



## AFŠĪN

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**AFŠĪN**, princely title of the rulers of Ošrūsana at the time of the Muslim conquest, the most famous of whom was *Keydār* (arabicized *Ḥaydar*) b. *Kāvūs*, d. *Ša'bān*, 226/May-June, 841. The term is an arabicized form of middle Persian *Pišīn*, Avestan *Pisinah-*, a proper name of uncertain etymology (*AirWb.*, col. 907). In pre-Islamic Iranian tradition, it is the name of a grandson of Kayanid king *Kavād* (*Yt.* 13.132, 19.71). In the Islamic period, it is found as a proper name attested by Armenian historians in the form *Ōšin* (from *Awšin*; see *Justi*, *Namenbuch*, pp. 252-53).

Our early knowledge of the ruling family of Ošrūsana is derived from the accounts by the Arabic historians (*Ṭabarī*, *Balāḍorī*, *Ya'qūbī*) of the final subjugation of that region by the 'Abbasid caliphs and the submission of its rulers to Islam. Ošrūsana lay to the south of the great, southernmost bend of the Syr Darya and extended roughly from Samarqand to *Ḳoḷand*. During the reign of the caliph *Mahdī* (158-69/775-85) the Afšīn of Ošrūsana is mentioned among several Iranian and Turkish rulers of Transoxania and the Central Asian steppes who submitted nominally to him (*Ya'qūbī*, II, p. 479). But it was not until *Hārūn al-Rašīd*'s reign in 178/794-95 that *Faḏl b. Yaḥyā Barmakī* led an expedition into Transoxania and received the submission of the ruling Afšīn (whose name, by inference from *Ṭabarī*, III, p. 1066, was something like *Ḳarākana*); according to *Gardīzī* (ed. *Ḥabībī*, p. 130), this *Ḳarākana* had never previously humbled himself before any other potentate. Further expeditions were nevertheless sent to Ošrūsana by *Ma'mūn* when he was governor in *Marv* and after he had become caliph *Kāvūs*, son of the Afšīn *Ḳarākana* who



had submitted to Faʿzl b. Yaḥyā, withdrew his allegiance from the Arabs; but shortly after Maʿmūn arrived in Baghdad from the east (202/817-18 or 204/819-20), a power struggle and dissensions broke out among the reigning family of Ošrūsana.

After killing an opponent, Kāvūs's son Ḥaydar had to flee to Khorasan and then to the caliphal court in Baghdad, thus inaugurating the period of royal favor in which he was to bask for some two decades. In 207/822 an expedition under Aḥmad b. Abī Kāled was guided into Ošrūsana by Ḥaydar, using a shorter, lesser known route. Kāvūs himself now submitted, and the rival contender for the succession, Ḥaydar's brother Faʿzl, fled temporarily to the steppes. Kāvūs traveled to Baghdad and finally embraced Islam, being mentioned as tributary ruler of his province (Ṭabarī, III, pp. 1065-66). At some unknown date, Kāvūs died and was succeeded as Afšīn or prince of Ošrūsana by Ḥaydar. During the years in which he served the 'Abbasids, Ḥaydar or Afšīn was a top commander in the guard of Maʿmūn's brother Abū Eshāq Moḥammad, the future caliph Mo'taşem, governor of Egypt. After his arrival in Egypt in Du'l-qa'da, 215/December, 830-January, 831, Afšīn was first sent as governor of Barqa, then recalled to suppress rebellions of the Copts and of the unruly Beduins of the Banū Modleĵ in the regions of Alexandria and the Delta (216/831; see Ṭabarī, III, p. 1105, and Kendī, *Ketāb wolāt Meşr*, ed. R. Guest, Leiden and London, 1912, pp. 189-92). To him is also attributed the formation of Mo'taşem's guard of Maġāreba, Arabs of the Nile Delta and the adjacent deserts of Lower Egypt.

Afšīn's rise in caliphal favor culminated in his nomination as supreme commander in the struggle against Bābak, leader of the anti-Islamic and neo-Mazdakite movement of the Ḳorramīya (q.v.), which had set afire Arrān, Azarbaijan and northwestern Persia and whose epicenter was the fortress of Baḡd. This outbreak had apparently been going on since ca. 201/816-17. According to the detailed account in Ṭabarī (III, pp. 1170ff.), Mo'taşem appointed Afšīn governor of Jebāl and commander in the war against Bābak in Jomādā II, 220/June, 835. Afšīn arrived in Azarbaijan and rebuilt the fortresses between Barĵand and Ardabīl destroyed by Bābak. He then gave battle to Bābak at Aršaq, defeated him, and drove him into Mūġān and then back into his fortress of Baḡd, although one of Bābak's commanders, Ṭarkān or Āḍīn, managed to defeat at Haštādsar a force under the caliphal general Boġā al-Kabīr (221/836) which included Afšīn's brother Faʿzl b. Kāvūs (who had clearly also entered the caliphal service). In this same year Afšīn received



reinforcements from the caliph under Ja'far b. al-Ḳayyāṭ and a contingent of volunteers under the Arab magnate **Abū Dolaf 'Ejlī**. Afšīn now established a camp at Rūd-al-rūd over against and six miles away from Baḡd, and used this as a base for assaults by his mountain troops. After an abortive attack by Abū Dolaf's volunteers, Afšīn brought up siege machinery and naphtha-throwers (*naffātūn*), and finally stormed Baḡd in Ramaẓān, 222/August, 837.

This was the peak of Afšīn's career, and the caliph rewarded him richly, adding the governorship of Sind to his existing ones of Armenia and Azarbaijan. He fought alongside Mo'taṣem during his Anatolia campaign of 223/838, which reached as far as Amorium, commanding the right wing in the onslaught against this fortress. Thereafter, however, his star began to decline, apparently as a result of jealousies which he had already shown against Abū Dolaf and **'Abdallāh b. Ṭāher**, governor of Khorasan and apparently regarded by Afšīn as an upstart and a rival for power in Transoxania. During the revolt in Ṭabarestān of Māzyār b. Qāren (224/839), the Espahbad of that region—a revolt which had been stimulated by Māzyār's jealousy of Taherid attempts to interfere directly in the Caspian provinces—Afšīn allegedly encouraged Māzyār in secret, in the hope that Abdallāh b. Ṭāher would be deprived of his governorship and he Afšīn, would fall heir to it. But Māzyār's rebellion was quashed, and Afšīn's position now became increasingly difficult.

He was accused by his enemies of hostility towards Islam and of sympathy for ancient Iranian practices and beliefs, of having an imam and a muezzin in Ošrūsana flogged for turning a local shrine into a mosque, contrary to the longstanding arrangement with the ruler of Soḡd whereby the local people were to be left in the peaceful practice of their faith; of possessing richly ornamented, heretical or anti-Islamic books; and of remaining uncircumcised. After a protracted trial, with the chief *qāẓī* Aḡmad b. Abī Do'ād and the vizier Ebn al-Zayyāt as chief prosecutors, he was imprisoned at Sāmarrā and starved to death (Ša'bān, 226/May-June, 841). In support of the charges against Afšīn, it was stated that bejeweled idols and sacred books of the Magians were found in his house after he had been arrested.

The contemporary Arabic sources thus regard Afšīn's rebellious acts as those of a protagonist of Iranian religious and imperial feeling, and as the expression of anti-Arab resentment for the loss of ancient Iranian political domination, feelings which were at this time finding a more harmless outlet on the literary level in the Šo'ūbīya movement. That this view subsequently became the stereotype is seen clearly from the anecdote about Afšīn in Abu'l-



Faḏl Bayhaqī's *Tārīk-eMas'ūdī* written over two centuries later (pp. 173-78), in which anti-Arab sentiments are specifically placed in his mouth. The truth is difficult to disentangle, but it is clear that personal jealousies of Afšīn's power and prestige after the victory over Bābak must have played some part in bringing about his ruin. The report of idols found in Afšīn's house, if true, suggests an adherence to Buddhism, and that of richly ornamented books a connection with Manicheism, rather than with Zoroastrianism, especially as it seems dubious whether Zoroastrianism had ever extended as far north as the Syr Darya valley.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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