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DABĪR

DABĪR (< Mid. Pers. *dibīr* < Achaemenid Elamite *tup-pi-ra*; Livshits, 1977, p. 166; Back, p. 207; cf. Arm. *dpir*), secretary, scribe.

i. In the Pre-Islamic Period

According to the *Nāma-ye Tansar*, secretaries constituted one of the four classes in Sasanian society (p. 57; tr., p. 37; *ʿAhd-e Ardašīr*, p. 63; *Testament of Ardašīr*, in Grignaschi, pp. 54, 74; *Ayīn of Ardašīr*, in Grignaschi, pp. 95, 115; [Pseudo] Jāḥeẓ, p. 25; see class system iii). The introduction of these classes was attributed in most Islamic sources to the legendary king Jamšēd (Ṭabarī, I, p. 180; Baḷʿamī, ed. Bahār, p. 130; Ṭaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, p. 12; Ebn al-Balḵī, p. 31; Jahšīārī, p. 2; Meskawayh, I, p. 6), though some authors named instead the Sasanian king Ardašīr (*Nāma-ye Tansar*, p. 57; Meskawayh, I, p. 61; [Pseudo] Jāḥeẓ, p. 25; *ʿAhd-e Ardašīr*, p. 63; *Testament of Ardašīr*, in Grignaschi, pp. 54, 74). In another account the art of *dabīrī* was attributed to Ṭahmūreṯ ([Pseudo]--Ḵayyām, p. 44; cf. *Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, I, p. 38). Secretaries had the important and delicate duty of handling the royal correspondence and of recording the orders, verdicts, speeches, words of counsel, exhortations, harangues, testaments, and other utterances of the king and his high officials. They were

also charged with recording everyday events and chronicles, and some of them served in various state offices (*dīvān*s) or were engaged in writing, compiling, and copying books. In the inscriptions of the early Sasanian kings and dignitaries a number of *dabīr*s were mentioned as important political figures. A(r)štād the "letter scribe" of Ray, from the Mehrān family, is mentioned among the retinue of Šāpūr I (241-72) in the latter's inscription on the Kaʿba-ye Zardošt (ŠKZ, Mid. Pers. l. 34 *dibīr*, Parth. l. 28 *frawardag dibīr*, Gk. l. 66 *epì epistolôn*; Back, p. 365). In the Middle Persian and Parthian inscriptions in the synagogue at Dura Europus (q.v.) several *dabīr*s are mentioned among eminent visitors (Geiger, pp. 297ff. nos. 42-44, 46-47, 49, 54). In the inscription of Šāpūr Sagānšāh, brother of Šāpūr II (309-379), at Persepolis the title of the dignitary Narseh can be reconstructed as *dibīr* (ŠPs I l. 7; Back, p. 493). The context of this inscription suggests that he had the rank of *āzādān* (q.v.). One *dabīr* of Šāpūr I, *Apasā of Ḥarrān, left an inscription in which he reported having made a statue of the king, who in return had rewarded him generously (ŠVŠ; Back, pp. 378-82). He may have been more than a *dabīr*, however, probably also a governor (cf. Back, p. 507 n. 250); during the reign of Ḵosrow I Anōšīrvān (531-79) a governor of Ctesiphon was addressed as *dabīrbad* "chief secretary" (Browne, p. 231). One of Ḵosrow's secretaries (*kottāb*), called Bābak son of *Behrovān (instead of Nahrovān/Bīrovān, etc., as in the mss.), was appointed chief of the military chancery (*dīvānal-jond*) and enjoyed much influence and prestige (Ṭabarī, I, p. 963; Dīnavarī, ed. Guirgass, p. 74; Baḷʿamī, ed. Bahār, pp. 1047ff.; cf. *Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VIII, pp. 62ff.: *mowbad*). *Dabīr*s were authorized to place their own names at the ends of inscriptions; for example, the *dabīr* of Šāpūr's inscription on the Kaʿba-ye Zardošt was Ōhrmazd son of Šēlag/Šērag (Parth. l. 30; Back, p. 371), and the *dabīr* of the inscription of Kirdēr (Kartīr) at Naqš-e Rajab was Bōxtag (KNRb l. 31; Back, p. 487). A number of inscribed Sasanian seals of *dabīr*s have been published (Brunner, p. 141 no. 9; Bivar, p. 44; Gignoux, p. 25; Göbl, pp. 44 no. 15, 52 no. 601; Gignoux and Gyselen, 1992, p. 49); among the owners was a Christian named Sebōxt (Gignoux and Gyselen, 1987, p. 246).

*Dabīr*s played an important part in the political events of the Sasanian period; for example, after the death of Yazdegerd I (399-421) the Persian nobles decided not to choose any of his sons, including Bahrām (who became Bahrām V Gōr, 420-38), as his successor. Instead they nominated a certain prince called Ḵosrow. Among these nobles there were three *dabīr*s: Gōdarz, secretary of the army (*kāteb al-jond*); Gošnasp Ādur (Jošnas Āḏar), the finance secretary (*kāteb al-ḵarāj*); and Jovānōy, the chief scribe (*ṣāḥeb dīvān al-rasāʾel*), who was sent to

the Arab ruler Monḏer in Ḥīra to deter him from protecting Bahrām. When Jovānōy met Bahrām, however, he came to an agreement with him (Dīnavarī, p. 57; Ṭabarī, I, p. 859; Baḷʿamī, ed. Bahār, p. 934; Meskawayh, I, p. 80; Browne, p. 223; *Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VII, pp. 285-88; Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 92 n. 1). Later both Jovānōy and Gošnasp-Ādur were mentioned as secretaries for Bahrām (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VII, p. 308 vv. 82-84). *Dabīr*s were also reported to have been consulted on knotty problems; an example is Ḵosrow Anōšīrvān's consultation with his secretary, Yazdegerd, and the chief *mowbad*, Ardašīr, about his proposed campaign against the Turks (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VIII, p. 161). The same persons, together with some other wise men, were present at the seven catechismal sessions held in the presence of Ḵosrow to test young Bozorgmehr-e Boḵtagān (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VIII, pp. 116-46, esp. vv. 1367, 1386, 1416, 1425, 1495; cf. Browne, p. 232). The successor to the throne was customarily designated in the presence of the chief secretary and the chief *mowbad* (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VII, p. 253, vv. 606ff.). When a careful investigation was required the king would appoint one reliable man from among his *dabīr*s, one from among the clergy, and one from among his attendants for the purpose (Meskawayh, I, p. 105). After the imprisonment of Ḵosrow II (590-628) in 628 his son and successor Šērōya (Kavād II, r. 628) appointed his chief secretary to investigate his father's crimes (Browne, p. 253). The powerful position of *dabīr* carried with it the risk of severe punishment or even death, however. For example, Dād-bendād (Dād-windād), the chief secretary of the army under the last Arsacid king, Ardavān IV (ca. 216-24; see artabanus), was put to death by Ardašīr after his defeat of Ardavān (Ṭabarī, I, p. 819; Baḷʿamī, ed. Bahār, p. 882). A secretary of Ḵosrow Anōšīrvān who ventured an objection to the king's fiscal reforms was also put to death (Ṭabarī, I, p. 961; Baḷʿamī, ed. Bahār, p. 1046; Jahšīārī, p. 5; Meskawayh, I, p. 98; Browne, p. 231). The same king ordered the execution of eighty officials accused of corruption and oppression, among whom there were fifty secretaries (*kottāb*; Jahšīārī, p. 9).

*Dabīr*s enjoyed certain privileges. They were among those exempted from taxes (Ṭabarī, I, p. 962; Dīnavarī, p. 73; Meskawayh, I, p. 99) and were authorized, like the king and the judges, to ride on "gently and steadily going horses" (*hemlāj*; Jahšīārī, p. 9). They wore special dress, except when accompanying the army (see below; Jahšīārī, p. 3). To acquire the rank of *dabīr* required certain qualifications. A commoner was not as a rule allowed to become a *dabīr* (Ebn al-Balḵī, p. 93). Ferdowsī narrated the story of a shoemaker who asked to be educated as a *dabīr* in exchange for lending the

king a considerable amount of money, but his request was refused (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VIII, pp. 297-99). The school in which the *dabīr*s were trained was called *dibīrestān* (*Pahlavi Texts*, ed. Jamasp-Asana, pp. 63.1, 69.13).

The court *dabīr*s were selected from among the young *dabīr*s by examination conducted by the chief secretaries. After the names of the accepted persons had been submitted to the king, they were counted among the royal attendants. They were forbidden to associate with anyone not sanctioned by the king (Jahšīārī, pp. 3, 4). Those less qualified in handwriting and intelligence were assigned to high officials (*kārdār*; *Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VII, p. 173, vv. 320ff.). Apart from his professional skills (see below), a *dabīr* was supposed to be a person of insight (*ahl al-baṣar*), continence (*ahl al-ʿefāf*), and efficiency (*ahl al-kefāya*); he was to be assigned tasks in which he was experienced (Jahšīārī, p. 6, citing Šāpūr I's testament to his son). He was expected to be the "king's tongue" for those remote from him, his interpreter (Ebn al-Balḵī, pp. 92-93, citing Anōšīrvān; Jahšīārī, p. 3).

The estate of the *dabīr*s was subdivided into several groups, the establishment of which was attributed to Jamšēd (Jahšīārī, p. 2; Ṯaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, p. 12; Meskawayh, I, p. 6; Ebn al-Balḵī, p. 31). In *Namā-ye Tansar* (p. 57; tr. p. 38) seven groups of officials are mentioned; the first four were categories of *dabīr*, each with specific functions: official correspondents; accountants; recorders of verdicts, registrations, and covenants; and chroniclers (see also dabīre, dabīrī).

Official correspondents. The Pahlavi title for correspondents was *frawardag/nāmag-dibīr* (cf. SKZ, Parth. l. 28); they wrote in a script called *frawardag/nāmag dibīrīh*. The ideal correspondent was supposed to have beautiful handwriting (*xūb-nibēg*), a swift hand (*rag-nibēg*), subtle knowledge (*bārīk-dānišn*), nimble fingers (*kāmakkār-angust*), and wise speech (*frazānag--saxwan*; *Pahlavi Texts*, ed. Jamasp-Asana, p. 27 par. 10). He also had to be skillful, vigilant, and quick-witted, so that, if the king dropped a hint, he could understand the intention fully and express it in a fluent, smooth, and pleasant style. He was also supposed to have some notion of various sciences (Ebn al-Balḵī, p. 31). At the Sasanian court there were bilingual *dabīr*s who also served as interpreters; for example, one Indian secretary was reported to have lived at the court of Ḵosrow II (Ṭabarī, I, p. 1053). The same king always had an Arab *dabīr* as well, for example, ʿAdī b. Zayd ʿEbādī, whose father had also served this king and his father, Hormozd IV (579-90; Ṭabarī, I, pp. 1016, 1017, 1024; Browne, pp. 246-47). It was customary for some *dabīr*s to accompany the army into the field, and the commander-in-chief was supposed to consult them

(Jahšīārī, p. 4). Sometimes they were also charged with reporting to the king in secret and spying for him; for example, when Bahrām Čōbīn became angry with Hormozd and decided to revolt, Yazdak the scribe, together with another official, fled by night to inform the king (Dīnavarī, p. 86; Browne, p. 237). The same Yazdak, with the title *kāteb al-jond* (probably **spāh-dibīr* in Pahlavi; cf. *dabīr-e sepāh* in *Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VIII, p. 142 v. 1493), was mentioned among the attendants of Ḵosrow I (Dīnavarī, p. 90; Browne, p. 240). The same title was borne by one of the grandees in the time of Yazdegerd I (399-420; Dīnavarī, p. 57). Certain *dabīr*s were entrusted with the secret correspondence. They were called *kāteb al-serr* in the Arabic sources; the Pahlavi term was probably **rāz-dibīr*. For example, Ḵosrow II, having killed Bendūya (Windōya) intended to kill his brother Besṭām (Wistahm; see BESṬĀM O BENDŌY) as well. He therefore ordered his *kāteb al-serr* to write a letter to Besṭām, summoning him for consultation. The office of confidential secretary survived into the ʿAbbasid period (Dīnavarī, pp. 106, 389; see ii, below).

Accountants. The accountants were further divided into subgroups. The financial secretaries (Pahl. *šahr-(h)ā/ămār-dibīr* (Paikuli inscription, Mid. Pers. l. 16, Parth. l. 14; Humbach and Skjærvø, III/1, pp. 42-43, III/2, p. 45) handled tax affairs; some were mentioned as *kāteb al-ḵarāj* in Arabic sources (e.g., Ṭabarī, I, p. 960). During the reign of Ḵosrow Anōšīrvān they were charged with assessing the value of the land as the basis for a new system of taxation (e.g., Meskawayh, I, p. 98). Each region had its own tax accountant, *kāteb al-kūra* (Meskawayh, I, p. 102). The court accountants bore the title **kadag-(h)ă/āmār-dibīr*. There were also accountants attached to the treasury (*ganj-(h)ā/ămār-dibīr*). The title of the accountants of the (royal) stables was **āxwar-(h)ā/ămār-dibīr*, of those attached to the fire temples *ātašān-(h)ā/ămār-dibīr*. Some inscribed seals of the latter survive; for example, one bears the name *Bōxtōg ī Āmihr ī ādur ī Gušnasp dibīr* “Boxtōg son of Āmihr, scribe of the fire temple Gušnasp” (Göbl, p. 52 no. 601; cf. p. 44 no. 15). Accountants of pious foundations were known as **ruwānagān-(h)ā/ămār-dibīr*. After the Arab conquest Persian accountants, *kāteb* or *kāteb al-ḵarāj*, continued to play an important part in the imperial administration; one example is the famous Zādān-farroḵ and his family (Balāḏorī, *Fotūḥ*, ed. Monajjed, p. 368; Jahšīārī, p. 38).

Judicial secretaries. Secretaries responsible for recording judicial decisions and verdicts were probably called *dād-dibīr*. A certain Xwadāy-būd, with the title *dibīr*, mentioned as a judicial commentator (*Mādayān*, pt. 1, p. 2 l. 5), may have

belonged to this group.

Chroniclers. Certain *dabīr*s were responsible for recording daily events. One of them, a secretary of Šāpūr II called Xwarrahbūd (Arm. Xorōhbowt), was captured by the Romans. In the Roman empire he learned Greek and wrote a book on the deeds of Šāpūr and Julian. Later he also translated into Greek a Persian book on the history of primitive times written by one of his Persian companions in captivity, Rāstsaxwan (Arm. Rastsohown; Moses of Khorene, chap. 70; tr. Thomson, p. 217). Sergius, an interpreter for Ḵosrow Anōšīrvān summarized the court archives and translated his summary into Greek; this work was used by Agathias (Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, p. 76). Hormozd IV, after his imprisonment, asked for a *dabīr* to be sent to him with a book, in order to read to him ancient stories and the exploits of the kings (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, IX, pp. 13-14 vv. 56-57, 65). According to Balāḏorī (*Fotūḥ*, ed. Monajjed, p. 569; cf. Lukonin, pp. 711-12), in a report pertaining to the late Sasanian period, the king's orders and decisions were recorded in his presence, and another official copied them into the royal monthly diary; then the king put his seal on the diary, which was kept in the treasury. It is also related that Ardašīr charged two intelligent pages, probably two *dabīr*s, with dictating and recording what he said in the presence of his courtiers while he was drinking. The next day his *dabīr* would read out his words to him ([Pseudo] Jāḥeẓ, p. 27). Those *dabīr*s whose duty was to know the rank, position, and special place of each courtier probably belonged to this group; in instances of ambiguity or dispute they were consulted (Ebn al-Balḵī, p. 49; Meskawayh, p. 29).

Copyists. Little is known about the *dabīr*s who engaged in writing down and copying secular and religious books in the Sasanian period. Those who transcribed or copied Zoroastrian religious books, especially the Avesta, were probably called *dēn-dibīr*. Manichean *dabīr*s were regarded as a class of the elect (*Mir. Man*. II, p. 325 n. 1).

The chief secretary bore the title *dibīrbed*, attested in the Parthian documents from Nisa as *dpyrpty* (D'yakonov and Livshits, nos. 90, 99, 2150, 2172). In the inscription of Šāpūr I on the Kaʿba-ye Zardošt the *dibīrbed* is mentioned among the royal dignitaries. A certain Mard with this title was named among Ardašīr's retinue (ŠKZ, Mid. Pers. l. 29, Parth. l. 24; Back, p. 352). In the same inscription a dignitary called Ohrmazd, with the same title, is mentioned among Šāpūr I's retinue; his father had borne it as well (ŠKZ, Mid. Pers. l. 34, Parth. l. 28; Back, p. 363). In the Arabic and Persian sources this title was given as *dabīrbad* (Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 104; Grignaschi, pp. 103, 129; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīḵ*, I,

p. 202; [Pseudo] Jāḥeẓ, pp. 77, 160, 173; Browne, p. 231) or *dabīrfad/ḏ* (*dbyrfd/ḏ*; Ebn al-Balḵī, p. 49; Meskawayh, I, p. 29). In some of the sources this title is translated *raʾīs kottāb al-rasāʾel* (Dīnavarī, p. 112). Another title for the chief secretary, also known from Parthian times, was Pahlavi *dibīrān mahist* (*Pahlavi Texts*, pp. 2 par. 8, 3 par. 22; *Kār-nāmag*, ed. Antia, chap. 15.9), which was translated in the Persian sources as *mehtar-e dabīran* (*Nāma-ye Tansar*, p. 87; tr., p. 61; Baḷʿamī, ed. Bahār, p. 1160), *mehtar dabīr* (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VII, p. 127 v. 271), or *bozorg dabīr* (Baḷʿamī, ed. Maškūr, p. 186). The fact that the title *dabīrbad* was used for the *kāteb al-ḵārāj* indicates that he was chief secretary for taxation. The official so designated was the first person, after the king, to deliver a speech at the Nowrūz ceremony (Grignaschi, pp. 103, 129). The chief priest (*mowbad*), the chief secretary (*dabīrbad*), and the chief religious teacher (*hīrbad*) were present at public pleadings ([Pseudo] Jāḥeẓ, p. 160). It was also reported that on “delicate” occasions the king dined only with three of his attendants, the chief *mowbad*, the *dabīrbad*, and the chief of the cavalry (*raʾs al-asāwera*; [Pseudo] Jāḥeẓ, p. 173; cf. p. 77). The *dabīrbad* was expected to be the wisest, the most intelligent, and the most vigilant of men (Ebn al-Balḵī, p. 49).

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(Aḥmad Tafażżolī)

ii. In the Islamic Period

*Dabīr*s, the bureaucratic personnel comprised in the third estate of Sasanian society, survived as a group after the Arab conquest of Persia. They constituted the core of the civilian administration (*dīvān*) throughout the Islamic period and played a significant role in the transmission of bureaucratic skills and the Persian cultural heritage in general under the Arab caliphs and later under the Turkish dynasties.

After the conquest Persians, of whatever class, were lower in the social hierarchy of the Muslim empire. Whereas previously members of the bureaucratic class, which comprised, beside the *dabīr*s, viziers, accountants and tax collectors (*mostawfī*, record keepers, and scribes (*dabīr*, *kāteb*, *monšī*), had been exempt from taxes, they, like all the conquered peoples had to choose between conversion to Islam and the status of clients (*mawālī*) of the new Arab rulers or payment of the poll tax (*jezya*) levied on nonbelievers. The Muslim rulers soon found that they needed the administrative skills of the *dabīr*s in order to govern their empire. Conversely, *dabīr*s sought the support of the ruling elite in order to maintain their privileged position in their communities (see class system iv; Cahen, *Camb. Hist. Iran*, pp. 305-28; Jahšīārī, pp. 16-17; Moroney, pp. 199-211, 300-05). The title *dabīr* was presumably in use in the early Omayyad period before Arabic replaced Persian as the language of administration; in Islamic Persia it remained a synonym for Arabo-Persian *kāteb* “scribe, clerk,” the more common designation for an official in the secretariat (*dīvān; Sellheim and Sourdel; Fragner, EI^2). When Persian was revived as the language of administration in much of the eastern Islamic world, dabīr once more became an administrative title.*

The survival of the bureaucratic estate that included the *dabīr*s was furthered by the legacy of the four-part Sasanian social stratification, which had been made familiar to the Islamic world by Persian historians and by authors of mirrors for princes and books of ethics, who were members of the same social class. Some authors viewed this estate as a distinct stratum comparable to the those of the military, clerics, and men of affairs (i.e., merchants, artisans, peasants, and herdsmen; see Ṭabarī, I, p. 180; Ṭaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, p. 12; *Šāh-nāma*, ed. Ḵāleqī, I, pp. 42-43; *Nāma-ye Tansar*, p. 57; Ebn al-Balḵī, pp. 30-31; Gardīzī, ed. Ḥabībī, p. 2). Other writers considered *dabīr*s and religious leaders the two pillars of the class of “men of the pen.” For example, Naṣīr-al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) divided society into four classes (men of the pen, men of the sword,

men of affairs, and peasants), which were to be maintained in their proper places by the ruler; men of the pen included "learned men," jurisprudents (*foqahāʾ*), judges (*qożāt*), scribes (*kottāb*), mathematicians, geometricians, astronomers, physicians, and poets (for similar views, see Davānī, pp. 138-39; tr., pp. 388-90; Wāʿeẓ Kāšefī, p. 48). The functioning of the Persian bureaucratic estate after the conquest thus contributed both to the continuity of Persian administrative traditions and to the building of the Islamic state.

Given the important position and role of *dabīr*s in public administration, certain qualities were considered indispensable to them. Moḥammad Ḡazālī devoted the third chapter of his *Naṣīḥat al-molūk* (p. 189) to *dabīr*s and their art; he noted that, "beside the art of literary composition, *dabīr*s should know many things to qualify to serve rulers," among which qualities he included expert knowledge of astronomy, mathematics, agriculture, irrigation, medicine, and poetry. The *dabīr* was also supposed to be cheerful and good-looking. Neẓāmī ʿArūżī described the qualified *dabīr* as a man of noble birth with a good reputation, sound judgment, capacity for profound thought, prudence, knowledge of *adab*, a refined manner in correspondence, and sincere devotion to the service of his master. He defined *dabīrī* as "an art, comprising eloquent rhetorical syllogisms, useful in communication among people in the form of dialogue, consultation, and controversy" (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, text, pp. 19-22; cf. Naḵjavānī, I, pp. 98-101; ʿOnṣor-al-Maʿālī, chap. 39). The *dabīr*s thus preserved and passed on, often within families, bureaucratic techniques, including styles of handwriting, principles of composition, and knowledge of forms of address and titles of nobles and notables; such aspects of the bureaucratic life-style as etiquette, manners, appearance, and dress; and support for the institution of the vizierate (see Mottahedeh, 1980, pp. 25-36; Klausner, pp. 37-81). In classical Persian literature there are many references to the literary virtuosity of *dabīr*s. The term eventually became almost synonymous with "man of letters."

The relative position of the bureaucratic estate in the Islamic world varied. In the late 8th and 9th centuries the power of the vizier rose in relation to that the Arab tribal military aristocracy, as the ʿAbbasids sought to consolidate their central authority (Mez, pp. 89-106). As a result, those who assisted and supported the viziers, including the *dabīr*s, also enjoyed high status. Like other members of the dominant classes *dabīr*s were exempt from taxation and controlled agricultural land as intermediaries between the state and the cultivators. Nonhereditary grants of land (*eqṭāʿ*, in the medieval period, later *toyūl*)

were basically ways of remunerating military, administrative, and religious personnel, who would then be responsible for extracting taxes from them (Lambton, *Continuity*, 1987, chap. X; Fragner, *Camb. Hist. Iran*, pp. 499-524; Cahen, *EI*^{2}).

Military power began to become more important in the 10th century, when Turkish slave soldiers and Daylamites seized control of the ʿAbbasid state. In Persia the supremacy of the military persisted under Turkish, Mongol, and Turkman rule until the 19th century (see, e.g., Ashtor, pp. 168-248). In that long period princes and men of the sword were primarily of Turkish stock, whereas viziers and men of the pen in general were of Persian (in the sources sometimes called Tajik) stock. Under the Ghaznavids (366-582/977-1186) and Saljuqs (429-590/1038-1194) both the titles *dabīr* and *kāteb* were in use. Offices known from that period include the *dabīr-e sarāy* (the palace secretary), *dabīr-e nawbatī* (the secretary on duty), *dabīr-e ḵezāna* (the secretary of the treasury), and *dabīr-e ḵāṣṣ* (the private secretary of the ruler; Anwarī, p. 189). Under the Saljuqs the *dabīr-e jāmagīyāt* (secretary of the wardrobe) and *dabīr-e rūz-nāma* (secretary of the daily register) were subordinate to the *mostawfī* (accountant; Abū Rajāʾ, pp. x-xiv). In the Safavid period *dabīr* was replaced as an official title by *monšī*, but it was in use again under the Qajars.

The functional significance of the men of the pen and the men of the sword in the Persian social hierarchy was a source of conflict and rivalry throughout the long period following the Saljuq invasion. Many writers claimed either the superiority of the pen over the sword (e.g., Māwardī, p. 10) or the equal importance of the two for the survival and functioning of the state apparatus (e.g., Yaʿqūbī, pp. 27-54). Despite sporadic manifestations of solidarity and group identity within each of these groups, the clerks, like the soldiers, were often divided by factionalism incited by the rulers. In this respect both clerks and soldiers differed from members of other professions, which often exhibited strong group loyalty and functioned en bloc in intergroup conflict (Mottahedeh, 1980, pp. 108-10, 116-17).

A strong hereditary tendency among prominent bureaucratic families continued until quite late. In the 14th-century Qazvīn, for example, there were fourteen families of city officials, tax collectors, and bureaucrats (of thirty-three families of notables) who had dominated the region for generations; many had accumulated wealth and land property. The clan of Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfī, attested among notables in the city for more than five centuries, is a prime example (*Tārīḵ-egozīda*, ed. Browne, pp. 798-814).

In modern Persia *dabīr* is the title of a secondary-school (*dabīrestān*) teacher and a component in the titles of a newspaper or journal editor (*sar-dabīr*) and the secretary or secretary-general (*dabīr-e koll*) of an association or political party.

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