

From Hilal al-Sabi's
The Rules and Regulations of the 'Abbasid Court'

'Ali b. 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Hajib al-Nu'man told me, "In the year 977 when 'Adud al-Dawla¹ was invested with the insignia of power and granted the title 'Crown of the Community' he wrote to the caliph al-Ta'i li-Allah² and said, 'In order that I may be seen enjoying more favor with the caliph, I request to be permitted to enter the Ceremonial Courtyard riding, and ask that a curtain be placed in front of the caliph so that no one will see him before I appear in his presence.' By this he meant to prevent the people from seeing him while kissing the ground. The caliph complied with his request. However, a barrier of hard clay was built against the door from which he was to enter. Consequently, when he arrived riding he could not go all the way. The arrangement was as follows:

Al-Ta'i (*may the mercy of God be upon him!*) sat on a throne in front of a curtain in the Ceremonial Courtyard. His seat was of black silk woven with gold threads. He was surrounded by a hundred of his private servants in good attire, with colored garments, belts, and swords with trappings studded with jewelry. In their hands they carried clubs and battle-axes. The old Mut'i Slavic servants, including Khalis, Tarif, Badr, Ahyaf, Sabur, Riyad, Mawahib, Salaf and others below them in rank, stood on both sides of the throne carrying fly-wisks. The caliph, (*may the mercy of God be upon him!*) had 'Uthman's copy of the Qur'an in front of him. On his shoulder he had the Mantle of the Prophet; and in his hand, the Staff of the Prophet. He was girded with the sword of the Apostle of God (*may God bless him!*). He was dressed in black, and on his head he wore a high tiara. A brocade curtain, sent by 'Adud al-Dawla to screen al-Ta'i so that none of the soldiers could see the caliph, was hung on the middle columns. Ropes were connected to all the columns in the courtyard. The Daylamites and the Turks entered without any weapons whatsoever. The Daylamites stood on the left and the Turks on the right. The nobles, judges and others of high rank stood in accordance with their respective ranks, on both sides and below the columns. The three chamberlains of the caliph, Mu'nis al-Fadli, Wasif, and Ahmad b. Nasr al-'Abbasi, and their twenty-eight lieutenants, all of them in black popular garments and with swords and raised belts, together with the chamberlains of 'Adud al-Dawla, stood in front of the

^{*}Abu al-Hasan Hilal b. al-Muhassin al-Sabi (d. 1055). *Rusum Dar al-Khilafa. The Rules and Regulations of the 'Abbasid Court*. Translated by Elie A. Salem (Beirut, 1977), pp. 18-22, 64-68, 98, 102, 112-113. Selected, edited and annotated by John E. Woods.

¹Adud al-Dawla Fana-Khusru, Buyid *amir al-umara* (generalissimo), 949-983.

²Abbasid caliph, 974-991.

ropes on both sides. Then, al-Ta'i' was asked for permission to admit 'Adud al-Dawla, and he granted it. When the caliph knew of his entry into the courtyard, he ordered the curtain lifted: as it was lifted he saw 'Adud al-Dawla. Mu'nis and Wasif, who met him and walked in front of him, said, 'The Commander of the Faithful has seen you, now kiss the ground.' He did. They held him by his upper arms, and he continued to kiss the ground until he approached the caliph. 'Adud al-Dawla was flanked by his minister al-Mutahhar b. 'Abd Allah and his secretary 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Yusuf. He was followed by Jibril b. Muhammad, Musa, Daranta Shiri, al-Hasan b. Ibrahim, Asfar b. Kurdawayh, Ziyar b. Shahrakawayh, Muhammad b. al-'Abbas and Wakid b. Sulayman. It is believed that Ziyar b. Shahrakawayh disapproved of 'Adud's kissing the ground, and said, 'This is done only for God.' 'Adud al-Dawla heard him and said to 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Yusuf, 'Let him know that the caliph is God's vicegerent on earth.' 'Adud al-Dawla arrived at the entrance of the three-domed dais between the two rows, and no one behind the ropes stirred. Murjan, the servant, stood with a bow in the courtyard ready to prevent and shoot down any crow that flew or croaked. When 'Adud al-Dawla reached the entrance, al-Ta'i' turned to Khalis and said, 'Let him come closer'. Thereupon, 'Adud al-Dawla climbed the threshold and kissed the ground twice in the middle of the dais. Al-Ta'i' said to him, 'Come closer to me.' He approached, knelt, and kissed his hand and leg; and then al-Ta'i' gently touched him with his right hand and asked him to sit in the square chair on the right side of the throne which was covered with Armenian cloth and usually reserved for princes. He acknowledged the invitation but did not sit. The caliph said, 'I have sworn that you should sit there.' 'Adud al-Dawla then kissed the chair and sat. Al-Ta'i' said, 'We have been very anxious to see you and to negotiate with you.' He answered, 'My excuse is quite evident to our master.' Al-Ta'i' said, 'Your intention is reliable and your doctrine is agreeable.' 'Adud nodded his head. Then al-Ta'i' said, 'I have decided to invest you with all that God (*may He be blessed and exalted!*) has entrusted to me in the government of my subjects in the East and in the West and in the management of all their affairs, except my private affairs, my means of subsistence, and the internal conduct of my Residence. Manage this under God's supervision.' 'Adud al-Dawla answered, 'May God grant me His support in rendering obedience and service to the Commander of the Faithful,' and added, 'I would like al-Mutahhar and 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Yusuf, and the eminent leaders who accompanied me, to hear the speech with which the Commander of the Faithful has honored me.' They were standing in one line below the threshold between the two lines of ranking officials. Accordingly, they were asked to draw near. Al-Ta'i' said, 'Bring al-Husayn b. Musa, Muhammad b. 'Umar, Ibn Ma'ruf, the chief judge; Ibn Umm Shayban, a judge of Baghdad; and al-Zaynabi, chief judge of Baghdad.' They approached and stood behind

'Adud al-Dawla. Al-Ta'i' repeated his investiture. Then he turned to the servant, Tarif, and said, 'O Tarif, let him be invested with the robe of honor and let him be crowned.' 'Adud al-Dawla rose and was led to the hall which lies beyond the dais. He was followed by 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Yusuf, Khurrashid b. Ziyar b. Mafinnah al-Khazin and four clothiers. There he was dressed with robes of honor and a crown was put on his head; one of its two loops was allowed to hang and was studded with precious jewels. 'Adud al-Dawla returned with slow, heavy steps because of the burden of his robes and jewels. He tried to kiss the ground but could not. Al-Ta'i' said to him, 'Enough, enough,' and ordered him to sit on the chair. He did; and then al-Ta'i' ordered Mu'nis al-Fadli to present him with the banners. He gave al-Ta'i' two banners—one for the East, the other for the West. al-Ta'i' invoked God (*may He be blessed and exalted!*) and invoked His Apostle in prayer. Then al-Ta'i' said to him, 'This is what God has chosen for us, you, and all the Muslims. I command you to do what God commands you, and I forbid you to do what He forbids you. I exonerate myself before God for all other things. In the name of God, rise and come close to me.' As 'Adud al-Dawla approached, the caliph took up the hanging loop and tied it in its proper place in the crown. This was done in accordance with the previous agreement of 'Adud al-Dawla. Al-Ta'i' took a black-sheathed sword with silver ornaments from between two cushions by his side and adorned him with it. This was in addition to the sword that al-Ta'i' had presented to 'Adud al-Dawla with the robe of honor. When 'Adud al-Dawla wanted to leave he said to al-Ta'i', "It is a bad omen for me if I return the same way I entered. I therefore request that this door be opened—referring to the revolving door which opened from the dais to the gardens. The gardens had a door that opened on the Tigris and it was ordered open." Ibn Hajib al-Nu'man said, "Immediately three hundred workers were put to the task of building a bridge for 'Adud al-Dawla's horse to pass over. As al-Ta'i' watched, 'Adud mounted his horse and rode alone, while the army marched in the dry river bed betwixt thorns and bushes until 'Adud al-Dawla departed through the private gate. The leaders and the soldiers then mounted and followed him as he rode through the city.

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When 'Adud al-Dawla took control of Iraq he asked al-Ta'i' for greater titles, and he bequeathed them, adding: "your felicity," "your grace," and "may the Commander of the Faithful delight in thee and in the blessing of having you in service and in your fortune." The invocation in the text, upon the mention of his name, was: "May God sustain his glory." This usage was established in the letter addressed to him giving him the title of 'Crown of the Community' as well as 'Adud

al-Dawla ('Arm of the State'). The letter also state: "The Commander of the Faithful wanted to reward you above all equals and has entrusted you with the position of generalissimo." This rank was greater than all the preceding ranks, and it became the official title of his successors from among his brothers and sons. When the caliphate devolved upon the Commander of the Faithful, al-Qadir bi-Allah³ (*may the blessings of God be upon him!*), he made the invocation to Baha' al-Dawla⁴ in the text when his name was mentioned as: "May God continue to support him." This usage was applied to his son after him. The invocation did not go beyond this.

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As for letters issuing from the princes, I do not know of anyone except 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Yusuf who has followed this form. He used it in writing, on behalf of 'Adud al-Dawla, the investitures of governorships and judgeships. He wrote, "This is what 'Adud al-Dawla and Taj al-Milla Abu Shuja' b. Rukn al-Dawla Abu 'Ali, the client of the Commander of the Faithful, has entrusted to so-and-so." In so writing he claimed that all matters of state were under 'Adud's administration, and that appointments were made by him. When my grandfather, Ibrahim b. Hilal, took charge of the Bureau of Correspondence in the days of Samsam al-Dawla, he said, "Only the caliph has the legal right to appoint judges." But he did not like to change the tradition of 'Adud al-Dawla. Instead he wrote as follows, "This is what Samsam al-Dawla⁵ and Shams al-Milla Abu Kalijar b. 'Adud al-Dawla and Taj al-Milla Abu Shuja' b. Rukn al-Dawla Abu 'Ali, the client of the Commander of the Faithful, have entrusted to so-and-so, at the command of the Commander of the Faithful, al-Ta'i, may God prolong his life." Soon, however, the affairs of the judges and of the leading officers of the provinces were restored and were written on behalf of the Commander of the Faithful, al-Qadir bi-Allah (*may the blessings of God be upon him!*).

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When 'Adud al-Dawla came to power and was approached by the high and the low, Harun b. 'Abd al-Muttalib, the orator in the Rusafa Mosque, invoked his name as follows, "Praise be to God for his favors. Who is worshipped in His land and sky, Who has favored us with the caliphate of the imam al-Ta'i li-Allah, and by the latter's excellent opinion in the 'Arm' of his state, and the 'Crown' of his community and the refuge of his caliphate, the master of his princes. At his hand, God

³Abbasid caliph, 991-1031.

⁴Baha' al-Dawla Firuz, Buyid *amir al-umara*, 989-1012.

⁵Buyid *amir al-umara*, 983-998.

allowed the conquest of enemy lands difficult to conquer, and the destruction of the caliph's enemies. He follows the wise policy of obeying his superiors. God has praised him and his progeny, for He says in His Book: *Your Patron is God Alone, as well as His messenger and those who believe—who are steadfast in prayer, pay the welfare tax, and bow down their heads in worship. Anyone who enlists God as a patron, and His messenger, and those who believe, will find God's troop will be victorious.*⁶ He has built mosques, dug rivers and sought the welfare of all the provinces. He abided by God's orders night and day, saying, *'Only someone who believes in God and the Last Day, is steadfast in prayer, pays the welfare tax, and fears God Alone, shall frequent God's mosques. Perhaps those will be the ones who submit to guidance.'*⁷ Pray to God and thank Him, and offer your prayers to the Commander of the Faithful and to the 'Arm' of his state, and the 'Crown' of his religion, the faithful master, the defender of the domain, the one who is afraid of being asked about pleasures on Judgment Day. Not so! Did ye but know with certain knowledge! Ye shall surely see hell! and again ye shall surely see it with an eye of certainty. Then Ye shall be asked about pleasure! God hath truly said, *'O You who believe! obey God, and obey the Prophet and those in authority among you.'* By obeying the Commander of the Faithful, al-Ta'i li-Allah, you will please your God and enrich your fortunes and increase your children. Obey the 'Arm' of his state and you will be well instructed, and follow the 'Crown' of your religion and you will be guided. I testify, there is no God but God alone, and none shares power with Him." And thus he ended his speech. This statement by Harun b. 'Abd al-Muttalib was not based on a rule. When 'Adud al-Dawla heard of his statement he wrote to al-Ta'i asking that he should be mentioned in the speech. From then on this practice was followed.

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In the days of Samsam al-Dawla, the son of 'Adud al-Dawla, in the year 986, I witnessed the arrival of Bardas Sclerus,⁸ the great Byzantine dignitary, to the Buyid Royal Residence. He had been defeated by Basil⁹ and had sought refuge with 'Adud al-Dawla. 'Adud al-Dawla seized him in Mayyafariqin¹⁰ and brought him to Baghdad where he was detained until the death of 'Adud al-Dawla and until the end of Samsam al-Dawla's reign. But the commander of the army at that time, Ziyar b.

⁶Qur'an 5: 56-57.

⁷Qur'an 9: 18.

⁸He was a Byzantine nobleman and general, brother-in-law of John Tzimiscas, who rebelled and declared himself emperor. He was defeated by forces loyal to Basil II in 979 and finally submitted in 989.

⁹Basil II, Byzantine emperor, 976-1025.

¹⁰Martyropolis, modern Silvan, in southeast Turkey.

63

Shahrakawayh, interceded for his release and return to his country. Thereupon he was set free after agreement had been reached on certain conditions. Bardas was accorded a ceremonial welcome. For his arrival the Royal Residence was decorated with large 'Adudiyya drapes usually used in the royal councils. The elegant brocade drapes were hung at the doors of all its rooms, courtyards, passageways and corridors. The Daylamites were lined up in two rows, according to their rank, from the Tigris to the seat of Samsam al-Dawla. They were attired in the best dress and had the most magnificent equipment and weapons. They and their pages carried short spears and shields in their hands. The royal pages and the servants, in beautiful attire, stood on the balcony attending them.

Samsam al-Dawla sat in a golden three-domed dais, and under his great elevated seat ran a stream of water in a lead-plated bed. Golden fire burners with lighted aromatic sticks were placed before him. Bardas with his brother and his son, approached between the two rows of soldiers. Bardas was in a loose, long-sleeved garment with a gilded girdle. Attending him were chamberlains carrying swords in pearl-studded girdles. His greeting to Samsam al-Dawla did not involve more than a slight bow and the kissing of his hand. Bardas was offered a chair with a cushion. They conversed through an interpreter. Bardas departed from a door different from the one through which he had entered. This door led to another palace in which there were as many soldiers as in the first.

The number of Daylamite soldiers was at that time 10,000. Although this was then a great number, it was still much less than it had been in the days of al-Muqtadir bi-Allah¹¹ (*may the blessings of God be upon him!*). Similarly, the number of these soldiers in the days of the earlier caliphs (*may God be pleased with them all!*) was greater than in the days of the later caliphs.

¹¹Abbasid caliph, 908-932.