



## ABŪ SAHL ḤAMDOWĪ

**ABŪ SAHL ḤAMDOWĪ** (or Ḥamdū'ī), AḤMAD B. ḤASAN, Ghaznavid official of the 4th-5th/11th century. His *laqab* is sometimes cited as Ḥamdūnī (e.g., Bayhaqī) but the more frequent form is established as correct by the rhyme words matched with it in Arabic and Persian poems; Ta'ālebī gives the full name, the *laqab* as al-Ḥamdū'ī (*Tatemmat al-yatīma*, ed. 'A. Eqbāl, Tehran, 1353/1934, II, pp. 60-62; see also pp. 73-74).

Abū Sahl, while still a youth, attracted Sultan Maḥmūd's attention and rose to become fiscal administrator (*ṣāḥeb-e dīvān*) of Ġazna and its dependent districts. He served under Aḥmad b. Ḥasan Maymandī, Maḥmūd's second to last vizier. Abū Sahl himself served as vizier for a few months, during the ephemeral reign of Sultan Maḥmūd (421/1030). That he was an able administrator may be inferred from the historian Bayhaqī's account. Moreover, when Sultan Mas'ūd (421-32/1030-40) reappointed Maymandī as vizier, the latter quickly appointed Abū Sahl as inspector-general for the entire fiscal administration (*ešrāf al-mamlaka*). Sultan Mas'ūd evidently appreciated Abū Sahl's talents in this capacity; he turned down Maymandī's recommendation in 423/1031-32 that Abū Sahl be appointed to head the *dīvān-e 'arż* (a post which, in effect, was that of the civilian commander of the army), citing the importance of the position of inspector-general. Early in 424/1033, however, Abū Sahl was assigned the governorship (*kadkodā'ī*) of Ray and Jebāl, the westernmost Ghaznavid territories. (Maymandī died during this period.) In this role Abū Sahl led a force against Isfahan in 425/1033-34, where he seized the treasure of the Kakuyid dynast, Moḥammad b. Kākūya. The



booty is said to have included a part of Ebn Sīnā's library, which was sent to Ġazna, eventually to suffer destruction when the city was taken by the Ghurid 'Alā'-al-dīn Ḥosayn in 544/1149 (Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, pp. 234, 301). Abū Sahl held Isfahan for two years; but Ebn Kākūya then retook his capital and went on to reoccupy Ray in 428/1036-37. Abū Sahl retreated to Nīšāpūr, seat of the Ghaznavid governor, Abu'l-Faẓl Sūrī. Contributing to this brief resurgence of Kakuyid power was the growing threat to Ghaznavid Khorasan posed by the Oġuz Turkmen, led by the Saljuqs. As the tribes frustrated the Ghaznavid army under Sobāšī and took Nīšāpūr in 429/1038, Sūrī and Abū Sahl took refuge in Gorgān. Abū Sahl returned to Ghaznavid territory when Sultan Mas'ūd's forces advanced in 431/late 1039. Mas'ūd was dissatisfied with the former governor but accepted the suggestion of Mas'ūd b. Layṭ that Abū Sahl pay a mulct of 50,000 dinars. The sultan became reconciled, bestowed a robe of honor on Abū Sahl, and admitted him to his circle of intimates. He was then sent to Ġazna to recover revenue receipts he had deposited in the fortress of Mikālī at the time of his flight from Nīšāpūr. The following year Mas'ūd made him his chief advisor, when vizier 'Abd-al-Şamad was away with Prince Mawdūd. Although not on good terms with the vizier, Abū Sahl tried not to offend him. Information about Abū Sahl ceases with the year 432/1040-41 (the end of the extant portion of Bayhaqī's history).

Abū Sahl was a man of letters and patron of poets. Ṭa'ālebī quotes Arabic poems by him and Arabic verses in his honor by Abū Bakr 'Alī b. Ḥasan Qohestānī. Farroḳī wrote three panegyric *qaşīdas* attributing to Abū Sahl an ancient, noble lineage (*Dīvān*, ed. M. Dabīrsīāqī, Tehran, 1335 Š./1956, pp. 340-42, 398-401; Ġ. Ḥ. Yūsofi, *Farroḳī-e Sīstānī*, Maşhad, 1341 Š./1962, pp. 110-13, 642).

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Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, pp. 71, 85-86, 105, 234-35.

Idem, "Dailamīs in Central Iran: the Kākūyids of Jibāl and Yazd," *Iran* 8, 1970, pp. 81-83.