



ĀL-E ELYĀS

ĀL-E ELYĀS, a short-lived Iranian dynasty which ruled in the eastern Persian province of Kermān during the 4th/10th century. The founder of the family's fortunes, Abū 'Alī Moḥammad b. Elyās, was apparently of Sogdian origin; the family always retained estates in Soḡd. He started his career in the army of the Samanid amir Naṣr II b. Aḥmad (301-31/914-43). He is first mentioned as being jailed by the amir in Bokhara for some misdeed; but he was released on the intercession of the vizier, Abu'l-Faẓl Moḥammad Baḷ'amī (317/929). It is possible that he had been involved in the rebellion against Naṣr b. Aḥmad by his three brothers. After his liberation, Moḥammad b. Elyās certainly proclaimed his adherence to the cause of one of these brothers, Yaḥyā, when he subsequently found himself in temporary control of Nišāpūr. But Naṣr b. Aḥmad's reassertion of authority in his kingdom in 320/932 drove Moḥammad b. Elyās south into Kermān (Gardīzī, ed. Nazim, pp. 29-30; Naršaḳī, *Tārīḳ-e Bokārā*, tr. R. N. Frye, *The History of Bukhara*, Cambridge, Mass., 1954, pp. 95-96).

The province of Kermān had, in the second half of the 3rd/9th century, formed part of the vast but ephemeral military empire of the Saffarid brothers Ya'qūb and 'Amr b. Layṭ. After 301/913-14 the 'Abbasid caliphs had fleetingly been able to reimpose their authority in Fārs and Kermān, with Moqtader's slave commander Yāqūt acting as governor there from 315/927 onwards. However, the rise of the Daylamī adventurer Mardāvīj b. Zīār and, in his train, the three Buyid brothers 'Alī (the later 'Emād-al-dawla), Ḥasan (the later Rokn-al-dawla) and Aḥmad (the later Mo'ezz-al-dawla) removed southern Persia from direct



caliphal control forever; in 322/934 Yāqūt lost his capital, Shiraz, to the Buyids. In this power vacuum, Moḥammad b. Elyās appeared and established himself as independent ruler in Kermān, but was driven out by the Samanid general Mākān b. Kākī (322/934). A three-cornered struggle now took place in Kermān between the representative of Samanid authority in Kermān, Abū ‘Alī Ebrāhīm b. Sīmjūr, Moḥammad b. Elyās, and an invading force from the west under Mo‘ezz-al-dawla, who had been diverted thither by ‘Emād-al-dawla in Fārs. The sources record confused fighting in Kermān, in which Moḥammad b. Elyās was forced to seek refuge with the Saffarids in Sīstān. Ebrāhīm b. Sīmjūr returned to Khorasan; and Buyid authority was at last established, but only after ‘Emād-al-dawla had been obliged to send a further army to his brother’s aid against the fierce mountain peoples of Kermān, the Kūfečīs (or Qofš) and the Balūč (324-25/936-37) (Ebn Meskawayh, repeated in Ebn al-Aṭīr).

For thirty years or so nothing is recorded of affairs in Kermān. But it is clear that Moḥammad b. Elyās must have returned from Sīstān at an early date and reasserted his power in Kermān. He recognized the Samanids as suzerains but was in practice an independent ruler, receiving in 348/959-60 the insignia of royalty direct from the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Moṭī’. To a marked degree, the Elyasid state in Kermān became a bandit one, apparently deriving revenue from the spoils of raids on caravans crossing southern Persia, in concert with the predatory Kūfečīs and Balūč, who, as the geographer Maqdesī (or Moqaddasī) records, terrorized travelers through the Great Desert (pp. 488-90). On the credit side, Moḥammad b. Elyās did much useful charitable building work in his capital, Bardasīr (the later town of Kermān), including a new mosque and citadel; he also directed construction in other towns of the province. No coins of the Elyasids were known, until in 1974 there turned up a dirham of Moḥammad b. Elyās, dated 334/945-46 and minted at “Kermān” (sc. at this time, the province, although the coin was probably struck in Bardasīr anyway; A. H. Morton, “A dirham of Muḥammad b. Ilyās of Kirmān,” *Iran* 15, 1977, pp. 178-82). Certainly the sources stress the prodigious treasures which Moḥammad b. Elyās is supposed to have amassed.

The events surrounding the end of Moḥammad b. Elyās’s reign of some thirty years and the downfall of his whole family are given in detail by Ebn Meskawayh (repeated in Ebn al-Aṭīr and to be supplemented by ‘Otbī) under the years 356-57/967-68. After being afflicted by a paralytic stroke, Moḥammad b. Elyās was compelled to divide his power in Kermān among his three sons Elyasa’, Elyās, and Solaymān; the first was commander of the army and *walī-*



al-'ahd (heir-presumptive). Solaymān refused to accept a subordinate role, rebelled unsuccessfully, and had to flee to Khorasan. Moḥammad b. Elyās's arbitrary and capricious behavior now compelled Elyasa' to require his abdication, and the former had accordingly to leave Kermān, taking with him all his immense wealth. He settled at the court of Amir Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ at Bokhara, recovered from his condition, and became one of the Samanid ruler's boon-companions. He lived until 356/967 ('Otbī and Ebn al-Aṭīr) or 357/968 (Ebn Meskawayh).

The inexperienced Elyasa' was not long able to hold out against the vigorous and forceful 'Azod-al-dawla, who was well on his way to uniting all the Buyid dominions under his personal rule and had conquered 'Omān in 356/967. 'Azod-al-dawla suborned a large part of Elyasa's Turkish and Daylamī troops; and when he invaded Kermān in 357/968, Elyasa' could only flee without a fight to Bokhara, eventually going on to K̄vārazm, where he ultimately died. Kermān was now incorporated into the Buyid empire for the next eighty years, 'Azod-al-dawla appointing his son Šīrzīl (the later Šaraf-al-dawla) as his deputy in the province. The sources mention futile attempts over the next few years by Elyasid claimants hoping to regain their lost patrimony from the Buyids. In 359/969-70 Solaymān b. Moḥammad b. Elyās came from Khorasan with a force of Samanid troops to raise the Kūfečīs and Balūč against the Buyids; but Solaymān was killed in battle, and 'Azod-al-dawla's generals then led a punitive expedition through southeastern Persia to the Makrān coast. Finally, in 364/974-75, an Elyasid called Ḥosayn, apparently a son of Moḥammad b. Elyās, joined in a rising of the mountain peoples of southern Kermān and Makrān against the Buyids when 'Azod-al-dawla was distracted by events in Iraq and 'Omān. He was, however, captured at Jīroft and disappears from history, together with the rest of his short-lived dynasty. Kermān, apart from a brief interlude of Ghaznavid occupation, remained firmly within the Buyid orbit until the coming of Qāvord and the Saljuqs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The principal, near-contemporary sources are Ebn Meskawayh's *Tajāreb* I-II,



tr., IV-V. His information was used by Ebn al-Aṭīr, VIII, and by ‘Otbī, *al-Ta’rīk al-Yamīnī*, ed. with commentary by Manīnī, Cairo, 1286/1869, II, pp. 116-19, for the events in Kermān itself. Two centuries after the Elyasids, the local historian of Kermān, Afzal-al-dīn Aḥmad Kermānī, wrote his *‘Eqd al-‘olā*, which has important details about Moḥammad b. Elyās’s rule in Kermān and especially in Bardasīr (ed. ‘A. M. ‘Āmerī Nā’īnī, Tehran, 1311 Š./1932, pp. 60, 66-68).

This and subsequent material was used by the 19th-century historian of Kermān, Aḥmad ‘Alī Khan Wazīrī, in his *Tārīk-eSālārīya*, ed. M. E. Bāstānī Pārīzī, Tehran, 1340 Š./1961, pp. 59-63, 65-68.

These and other, minor sources are utilized in C. E. Bosworth, “The Banū Ilyās of Kirmān,” *Iran and Islam, in memory of the late Vladimir Minorsky*, Edinburgh, 1971, pp. 107-24.