



AḤMAD B. NEZĀM-AL-MOLK

AḤMAD B. NEZĀM-AL-MOLK, ABŪ NAṢR (d. 544/1149-50), son of the well-known Saljuq vizier (d. 485/1092) and himself vizier for the Great Saljuqs and then for the 'Abbasid caliphs. He was born in Balk, his mother being a Georgian princess; she was either daughter or niece of King Bagrat I and formerly married (or at least betrothed) to Alp Arslan after the Caucasus campaign of 458/1064. Aḥmad lived in Isfahan and Hamadān during his father's lifetime and after; in 500/1106-07 he set off for Sultan Moḥammad b. Malekšāh's court in order to raise a complaint against the *ra'īs* of Hamadān. On reaching the court, he was appointed Moḥammad's vizier (Šawwāl, 500/June, 1107) in succession to Sa'd-al-molk Abu'l-Maḥāsen Ābī, who had been executed on suspicion of heresy; the appointment was, it seems, primarily made on the basis of the reputation of Aḥmad's father and the claims of the family on the patronage of the Saljuqs. His father's honorific titles (Qewām-al-dīn, Šadr-al-eslām and Nezām-al-molk) were conferred on him, but he seems already to have had the *laqab* *Žiā'*-al-molk. During his four years' vizierate, Aḥmad accompanied the sultan on his expedition of 501/1107-08 to Baghdad and Iraq, during which, at No'mānīya, the Saljuq army defeated and killed the powerful Mazyadid amir of Ḥella, the so-called "king of the Arabs" Sayf al-dawla Šadaqa b. Maṣṣūr. Verses by the poet Abu'l-Mozaffar Abīvardī eulogizing the vizier for his part in this campaign have been preserved. In 503/1109 the sultan sent Aḥmad and Amir Čavlı Saqāvū to besiege the Isma'ili sectaries under Ḥasan Šabbāḥ in their stronghold of Alamūt and Ostāvand, but the attacking army was unable to make headway before winter set in and had to retire. This failure doubtless contributed to Moḥammad's decision to



dismiss Aḥmad in 504/1110-11 in favor of Kaṭīr-al-molk Abū Maṣṣūr Maybodī; in 503/1110 Aḥmad had already survived an attempt by Isma‘īli *fedā’īs* to assassinate him in the mosque at Baghdad. Over the next few years, Aḥmad lived quietly in his house at Baghdad, according to Ebn al-Aṭīr; but according to the contemporary Anūšervān b. Kāled, he was imprisoned by the sultan for ten years.

By 516/1122, Maḥmūd b. Moḥammad was reigning as sultan, with another of Neẓām-al-molk’s sons, Šams-al-molk ‘Oṭmān, as his vizier. When the caliph Mostaršed’s vizier, ‘Amīd-al-dawla Jalāl-al-dīn Ḥasan b. ‘Alī, was dismissed and jailed, Maḥmūd, disturbed by the growing independence shown by the ‘Abbasid ruler, imposed on him as vizier his personal choice, Aḥmad (Ša‘bān, 516/October, 1122). With the caliph, Aḥmad took part in warfare against the Mazyadid Dobays b. Šadaqa. But when Sultan Maḥmūd dismissed and executed Šams-al-molk ‘Oṭmān, the caliph deemed himself strong enough to shake off the vizier foisted on him by the Saljuqs; and in 517/1123 he dismissed Aḥmad from office. So ended Aḥmad’s singularly undistinguished official career; clearly, it had been the magic of his father’s name, rather than any innate ability, which had brought him to prominence in the first place. He retired to the college founded in Baghdad by his father, the Neẓāmīya, where he spent the remaining twenty-seven years of his life (Ebn al-Aṭīr [repr.], XI, p. 147).

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See also the later works on viziers: Nāṣer-al-dīn Kermānī, *Nasā'em al-ashār*, ed. J. Ormavī, Tehran, 1338 Š./1959, pp. 52-54.

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