



AḤMAD B. MOḤAMMAD

AḤMAD B. MOḤAMMAD B. KALAF B. Layṭj, ABŪ JA'FAR (r. 311-52/923-63), amir in Sīstān of the Saffarid dynasty (that part of it sometimes called “the second Saffarid dynasty”). The vast military empire built up by Ya'qūb and 'Amr b. Layṭ had been shattered by the Samanids of Transoxania, who had in 298/910-11 and again in 301/913-14 invaded Sīstān and imposed their rule there. However, the accession in Bokhara of the child Naṣr II b. Aḥmad as amir inaugurated a period of Samanid weakness. The authority of the 'Abbasid caliphs was briefly reestablished in Sīstān by their governor in Fārs and Kermān, but then the province passed into the hands of local military leaders and chiefs of the bands of patriotic *‘ayyārs* or “vigilantes.” In the course of this confusion, the *‘ayyārs* of the capital Zarang rebelled, and in Moḥarram, 311/April-May, 923 raised to the throne of Sīstān a scion of the Saffarid dynasty, Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. Moḥammad; he is described by the local history, the *Tārīk-eSīstān*, as young in years but with the wisdom of older men. Aḥmad's grandfather had been a close companion of Ya'qūb and 'Amr, and he was also related to them through his mother Bānū. His first accomplishment was to establish his own authority in the regions to the east of Sīstān proper, those of Bost and Rokkaḡ or Zamīn-dāvar, whither the dispossessed *‘ayyār* leader of Sīstān, 'Abdallāh b. Aḥmad, had fled (311/923). With the pacification of all these regions, he consolidated his power and his rule was universally recognized. Aḥmad was even able to contemplate forays outside the boundaries of his own land. In 317/929 the caliphate was distracted by the temporary deposition and then restoration of the caliph Moqtader, and Aḥmad sent an army under his slave Moḥammad b. Ya'qūb Razdānī into



Kermān, where a million dirhams taxation was collected. Shortly afterwards, another member of the Saffarid family, Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Amr b. Ya‘qūb b. Moḥammad, who had been briefly raised to power in Sīstān as amir (299-301/911-13), returned to Sīstān from Baghdad; possibly the caliph hoped to inject an element of discord into the politics of Sīstān, but Abū Ḥafṣ was in fact made welcome at the Zarang court. Bost, from its eccentric position in relation to the heartland of Sīstān, had remained a center for unrest and disaffection; in 320/932 Aḥmad went there to suppress a revolt of a group of Turks led by Qarategīn Esfījābī, who was aided by two local malcontent leaders, Bā Yazīd Banakī and Bā Zakarīyā’ Zaydūy.

Aḥmad was now a respected figure among eastern Islamic potentates, famed for his personal knowledge and his encouragement of learning, so that the Samanid Naṣr b. Aḥmad treated him on equal terms. Naṣr sent rich presents to Zarang, and his court poet Rūdakī wrote for Aḥmad a splendid ode, which earned its author 10,000 dinars from the Saffarid; the *Tārīk-eSīstān* goes on to mention that many poets writing in Arabic also eulogized Aḥmad. In the latter part of Aḥmad’s reign, the commander-in-chief of the army, Abu’l-Faṭḥ, secured a considerable ascendancy in the state, suppressing in 341/952-53 factional strife at Ūq. However, he then raised a revolt at Jarvardkān and Baskar in Sīstān in favor of Abu’l-‘Abbās, son of the former Saffarid amir Ṭāher b. Moḥammad b. ‘Amr (287-96/900-09), who, on account of his direct male descent from ‘Amr b. Layṭ, had considerable local support. Nevertheless, Aḥmad’s commander Razdānī, with the aid of the Turks of Bost, succeeded in mastering this outbreak. Nothing is known of the next few years, until in Rabī’ I, 352/April, 963, Razdānī conspired with leaders of the amir’s slave guards and with the Saffarid prince Abu’l-‘Abbās b. Ṭāher b. Moḥammad and murdered Aḥmad. A period of disorder followed, but eventually Aḥmad’s son, Abū Aḥmad Ḳalaf, was able to secure the throne and began a long reign in Sīstān, until the province came into the orbit of the empire built by the Ghaznavid sultan Maḥmūd (393/1003).



BIBLIOGRAPHY

The sole primary source is the anonymous *Tārīk-eSīstān*, pp. 310-26 (includes the complete text of Rūdakī's ode, also given by E. D. Ross, "A Qasida by Rudaki," *JRAS*, 1926, pp. 213-38).

Of secondary sources, see Bosworth, "The Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārīds," *Cam. Hist. Iran IV*, pp. 131-32, and for chronology, Zambaur, pp. 200-01, and Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties*, Edinburgh, 1967, p. 103.

What little is known about Aḥmad's coinage is discussed by J. Walker, "The Coinage of the Second Saffarid Dynasty in Sistan," *American Numismatic Society Notes and Monographs*, no. 72, New York, 1936, pp. 14-17.