

Presente de D. García de Silva y Figueroa

<i>Documentos Remetidos da Índia</i> (ver nota 56): Carta do rei para o vice-rei da Índia, D. Jerónimo de Azevedo, 7 de Março de 1614	<i>Comentarios de D. García de Silva y Figueroa</i> (ver nota 43). 1614–1624	<i>Relacion breve de la embaxada</i> (ver nota 44), 1619	Pietro della Valle (ver nota 48). 1667	<i>Década 13ª da Ásia</i> (ver nota 5; descrição do presente: pp. 370–371).
10 quadros de diferentes pinturas.	2 retratos de mulheres vestidas e tocadas “à espanhola”;		Alguns retratos, entre os quais o da nova rainha de França;	
	1 mastim;	1 mastim;		
	12 lanças de Ceilão de bom osso e lavrado a prata;	Algumas lanças (que foram incluídas no presente do rei).	Lanças indianas (que foram incluídas no rol de ofertas do rei).	
	4 arcabuzes de Ceilão com 7 palmos de cano e pouca munição mas que acertava a 300 passos de distância com a baina, “frascos” (polvorinhos) e fina cadeia guardados de prata;			
	1 arcabuz de Ceilão semelhante aos anteriores no trabalho mas mais grosso com os “frascos” (polvorinhos) de marfim e dourados.			

At the Royal Court of Shah ‘Abbas I (1589–1629)

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In this paper I first define and describe what the term royal court means within the context of Safavid Iran. Second, I provide an overview of the organization of the royal court and briefly describe the tasks of the most important court officials. Third, I take you on a tour to the royal court, from the moment of arrival of an ambassador in the country. Fourth and finally, I discuss the order in the court during an official audience.

Location of the royal court

The royal court in this paper means the place where the shah resided as well as the executive apparatus that executed his decisions and managed his kingdom. You will have noticed that I said ‘place’ and did not write the name of a city, and kept the designation of the shah’s residence vague. I did that on purpose, because, although Shah ‘Abbas had a capital city, Isfahan, it was not his only royal residence. Shah ‘Abbas had many royal palaces to choose from. His forebears had started with Tabriz as capital city in 1501 and then his grandfather had selected Qazvin as his capital city in 1548, both were amply equipped with palaces. In fact, Shah ‘Abbas received Don Garcia in audience in Qazvin, not in Isfahan, where Shah ‘Abbas had relocated the capital in 1598. But he had more royal palaces, for in 1612 he finished building a palatial complex in Ashraf and Farahabad in Mazandaran as his winter capital. These winter residences assumed an importance almost as great as that of the capital, Isfahan. The entire court moved to one of these palaces during the winter months if the shah chose to stay there. Foreign envoys who desired an audience with the shah at such a period had to visit him there.

However, none of them was the royal residence, for Shah ‘Abbas was always on the move. He not only moved from one city to the other, but even if he stayed in Isfahan, e.g., he might not stay in one of the palaces there. Often the shah stayed in the royal pavilion that was pitched in one of the specially laid out gardens outside the

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city. Around the royal pavilion a tent city arose where all his staff lived and worked. In short, the royal residence literally was the location where the shah resided, the place where he stayed. This could be a royal palace in the city, or it could be his pavilion out in the middle of nowhere. This moving around also had a practical purpose, because Shah 'Abbas was almost every year of his reign campaigning against his enemies. As he personally led his armies he camped out with them.

The tents used for the royal court were of various shapes, but mostly oblong and supported by three poles. The outside "is always of coarse cotton cloth, and the inside is either lined with the same, or with woollen, silk, according to the different seasons of the year, and circumstances of the owners. [...] The Persians use a certain glazing in their cotton tents, which, in some degree, prevents their being penetrated by water". Splendidly embellished poles supported tents, some of which were 60 by 35 feet and 30 feet high. This type of tent was called *bargah*, which could be so large that it was able to contain hundreds of people. It is probably to the latter type of tent or *bargah* that Tenreiro saw in Tabriz and refers to in his report: "It was as large as the chief hall of a king of Hispania, round with a prop in the middle as great as the leg of a man about the thigh, painted in gold and azure, and with fine tints and oils. The tent was entirely arrayed in colored satins with many flourishes, and carpeted with luxurious carpets, and with many silk cushions. The raised walls of the tent, made the tent much greater, so that all the kings and great lords, seated in order, could fit in it, and the Sufi a little further ahead".¹ All these tents were fastened with golden and silver pegs and silken ropes, and were themselves made of the most expensive textiles. The Shah always had two sets of his travel equipment, so that everything was ready when he arrived at the new resting-place. Some tents were so large and luxurious that they "contain within 'em Baths, great Tanks of Water, and movable Gardens of Flowers".²

This notion of the royal court on the move is expressed by one of the terms used for the royal court, viz. *ordu*, an old-Turkish word meaning inter alia, army camp or horde. It expressed the notion that the royal court was not only mobile, but that it was also a dynamic armed force, ever ready to defend the realm. That this notion was not just a remnant of nomadic past of distant Turkic forebears, but a reality is emphasized by the fact that members of the court were referred to in texts as being part of the '*asaker*', the army. When Persian texts use the terms such as '*asaker*' or *jonud*, they in fact included all personnel employed by the royal court. This is clear from a description of a review of the Persian army in 1530 which not only lists the tribal military forces but also the administrative officials as well as the workers of

¹ Ronald Bishop Smith, *The First Age of the Portuguese Embassies, Navigations and Peregrinations in Persia (1507-1524)* (Bethesda, 1970), p. 72.

² Willem Floor, *Dastur al-Muluk, a Safavid State Manual*, transl. & annot. in collaboration with Mohammad Faghfoory (Costa Mesa, 2007), pp. 220-222.

the royal workshops. This was not a Safavid innovation because the same phenomenon existed among the Aq-Qoyunlu.³ This inclusion among the '*asaker*' was more than just filling the ranks. In fact, the bulk of the staff of the royal court belonged to the *aqā* class, which constituted a kind of a military yeomanry. At many occasions, therefore, the staff of the royal workshops participated in the defense of fortresses as well as in outright battles. For example, in 1576 "the '*azabs*' [scribes] of the royal treasury opened fire on the enemy".⁴ In 1000/1591-92, "Rostam Mirza's mother, closed the gates of the citadel and set the eunuchs and workers of the royal workshops to mount guard there".⁵ In 1012/1604 "the retainers of the royal household, the personnel of the royal workshops, the contingents of the musketeers from Tabriz and Bafq, and others fought their way up to the rampart".⁶ Breastworks had been erected by Maqsd Beg, the high steward (*nāzer*), and the workmen of the royal workshops participating in the siege of Erivan.⁷ Sadeqi Beg, the famous royal painter, also was known for his reckless exploits during battle, in which he participated as part of the '*amaleh*' or court staff. As a consequence the staff of the royal workshops were also organized along military lines. They constituted detachments under *yuz-bashis*. Thus, all supporters and adherents of the shah were expected to physically show their allegiance. For example, both under the Aq-Qoyunlu as well as during the first 85 years of Safavid reign, religious leaders such as the *sadr* can be found participating in military reviews and campaigns, including actual battles.⁸

This also meant that whenever the royal court moved almost every member of the court moved with the shah. Not every one left, for part of the staff, equipment and supplies were permanent, while the greater part was mobile and followed the king. This meant, e.g., the bureaucracy, the food department, the workshops, etc. The grand vizier might join the shah or not, that depended on the circumstances, but finally on the shah's decision.

Organization of royal court

The staff of the royal court included a large variety of people, ranging from bureaucrats, and military to craftsmen. The most important dividing line between them was whether you were a member of the royal assembly or not. If not that meant you were a middle-level official and lower and were one of the many thousands that made the royal court work. I will not discuss them as they were not of political importance.

³ Vladimir Minorsky, "A Civil and Military Review in Fars in 881/1476", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 10, 1 (1939), p. 161.

⁴ R. M. Savory, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great* (2 vols., Boulder, 1978), vol. I, p. 288.

⁵ Savory, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, vol. II, p. 660.

⁶ Savory, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, vol. II, p. 845.

⁷ Savory, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, vol. II, p. 843.

⁸ Minorsky, "A Civil and Military Review", p. 161.

The upper echelons of the court, i.e. those court officials, who were present in the royal assembly, formed three distinct rankings, viz.: I. those with the title of *moqarrab al-khaqan*, II. or of *moqarrab al-hazrat* (See Table), and III. those without the title of *moqarrab*. The highest officials of state belonged to category I; then followed the first two officials of category II and then those of category III. Thereafter followed those of category II (i.e. those with a standing place only in the royal assembly), and finally the mid-level officials of category IV, who were not members of the royal assembly. Those belonging to categories II, III, and IV in most cases were subordinates of category I officials. In addition to these four categories of officials there were thousands of low-level officials, servants, artisans, and craftsmen working at the royal court.

There was further differentiation among the category I officials. They were all emirs, of which there were two classes, viz. those emirs serving at court and those who were not and were known as emirs of the marches. The latter included, for example, all vice-roys and provincial governors. Among the emirs there was yet another difference. The highest emirs were those bearing the title of *'alijah* or Excellency. These included the vice-roys, the grand vizier, the army commanders, and the governors-general of large provinces. The highest echelon of the 'Excellency emirs' formed the inner cabinet, as we may call it with a modern term. These numbered only seven court emirs, four of which were called the pillars of the almighty state (*arkan-e dowlat-e qahirah*). First [among them] is the *qurchi-bashi*, second the *qollar aghasi*, third the *ishik aqasi-bashi*, and fourth the *tofangchi aghasi*. These four individuals, together with the grand vizier (*'alijah vazir-e divan-i a'la*), the *divan-begi*, and the *vaze'eh-nevis*, making a total of seven, had since early times constituted [the body of] the council emirs (*omara-ye janeqi*). If the council meets for the purpose of sending the *sepahsalar* to some place at the frontiers, his presence at the council was a necessary condition.⁹

A further differentiation among the upper echelons of court officials was that some had a sitting place in the royal council, while others had only a standing place (see Table). A final cleavage among the court officials was that originally all the important military and government positions had been held by members of the Qezelbash tribes. These Turkic-speaking tribes had been the military force that had brought the founder of dynasty, Shah Esma'il I, to power. Administrative and clerical posts were almost exclusively held by Tajiks, or Persian speakers. With the introduction of significant numbers of Armenians, Georgians, and Circassians, mostly as royal slaves or *gholams*, into Persia from the time of Shah Tahmasp I, the ethnic mix of the Safavid ruling apparatus underwent a radical change. This change was reflected in appointments to the principal offices under 'Abbas I. Qezelbash and *gholams* (royal slaves)

⁹ On the royal council and the *janeqi* see Willem Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions* (Costa Mesa, 2001), pp. 57-58.

appointees dominated most court functions, but this was initially not the case in purely administrative functions. Here, Tajiks continued to dominate, who either held those functions because of family tradition and/or because of technical competence. The latter factor was above all important for those who held functions in the royal chancellery. However, gradually members of the Qezelbash clans were absorbed by the bureaucracy and became holders of important administrative functions, thus turning into 'men of the pen'. A notable example is Eskander Beg Turkoman Monshi, the noted historian, who held important functions in 'Abbas I's bureaucracy.

In addition to the higher echelon of court officials there were many other middle- and low-level officials and staff. They formed the largest number of people at court. These also included many female servants, who served in the royal harem as well eunuchs. The latter did not only serve in the harem. Before the reign of 'Abbas I only black eunuchs were employed, but from then on both black and white eunuchs were employed. It goes without saying that most court officials were recruited from among the sons of the noblest emirs. Finally, there were the religious officials, who were the leaders of the official clerical establishment. They were: the *molla-bashi*, the *sadr-e khasseh* and the *sadr-e amme*, the *motavallis* of the shrine of Imam Reza, the shrine of the *Ma'sumeh* in Qum, the shrine of 'Abd al-'Azim near Tehran, the royal tombs in Qum, the tombs in Ardabil as well as the *sheikh al-Islam* of Isfahan, the *qadi* of Isfahan, and the *qadi-'askar*.¹⁰

Category I	Category II	Category III	Category IV
Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
<i>Moqarrab al-khaqan</i>	<i>Moqarrab al-hazrat</i>	Various	Various
Title/all were seated in royal assembly	Title/only the first two were seated in the royal assembly	Title/ all were seated in royal assembly	Title/ not members of the royal assembly
4 <i>valis</i> or vice-roys and 14 <i>beglerbegis</i> or governors-general. These were emirs of the marches as well as many lower-ranking governors	<i>nazer-e daftarkhaneh-ye homayun-e a'la</i> (the royal secretariat)	vizier of Isfahan	<i>yasavol-bashis</i> and others
From here onwards all court emirs			
grand vizier	<i>darugheh-ye daftarkhaneh</i> (the bailiff of the royal secretariat)	vizier of the God's Grace endowments (<i>vazir-e feyz-athar</i>)	<i>ishik aqasis</i> of the exalted harem

¹⁰ Floor, *Dastur al-Muluk*, pp. 175-84; Willem Floor, "The *sadr* or head of the Safavid religious administration, judiciary and endowments and other members of the religious institution", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 150 (2000), pp. 461-500.

	As of here standing in the royal assembly		
<i>qurchi-bashi</i>	<i>sofrehchi-bshi</i>	<i>vazir-e halal</i>	<i>avarajeh-nevisan</i>
<i>sepahsalar</i>	<i>jelowdar-bashi</i> (chief equerry)	vizier of the <i>qurchi</i> department	<i>keshik-nevisan</i>
<i>qollar aghasi</i>	guest-keeper general (<i>mehmandar-bashi</i>)	vizier of the <i>gholam</i> (royal slaves)	<i>pishkash-nevis</i> (recorder of gifts)
<i>ishik aqasi-bashi-ye divan</i>	<i>darugheh</i> of Isfahan	vizier of the <i>tofangchi</i> (musketeer)	<i>monshi-ye divan</i>
<i>tofangchi aghasi</i>	bailiff of the tent and carpet storehouse (<i>darugheh-ye farrash-khaneh</i>)	accountant of the state endowments (<i>mostowfi-ye mowqufat-e mamalek</i>)	<i>nameh-nevis</i> (the letter writer)
<i>nazer-e boyutat</i>	<i>davatdar-e mohr-e bozorg</i> (the inkhorn holder of the great seal)	<i>mohtaseb al-mamalek</i>	scribes (<i>monshis</i>) of the royal chancellery
<i>divan-begi</i>	<i>davatdar-e mohr-e an-goshtar-e aqtab-athar</i> (the inkhorn holder of the seal of the sun-like signet ring)	<i>lashkar-nevis</i> of the <i>divan</i>	and many more lower-level officials and workers
<i>amir shekar-bashi</i>	<i>min-bashi-ye jazayeri-andaz-e gholam</i>	<i>kalantar</i> of Isfahan	
<i>tupchi-bashi</i>	<i>min-bashiyan-e tofang-chi-ye qeliji-ye jelow</i> (commanders of 1,000 of the royal musketeers)	<i>mostawfi</i> of the <i>qurchi</i>	
<i>amir akhur-bashi-ye jelow</i>	<i>min-bashi-ye tofangchiyan-e Isfahan</i> (commander of 1,000 of the Isfahan musketeers)	accountant (<i>mustowfi</i>) of the <i>gholam</i> and <i>tofangchi</i> department	
<i>majles nevis</i>	the chief water distributor (<i>mirab</i>)	<i>mostowfi</i> of the <i>tup-khaneh</i> department	
<i>hakem-bashi</i>	superintendent of animals (<i>nazer-e davvab</i>)	<i>zabet-e dushalek-e vakil</i> (collector of the vakil's fees on presents and grants)	
<i>amir akhur-bashi-ye sahra</i>	17 different arms-bearing <i>qurchis</i>	<i>mostowfi</i> of Isfahan	
<i>rish-safid-e haram</i>		<i>malik al-sho'ara</i> (royal poet)	
the <i>mehtar-e rekab-khaneh</i> (master of the robes)	<i>farrash-bashi</i>		
<i>jabbeddar-bashi</i> (director of the arsenal)	<i>Rekabdar-bashi</i>		
royal treasury <i>khazi-nehdar</i>	<i>ketabdar-bashi</i>		
<i>laleh-ye gholaman-e khasseh va gholaman-e anbari</i> (the tutor of the royal household slaves)	<i>qeychachi-bashi</i>		
<i>yuz-bashi</i> of the white slaves	<i>malek al-tojjar</i>		

<i>yuz-bashi</i> of the black palace eunuchs	<i>abdar-bashi</i>		
From here w/o title of 'alijah			
<i>ishik aqasi-bashi</i> of the harem	<i>qahvehchi-bashi</i>		
<i>khalifeh al-kholafa</i>	<i>zindar-bashi</i>		
<i>monajjem-bashi</i>	<i>sharbatdar-bashi</i>		
<i>mohrdar-e mohr-e homayun</i> (the keeper of the august seal)	<i>mash'aldar-bashi</i>		
<i>mohrdar-e sharaf-nafadh</i> (keeper of the honor bestowing seal)	<i>havijdar-bashi</i>		
<i>mostowfi-ye sarkar-e khasseh</i> (<i>mostowfi</i> of the <i>khasseh</i> department)	<i>naqqash-bashi</i>		
<i>mo'ayyer al-mamalek</i>	<i>shotor-khan</i>		
<i>monshi al-mamalek</i> (the scribe of state)	<i>anbardar-bashi</i>		
<i>qurchi-yi rekab</i>	<i>qapuchi-bashi</i>		
<i>tushmal-bashi</i>	<i>ishik aqasis</i> of the <i>divan</i>		
	<i>qapuchi-bashi</i> of the <i>divan</i>		

An active and hands-on shah, such as 'Abbas I, directed much of the management of government affairs himself. He "occupied himself with the despatch of much business all the rest of the day. He arranged many things, despatched divers men and divers letters; and he received many letters, all of which Agamir [Aqa Mir Taher, the *majles-nevis*] read to him openly and loudly, so that we all heard". Among the letters was one by Takhteh Beg, governor of Isfahan announcing the arrival of Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa. The Shah asked whether he was a great man, Spanish or Portuguese. "In this manner the King continued transacting business and speaking with various people until it was night; and, meanwhile the cup continued circulating, and the wine was drunk many, many times, as much by the King as by the others".¹¹ 'Abbas I, despite being the absolute autocrat that he was, also was in the habit of consulting his main councilors, who in 1608, were comprised of Allahverdi Khan, Hatem Beg the grand vizier, the *qurchi-bashi*, and an unnamed person who was his 'governor' and preceptor, probably

¹¹ Pietro Della Valle, *Les Fameux Voyages* (4 vols., Paris, 1664), vol. II, p. 318.

the *majles-nevis*.¹² For example, when the Carmelites were discussing a papal Note Verbale with 'Abbas I he had it read aloud to him by the grand vizier, "and then had a brief discussion with him and his councilors, then he told me to sign it".¹³

But 'Abbas I could not take care of all business himself. Therefore his grand vizier, like his other officials, worked with the same diligence in dispatching business as the shah himself. The grand vizier, "who has charge of all the royal revenues, the dispatch of ambassadors, and all other affairs, and who is the first person after the Shah, used to dispatch 200 petitions in a morning, and after having sat and given a hearing for six or seven hours would go out as serene, as if he were coming from taking his horse for a walk".¹⁴

It was the grand vizier's task to approve all appointments, all revenues and expenditures, including those managed by the *sadrs* (head of the religious institution), (which required his counter-seal) as well as the correct implementation of policy and existing rules. No appointment or expense could be made without his endorsement, even when the decree had been sealed by the shah. In most cases the grand vizier did not ask the shah at all for his decision for appointments.¹⁵ He further was the superior of all central and provincial administrative government staff. He also carried on all negotiations with foreign nations, but did not effect the signing of treaties. Depending on the personality of the grand vizier and his relationship with the shah, the grand vizier was actually the man in charge of the entire royal court. This means that in some cases he even commanded the troops and the military were subordinate to him.¹⁶

Sherley observes that "The Vizir sitteth every morning in council about the general state of all the King's provinces, accompanied with the King's Counsel, Advocates resident, and Secretaries of State. There are all matters heard, and the opinions of the council written by the Secretaries of State; then after dinner the council - or such a part of them as the King will admit - present those papers, of which the King pricketh those he will have proceed, and the rest are cancelled; which being done, the council retire them again to the Vizir, and then determine of the particular business of the King's house. [...] The King himself every Wednesday sitteth in the council publicly, accompanied with all those of his council and the aforesaid Advocates. Thither come a flood of all sorts of people, rich and poor, and of all nations without distinction; and speak freely to the King in their own cases, and deliver everyone of his own several bill which the King receiveth; pricketh some and rejecteth others to

¹² *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries* (2 vols., London, 1939), vol. I, p. 159.

¹³ *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. I, p. 127.

¹⁴ *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. I, p. 159.

¹⁵ Vladimir Minorsky, *Tadhkirat al-Muluk: A Manual of Safavid Administration* (London, 1943), pp. 44-45.

¹⁶ Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, pp. 23-40.

be better informed of. The Secretaries of State presently record in the King's book those which he hath pricked, with all other acts then by him enacted; the which book is carried by a Gentleman of the Chamber into his chamber where it ever remaineth; and woe be to his Vizir if after the King hath pricked bill or supplication it be again brought the second time".¹⁷

The grand vizier was assisted by a large bureaucratic institution, known as the *divan-e a'la*. The latter was subdivided into a *dafiar[khaneh]-ye [homayun-e] a'la*, which was in charge of fiscal affairs, and a *dar al-ensha*, which was in charge of all administrative correspondence. The financial administration of the Safavid state was divided into *mamalek* (state) and *khasseh* (royal household) branches, which were respectively under the *mostowfi al-mamalek* and the *mostowfi-ye khasseh*. They prepared 'the budget' and the assessment and collection of taxes in their respective areas. They had a large number of accountants, bookkeepers, tax collectors and assessors in their service.

The royal chancellery was divided into two branches. The *monshi al-mamalek* who was the most important clerical official at that time, was in charge of all correspondence with foreign rulers and all the governors. He was overtaken in importance in the post-'Abbas I era by the *vaqay'-nevis*, who was the record keeper of what was discussed in the royal council. He also became the main conduit for contacts with governors, and later also had a major role in 'foreign relations'. Both had a considerable number of secretaries and clerks at their disposal.¹⁸

The *nazer-e boyutat* or high steward was the manager of the Shah's entire household (*khasseh*). As such he was in charge of all the material needs of the court, food and non-food, both moveable and immovable assets. This ranged from food, drinks, clothes, to arms and buildings. Finally, he was in charge of the entire palace staff, including that of the royal workshops (*boyutat*), who were responsible for providing, keeping, maintaining and supplying the royal court and included small workshops such as a tailoring department and weaving workshops, each of which was headed by an officer with his staff. The extent of his responsibilities did not include the Harem and its inmates, as well as some of its effects (e.g. the elephants were in the charge of the eunuchs, maybe because they were held inside the Harem). At the end of the 16th century the staff of royal workshops (*'amaleh-ye boyutat*) numbered 3,800 persons, while European observers estimated that there were about 5,000 people in the 32 royal workshops.¹⁹

¹⁷ Sir E. Denison Ross (ed.), *Sir Anthony Sherley and his Persian Adventures* (London, 1933), p. 230.

¹⁸ Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, pp. 40-60.

¹⁹ Floor, *Dastur al-Muluk*, p. 208.

The Safavid army consisted of four major units: (1) the *qurchis*; (2) the *qollar* or *gholams*; (3) the *tofangchis*; and (4) the *tupchis*.

The *qurchis* were the royal life guards. Their creation dates from around 1500, when they are mentioned for the first time in Safavid sources. The head of the *qurchi* corps bore the title of *qurchi-bashi*. He always was selected from the corps itself. Among the *qurchis* we may distinguish three categories: (1) the *qurchiyan-e molazem* (in royal attendance) or high-ranking officers, of which the *qurchi-ye rekab* was the most important; (2) the *qurchiyan-e yaraq* or bearers of the royal arms; and (3) the rank and file, mostly referred to as *qurchiyan-e 'ezam*. *Qurchis* were mainly recruited from among the Qezelbash tribes. The size of this corps was about 12,000 men during the reign of Shah 'Abbas.

The royal slave corps (*qollar* or *gholam*) existed prior to Shah 'Abbas, but he increased its size and importance considerably. From the very beginning of his reign, 'Abbas I relied on his *qurchis* and his *gholams* to extend his power over the state. The large number of Georgian, Armenian, and Circassian children and young men captured during the wars in the Caucasus constituted the main recruiting grounds for the *gholam* corps. There were two kinds of *gholams*. Those that were eunuchs (*khvajeh*) and those that were not (*sadeh*). The *sadeh* or non-eunuch *gholams* were trained for royal service in the army, the administration, and the royal workshops. The training of both categories of *gholams* was the responsibility of the *laleh-ye gholaman-e khasseh va gholaman-e anbari*. According to della Valle, the total number of *gholams* numbered about 30,000 in 1618, of whom some 15,000 served as soldiers. The *gholams* acquired a dominant role in the Persian state. They held leading military, administrative and political functions. The chief of the *gholams* was the *qollar-aghasi*, who already soon after the creation of the *gholam* corps had become one of the most important officials in Safavid Persia.

In 1516, Esma'il I gave orders to constitute a corps of *tofangchis* or musketeers under a commander, who was entitled *tofangchi-bashi*. The *tofangchis* were basically local levies, from all over Persia. Their main function was to defend their own district or province. Furthermore, they might be called upon to participate in military campaigns against the Ottomans. According to della Valle, they numbered 20,000. There was one corps commander, the *tofangchi-bashi* or *tofangchi-aghasi*, who was assisted by various officers such as *min-bashis*, *yuz-bashis*, *panjah-bashis*, *dah-bashis* and an administrative staff.²⁰

The exact date of the creation of the artillery corps or *tupchis* is not known. However, from the early beginnings of the formation of the Safavid army, cannon constituted a

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of the composition and development of the Safavid army see Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, chapter 3, pp. 124–280.

regular, but insignificant, part of its capability. The use of cannon, especially at siege operations, continued to be a standard feature for the rest of the century. For artillery was mainly used as a defensive weapon, in particular mounted on the walls of the citadels of the major towns and of strategic fortresses. Persians had problems in casting cannon, but also in its use and the production of its munitions. Europeans therefore were regularly asked to provide lead, powder and gunners. The *tupchis* were organized like the other army units. The corps was headed by a *tupchi-bashi*, who was assisted by an administrative staff, and by various lower-ranking officers.

Under the Safavids, the head of the secular judiciary (*divan-e 'adalat*) was the *divan-beygi*. 'Abbas I used to mete out justice standing in the gate of his palace, and so did provincial governors and the grand-vizier. Like the shah, the grand-vizier and provincial governors also set aside a particular day to sit or stand in judgment. 'Abbas I took a pro-active role and often asked the people to come forward with complaints, but after 1683 the Safavid Shahs gave no access any more to their person. In Isfahan, in the 17th century, the *divan-beygi* had to sit in court four days of the week with the two *sadrs* (head of the religious institution), although the latter often were not present. In some cases there was a special building, while a pavilion in a garden also was used. The *divan-beygi* sat at the King's Gate in Isfahan, but also twice per week in his house. Any complaint against officials could be filed with him for submission to the shah. The *divan-beygi* did not deal with cases involving members of the army or religious officials whose cases he respectively referred to the chief of each army corps and the *sadr*. Although there still was an army judge (*qazi-ye 'askar*) he had no real operational function. In addition there were a number of urban local officials who would take care of the bulk of transgressions. These included the mayor of the town (*kalantar*), the bazaar supervisor (*darugheh*), the overseer of weights and measures (*mohtaseb*), the chief of the city quarter (*kadkhoda*) as well as the guild chiefs (*bozorg*, *kadkhoda*) and the chief of the merchants (*malek al-tojjar*).²¹

The master of ceremonies, the *ishik aqasi-bashi* of the *divan-e a'la* was (i) in charge of the palace guard with a view to control access to the royal palace and to the Harem in particular as well as (ii) the master of ceremonies and protocol for the royal council and public audiences. As such he was in charge of and had the responsibility for the doorkeepers (*qapuchiyan*), guards (*keshikchiyan*), macebearers (*ishik aqasis*), public criers (*jarchis*), ushers (*yasavols*), gentlemen-in-waiting (*aqayan*) and aides-de camp (*yasavol-e sohbat*). This palace staff, which numbered more than 2,000 persons, also included the porters, who guarded the inner palace, and the horse guard that accompanied the Shah when riding. When the Shah traveled the *ishik aqasi-bashi* was responsible for the route, the way stations, the orderly travel arrangements, including the repairs of bridges, the roads, and the passageways. This responsi-

²¹ For a discussion of the judicial system in Safavid Iran see Willem Floor, *The Economy of Safavid Persia* (Wiesbaden, 2000), pp. 12–16, pp. 21–28.

bility he shared with the *farrash-bashi* and *darugheh* of the *farrash-khaneh*. Pioneers (*bildars*) repaired the road that the Shah had to travel and water carriers (*saqqayan*) sprinkled it to avoid annoyance caused by dust. To that end the water carriers and water drawers (*ravayeh kashan*) filled their water skins and loaded these on camels. Food and drinks of all kinds were stored in ice-cooled trunks (*yakhdans*), kept in golden vessels and wrapped in gold-embroidered tablecloths. The *ishik aqasi-bashi* also guarded the Shah's person at night during these journeys.

The master of ceremonies (*ishik aqasi-bashi-ye divan a'la*) was only responsible for the *birun* or public part of the royal establishment, whether in the palace or in the army camp. As to the *andarun* or private part of the royal living quarters and during royal outings the *ishik aqasi bashi-ye haram* took over. He was an emir of lower rank and had to coordinate his activities with that of the master of ceremonies of the royal council. The *lashkar-nevis* was in charge of the administration of the Harem personnel. This function was entrusted to men of older age and service, who had good judgment. He had to maintain order and security at the Harem gate and to be present in the guard-house, expect on Fridays when he could go home. His porters (*qapuchis*) and mace-bearers (*ishik-aghasis*) guarded the Harem, also during the Shah's travels, when this task was shared with the staff of the master of ceremonies.²²

The office of *amir shekar-bashi* was a very important office. It was his task to see to it that the ruler always would be able to go on a rewarding hunting trip. He also had to see to it that hunting animals, such as the leopard and birds-of-prey, were trained and to see to it that the hunting grounds were out-of-bounds. Under the orders of the master of the royal hunt were the *qushkhaneh-aghasi* (royal falconer) and the *sag-khaneh bashi* (master of the kennels) and some 1,000 *mir shekar-bashiyan*, *qushchiyan* and other officials throughout the kingdom. The master of the royal hunt was one of the leading emirs and in charge of falconers, hunters, cheetah-keepers, dog barkers, and dog handlers, who numbered more than 1,000 persons. He also was responsible for feeding the animals.²³

The master of the horse (*amir akhor-bashi*), of whom there were two, one of the *jelow* (stables), the other of the *sahra* (fields) or *ilkhi* (herds) was responsible for the king's mounts, which were housed in various stables. The master of the herds was also responsible for their herding and training. They both were responsible for the proper management of their staff, horses and other pack- and riding animals.²⁴

²² For a discussion of the tasks and staff of these two officials see Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, pp. 140-174.

²³ For a discussion of the task and staff of the Master of the Hunt see Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, pp. 185-198.

²⁴ For a discussion of the task and staff of the two Masters of the Horse see Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, pp. 199-209.

An ambassador's itinerary

A visitor arriving in Iran would almost immediately be met by a representative of the royal court, most certainly if his arrival had been made known to the authorities beforehand. In the latter case, the court would have assigned a so-called *mehmandar* or conductor of guests. If the visitor came unannounced then he presented his credential to the governor of the border town where he entered Iran, and if accepted the latter would appoint a *mehmandar*. It was the task of this official to conduct the guest to the royal court. During the journey he had to take care of all the needs of the official guest in terms of food, fodder, riding and pack animals, and lodging en route and that he was everywhere respectfully received. The costs were borne by the inhabitants of the village or town through which the embassy passed. Officially, these cost were to be deducted from the annual tax burden, but this did not always happen. Because in later years the *mehmandars* often asked more than they were entitled to, the population did not like to pay this impost. They therefore often fled when an embassy was approaching their village, they sometimes would refuse, or made up excuses to avoid paying such as that the village had been struck by the plague. This duty to provide supplies held not only for the arrival, but also for the guest's stay at court and his return trip. The rank of the *mehmandar* usually was commensurate with that of the visitor, or lower/higher depending on how much respect the Shah wanted to show him. An ambassador was officially welcomed at every location that he approached by a delegation consisting of sometimes the governor, but more usual, of high officials accompanied by troops and notables of the town, or in the case of village, of the village chief and elders. This official reception or *estegbal* took place outside the town/village and the distance to the town was longer/shorter depending on the importance that was given to the visitor by the court. The welcoming party then accompanied the visitor to his lodgings in the town, while the inhabitants lined the streets to welcome him. Usually an orchestra played music and dancing girls made their alluring gyrations. Once the visitor was installed provisions were sent. This spectacle repeated itself at every halting place. When the ambassador finally had arrived at the royal court, he was taken to the lodgings that had been prepared prior to his arrival by a number of grandees led by the *mehmandar-bashi*.

The *mehmandar-bashi*, the Introducer of the Ambassadors or Guest-Keeper General, was a subordinate of the *qurchi-bashi*. Lodging in the capital city usually was no major problem, though sometimes it could. He sometimes even organized the proper seating and standing arrangements of visitors and courtiers at a royal audience. The Shah had a number of mansions at his disposal to assign to his guest, and if need be, the occupants of a desirable house were just told to vacate the premises.

The King has above three hundred Houses in Ispahan, which are properly his own, having devolv'd to his Predecessors, and to himself either by Right of Succession, by Confiscation, or by Purchase. These Houses which are all large and fine, [...] are almost always empty,

and run to Ruin, for want of being kept up in sufficient Repair. These they give to Embassadors, and Strangers of Consideration, that come to Ispahan. The Commissioners of the Quarters where they are scituated, have the Keys of these Houses, and are charg'd to keep them Clean and Neat.²⁵

It was the *mehmandar-bashi*'s task to formally ask the ambassador the official purpose of his visit. In the case of Don Garcia this was superfluous, of course, as this was well-known. In fact, Shah 'Abbas regularly received reports of the ambassador's progress from his governors. At various occasions, he also asked Pietro della Valle, for example, about what person Don Garcia was and discussed Spanish/Portuguese politics with him. "[...] he asked me if the Ambassador of Spain who had now come to his court was a man of truth and integrity". He discussed with Della Valle why Spain did not attack the Ottomans.²⁶ The *mehmandar-bashi* also made arrangements for the upkeep of the embassy at the royal court either by allotting it a cash allowance or by providing supplies in kind. Whereas the cost of the embassy was borne by the villages and towns where it lodged, at court the expense was met from the royal treasury.

Another official who came to visit the ambassador was the *pishkash-nevis* [Receiver of Presents] to "see the Presents he had brought for the King, examine them, and take an Inventory thereof". The officers of the Shah's household received 25 per cent of the estimated value of the presents in ready money. The valuation commission consists of "the prevost of the Merchants, a Comptroller of the Palace, the chief of the Goldsmiths, the Intendant of the Manufactures of the Stuffs of Gold and Silk, the great Master of the Artillery, the chief of the Painters, and ten or twelve of the most considerable Merchants of Ispahan".²⁷

Unlike in Europe, where an embassy could take as little time as one week, an ambassador to the Safavid court stayed as many as six to eight months in Isfahan. During that time they were often cloistered in the villa assigned to them, because often they were not given permission to move around town. Once they had been granted a royal audience, they were allowed to present their letters of credence, genuflect and meet a royal personage who hardly spoke to them at all. Then they were offered a meal, which did not last long and then were returned to their villa. The letters of credence took months to translate, because this usually only took place a couple of weeks before the ambassador would be allowed to depart. The real discussion of business took place with the grand-vizier who also drafted the reply to the requests brought by the ambassador.

²⁵ For a discussion of the task and staff of the Introducer of Guests see Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, pp. 155-159.

²⁶ Della Valle, *Les Fameux Voyages*, vol. II, pp. 329-330.

²⁷ Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, p. 159.

After his forced stay in Isfahan, Don Garcia was finally allowed to depart from Isfahan to meet with Shah 'Abbas. He sent one of his suite ahead to announce his approach to the governor of the town. The Spanish official returned with an Iranian official who brought fruit and ice on behalf of the governor. He further informed Don Garcia that he should enter the city between 8 and 9 a.m. the next morning. The next day Don Garcia sent his baggage train, which also contained the presents for the Shah, ahead and followed himself with a suite of 25 people. Fifteen hundred meters outside the city he was met by Davud Khan, the brother of the Governor-General of Fars, the governor of Qazvin and Hoseyn Beg, the *mehmandar-bashi* accompanied by 200 officials, all on horseback. The ambassador and his suite were dressed in the best Spanish clothes with beautiful collars, while the Iranian nobles all wore gold brace dresses and beautiful bejeweled and feathered turbans. The Shah had given express orders that only the reception party was allowed to go outside the city to welcome the ambassador. Davud Khan then welcomed the ambassador and introduced him to the most important officials that accompanied him. He then took place on his left and together rode into the city, while conversing one another. Arrived at the ambassador's lodging the welcoming party took leave.

The reception of Don Garcia thus was much less important than the three ambassadors that would come after him (India, Muscovy, Ottoman), where the entire population of Isfahan had been ordered to welcome them outside the city.

When the Shah finally agreed to receive the ambassador, the *mehmandar* accompanied the guest to court to present him to the shah during the official audience, to present his official gifts as well as to introduce him to important government officials. Prior to that date, the *pishkash-nevis* informed

the Great Provost, and Governor of the City, that he must have such a Number of Men, such a Day, in such a Place, to carry the Presents of such an Ambassador. The Governor sends in for the Commissary of that Ward or Quarter, and gives him his Orders accordingly, and the Commissary delivers them to the principal Burghers of the Quarter. These Burghers [*kadkhodās*], to the Number of Eight or Ten, take a Man out of each Shop of the Quarter, or as many as are necessary, and repair, with a Clerk of the Receiver of the Presents, to the Ambassador's lodgings, where they receive his Presents according to the Memorial, and deliver them to these Bearers. Each Man takes a Piece, and goes away. Fifty Men very often are employ'd to carry to an Audience, what one Man might easily carry. This Practice, is to do Honour to the Person who makes the present, because it makes him appear the more considerable; and likewise for the grandure of the King, by reason that the People seeing the Presents that are brought to him, conclude that he is highly esteem'd by Foreign Nations.²⁸

²⁸ Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, pp. 158-159.

This also happened in the case of Don Garcia, who accompanied by officials, was followed by youths who carried the Spanish king's gifts. The cavalcade did not go direct to the royal court, but circumambulated through the town so that its inhabitants would see the rich gifts borne to the Shah and the great respect shown by other monarchs to the king of kings.

Order in the court

At the Safavid court, strict protocol as to precedence of the various courtiers was maintained. The royal assembly was divided into three sections. The first section was reserved for the shah, who sat on a small square (2.5 x 2.5 m) elevation, which was covered with rich gold cloths enriched with pearls. In this section, the category I officials as well as the religious officials were seated. The shah usually was flanked by richly dressed pages and the royal chamberlain, a eunuch. In the second section the category III officials sat, while in the third section the category II officials stood. This order was also respected in the royal camp when the Shah was traveling. The courtiers sat row upon row, the highest ranked closer to the Shah than the lesser-ranked courtiers. Also, the most honored had a *sayeban* or an awning. In addition to these officials, there were various performers (musicians, dancing girls) and servants present in the place where the royal assembly was held, but they were not members, of course.²⁹

When in 1628, the British embassy under Sir Dodmore Cotton arrived at the palace in Qazvin it was bid welcome by an official and led to a small house, where it reposed and was entertained with rice and wine. "Nothing so good as the material they were served in, flagons, cups, dishes, plates, and cover being all of gold". Then it was taken to another summer-house, rich in gold embossment and paintings. The ground was spread with carpets of silk and gold. In the middle were tanks with water and around them were placed goblets, flagons, cisterns, and other standards of massive gold, some of which were filled with perfumes. Then the embassy was taken to another square upper room, "here the ground was covered with richer carpets than before, the tank was larger, [...] and so much gold, transformed into vessels for use and ornament, were set for us to look upon that some merchants then present made an estimate at an incredible value of 20 million pounds. [...] Most of the flagons, cups, and other plate were garnished with rubies, diamonds, and like stones".³⁰

The embassy was finally led into the audience hall. Before entering the audience hall the visitors had to take off their shoes or boots. Even Shah 'Abbas took off his shoes when he entered his own *divan-khaneh*.³¹ Here it was the *ishik aqasi-bashi*'s function

²⁹ Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, p. 159.

³⁰ Thomas Herbert, *Travels in Persia, 1627-1629*, ed. W. Foster (New York, 1929), pp. 153-154.

³¹ Della Valle, *Les Fameux Voyages*, vol. II, p. 310.

as the master of ceremonies at royal council meetings and other public functions to see to it that protocol was respected. He was to see to it that the royal council meetings and official audiences were well ordered. This included knowing where each official, both sitting and standing, had his rightful place to which end he kept a list. He took all officials and guests to their places; foreigners were usually accompanied by the *mehmandar*. The order of precedence as well as who was a member of the council was based on ancient Safavid protocol. Both the membership and order of precedence changed over times as a function of the prestige of the office and the relationship with the Shah.³²

Herbert noted that the floors also in the audience hall "were overlaid with such large and rich carpets as befitted the monarch of Persia. Round about the room were also seated several tacit [i.e. silent] Mirzaes, Chawns, Sultans, and Beglerbegs; who, like so many inanimate statues, were placed cross-legged, joining their bums to the ground, their backs to the wall, and their eyes to a constant object; to speak one to another, sneeze, cough, or spit in the Pot-shaw's presence being held no good breeding".³³

The *ishik aqasi-bashi*, although a high-ranking *moqarrab al-khaqan*, always stood in the royal assembly close to the Shah. As token of his office he held a golden gem-studded staff, which he received on his appointment. The staff had a length of five feet. On both ends it was covered with gold plate and very heavily studded with so many precious stones that one could not touch the staff with one's little finger without touching one of these jewels. Whenever the Shah signaled the master of ceremonies to come close to receive orders he would throw his staff on the ground and present himself as fast as possible. The *ishik aqasi-bashi* guided those honored with a royal audience toward the Shah while holding their elbow, so that they could do their reverence.³⁴ Della Valle was brought into the Shah's presence by the *qurchi-bashi*, "who was at my left, and retained that station, putting his hand under my arm as if to support me". This custom was done in honor of great persons, and it was customary that the greater the person, the greater the one who takes him by the arm.³⁵

There were different ways in which visiting subjects and foreign dignitaries greeted the Shah. It would seem that Safavid princes were allowed to kiss the Shah's hand (*dast-bus*). Commoners, whether local rulers or simple rank and file subjects, and other Middle Eastern persons kissed the Shah's foot or the ground, which ceremony was referred to by several terms such as *pa-bus* (foot-kiss), *zamin-bus* (ground-kiss), *'atabah-bus* (threshold kiss), and *besat-bus* (floor-covering kiss), denoting the same activity. *Pa-bus* was also called *zamin-bus*, "that is to say, to kiss the Ground, and Ravi zemin, which implies, the face on the Ground. This Salutation is perform'd after this manner. The

³² Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, pp. 159-160.

³³ Herbert, *Travels in Persia*, pp. 153-55.

³⁴ Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, p. 160.

³⁵ Della Valle, *Les Fameux Voyages*, vol. II, pp. 311-312.

Ambassador or other Person, is conducted to within four Paces of the King, and right against him where they stop him, and make him kneel, and in that Posture he makes three Prostrations of his Body and Head to the Ground, so low, that his Fore-head touches it". Going three times round the Shah meant, for the one who did so, that he wished to take upon himself any mischance that might happen to the Shah. Courtiers gave the *zanu-bus* (knee-kiss) to visiting foreign royalty. When 'Abbas I appeared in the main square of Isfahan the courtiers who came there to pay their respects only needed to incline their head without bending the body when he passed. It was not needed to repeat this a second time when passing by. Horsed soldiers pressed a hand to their stomach and then to their forehead, when riding past the Shah during an army review. Visiting Europeans, especially the Catholic priests, were allowed the *dast-bus* or the kissing of the hand.

Della Valle states concerning the *pa-bus* "They normally perform this ceremony, not every time that they see and speak with him, but only every time they come to him from abroad, or take leave of him to go abroad and far away". The Shah, when the person had kneeled on both knees, extended his right foot for him to kiss, after which he touched it with his forehead. Europeans, whether a visiting commoner or ambassador, did likewise, though in the 17th century they began to make a bow and took off their hat. In 1515, the Portuguese ambassador, Fernão Gomes de Lemos, and his party made their reverence, by placing their heads on the ground, and later when received in audience the ambassador "kissed his hand and foot" while the secretary of the embassy "kissed the floor thrice". The English did likewise: "The King admitted us into his presence and gave us that honour to kiss his foote, and then invited us to sup with him". A visiting Polish ambassador also kissed the Shah's foot. The Carmelites report, "Not only his own people, however great they may be, but foreigners and ambassadors from great kings kiss his feet, only to the Franks does he offer his hand [to kiss]". Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa "bent his knee and kissed his Majesty's hand". Della Valle, when he first met the Shah, intended to kiss his robe, but the Shah extended his arm so that he could not bow down further, so that he kissed his hand and touched it with his forehead. 'Abbas I made an exception for European religious persons. Pacifique de Provins relates that he was welcomed by the Shah, and was told that he did not have to kiss the Shah's foot and was allowed to shake his hand. The Carmelites were allowed to kiss 'Abbas I's hands and bowed. Towards the end of the 17th century and later European ambassadors and their suite would take off their hat and bow. The first Dutch ambassador in 1629 made a bow and did as if he kissed the Shah's hands. Other Dutch ambassadors in 1652, 1690 and 1710 only made a deep bow. The Polish ambassador in 1694, however, still put his hands on the ground out of respect and made a very deep bow.³⁶

After Sir Dodmore Cotton had related the main points of his embassy Shah 'Abbas stood up and replied to each of the issues raised by the ambassador, he then sat

³⁶ Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, pp. 161-163.

down. How did these two understand what was being said? The court language was Turkish till the very end of the dynasty. In fact, at court more Turkish was spoken than Persian.³⁷ Della Valle related that "The king talked in Turkish to me and I narrated succinctly all my journey and answered his various questions. And then when I had finished, he reported in the Persian language most clearly and distinctly, as he always has to do by custom, all that I had told him to his people standing around, saying to them: have you heard what he said?"³⁸ However, formal correspondence was in Persian. Foreigners therefore needed interpreters, for both languages. Ambassadors from countries that had irregular contacts with the Safavid court needed to have their official letters translated as well as have somebody during the royal audience and follow-up discussions with the grand vizier who would translate for them. The Safavid court did not usually have an official interpreter or *kalamchi*. To that end often use was made of Armenians, resident Europeans such as Catholic monks. Amongst the latter, in particular, father du Mans was more or less used as the official court translator, although he was not paid for it.³⁹

'Abbas was very friendly towards the aged Don Garcia. He realized that it was difficult for him sit tailor-wise for a long time and therefore offered him a small stool to sit on. He also helped him get up with two hands. To show his respect he called him 'Baba' or 'Father' and kissed him when he took his leave. During private assemblies he always put the Moghul ambassador to his right and Don Garcia to his left.

The formalities concluded with a banquet in honor of the visitors; the meal was customarily served on dishes of gold, and wine was passed in golden goblets. The Shah always ate apart from his magnates, when they dined with him. "The King is serv'd out of a Vessel of pure Gold, or more than Three Foot diameter. The Cover [...] Padlock by which his Portion is locked up, are of the same Metal; and they carry this Vessel about with ceremony upon a sort of Hand-Barrow, [...] rich, with Plates of Gold. The Gentleman-Carver opens the Lock before his Majesty; and after having fell on his Knees, and tasted the Viands, he fills several Golden Plates with a Golden Spoon and Fork (which he wears by his Side to distinguish his Office) and then humbly presents 'em to his Majesty". The guests were served after the Shah, also on golden plates of 1.5 foot diameter. In fact, guests were served according to their rank. Apart from ladles, no other utensils whether spoons, forks or knives were used, everybody, including the Shah, ate with their hands. "Only the steward, who also has the office of carver, occasionally divides up some food when this is asked for, without knives or forks, but with a single great big spoon, almost square, which hardly ever leaves his hand and is also of gold".⁴⁰

³⁷ Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, p. 164.

³⁸ Della Valle, *Les Fameux Voyages*, vol. II, p. 324.

³⁹ Floor, *Dastur al-Moluk*, p. 164; Herbert, *Travels in Persia*, p. 154.

⁴⁰ Della Valle, *Les Fameux Voyages*, vol. II, pp. 301-302; *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. I,

The rigid protocol that prevailed during an official audience was abandoned during a private one. After the audience granted to Sir Dodmore Cotton was finished, the Shah invited him to another apartment where wine was served. When Shah 'Abbas drank to King Charles's health the ambassador stood up and uncovered his head; which, being noted by the Pot-shaw, also lifted to his turban to oblige him and after one hour he dismissed him with much satisfaction.⁴¹ Della Valle related how he met Shah 'Abbas in the palace in Ashraf, where after everybody had sat down in the divan-khaneh the Shah took off his turban. However, nobody else "removed their turbans, as this would not be good manners in front of high ranking people, or even equals and people who were not of the family. Musicians kept playing and singing continuously nearby, but very softly, so that the music did not impede our speaking and conversation. The king wanted to talk to me and commanded me to sit next to him, making a sign with his hand to the left, and I sat down there. No others remained in the divan-khaneh save the King, the Khan Deli, the musicians, and I, while outside stood the servants of the King, who never left".⁴²

In short, the above has shown that the court of 'Abbas I was a moving target; the shah was always on the move and thus his court moved with him. This held for the highest officials, many, but not all, also moved with him as well as for the lower ranks. There was a strict hierarchy with regards to one's standing in court. The first dividing line was whether you were a member of the royal assembly or not. Those who were distinguished themselves from each other by other markers, such as by being an emir, and then also being an Excellency. The procedure of receiving ambassadors likewise was prescribed and had to be adhered to. The man literary in charge of an ambassador or foreign guest was the Introducer of Guests, who saw to all his needs and took him to court when finally an audience was granted. Arrived at court, the ambassador was also subject to court protocol; he had to take off his shoes, then the master of ceremonies took him passed the serried ranks of silent courtiers, to take his seat whence he might address the Shah. After the formal statements by ambassador and Shah, usually a banquet was offered. The strict protocol stood in strong contrast to the relaxed and informal atmosphere when the shah invited a guest to a private meeting. Shah 'Abbas showed himself not only knowledgeable, but a consummate politician by adapting his behavior towards his guest and his political objectives.

pp. 488ff.

⁴¹ Herbert, *Travels in Persia*, pp. 156-57.

⁴² Della Valle, *Les Fameux Voyages*, vol. II, pp. 313, 325, 344.

Itinéraires et voyageurs portugais en Perse safavide

VASCO RESENDE *

Résultat de l'observation attentive, de l'immense curiosité et de la vaste érudition de son auteur, les *Comentarios* de García de Silva y Figueroa¹ représentent un tournant dans l'écriture des récits de voyage européens en Perse; mais leur importance ne peut être pleinement appréciée sans une connaissance plus élargie de la production littéraire qui a précédé cette oeuvre monumentale. En effet, si le récit de l'ambassadeur espagnol marque une nette rupture avec le style et la structure de cette littérature telle que l'avaient développée initialement les Vénitiens,² puis les Portugais,³ les *Comentarios* – dont la première édition en présenta une traduction partielle en langue française⁴ – ne sont que la conséquence logique d'une évolution littéraire

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¹ García de Silva y Figueroa, *Comentarios de Don García de Silva y Figueroa de la embajada que de parte del Rey de España don Felipe III hizo al Rey Xa Abas de Persia*, ed. Manuel Serano y Sanz (2 vols., Madrid, 1903-1905).

² On se réfère ici essentiellement aux voyages des émissaires vénitiens du XV^e siècle auprès de Ūzūn Hasan, à la tête de la confédération turkmène des Āq-Quyūnlū. Les récits de voyage de Giosafat Barbaro et Ambrogio Contarini furent publiés ensemble à Venise en 1543 (le livre de Contarini avait déjà connu une première édition en 1524) et celui de Caterino Zeno dans la même ville en 1558, mais leurs textes n'obtinrent une dimension internationale qu'après leur réédition dans le second volume des *Navigazioni et Viaggi* de Giovanni Batista Ramusio – les deux premiers récits en 1559, le troisième dans l'édition de 1574. Cf. George B. Parks, "The Contents and Sources of Ramusio's *Navigazioni*", *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 59, 6 (1955), pp. 279-313, surtout pp. 298 et 300. Voir Giosafat Barbaro & Ambrogio Contarini, *I Viaggi in Persia degli Ambasciatori Veneti Barbaro e Contarini*, éd. L. Lockhart, R. Morozzo della Rocca & M. F. Tiepolo (Venise, 1973); *Travels to Tana and Persia*, trad. William Thomas & S. A. Roy, éd. Lord Stanley of Alderley (Londres, 1873); *A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, trad. et éd. Charles Grey (Londres, 1873). Cf. Guglielmo Berchet, *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia* (Turin, 1865), pp. 6-20; Laurence Lockhart, "European Contacts with Persia, 1350-1736", in *The Cambridge History of Iran* (7 vols., Cambridge, 1968-1991), vol. VI (ed. Peter Jackson & Laurence Lockhart), pp. 373-409, surtout pp. 377-378; Giorgio Rota, *Under Two Lions: On the Knowledge of Persia in the Republic of Venice (ca. 1450-1797)* (Vienne, 2009).

³ Voir, en guise d'introduction à ce sujet, Luís Graça, *A visão do Oriente na literatura portuguesa de viagens: Os viajantes portugueses e os itinerários terrestres (1560-1670)* (Lisbonne, 1983).

⁴ *L'Ambassade de D. Garcias de Silva Figueroa en Perse*, trad. Abraham de Wicquefort (Paris,