



TADKERAT AL-MOLUK

TADKERAT al-MOLUK (Memorial for kings), Persian manual from the transitional period between the collapse of the Safavid empire at the end of the reign of Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn (r. 1694-1722) and the early Afghan period in Persia. Together with *Dastur al-moluk*, it constitutes a pre-eminent source of the Safavid administrative system.

Manuscript, edition, translation. The manuscript, which is kept in the British Library (Or. 9496), appears to be complete. It was published for the first time in facsimile, along with an English translation and a detailed commentary as *Tadhkirat al-Mulūk. A Manual of Šafavid Administration*, by Vladimir Minorsky in 1943 in the E. J. W. Memorial Series and reprinted in 1980. In 1989, the Iranian scholar Moḥammad Dabir-Siāqi published an edition of *Tadkerat al-moluk*, together with a Persian translation of Minorsky's commentary, in Tehran. *Author.* In contrast to the *Dastur al-moluk* (q.v.; see bibliography for manuscript, editions, and translations), a manual similar in character and, at times, even in wording, the author's introduction to *Tadkerat al-moluk* does not contain information on his name or position. Dabir-Siāqi (introd.), however, opts in this regard for a certain Mirzā Sami'ā.

Contents. The manual consists of an introduction, five chapters, and an "epilogue" or "conclusion" (*kātema*). Chapter I deals with the responsibilities of the religious authorities, among them the *Šayḵ-al-Eslām* (see Marcinkowski, 2000), at the capital city of Isfahan. Chapter II deals with provincial governors and major officials (mostly military), who were present at the royal court and who were styled *'āli-jāh*, or "high-ranking." Chapter III elaborates on the



dignitaries with the rank of *moqarrab* or “confidant” (with several sub-categories), among them the major palace eunuchs and the heads of the royal workshops (*boyutāt-e salṭanati*, q.v.). Chapter IV deals with the officials of the financial administration, whereas Chapter V focuses on those dealing with the affairs of the capital city and its surrounding district. The “conclusion” is actually an appendix in three parts dealing in great detail with the incomes of officials and with provincial revenues. *Tadkerat al-moluk* contains 164 entries which describe the responsibilities of the major and minor officials of the Safavid state, from the grand vizier down to the staff of the royal palace kitchens. However, some of the entries actually appear twice, first in their respective chapter, and again in the “conclusion,” which deals for the most parts with salaries and other kinds of income.

In the words of Minorsky (p. 203), “the language of the *T.M.* [*Tadkerat al-moluk*] is negligent and approaches the type of an official jargon intelligible to a limited group of initiated. The meaning of many terms which the author takes for granted could be ascertained only through the context, or merely hypothetically” (For further particularities of style see *idem*, p. 204; on differences and interrelations between *Tadkerat al-moluk* and *Dastur al-moluk* see [DASTUR AL-MOLUK](#), and Marcinkowski, 2002, pp. 53-57; *idem*, 2003c).

Historical context and date of compilation. The factors that contributed to the collapse of the Safavid state in 1722, that is, the historical background for the composition of *Tadkerat al-moluk*, have been dealt with elsewhere and from different perspectives (see bibliography). Here, it is sufficient to mention that among the *immediate* causes for the Safavid disaster was the loss of the strategically important eastern town of Kandahar (in present-day Afghanistan) to the rebellious Sunnite Ġilzay (q.v.) Afghans (subjects of the Safavids) under their leader Mir Vais in 1709. This incident had dramatically revealed the weakness of the central government in Isfahan (see [AFGHANISTAN x](#)). In 1719, Mir Vais’ successor Maḥmud was even able to attack and loot the important province of Kerman without any active opposition on the part of the Safavid central government in Isfahan. Maḥmud and his followers took this as an invitation to return with a stronger army, now heading directly for the Safavid capital. On 3 March 1722 a decisive battle was fought at Golnābād (q.v.), by the gates of Isfahan. Finally, in October 1722 starvation and the outbreak of epidemics had forced the city to surrender to the mercy of the Afghans. Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn went over to Maḥmud’s camp in order to declare his abdication.



In the aftermath, the Afghans were unable to secure complete control over the entire country, let alone to capture the designated heir-apparent T'ahmāsp Mirzā. The same year 1722 saw the Russians invading Persia in large scale from the north, occupying the Caspian coastal regions. They were followed by the Ottomans, who, on the pretext of intervening on behalf of the deposed Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn, occupied much of Azarbaijan and western Persia. This was the signal for Ašraf (q.v.), the successor of Maḥmud, to execute the imprisoned Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn in 1725.

The Afghan invaders were in desperate need of acquiring practical knowledge of administrative practices in Safavid Persia, a country they had unexpectedly been able to defeat. In *Tadkerat al-moluk*, Maḥmud is spoken of as dead (*Tadkerat al-moluk*, ed. Minorsky, p. 60), and in the view of Minorsky, the manual, “hurriedly compiled,” was presented to his successor Ašraf (*ibid.*, p. 10). The author explicitly states in his introduction that he wrote his handbook “by the supreme order” (*al-amr al-a'lā*; *ibid.*, p. 41). In light of the historical background referred to above, this could only mean the Afghan ruler. As argued by the present writer elsewhere, *Dastur al-moluk* precedes *Tadkerat al-moluk* (for a detailed discussion of this still controversial issue see Marcinkowski 2002, pp. 29-52; *idem* 2003c; [DASTUR AL-MOLUK](#)).

Significance. Up to Dānešpažuh’s edition of the *Dastur-al-moluk* in the late 1960s, Minorsky’s work constituted the main source on Safavid administration. Both *Dastur al-moluk* and *Tadkerat al-moluk* are of prime importance, since they deal with administrative practice rather than theory. It is this particular fact that gives them their unique character vis-à-vis the genre of “advice (*naṣiḥa*) literature”, also known as “mirrors-for-princes”.

It is also interesting to note the existence of a similar genre in Georgia (a Safavid vassal state), where it was known as *dasturamali* (from Pers. *dastur al-‘amal*, “instructions,” “regulations”). According to Minorsky, a particular *dasturamali* from around 1706, “epitomizes the administrative make-up of the Georgian kingdom, strongly influenced by the institutions and terminology of the suzerain Persia. In its object it is identical to, and in its date slightly earlier than the *T.M.* [*Tadkerat al-moluk*]” (Minorsky, p. 205; for the manual in question see Umik’ashvili; see also [GEORGIA](#), especially ii, “History of Iranian-Georgian relations”).



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See also [ADMINISTRATION i](#).

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