



ABU'L-ṬAYYEB ṬĀHER

ABU'L-ṬAYYEB ṬĀHER B. ḤOSAYN B. MOṢ'AB B. ROZAYQ, founder of the Taherid dynasty of Khorasan; born 139/775-76 in Pūšang (Būšang), died 207/822 in Marv. Ṭāher's great-grandfather Rozayq was *mawlā* of the governor of Sejestān, Abū Moḥammad Ṭalḥa b. 'Abdallāh Kozā'ī (62-64/681-82 to 683-84), and the Taherid family came then as *mawālī* of the Arab tribe of Kozā'a to Khorasan (cf. Kaabi, "Origines," pp. 147, 150). The grandfather Moṣ'ab, who took part in the 'Abbasid *da'wa* in Khorasan, became 'āmel of Pūšang near Herat, as did his son Ḥosayn after him. Hārūn al-Rašīd's governor 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān (180-91/796-806) caused trouble in the province when he attacked the Khorasanian nobles, among whom were the Taherids. While Ḥosayn withdrew from these persecutions by making the pilgrimage to Mecca in 190/806, Ṭāher was taken and ill treated (Šaboštī, *Ketāb al-dīārāt*, Baghdad, 1951, p. 92). It seems that afterwards he sided with Rāfe' b. Layṭ, who had been in revolt for some years near Samarqand (according to Ebn Ḥazm, *Naqṭ al-arūs*, Cairo, 1951, p. 76); he changed fronts after the caliph deposed 'Alī and sent general Hartama b. A'yan against the rebellious Kharijites (cf. Kaabi, "Origines," pp. 160-64 with sources).

During the civil war, Ṭāher was in command of Ma'mūn's forces and achieved an important victory near Ray in Ša'bān, 195/May, 811 over Amīn's army, which was led by his personal enemy, 'Alī b. 'Īsā. Ṭāher, because of his habit of wielding his sword with two hands, was called *Du'l-yamīnayn*, "ambidextrous" (later his honorary title; cf. Ebn Ṭayfūr, *Ketāb Baḡdād*, Cairo, 1949, p. 20; Ṭabarī, III, pp. 802, 829f.). He conquered in rapid succession Qazvīn, Ḥolwān,



Ḳāneqīn, and Ahvāz and besieged Baghdad with Hartama b. A'yan in 197-98/812-13. At last Amīn was promised safe conduct by Hartama if he voluntarily abdicated, but Ṭāher disregarded this promise and had him murdered. Accompanied by a letter of apology, Amīn's head was sent to Ma'mūn in Khorasan. (Cf. Ṭabarī, III, pp. 796-832, 840-51, 855-57, 867-932; Ya'qūbī, II, pp. 530-32, 535f; Ebn al-Aṭīr, VI, pp. 165-71, 174-78, 181f., 186f., 194-208; *al-'Oyūn wa'l-ḥadā'eq fi'l-aḳbār wa'l-ḥaqā'eq* I, Leiden, 1869, pp. 323-44; Jahšīārī, *Ketāb al-wozarā'*, Cairo, 1938, p. 304; Ebn Ḳallekān [Beirut] II, pp. 517-20.) As a reward, Ṭāher received in 199/814-15 the provinces of Jazīra, Šām, and the Maḡreb, the city police (*šorṭa*) of Baghdad, and the police surveillance (*ma'āwen*) of the Sawād, and in 205/821, after Ma'mūn had passed over to Baghdad in 203/918, dominion over the countries east of 'Erāq. (Cf. Ebn Ṭayfūr, pp. 20, 24, 35; Ṭabarī, III, pp. 975, 1039; Ya'qūbī, II, pp. 542, 554; Ebn al-Aṭīr, VI, pp. 208f., 255f.; 'Oyūn I, pp. 344, 361, 362; Ebn Ḳallekān [Beirut] II, p. 520.) The governorship of Khorasan was the crowning of Taherid efforts, which had always been linked to 'Abbasid policy. This arrangement also suited the caliph, who had spent enough time in Khorasan to recognize that Iran could not be ruled directly from Baghdad. The settlement thus reached left the caliph his sovereignty and Ṭāher his longed-for freedom.

Ṭāher's attempt to obtain complete independence failed. In Jomādā I, 207/September-October, 822 he omitted the caliph's name in the Friday sermon (*koṭba*) at Marv—an act equivalent to open revolt. The event cannot be reconstructed exactly, since even the contemporary sources do not know the details. (Cf. Sourdel, "Circonstances," passim; Ebn Ṭayfūr, pp. 22-24, 67, 73-76; Ṭabarī, III, pp. 1063-66; Ya'qūbī, II, pp. 554-57; Ebn al-Aṭīr, VI, p. 270f; Gardīzī, ed. Nazim, p. 5; 'Oyūn I, pp. 364f.; Šaboštī, pp. 94f; *Aḡānī* XIV, p. 37; Ebn Ṭeqṭaqā, *Ketāb al-faḳrī*, Paris, 1895, pp. 309f.; Ḥamza, p. 276; Ebn Ḳallekān [Beirut], II, pp. 521f.) It has been assumed as certain that Ma'mūn's vizier, Aḡmad b. Abī Ḳāled (q.v.) (who supported Ṭāher's appointment some years previously), had him poisoned in Jomādā II, 207. But Kaabi (*Ṭāherides*, pp. 193-218, 246-48) has presented good reasons to prove that there was no revolt and that Ṭāher died a natural death. Indeed, his son Ṭalḡa was a short time later appointed by the caliph and began the rule of the Taherids over Khorasan (until 259/873).

Ṭāher's mother tongue was Persian (cf. Bosworth, "Tahirids," p. 48), but he was also versed in Arabic. In 206/821-22 he wrote a letter to his son 'Abdallāh, who had been appointed governor of Dīār Rabī'a. Even Ṭāher's contemporaries



appreciated this composition, both for its political contents and its classical Arabic style (see Bosworth, “Mirror for Princes”).

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