



# ḤĀJEB II. IN THE SAFAVID AND QAJAR PERIODS

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In the Safavid period the *ḥājeb*, the major domo or master of ceremony, was called the *išik-āqāsi-bāši*, literally ‘head of the masters of the threshold.’ The name change is explicitly mentioned by Mirzā Beg Jonābādi (p. 730), who for the year 1001/1592-93 claims that Maḥdiqoli Khan Šāmlu was elevated to the position of “*ḥejābat* and *šāḥeb-divāni*, which, according to Turkish usage, they call *išik-āqāsi*.” It is unclear exactly when and under what circumstances this change in terminology came about, however, nor to what extent the tasks of the *ḥājeb* devolved on the *išik-āqāsi-bāši* in Safavid times.

The function of *išik-āqāsi-bāši* was divided into the *išik-āqāsi-bāši-eḥaram* and the *išik-āqāsi-bāši-edivān-e a'lā*, the former belonging to the *kāṣṣa* realm, and the latter to the *divān* department. Most of the information we have, especially that provided by foreign travelers, concerns the *išik-āqāsi-bāši-e divān*.

The headquarters of this official were located in the hall of the main entrance to the ‘Āli Qāpu Palace (q.v.; Chardin, VII, p. 369). He was in charge of all those who served in the royal palace (*išik-āqāsis*), door-keepers (*qāpučīān*), the royal guards, those with ceremonial functions, such as the public announcers of the *divān* (*jārčīān*), and, most notably, the *yasāvolān-e šoḥbat*, the aides-de-camp



who were responsible for keeping order. At the time of Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn (1105-35/1694-1722) the total of all these functionaries is said to have numbered 2,670. The *išik-āqāsi-bāši* was also in charge of the *qoroqčis*, the officials, 2000 men strong (reduced to 700 under Shah Solaymān), who organized the royal outings, during which all males had to remain out of sight (Mirzā Rafi‘ā, 16/1-2, p. 82; *Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, tr. Minorsky, p. 47; ‘Ali-Naqi Naširi, p. 17; Chardin, V, pp. 356-57, 361-62; Richard, ed., II, p. 13; Kaempfer, p. 106).

The importance of the *išik-āqāsi-bāši* derived above all from the fact that he served as the buffer between the shah and those wishing to see him or be heard by him, for he screened all visitors and petitioners. Not only the petitions of visitors during royal receptions but also all requests from provincial rulers, with the exception of the governors (*wāli*) of ‘Arabestān (Kūzestān) and Georgia, who applied to the Grand Vizier (*e‘temād-al-dawla*), had to go through him. He would pass these on to the *išik-āqāsi-bāši-e ḥaram*, who transmitted them to the shah via the senior officer (*riš-safid*) of the haram. The *išik-āqāsi-bāši* was also responsible for the orderly proceedings of royal ceremonies and receptions. During audiences he accompanied foreign ambassadors to the shah’s throne and during official meals he oversaw the seating arrangements for guests. He remained standing even when others were seated, but his official seat was always left empty out of respect. His place was right next to the shah, from where he would have his gaze invariably fixed on the ruler in order to be able to move at the latter’s slightest gesture or eye movement, and give orders to the many *yasāvolān-e šoḥbat* who were in attendance as well. He pronounced the *takbir* (saying the formula *Allāho akbar*) after official meals (Mirzā Rafi‘ā, 16/1-2, p. 82; ‘Ali-Naqi Naširi, p. 18; Olearius, pp. 671-72; Richard, II, p. 13; Kaempfer, p. 106).

In the foreign sources the *išik-āqāsi-bāši* is often called the carrier of the golden stick, referring to his symbol of dignity, the five-foot mace, *daganak*, gold-plated and encrusted with precious stones, that he carried or had carried in front of him (Speelman, p. 158; Chardin, V, p. 357; Sanson, pp. 33-34; Valentyn, pp. 281-83; Kaempfer, p. 106). The appointment of *yasāvolān-e šoḥbat* and *išik-āqāsis* involved an initiation ritual, whereby he symbolically beat the appointee with his stick in the presence of the king, in a tradition that seems to go back to ancient Qezelbāš ritual (Morton; Mirzā Rafi‘ā, 16/4, pp. 436-37; Zayn-al-‘Ābedin Naširi, p. 55; ‘Ali-Naqi Naširi, p. 18).

The *išik-āqāsi-bāši* ranked among the senior courtiers (*arkān-e arba‘a-ye*



*dawlat-e qāhera wa moqarrabān-e dargāh*; Mirzā Rafi'ā, 16/1-2, p. 82). In late Safavid times, his stature seems to have increased, for under Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn his signature and seal had to be fixed to the statements concerning the salaries of his subordinates (Mirzā Rafi'ā, 16/1-2, p. 82). That he occupied an elevated position at the court is further suggested by the fact that he was a member of the royal privy council, the *jānqi* ('Ali-Naqi Nasiri, p. 16). Statements about his fixed annual income vary from 400 tomans (Mirzā Rafi'ā, 16/3, p. 307) to between 500 and 600 tomans (Richard, II, p. 13). The fief (*toyul*) he enjoyed netted at least another 600 tomans (Mirzā Rafi'ā, 16/3, p. 307). In addition he received ten percent of all gifts offered to the shah as well as those given by the ruler, which was divided between him and the registrar of gifts (*piškašnevis*). Other emoluments came from the branding of camels and the slaughter of sheep for the royal kitchen. The total amount of this income (*madākel*) was about 6,000 tomans (*Tadhkirat al-Mulūk*, tr. Minorsky, p. 87; 'Ali-Naqi Naširi, p. 17; Chardin, III, pp. 197-98, V, pp. 359, 430; Kaempfer, p. 106; Speelman, p. 269; Algemeen Rijks Archief, VOC 1430, fol. 1548b).

Throughout the Safavid period the divān part of the position rested with prominent members of the Qezelbāš, and more specifically *qurčis* from the Šāmlu tribe, with the sole exception of Manučehr Beg, a *golām*, who served in the reign of Shah 'Abbās I (Fazli Eşfahāni, fol. 81b; Jalāl-al-Din Monajjem, p. 129; 'Ali-Naqi Naširi, p. 19). Like so many other government positions, the function was hereditary (Eskandar Beg, p. 440, tr. Savory, p. 614). The government of Ray (present-day Tehran) was typically annexed to the function, at least after the death of Farhād Khan Qarāmānlu in 1596, when the territory was transferred to the Šāmlu tribe (Fazli Eşfa-hāni, fol. 113; Eskandar Beg, p. 1040, tr. Savory, p. 1261; Eskandar Beg and Moḥammad-Yusof Mo'arrek, p. 147; Sanson, pp. 33-34). At some point in later Safavid times this connection was severed (*Tadhkirat al-Mulūk*, tr. Minorsky, p. 87).

An overview of the incumbents shows the hold over the position by members of the Šāmlu. Durmiš Beg Khan Šāmlu received the post in 928/1521-22 (Haneda, p. 91). Ḥosaynqoli Khan Šāmlu became *işik-āqāsi-bāši* at the time of Shah Esmā'il II's accession in 984/1576 (Eskandar Beg, p. 206, tr. Savory, p. 306). He was quickly succeeded, in 988/1580, by Qur Koms Khan Šāmlu (Wāleh Eşfahāni, 1993, pp. 613, 614). Rezāqoli Beg is on record as the incumbent in 993/1585 (Afušta'i Naṭanzi, p. 272). Maḥdiqoli Khan served several times between about 1000/1591-92 and 1011/1602 (Jonābādi, pp. 729-30; Eskandar Beg, pp. 440, 620, tr. Savory, pp. 614, 810). Manučehr Beg, the only *golām* to



hold the position, also served in this period, taking over from Mahdiqoli Khan in 1002/1594 (Jalāl-al-Din Monajjem, p. 129). Esfandiār Beg Evči-bāši ‘Arabgirlu briefly served in 1033/1623-24, the year of his death (Eskandar Beg, p. 1022, tr. Savory, p. 1244). His successor, ‘Aliqoli Khan, also died soon after taking office, in 1034/1624-25, and after a brief vacancy, Zaynal Beg Begdilu became the incumbent in 1036/1627 (Eskandar Beg, pp. 1040, 1059-60, tr. Savory, pp. 1261, 1283; Jalāl-al-Din Monajjem, p. 390). He was succeeded by Oğurlu Khan, a son of Mahdiqoli Khan, who only served until 1634, when he was executed, to be succeeded by Emāmqoli Beg Ināllu. When the latter was killed in the same year, Jāni Khan, who had first served as *yasāvol-e šoḥbat*, took his place (Eskandar Beg and Moḥammad-Yusof Mo’arrek, pp. 147, 199; Wāleh Eşfahāni, 1380, pp. 201-4; Dunlop, p. 525). When Jāni Beg was appointed *qurči-bāši* a year and a half later in 1637, Mortazāqoli Beg Bijārlu succeeded him as *işik-āqāsi-bāši* (Wāleh Eşfahāni, 1380, p. 250; Olearius, p. 672). Upon Mortazāqoli Beg’s appointment as *qurči-bāši* in 1645, Mahdiqoli Khan, a son of Oğurlu Beg, became *işik-āqāsi-bāši*, serving until his death in 1663, when his son, another Oğurlu Khan, succeeded him (Waliqoli Šāmlu, p. 288; Waḥid Qazvini, pp. 68, 328; Mollā Kamāl, p. 101; Naşrābādi, p. 549). Shah Solaymān, intent on saving money, kept the function vacant during an undetermined period of time, so that in 1684 the *divānbeği*, Mohammad-‘Ali Beg, was in charge of his responsibilities (Kaempfer, pp. 106-7; Algemeen Rijks Archief, VOC 1373, fol. 883v). The vacancy may have lasted until 1103/1691-92, when Biji Beg Bijārlu, a son of Mortazāqoli Beg, was called to serve (*Tadkera-ye Şafawiya-ye Kermān*, p. 627). In 1694, at the time of Shah Solţān-Ḥosayn’s accession, the position went to Moḥammad Mo’men Khan Šāmlu (Zayn-al-‘Ābedin Naşiri, p. 19; Aubin, ed., p. 56). In the remaining years of Solţān-Ḥosayn’s reign the following officials held the post, mostly in rapid succession: ‘Ali Mardān Khan, 1110/1698-1701 (Zayn-al-‘Ābedin Naşiri, p. 273; Valentyn, p. 283); Şafiqoli Beg, 1702-06 (Kātunābādi, p. 549; Algemeen Rijks Archief, VOC 1679, fols. 103-4; idem, VOC 1732, fol. 539); Moḥammad-Zamān Khan Šāmlu, 1706-07; Maḥmud Āqā, 1707-08; Mortazāqoli Khan, 1708-09 (Algemeen Rijks Archief, VOC 1763, fols. 252; idem, VOC 1779, fol. 255); Moḥammad-Salim Khan, 1121-125/1709-13 (Kātunābādi, p. 558; Algemeen Rijks Archief, VOC 1779, fol. 299; idem, VOC 1843, fol. 19); Moḥammadqoli Khan 1713; Najafqoli Beg, the latter’s nephew, 1713-14 (Algemeen Rijks Archief, VOC 1856, fols. 587, 613, 627, 1011); Reżāqoli Khan, 1133/1721 (Moḥsen Mostawfi, p. 128).

We know much less about the haram counterpart, which is mostly due to the fact that he presided over the inner part of the palace, that he did not take part



in the more visible and spectacular court ceremonial, and that his position may have been subordinated to that of his *divān* counterpart (*Tadhkirat al-Mulūk*, tr. Minorsky, pp. 118, 133). According to Jean Chardin (V, p. 356), he was the second most important official in the *kāṣṣa* department, yielding only to the *nāẓer*, under whose authority he served. He and his subordinates, the *qāpu-čīs* and *išik-āqāsis*, stood guard at the gate of the ha-ram, and he was supposed to be present at the *kešik-kāna* day and night, with the exception of Friday nights. Whenever the shah traveled the *išik-āqāsi-bāši-e ḥaram* also took part in the enforcement of *qoroq*. In 1055/1645 his salary was fixed at 300 tomans (Wāleh Ešfahāni, 1380, p. 420; *Tadhkirat al-Mulūk*, tr. Minorsky, p. 87). A Persian chronicle asserts that the post of *išik-āqāsi-bāši-e kāṣṣa-ye ḥaram* rested with the family of Mahdiqoli Khan Afšār, who held the position in about 999 (Faẓli Ešfahāni, fol. 81b). Mirzā Rafi‘ā (16/3, p. 307), on the other hand, claims that the position was always with the Čula clan. This is mostly true but not fully borne out by the record. Thus in 978/1570-71 the position was given to Solṭān-Ebrāhim Mirzā, a nephew of Shah Ṭah-māsb (Haneda, pp. 140-41). Later on, the position often went to one of the *gōlāms*. Thus in 999 Allāh-verdi Solṭān was appointed (Faẓli Ešfahāni, fol. 47). Abu’l-Qāsem Beg Evoġli (Ivāġli) served in the last years of Shah ‘Abbās I’s reign and into that of Shah Šafi (Eskandar Beg, p. 929, 1078, tr. Savory, pp. 1147, 1302; Eskandar Beg and Moḥammad-Yusof Mo’arriḳ, p. 7). He was succeeded by Čalabi Beg, his brother. Ḥaydar Beg Evoġli, son of Abu’l-Qāsem Beg, served following his uncle’s death in 1637, and held the position until 1642, when he was succeeded by ‘Aliqoli Beg (Waḥid Qazvini, pp. 55-56; Wāleh Ešfahāni, 1380, p. 329; Mollā Kamāl, p. 99). In 1643 ‘Ali Qobād Beg Čula was appointed (Wāleh Ešfahāni, 1380, pp. 402-3). His direct successor may have been Moḥammadqoli Khan Čaġatāy, who served until his death in 1662, and was succeeded by Abdāl Beg Čula (Waliqoli Šāmlu, ms, fol. 143v; Waḥid Qazvini, p. 311). In 1103/1691-92, Ṭahmāsb Beg Darjazini was appointed, succeeding Āqā Morād. In 1692 the shah called Kamāli Ṭahmāsb Beg to serve (*Tadkera-ye Šafawiya-ye Kermān*, p. 626). In 1694, the incumbent was ‘Aliqoli Beg Čula (Zayn-al-‘Ābedin Naširi, pp. 28, 272).

Nāder Shah Afšār is said to have abolished the position of *išik-āqāsi-bāši-e divān* in 1736 (Marvi, p. 457). This was only a temporary measure, however, for under the Zands the position appears again, though it no longer seems to have been held by the Šāmlu. Henceforth officials from varying background occupied the position. During the reign of Karim Khan Zand we thus hear of Moḥammad-Zamān Khan Zand as the incumbent (Ġaf-fāri Kāšāni, pp. 485, 586). The French envoy Amédée Jaubert in 1806 was introduced to Faṭḥ-‘Ali



Shah by Jaʿfarqoli Khan in 1806 (Jaubert, pp. 229-30). In 1236/1820-21, Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Khan Zangana became *išik-āqāsi-bāši*. In 1249-50/1834, Sāḥqoli Mirzā, a son of Faṭḥ-ʿAli Shah, was appointed (Lesān-al-Molk Sepehr, pp. 328, 602).

In the early Qajar period the *išik-āqāsi-bāši-e divān* is still described as the functionary who almost never left the shah’s side and who, equipped with his stick, announced the names of foreign envoys and escorted them to the shah during audiences. He was also said to be in charge of relaying the shah’s orders to the divān officials and to be the head of the *farrāš-bāšis* (Malcolm, II, p. 556; Morier, p. 212; Drouville, II, p. 28).

Under Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, the function lost much of its importance: the incumbent’s tasks became limited and he only served on ceremonial occasions, such as welcoming receptions and audiences with foreign envoys (Mostawfi, *Šarḥ-e zendagāni* I, pp. 409-10; Brugsch, pp. 262-63). Meanwhile, a change in terminology also occurred; as early as 1806, Jaubert (pp. 229-30) used the term *tašrifātči-bāši* for the royal master of ceremonies. In the later Qajar period the *išik-āqāsi-bāši* was commonly called *raʿis-e tašrifāt* or *wazīr-e tašrifāt* (Bām-dād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 367-68; Mostawfi, *Šarḥ-e zendagāni* I, pp. 409-10; Dust-ʿAli Khan Moʿayyer-al-Mamālek, 1361, pp. 109-10; idem, 1372, p. 55). Between 1283/1866-67 and 1294/1877, the position was filled by Moḥammad-Nāṣer Khan Qājār Davalu (Zāhir-al-Dawla; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* IV, pp. 14-15). His son, ʿAli Khan Davalu Qājār Zāhir-al-Dawla, who was married to a daughter of the shah, took up the post in 1304/1886-87, and held it for thirty years (Dust-ʿAli Khan, 1361, p. 109; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 367-68; Zāhir-al-Dawla, introd. by Afšar). See also COURT.

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(Rudi Matthee)