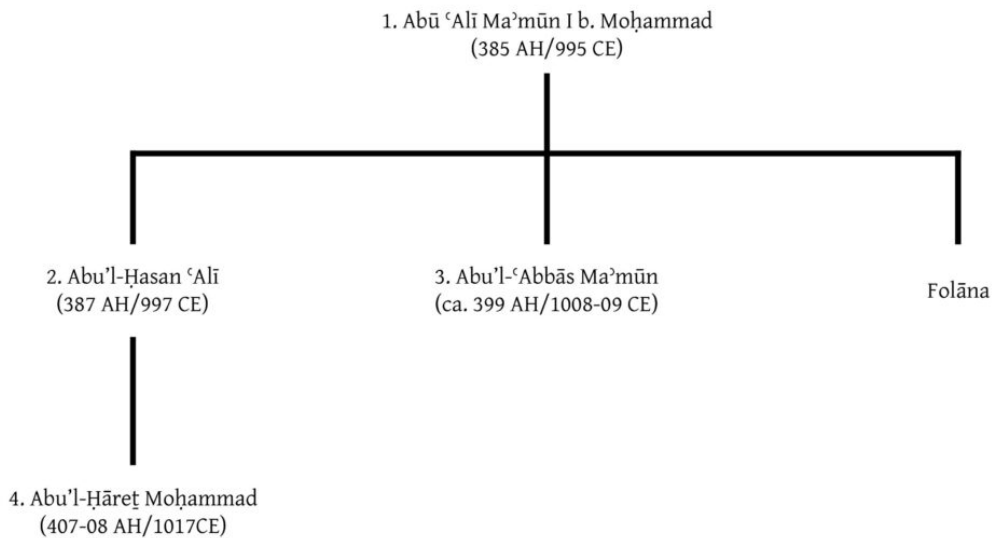




ĀL-E MA'MŪN

ĀL-E MA'MŪN (or Ma'munids), a short-lived dynasty of independent Iranian rulers in *Ḳvārazm*, 385-408/995-1017; they replaced the ancient line of Afrighid *Ḳvārazmšāhs*, but were in turn displaced by the expansionist policies of Maḥmūd of *Ġazna*. The genealogical tree of the family (see Table 1) is as follows:



The rise of the Ma'munids is connected with the growth of the commercial center of *Gorgānĵ* in northwest *Ḳvārazm* and its rivalry with the capital of the Afrighids, *Kāt* or *Kāt*, on the right bank of the Oxus. *Gorgānĵ* flourished



especially because of its position as the terminus for caravan trade across the Ust Urt desert (then known as the Oghuz steppes) to the Emba, the lower Volga, and south Russia; it was, for instance, from Gorgānĵ that the caliphal envoy Aḥmad b. Faẓlān in 309/921 began his journey to Bolġār on the middle Volga. There seems to have been some ancient rivalry between Gorgānĵ and Kāt; for Gardīzī (ed. Nazim, p. 57; ed. Ḥabībī, p. 171) speaks of “old-established hostility” (*ta'aṣṣob-ī . . . qadīm*) between their respective populations. Bīrūnī has some rather enigmatic information about a division of authority within K̄vārazm between the Afrighids of Kāt, who retained the royal authority (*šāhīya*), while another line exercised governorship (*welāya*) in Gorgānĵ at times (*al-Āṭār al-bāqīa*, ed. Sachau, p. 36; *Chronology*, p. 42). But it is not clear that these “governors” in Gorgānĵ were necessarily the Ma'munids nor that there was, in fact, a definite dual system rule in K̄vārazm after the Arab invasions of the early 2nd/8th century (see Āl-e Afrīq). If the Ma'munids were already dominant in Gorgānĵ in the early part of the 4th/10th century, it is curious that an acute observer like Aḥmad b. Faẓlān says nothing about them; he visited the Afrighid ruler in Kāt, Moḥammad b. 'Erāq, and then spent three months in Gorgānĵ waiting for the worst of the winter cold to end before setting off across the steppes (A. Z. V. Togan, *Ibn Faḍlāns Reisebericht*, AKM 24/3, Leipzig, 1939, par. 7-14).

Yet 70 years later, the Ma'munids had somehow managed to rise to dominance in Gorgānĵ; and finally they took over the whole kingdom of K̄vārazm. The anonymous author of the *Ḥodūd al-ālam* (written in 372/982; sec. 26.25, tr. Minorsky, p. 122) states that Gorgānĵ was formerly under the control of the (Afrighid) K̄vārazmšāhs but was now ruled by a separate *amīr*. In 385/995 Ma'mūn b. Moḥammad b. Aḥmad overthrew and killed the last Afrighid, Abū 'Abdallāh Moḥammad b. Aḥmad, whom Bīrūnī (who seems to have had some special sympathies for the ancient dynasty) accordingly calls al-Šahīd (“the Martyr”). The nominal overlords of K̄vārazm, the Samanids, were by now in no position to intervene and help the Afrighids, for the Samanid *amīrs* were themselves fighting for their existence in the face of rebellious military commanders in Khorasan and pressure from the Turkish Qarakhanids on the northern frontiers of Transoxania. In 382-83/992-93 the Samanid Nūḥ b. Maṣṣūr had had to flee to Āmol-e Šaṭṭ and secure help against the Qarakhanid invaders from both the Afrighids of Kāt and the Ma'munids of Gorgānĵ. Two years after this, Ma'mūn b. Moḥammad was to be found as the ally of the rebellious commander Abū 'Alī Sīmĵūrī, whom the K̄vārazmšāh Abū 'Abdallāh Moḥammad, as the partisan of the Samanid *amīr*, opposed. In the course of



this confused fighting Ma'mūn defeated and captured the shah, extinguishing his dynasty (see Barthold, *Turkestan*³, pp. 233-34, 259, 262-63; and Sachau, "Zur Geschichte und Chronologie von Khwārizm," *Sb. Ak. Wiss. Wien* 74, 1873, pp. 287-91). With the decline and disappearance of the Samanids and the subsequent embroilment of the Qarakhanids with the Ghaznavids, K̅vārazm was able for a brief while once more to control its own destiny.

Of the internal history of K̅vārazm under the Ma'munids, little is known. According to 'Otbī (*al-Ta'rīk al-Yamīnī*, with commentary of Shaikh Manīnī, Cairo, 1286/1869, I, pp. 254-55), Ma'mūn was assassinated by his own guards in 387/997 and succeeded by his son Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī. During 'Alī's reign, probably in 390/1000, the last Samanid *amīr*, Esmā'īl b. Nūḥ Montaṣer, came to K̅vārazm and collected an army—probably with the assistance of the K̅vārazmšāh—and temporarily drove out the Qarakhanids from his capital Bukhara ('Otbī, loc. cit.; Barthold, *Turkestan*³, p. 269). Later, however, when the Samanid dynasty had finally disappeared, Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī seems to have felt the influence of the Qarakhanid Ilig Naṣr; but with the repulse of the Qarakhanid invasion of Khorasan in 398/1008, he moved towards a policy of friendship with the victorious Maḥmūd of Ġazna and married the sultan's sister ('Otbī, II, pp. 80, 251; Bayhaqī, p. 668; Barthold, *Turkestan*³, pp. 272, 275). The date of 'Alī's death and the accession of his brother Abu'l-'Abbās Ma'mūn II is not definitely known, but must have been ca. 399/1008-09 (see discussion in M. Nazim, *The life and times of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna*, Cambridge, 1931, pp. 184-85). It seems that this new shah was a considerable builder and adorer of his capital; an inscription on a minaret surviving in the ruins of what was Gorgānĵ, now Konya Orgeṅĉ in Soviet Turkmenistan, describes how Ma'mūn II ordered its construction in 401/1010-11 and supervised the laying of its foundations (see Barthold, *Turkestan*³, p. 147, n. 4).

Because of the survival of an important extract from Bīrūnī's history of his native land, the *Ketāb al-mosāmara fī akbār K̅vārazm*, as the final part of Bayhaqī's history (pp. 665-706), we are well-informed about the events surrounding the end of the Ma'munids and the annexation of K̅vārazm to the Ghaznavid empire, an act of sheer aggrandizement on Maḥmūd's part. Ma'mūn II was, as his brother had been, linked to the Ghaznavids by marriage, having taken over his brother's widow, Sultan Maḥmūd's sister Kah-Kālĵī, in 406/1015-16 (Gardīzī, ed. Nazim, p. 73; ed. Ḥabībī, p. 182). In 405/1014 the 'Abbasid caliph Qāder had sent the shah a robe of honor, a banner, an investiture diploma, and the honorifics 'Ayn-al-dawla wa Zayn-al-mella.



Ma'mūn feared to receive these awards directly in his capital Gorgānĵ and sent the scholar Bīrūnī (who had been at the shah's court since 400/1009-10) to meet the envoy in the steppes and accept the awards there. He hoped thus to placate Maḥmūd of Ġazna, who had by now become the most powerful sovereign in the eastern Islamic world. The latter, however, insisted that Ma'mūn should agree to placing Maḥmūd's name in the *koṭba* or Friday sermon in K̄vārazm, i.e., that he should recognize the Ghaznavid as his suzerain. The shah's hopes of getting military assistance failed, but the nobles and army leaders of K̄vārazm refused to truckle to Maḥmūd's oppressive demands. The shah was accordingly in a difficult position, caught between two opposing forces; he had nevertheless to agree to the terms of an ultimatum from Maḥmūd: to introduce the *koṭba* for him, to pay a heavy indemnity, and to send a deputation of prominent Khwarazmian scholars and notables to Balk̄. The shah's submission provoked a patriotic reaction in K̄vārazm, led by the commander-in-chief of the army, Alptigin; Ma'mūn was killed in Šawwāl, 407/March, 1017; and the rebels raised to the throne Ma'mūn's young nephew Abu'l-Ḥāreṭ Moḥammad b. 'Alī. The murder of his brother-in-law gave Maḥmūd an excellent *casus belli*, and he prepared in northern Khorasan ships and troops in order to invade K̄vārazm. The Khwarazmian army was pushed back, and the Ghaznavid forces entered Kāt in Šafar 408/July, 1017. Shah Moḥammad was deposed and imprisoned; draconian vengeance was taken on Ma'mūn's murderers; the sultan's faithful commander Altūntāš Ḥājeb was appointed governor, with the title of K̄vārazmšāh; and a Ghaznavid army was left in occupation of the country until it was pacified (Bayhaqī, pp. 668ff.; Gardīzī, ed. Nazim, pp. 73-74, ed. Ḥabībī, p. 182; Sachau, op. cit., pp. 297-300; Barthold, *Turkestan*³, pp. 275-78; Nazim, *Maḥmūd of Ghazna*, pp. 56-60). The last ethnically Iranian line of K̄vārazmšāhs thus disappeared; subsequent holders of this tradition royal title were all to be Turks.

Culturally, the Ma'munids had a significance disproportionate to the short duration of their power. Their court at Gorgānĵ became a Mecca for scholars and litterateurs from all over the eastern Islamic world. Ma'mūn II and his vizier, Abu'l-Ḥosayn Aḥmad Sohaylī, gathered round themselves a circle of luminaries which included the polymath Bīrūnī, the philosophers Ebn Sīnā and Abū Sahl Masīḥī, the mathematician Abū Naṣr 'Arrāq, and the physician Abu'l-Ḳayr b. al-Ḳammār. The Arabic philologist Abū Mansūr 'Abd-al-Malek Ta'ālebī moved to the Ma'munid court, perhaps impelled to transfer thither by unsettled conditions in his native Khorasan, and became a protégé and *nadīm* of the shah. He wrote poetry for him, together with various *adab* and



philological works, and seems to have been placed in charge of the royal library. Among these works is a *Ketāb ādāb al-molūk al-K̅vārazmšāhī*, a theoretical manual of statecraft in the “Mirrors for Princes” tradition, dedicated, according to the unique Istanbul ms. of the work, to Ma’mūn II (see for Ta’ālebī’s stay in K̅vārazm, Bosworth, *The Book of Curious and Entertaining Information, the Laṭā’if al-Ma’ārif of Tha’ālibī*, Edinburgh, 1968, intro., pp. 4-5; and, for this last work, T. R. Topuzoğlu, *Kitāb Ādāb al-mulūk al-Khwārazmshāhī, a Critical Edition, with Introduction and Translation*, Manchester Ph.D. Thesis, 1974, unpublished). In Neẓāmī ‘Arūzī Samarqandī’s *Čahār maqāla* (ed. Browne, London, 1910, pp. 76ff., revised tr., London, 1924, pp. 85ff.; cf. *Lit. Hist. Persia* II, pp. 95-98, and Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 132) there occurs a celebrated anecdote. Maḥmūd of Ġazna, jealous of the cultural splendor of Ma’mūn’s court, demanded that all the outstanding scholars there be sent forthwith to his own circle in Ġazna; Bīrūnī obeyed the summons, but Ebn Sīnā and Abū Sahl Masīḥī preferred to flee westwards across the Qara Qum desert to Persia. This story may perhaps have arisen from a confusion with the episode of the political ultimatum of 407/1017 which preceded the Ghaznavid annexation of K̅vārazm.

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See also Markov, *Inventarnyi katalog . . .*, St. Petersburg, 1896, III, p. 976 (Ma’munid coins from Gorgān) of 395/1004-05 and 396/1005-06).

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