

“without any further pretext, or legal deed, they (the slaves) sell up the houses or property, nor is there any recourse for getting them back.

“The rewards for services given by the nobles are dignities and ranks at the Court, such as ‘centurions’, captains of the king’s guards, and posts as ‘sultans’, by which is meant governorships of provinces. So much for service on the king’s person.

“Truly speaking, there is only one council, in which there is no other president than the king, with the assistance of 12 ‘sultans’ (i.e. governors) men of experience and acquainted with the provinces and affairs of state, although this number is liable to change from time to time by those governors who come to the capital, all of whom have the right of entry to the council. This council meets daily, except when the king goes to the bath and when his nails are cut, the hour for meeting both in summer and in winter being 22 o’clock¹ and later: and they continue to sit according to the business to be discussed till 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 hours after nightfall. The king sits on a Mastab, not much raised above the ground, and behind his shoulders sit his sons, when they are at Court, where Sultan Haidar Mirza, who is as it were lieutenant for his father, usually is present and does not leave him. Opposite and in front of the king sit the ‘governors’, members of council according to age, and to the right and left the ‘grand chancellors’, three or four of them who are called Wazir. The king puts forward the business, and discourses about it, asking the opinions of the governors one by one, and as each one pronounces his opinion he rises from his place and comes near the king and speaks in so loud a voice that he can be heard by the other governors: and, if in the course of the discussion the king hears some argument which pleases him, he has it noted down by the ‘grand chancellors’, and often takes a note of it in his own hand: and so, one after the other, according as the king calls on the governors, they come and give him their opinions. The king sometimes settles the business in the council itself, when there are no questions to discuss: at others he has the opinions of the council brought to him and considers them by himself, and then makes a decision. In the number of these governors belonging to the council there is also included the chief Qurchi, captain of the king’s guard, who although not a ‘governor’ is, however, a noble, and when he leaves that rank enters that of the ‘governors’. The ‘grand chancellors’² have no vote, and record nothing except they be questioned by the king: although they are highly honoured and much esteemed, they cannot, however, rise to the rank of ‘sultan’ nor to other military positions, even though they be of noble birth.

“The chancery consists rather of worthy, than of noble men: whilst the council is assembled they do not go away, but sleep there, guarding the king.

“Now, as it appears to me that I have so far said enough about the Court of this king, I shall at present speak of the extent of his dominions, and what is the method of governing the provinces and districts found in them, mention the chief towns, and how the king is loved. The country at present possessed by the king of Persia is bordered on the east by India, which lies between the Ganges and the Indus; on the west by the river Tigris, which divides Persia from Mesopotamia, now called Diarbakr, and this river flowing to the boundary of the region of Baghdad falls into the Euphrates, and in one and the same bed they both flow out beyond Basra and discharge their waters into the Persian Gulf to the south: and to the north, at the source of the river Tigris there is Lesser Armenia . . . all regions possessed by the Turks: on the south the boundary is Hurmuz and the coast of the Persian Gulf, on the north it is the Caspian Sea, which is called” (i.e. by the Persians) “the *Bahr*,³ and Tatory belonging to the great Khan of Cathay.

¹ Perhaps this is the computation, known in Persia as *dasteh* which begins with sunset the previous day, so that “22 o’clock” might be 3 or 4 p.m. according to the season.

² Compare narrative B: “He has two ‘grand chancellors’ who are called by these people *muhr-dar*” (i.e. “keepers of the seal”) “one of whom always carried the royal seal attached to his neck. . . .” This is *chancelier* and *cancelliere* in the French-Italian meaning of the word, as in their modern consulates, and equals a secretary with special authority to use and apply the seal, and functions.

³ In full in Persian *Bahr-i-Hazar*, *bahr* being Arabic for “sea”.