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**ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION, MINISTRY DEPARTMENT AND THEIR  
INEFFICIENCIES IN KHWARAZMSHAHIYAN DYNASTY**

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**ABSTRACT**

In ancient Iran, ministry (now known as an institution) was considered as an important component of the bureaucracy system. The minister was considered as the government's wisdom and was in the center of the government. In Khwarazmin dynasty, after the king, ministers were the most important figures in the bureaucracy system. After them, directors of other bureaucracies were considered as the most important, each being responsible for a specific duty. Since historical researches did not pay sufficient attention to ministry department, the present paper aims at studying the administrative system and the place of ministry department in Khwarazmian dynasty.

**Keywords: Administrations, Khwarazmian, Minister, Ministry, Bureau, Officials**

**INTRODUCTION**

It not clearly stated in the sources that how and when ministry department and bureaucracy system were formed. However, it is certain that there has always been a minister beside the king or the caliph who played the role of a consultant. Islamic sources reveal that Iranians had bureaucracy systems in Khwarazmian and Sasanian

dynasties in which ministers were the directors (Yaqubi, 2003, vol 1, p. 154). Christensen believed that the post of Grand Vizier which was popular at the time of Abbasid dynasty was imitated from the post of Wuzurgframadar in Sasanian dynasty (Christensen, 1993, pp. 6-135).

As Islam entered Iran and the number of Islamic lands increased, Umar established a bureaucracy like Iranian's (Jaheshyari, 1969, p. 16). In Abbasid dynasty administrations and bureaucracy system had an integrated form. In this era, the minister had the highest post in the bureaucracy system which was the Supreme Court. Various families like Sahls and Barmakswere given governmental posts in Abbasid dynasty and were supported by the caliphs (IbnTabataba, 1993, p. 20).

As semi-independent governments were established in east of Iran, including Tahirid dynasty and Saffarid dynasty, ministry department was seen in these governments as well. Ministry department has its golden age at the time of Seljuq Empire. Nizam al-mulk, the minister of Malik-Shah, was one of the most famous and well-known ministers of this era. He helped the king in invasions. The ministry on Nizam al-mulk was the supreme age of ministry in terms of theoretical and practical aspects. In terms of practical aspects, he gained special authorities and made ministry department the highest place in the bureaucracy system (Tonekaboni, 2004, p. 66).

### **Duties of a minister**

Literally "Vizier" means assistant, supporter and counselor. In broader sense, it means special companion of king who is in charge

for offering advices regarding carrying governmental burdens. Since the vizier agreed to help the king in shouldering this burden, he is called "vizier".

Vizier was highly important in the empire. A vizier had to be fair, wise, intelligent, old, trustworthy, honest and brave (Qazali, 1984, pp. 175-185). A vizier had to control the reign, be the king's friend, guide the king to morality as well as good deeds, and offer advices to the king (Ravandi, 1984, p. 110). The vizier was in charge of the reign under supervision of the king and was allowed to meet the king whenever he wanted. It was expected that the king let him know all the secrets and do not accept bad things others may say about him. He was expected to be decent and master office techniques, court corresponding and art of writing. Calligraphy was required as well (Qazali, 1984, p. 176). In texts that were written in seventh and eighth centuries, the duty of viziers were managing the reign, offering advices to the king and propagating religion and justice (Razi, 1973; Isfahani, 1985).

Najm al-Din Razisaid ministry is an important component of the reign. According to him, each king needs a righteous, wise, sympathetic and knowledgeable vizier. He said the reign is like a tent in which the wise

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vizier is the pillar and the ropes are other officials (Mirsad Al-Ibad, 1973, pp. 465-466).

**The post of the vizier in Khwarazmian era:**

In this era, the viziers had specific titles.

Viziers were called “khwaja” or “khwajajahan”. Afterwards, these titles were regarded as inferior (Nasavi, 1986, p. 321).

The other titles of viziers included Nizam al-Mulk and Sharaf al-Mulk. Like the previous eras, the vizier had specific duties. The most important duty of a vizier was being in charge of issue related to empire and courts. The exact difference between the duties of viziers in Khwarazmian and Seljuq eras is not clear.

It seems that as the post was regarded less important, the duties were more limited.

Many authorities of the vizier were given to the king. Baha al-Din Baqdadi who was the director of Rasa'il court for many years, named some duties for the vizier including taking care of profits of the realm and people, avoiding corruption in the society which leads to people's welfare and God's satisfaction, fulfilling people's needs, being responsible for religious and governmental issues, spreading kindness in the society and being responsible for the issues regarding poor and weak people (Baha al-Din Baqdadi, 1936, p. 75). It is not clear whether all these duties were done by viziers in Achaemenid Empire or not. As no military authority is mentioned,

it seems that the vizier was not responsible for military issues. Since in this era the post was regarded as less crucial, it is plausible that the vizier was not in charge of military issues.

In Khwarazmian era, the king was the commander and the director of military forces. Army commander and army secretary were the viziers of the government. In terms of religious issues, the duty of the vizier was being the assistant of the king. Just like the previous eras, he was responsible for choosing judges, trusteeship and endowment in each era (Baqdadi, 1936, p. 52). The vizier, as the head of the bureaucracy, could supervise the endowment court. This did not happen in Seljuq Empire. To what extent the vizier was allowed to supervise is not clear. All the agents of court obeyed the vizier. In this era, the vizier was considered as a regent. Najm al-Din Razi highlighted that if the vizier is competent, the king should respect him because the power and glory of ministry department is effective in the empire. Still he found it necessary for the king to supervise what the vizier does (Razi, 1973, p. 219).

The relationship between the king and the vizier is not clear. It seems that some people were the middlemen between the king and the vizier. They told the king what the clients wanted. The king told the middlemen the oral command. The middlemen told the command

to the vizier. The vizier issued the written command (Nasavi, 1986, p. 323). A text written in this era displayed the ideal relationship between the vizier and the king. He wrote the vizier should have four characteristics: do not betray the king and do not be a hypocrite, be content with what he has, be loyal to the king and be patient (Razi, 1973, p. 471). This ideal relationship never happened. Viziers always encountered the risk of being punished or dismissed. The relationship between Muhammad II of Khwarezm and his vizier Nizam al-Mulk was not good. The king made him the vizier because the king's mother wanted so. So, after a while the vizier was dismissed. Since Nizam al-Mulk was intimate with the king's mother, he was not punished. However, Sharaf al-Mulk the vizier of Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu was killed by the king (Nasavi, 1986, p. 260).

In this era the vizier did not have a great authority in relation to the king, but in relation to people he had too many authorities. Though the vizier's duties were limited, he could gather money and oppress people. For example, as Nizam al-Mulk was supported by Torkan Khatun; he dared to oppress people. According to Nasavi, he accepted bribes. The next six viziers continued his way (Nasavi, 1986, p. 48).

### **Viziers of Khwarazmian**

According to the existing resources, the first kings of AnushTigin family did not have a specific post for a vizier in their administrations. So, it does not seem that AnushTigin or his son Qutb al-Din had viziers. Atsiz wanted to gain political independence; therefore, he developed an administration which was similar to the administration of Seljuq Empire. The most famous vizier of Atsiz was Mujeddin Abu Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari. The reason of his fame and reputation is that he asked Zayn al-Din Gorgani to write *Al-Iqraz al-Tebbieh* and *Al-Mabahis al-Alaieh*. Gorgani was a famous physician in Khawrazmian era who wrote this work (Gorgani, 1966, p. 3). Shams al-Din abual-Fath Muhammad ibn Ali al-Hojji was another vizier of Atsiz who was praised by Rashid al-Din Vatvat (Vatvat, 1960, p. 576-577).

Since the era in which Il-Arslan was reigning was very short, we do not have any information about the viziers of this era. It seems that the most official viziers of Khawrazmian were the viziers of Ala al-Din Tekish and the kings who reigned after him. Death of Sultan Sanjar and the fall of the Seljuks made the historians regard the viziers of Tekish as important as the viziers of other empires (Aqili, 1985, p. 267).

The first vizier of sultan Tekish was Sadr al-Din Masud ibn Ali al-Heravi. As with other Khawrazmid viziers, he was titled as Nizam al-Mulk. He followed Shafi'i religion. It seems that he was a formidable enemy of Nizari Ismaili state. Sultan's military attack resulted into fall of Nizari Ismaili state. Fans of Nizari Ismaili state strongly believed that the vizier was the reason why the sultan attacked them; therefore, he killed the vizier (Maneshi Kermani, 1985 p. 95). Because of the murder of the vizier, Tekish send his son and an army to the palace of Quhistan. The palace was surrounded; then, Qutb al-Din heard the news about Tekish's death and stopped surrounding the palace (Joveyni, 1988, p. 267).

Nizam al-Mulk Mohammad ibn Saleh was supported by Torkan Khatun. He was the vizier for seven years starting from 606 AH (the year in which Sadr al-Din was dismissed). Because his mother supported the vizier, each time the king became aware of the vizier's mistakes and abuses, the only reaction was reprimanding the vizier. Around 614 AH, while the king was returning from Iraq, he stayed in Nishapur for a while. The sultan chose Sadr al-Din Joneydi -who was an experienced army secretary and was famous as the army secretary of Nishapur and its environs. The sultan knew that the vizier

accepted bribes from officials; therefore, he asked the judge not to force Nizam al-Mulk to do anything. Nizam al-Mulk reminded the judge that he has not paid bribe. The judge collected four thousand dinars and sent it to the vizier. Things happened so that Nizam al-Mulk had to send the money to the sultan. The sultan summoned the judge. Though at first the judge denied, it was proved that the money was sent to the vizier. The judge was dismissed. Nizam al-Mulk fled and went to sultan's mother (Nasavi, 1986, p. 42-44). It seems that it was a plot so that the sultan dismisses the vizier whom he disgust. Even after being dismissed, this vizier remained effective in the government due to his influences on the sultan's mother (ibid, p. 45). Muhammad II of Khwarezm was very angry at Nizam al-Mulk and did not choose a vizier to be his successor. The sultan had six middlemen do the affairs of the ministry department and asked them not to do a single thing without all of them being agreed. These six people included Nizam al-Din Kateb Ensha', Mojir al-Mulk Taj al-Din abu al-Qasem, Amir Zia al-Din Biabanak, Shams al-Din Kalabadi, Taj al-Din son of Karim al-Sharq Nishapuri and Sharif Majd al-Din Mohammad Mesva (Nasavi, 1986, p. 8). However, the state of the government was not improved. It was hard for these six people to

agree on issues regarding government's administrations. People encounter difficulties. According to Nasavi, people regret the time of Naser al-Din Nizam al-Mulk because it was easier to get along with one person and not six people (Nasavi, 1986, p. 48). Till the end of the reign of Muhammad II of Khwarezm, these six people were responsible for the ministry department (ManeshiKermani, 1985 p. 97).

The first vizier of Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu was Shams al-Mulk Shahabal-Din Heravi. Nasavi said he knew all the mores of leadership. At the time of Muhammad II of Khwarezm, Shams al-Mulk was the vizier of the princess Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu. The sultan assigned areas near India to his son Jalal ad-Din and sent Shams al-Mulk to Ghazni instead of his son. Jalal ad-Din was defeated by Mongols and crossed Indus River. Shams al-Mulk was separated from the sultan, went to Nasir-ud-Din Qabacha and was respected by him. According to Nasavi, when it was figured out that Jalal ad-Din was alive and he asked his vizier to go to him. Qabacha was worried that Shams al-Mulk may reveal Qabacha's secrets; therefore, he killed Shams al-Mulk (Nasavi, 1986, p. 117).

Another vizier of Khawrazmian was Ali ibn Qasem Jandi who was famous as Shams ad-

Din or Fakhr ad-Din and titled as Belderchin Vizier of Jalal ad-Din Khwarezm.

### **The reason of inefficiency of viziers of Khawrazmian era**

In Khwrazmian era, the post of a vizier has undergone changes due to political and social issues. When the vizier was offered authorities and credit, he was threatened by the opponents. Sometimes too many authorities offered to the vizier reduced the power of the king. In these cases, people close to the king –particularly Emirs- made the king dismiss the vizier. Sometimes the vizier was accused of embezzlement and was finally killed. Anyways, the ministry department was an inseparable part of the bureaucracy system. In Khwrazmian era, administrations were done as in the Seljuq Empire. In this system, after the king, the vizier was of the highest rank. The next rank belonged to the directors of other courts. Each of them has a specific set of duties. As with Seljuq Empire, a vizier supervised administrations. Sometimes, viziers were incompetent and treacherous people and came up with plots against the king and oppressed people. These behaviors made the king dismiss and punish them. Some of them survived because of being supported by some important figures in the courts of Khwrazmian.

At the time of Muhammad II of Khwarezm, Nizam al-Mulk Mohammad ibnSaleh became the vizier because of being supported by TorkanKhatun, the king's mother. Though the king knew he accepted bribes, he was not punished because of being supported by the king's mother. Finally he was dismissed. The king did not choose someone to replace him. Instead he had six middlemen who were responsible for administrations. He asked them to do things which they all agree upon. This did not improve the conditions of the country and led to serious problems in governmental affairs, because very hard for the six of them to agree on issues. Anyways, these six people remained in the post till the end of Muhammad II of Khwarezm's reign (Nasavi, 1986, pp. 115-119; Joveyni, 1988, pp. 193-197). When Jalal ad-Din started his reign, he chose a vizier for managing the affairs of the country. Jalal ad-Din chose Sharaf al-MulkFakhr ad-Din Ali as the minister. He was not competent and did not have the abilities a vizier should have. The sultan figured out about his incompetence and his unfaithfulness and dismissed him. In order to hinder rebellion, he was prisoned as commanded by the sultan. The fans of the former vizier came up with some plots against the king; therefore, the king ordered to kill him. It seems that after him the sultan did not

choose someone as the vizier. The reason may be the early death of Jalal ad-Din (ManeshiKermani, 1985, pp. 99-110).

## **CONCLUSION**

In Iran's history, the one responsible for the ministry department was very close to the king or the caliph. This department has undergone many ups and downs. Ministry department was different in various historic eras, based on political, social and cultural issues. Vizier post was inevitable in bureaucracy system. Khwarazmian continued the previous organizational traditions, particularly the organizational system of Seljuq Empire. However, their court structure was in accordance with the features of Khwarazmian government. They tried to improve the court structure and the ministry department. In the short era of Khwarazmian, even in its climax, because of foreign challenges, there were not many changes in the court system. Even changes that took place including allocation of vizier post to six people or improvement of the position of the court were not profound.

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