



ĀL-E MOḤTĀJ

ĀL-E MOḤTĀJ, a local dynasty, most probably of Iranian origin but conceivably of Iranized Arab stock, who ruled in the principality of Čaġānīān on the right bank of the upper Oxus in the basin of the Sorġān river (Čaġān-rūd in *Hodūd al-‘ālam*, p. 41), first as vassals of the Samanids in the 4th/10th century and then probably as vassals of the Ghaznavids in the opening decades of the 5th/11th century; afterwards the dynasty, at least under this name, disappears from history. In the late 1st/7th and early 2nd/8th centuries, Čaġānīān was ruled by a local magnate, presumably Iranian like the neighboring princes of Soghdia, with the title Čaġān-koḏā (cf. Ṭabarī, II, pp. 1596, 1600, 1601, year 119/737; and H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, London, 1923, *passim*). The eponymous ancestor Moḥtāj may have been a descendant of these Čaġān-koḏās, or he may have been one of the incoming, conquering Arabs (as the Arabic name might indicate), speedily Iranized and acquiring local power in this rather remote corner of the northeastern Iranian world (this seems to have happened with the nearby Abu Dawudids or Banijurids in Ṭokārestān and Kottal); we have no specific information. Whatever the truth, the Mohtajids managed to put down strong roots in Čaġānīān by the 4th/10th century, and the bodies of dead members of the family were usually brought back to the town of Čaġānīān for burial.

The first member of the family fully-attested in the historical sources is Abū Bakr Moḥammad b. Moẓaffar b. Moḥtāj, who was governor in Farġāna and then, after showing his loyalty to the Samanid amir Naṣr b. Aḥmad during the latter's temporary loss of his throne in Bokhara in ca. 317-18/929-30, became



governor of Balk and Toḵārestān and in 321/933 of Khorasan. He campaigned in northern Persia against various local Daylamī chiefs; but fell ill, was replaced in 327/939 by his son Abū 'Alī Aḥmad, and died two years later (Gardīzī, ed. Nazim, p. 31; ed. Ḥabībī, p. 153).

Abū 'Alī Aḥmad Čaġānī now became head of the family, the most famous of its members and an outstanding figure in the military politics of the Samanid amirate over the following fifteen years under Naṣr b. Aḥmad and Nūḥ b. Naṣr. As governor of Khorasan, he was concerned with furthering the Samanid policy of dominating northern Persia and making the local Daylamī and Kurdish rulers the vassals of Bokhara. He campaigned successfully there, defeating and killing the Daylamī adventurer Mākān b. Kākī in 329/940, extending Samanid authority as far west as Hamadān and Dīnavar, and above all, occupying Ray. His departure for Khorasan signaled the reassertion of power at Ray by the Buyid Rokn-al-dawla (331 or 332/943), but in 333/945 Abū 'Alī retrieved the Samanid position in the west. However, the new amir, Nūḥ, who succeeded his father in Bokhara in 331/943, heeded complaints at Nišāpūr about Abū 'Alī's harsh rule and dismissed him from the governorship of Khorasan in favor of the Turkish general Ebrāhīm b. Sīmǰūr, who represented the rising power of Turkish commanders in the state. Not being disposed to accept this rebuff without a struggle, Abū 'Alī now aspired to the role of king-maker. He rebelled in Khorasan and brought back from Iraq a Samanid prince, Nūḥ's uncle Ebrāhīm b. Naṣr, and temporarily installed him on the throne of Bokhara (335/947). But Ebrāhīm was unable to maintain himself there in the face of popular opposition, and Amir Nūḥ, who had retired to Samarkand, was able to recover power, depose and blind Ebrāhīm and two other Samanid pretenders to the throne, and return to power in Bokhara. Nevertheless, he was unable militarily to defeat Abū 'Alī, who had organized a coalition of all the vassal rulers of the upper Oxus principalities (Čaġānīān, Kottal, and Rašt) and the Komīǰī mountain people, and was compelled to make peace with him (337/948). Abū 'Alī retained his hereditary position in Čaġānīān and sent his son Abu'l-Mozaḥḥar 'Abdallāh as an honorably-received hostage to Bokhara. When the commander-in-chief in Khorasan, Maṣṣūr b. Qaratigin Esfīǰābī, died in 340/951-52, Abū 'Alī was reappointed to the charge, leaving behind his son Abū Maṣṣūr Naṣr as his deputy in Čaġānīān and Termed. He carried on warfare vigorously against the Buyid Rokn-al-dawla, but failed in a siege of Ray and made a treaty of peace with the latter (342/953). The arrangement displeased Amir Nūḥ, and Abū 'Alī was once more dismissed, an action upheld by Nūḥ's son and successor 'Abd-al-Malek (343/954). Although



Abū 'Alī obtained from the caliph Moṭī' in Baghdad in investiture diploma as amir of Khorasan, he was unable either to enforce this militarily or to return to his homeland Čaġānīān. He took refuge in Jebāl with the Buyids, but died of the plague, together with one of his sons, at Ray in the following year (344/955; cf. G. C. Miles, *The Numismatic History of Rayy*, New York, 1938, p. 161). The geographer Ebn Ḥawqal shortly afterwards praised Abū 'Alī for his knightly qualities (*oswārīya*) and his nobility of character, regretting only that he had been led into rebellion against his sovereign (p. 477; tr. Kramers, II, p. 459).

Abū 'Alī's son Abu'l-Możaffar 'Abdallāh had already died in a riding accident before his father, in 340/951-52 (Ebn al-Aṭīr, Beirut, VIII, p. 492), and the great days of the Mohtajids were now in fact over. But a person who may have been another son of Abū 'Alī, or conceivably a grandson, Faḡr-al-dawla Abu'l-Możaffar [Aḡmad b.] Moḡammad b. Abī 'Alī Aḡmad is found as local ruler in Čaġānīān towards the end of the 4th/10th and the early part of the 5th/11th century. In the last decades of the 4th/10th century the Samanid amirate fell into confusion and decay through weak amirs and the ambitions of military commanders; it was soon ripe for intervention from the north by the Turkish Qarakhanids. In these uncertain times, we find at one point Abu'l-Możaffar Moḡammad allied with the Turkish general Fā'eq Kāṣṣa against the Sīmǰūrīs and against a common enemy who had established himself in Čaġānīān, his kinsman Abu'l-Ḥasan Ṭāher b. Fażl b. Moḡammad b. Możaffar b. Moḡtāǰ (this filiation deducible from 'Awfī, *Lobāb*); it may be that Ṭāher b. Fażl had in fact controlled Čaġānīān for some time previously. However, the forces of Fā'eq and Abu'l-Możaffar prevailed against him; he was killed at Balḡ in 381/990-91, and Abu'l-Możaffar must have taken charge in Čaġānīān (Gardīzī, ed. Nazim, p. 53; ed. Ḥabībī, p. 168).

The collapse of the Samanids shortly after this brought the upper Oxus principalities into the orbit of their successor state in Khorasan, the Ghaznavids, and in 415/1024, when the Ghaznavid Sultan Maḡmūd crossed the Oxus at Termed to meet his ally the Qarakhanid Yūsuf Qadīr Khan of Kāšġar and Ḳotan, and amir of Čaġānīān (not named in the sources) and other vassals joined him (Gardīzī, ed. Nazim, p. 81; ed. Ḥabībī, p. 187). The links with these local rulers remained close during the succeeding sultanate of Mas'ūd b. Maḡmūd, when, as mentioned by Bayhaqī, the governor (*wālī*) of Čaġānīān was the amir Abu'l-Qāsem, Mas'ūd's son-in-law (pp. 465, 495; Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 236). In 426/1035 this Abu'l-Qāsem had temporarily to flee his principality when it was invaded by the sons of the Qarakhanid 'Alī b. Hārūn



or Ḥasan Boğra Khan (see 'Alitigin; Bayhaqī, p. 465; Barthold, *Turkestan*³, pp. 298-99). It seems quite possible that this Abu'l-Qāsem was a Mohtajid, perhaps a son or grandson of Abu'l-Moẓaffar Moḥammad; but after this time, all mention of the family disappears, and subsequently, Čağānīān passed under Saljuq control.

The Mohtajids have a not unimportant role in Persian literary history as the patrons of certain significant poets of the period. Daqīqī praised “the amir Abu Sa'īd Moḥammad Moẓaffar Moḥtāj Čağānī,” who might perhaps be Abū 'Alī Aḥmad's father, although the patronymic is different, or some other offshoot of the family ('Awfī, *Lobāb* [Tehran], p. 250; G. Lazard, *Premiers poètes* I, pp. 33-34, noting other fragmentary references in this same poet to a Mohtajid, Bū Sa'd-e Moẓaffar). A *mamdūḥ* of Monjīk Termeḍī was the Ṭāher b. Faẓl killed in 381/991 ('Awfī, *Lobāb*, pp. 252-53, cf. Nafisī's notes, pp. 566-67). Above all, the great Ghaznavid poet Farroḳī Sīstānī set off early in his poetic career for Čağānīān in order to seek the amir Abu'l-Moẓaffar Moḥammad's patronage, and Neẓāmī 'Arūzī records his famous ode, composed at the branding-ground for the amir's extensive herds of horses, which secured the latter's favor for him (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. M. M. Qazvīnī and M. Mo'īn, Tehran, 1333 Š./1954, pp. 58-65; E. G. Browne's revised Eng. tr., London, 1921, pp. 39-44; cf. idem, *Lit. Hist. Persia* II, pp. 124-28). Furthermore, it has been shown that the *mamdūḥ* of an ode by another contemporary poet, Labībī, given simply as one “Bu'l-Moẓaffar,” was not, as 'Awfī assumed two centuries later, a Ghaznavid prince, but the Mohtajid Abu'l-Moẓaffar Moḥammad (Şafā, *Adabīyāt*² I, p. 547; *Lobāb*, pp. 276-78, notes, pp. 671-73).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also Barthold, “Aḥmed, Abū 'Alī . . . b. Muḥtādj,” *ET*¹. Idem, *Turkestan*³, pp. 234, 242, 246-49, 254, 282, 298-301.

C. E. Bosworth, “The rulers of Chaghānīyān in early Islamic times,” *Iran* 19, 1981, pp. 1-20 (a detailed study of the Čağān-koḍās and the Mohtajids).

These studies utilize the primary sources for the history of Khorasan in the



4th/10th and early 5th/11th centuries: Gardīzī, ‘Otbī, Meskawayh, Naršakī (who erroneously gives Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad the *nesba* “Eṣfahānī” instead of “Čaġānī”), Bayhaqī and Ebn al-Aṭīr (Gardīzī and the latter author incorporate valuable material from the lost *Ta’rīk wolāt Korāsān* of Sallāmī).

V. Minorsky, *Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*, comm. 178, corrects the confusions of Browne over the Mohtajids and Farighunids of Gūzgān.

Coins may possibly have been minted by Abū ‘Alī on behalf of the Samanids when he was governor of Khorasan, but if so, none of them has survived, nor do we know of any coins minted in Čaġānīān itself by the Mohtajids.

The list of members and the genealogical table of the family in Zambaur (p. 204) is partial only and in need of correction; see the genealogical table in Bosworth, “The Rulers of Chaghānīyān,” p. 14.