefully catalogued, registered, summarized, and investigated; the final determinations were meticulously recorded. Much of the information received in this way was used for intelligence and control purposes (I.N.A, f.b. no. 117002, no reg. no.). The court maintained close contact with the religious hierarchy. Although many lower-ranking *ʿolamāʾ* no longer received financial support (administrator of the Pahlavi court to the prime minister, 29 Ābān 1305 Š./20 November 1926, I.N.A., f.b. no. 117001, no reg. no.), ties with the higher-ranking clergy were maintained and in certain instances strengthened (see, e.g., communications between the Pahlavi court and Sayyed Abu'l-HaÂr̤san Mojtahed Eṣfahānī and Ayatollah Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Nāʾīnī, as well as others, I.N.A., f.b. no. 117001, no reg. no.).

The court of Reżā Shah at first functioned as an unelected parliament, instituting legislation that was both modern in conception and autocratic. Officials kept the monarch informed of political demands requiring his attention; the court bureaucracy thus contributed to extending his control over the state and Persian society. By the 1930s this task had been largely completed. It was at that point that the court was gradually transformed from

a political to a financial and ceremonial institution. The shah no longer needed the court to mediate between him and men of influence, for the latter had come to serve him directly (see, e.g., Sajjādī, pp. 129-32); nor did he need a minister of the court.

Financial aspects. Teymūrtāš had simply incurred expenditures as he deemed necessary, instructing the prime minister to make payments (Teymūrtāš to premier, 20 Bahman 1305 Š./9 February 1926, I.N.A., f.b. no. 113016, reg. no. 119). After his dismissal formal requests for authorization of payments had to be made to the cabinet. In fact, after 1311 Š./1932 all communications between the court ministry and the office of the prime minister to be found in the national archives involved money. Political decisions were probably communicated to the prime minister by the shah himself (see, e.g., I.N.A., proceedings of cabinet meeting, 7 Ordībehešt Š./27 April 1937, f.b. no. 113016, reg. no. 1848). The communications between the court and the cabinet not only throw light on the functioning of the former during the last decade of Reżā Shah's reign, but they also show the contrast between the outward pomp and ceremony of the court and the often trivial reality. For instance, on one occasion the cabinet met to exempt a box of imported French sweets, valued at 25 tomans, from customs duties (minister of commerce to the cabinet, 14 Bahman 1318 Š./2 February 1939, I.N.A., f.b. no. 1-2/113016, reg. no. 34669/P50095). On another the ministry refused to pay a customs bill of 5 tomans for an automobile carrying a suitcase to the court, and the cabinet authorized payment by the treasury (cabinet executive order no. 9264/1380,11 Ābān 1317 Š./2 November 1938, I.N.A., f.b. no. 15-2 113016, reg. no. 9264/1380). The dress uniforms of court officials were paid for by the Ministry of foreign affairs (Yūsof Šokrāʾī to the prime minister, 1316 Š./1937, I.N.A., f.b. no. 15-3/113016, no reg. no.). The court ministry increasingly functioned as a corporation with extensive holdings, exploiting its connection to the state for the purpose of financial aggrandizement. Indeed, the boundary lines between court and state, between the personal and the public, became confused to the point of vanishing. The cabinet met frequently and always decided favorably on requests from the court, for example, a demand by the accounting office that all chemicals imported by royal industrial concerns be exempt from customs (cabinet executive order, 15 Šahrīvar 1314 Š./7 September 1935, I.N.A., f.b. no. 113016, reg. no. 4171). Three months later the cabinet acceded to another request, exempting the royal factories in Šāhī from custom duties on whatever they imported (executive order, Āḏar 1314 Š./December 1935, I.N.A., f.b. no. 113016, reg. no. 6547). Such practices continued after Reżā Shah's

abdication in Šahrīvar 1320 Š./September 1941. The cabinet even exempted citrus fruits from the palace gardens by the Caspian Sea from municipal taxes (executive order, 20 Bahman 1320 Š./ 9 February 1942, I.N.A., f.b. no. 11301, reg. no. 12555/1927). It is thus clear that the court budget in no way reflected the real situation. Many different court expenditures were absorbed by other ministries and state organizations. Foreign currencies were sold to members of the court and the shah's household at artificially low rates of exchange. When the government sent a bill for telephone and postal services, the court minister was outraged and informed the prime minister that such services were to be provided free of charge (minister of the court to the prime minister, 9 Ābān 1322 Š./31 October 1943, f.b. no. 113016, reg. no. 3294; 10 Ābān 1322 Š./1 November 1943, I.N.A., f.b. no. 113016, reg. no. 18712). For the wedding ceremonies of the crown prince, Moḥammad-Reżā, and Princess Fawzīa of Egypt in 1318 Š./1939, purchases by the department of exports and imports alone amounted to more than half the total annual official budget for the court (office of the premier to the Ministry of finance, 27 Esfand 1318 Š./18 March 1939, I.N.A., f.b. no. 113016, reg. no. 16-726/1269).

Ceremonial function. Aside from finances, the court ministry was responsible for overseeing all ceremonies. The shah, though his background was simple and his own life-style Spartan, wanted to impress his subjects with the grandeur of the "Pahlavi dynasty." Frequent processions, carnivals, and military parades bedazzled the population and reinforced a myth of invincible power. The luxury of the court should not be understood in the context of irrational consumption; rather, it was a form of self-assertion. For example, construction of austere and imposing royal palaces that did not resemble the houses of even affluent Persians helped to set the shah and his court apart. These palaces, Western in design, symmetrical in plan, sometimes incorporating elements of ancient Persian architecture, represented new realities. Whereas Qajar court traditions had been more personal and informal, the Pahlavi court ceremonies were partly patterned after those of European rulers (Sackville-West, pp. 49-50), for example, the coronation of the shah (Amīr-Ṭahmāsb, pp. 697-717; for the complete program of the ceremony, see Behbūdī, pp. 166-73) and the crown prince's wedding. The shopping list for the latter event, provided by the court to the office of the prime minister, included 5,000 "excellent bottles of champagne, 800 bottles of liquor of fine quality, 10,000 invitation cards." The ministry of foreign affairs was to hold receptions at which "3,000 bottles of excellent champagne," among other luxuries, were to be served. All municipalities and government departments

held separate receptions as well (for the list, on court stationery but undated, N.I.A., f.b. no. 117001, no reg. no.).

Court ceremonials, including holidays, openings, and royal inspections, were managed by the master of ceremonies (executive order to all ministries, 10 Dey 1315 Š./9 January 1936, I.N.A., f.b. no. 1170010, reg. no. 1400/840). Mahdī Farroḵ (pp. 392-405) recalled a major political problem that he, as governor-general of Azarbaijan, faced over how to array military and civilian officers flanking the shah's picture during official celebrations. Court etiquette and court dress were also designed to impress. For example, the public ceremonies marking the birthday of the crown prince were intricate, extensive, formal, and reverential. The ceremonies themselves had little to do with Persian tradition but reflected European notions. Reżā Shah's presence subtly underscored the young prince's royal authority (for a description of the event, see chief administrator of the court to the prime minister, 8 Āḏar 1317 Š./29 November 1938, I.N.A., no f.b. no., reg. no. 1205).

The court of Reżā Shah was thus institutionalized, regulated, military, and bureaucratic. At the same time the domestic life of the shah and his family was frugal and unostentatious, even puritanical. The shah ate simply, slept on the floor, and washed in a basin brought to him by a servant. He even kept track of the cigarettes and tea entrusted to the servants (Behbūdī, pp. 191-95). His third wife, Eṣmat, and her son had to beg for a refrigerator, a request that was denied (for the shah's domestic life, see "Ḵāṭerāt"; Moʾassesa, I, pp. 73-75).

Court etiquette regulated the rank and prestige of each official. From the shah to the lowliest courtier, behavior toward superiors and subordinates was prescribed in detail. Courtiers' honor was derived from their situations, rather than from blood descent, as it was in Europe, for class distinctions in Persia were less pronounced. The Persian "nobility" was primarily a *noblesse de cour*. Those who were not members of the court or had no access to it rarely could rise to become part of the political or financial elite. There was no other institution that could confer as much power and prestige on individuals. As a result loyal obedience derived from a concept of family honor was secondary to obedience guided by fear and by expectation of immediate and future rewards. When Reżā Shah abdicated in 1320 Š./1941, even before he had reached the port of embarkation, Bandar-e ʿAbbās on the Persian Gulf coast, his entourage had expressed the wish to desert him (Pahlavī, pp. 6-9; cf. Golšāʾīān, in Ḡanī, pp. 522-604). The court of Reżā Shah was thus a specific social constellation, the conscious creation of a single person, in contrast to the

Persian monarchical tradition, which had been characterized by relative informality and accessibility.

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