



'ALĀ'-AL-DĪN ḤOSAYN JAHĀNSŪZ

'ALĀ'-AL-DĪN ḤOSAYN B. 'EZZ-AL-DĪN ḤOSAYN, called **JAHĀNSŪZ**, Ghurid sultan and the first ruler of the Šansabānī family to make the Ghurids a major power in the eastern Islamic world (544-56/1149-61). By the early 6th/12th century the Šansabānī chiefs had acquired the main power in the mountainous region of Ġūr in central Afghanistan (the modern Ġōrāt province). After the Saljuq sultan Sanjar had placed the Ghaznavid sultan Bahrāmšāh on the throne in Ġazna in 512/1118 as his protégé, the suzerainty exercised by the Ghaznavids over Ġūr since the time of Maḥmūd and Mas'ūd in the early 5th/11th century inevitably weakened. 'Alā'-al-dīn Ḥosayn's predecessors were still tribal chiefs, given to internecine squabbling; and this allowed Bahrāmšāh early in his reign to follow a policy of divide and rule in Ġūr. Bahrāmšāh allegedly had 'Alā'-al-dīn's brother, Qoṭb-al-dīn Moḥammad, poisoned; when another brother, Sayf-al-dīn Sūrī, led a military expedition against Ġazna, the sultan captured him and had him crucified. A further brother, Bahā'-al-dīn Sām, died before he could avenge his two brothers. 'Alā'-al-dīn Ḥosayn therefore succeeded as amir in Ġūr in 544/1149; he completed the construction of his fortress-capital Fīrūzkūh (whose site has not yet been identified with certainty) and was above all concerned to avenge his family on the Ghaznavids.

'Alā'-al-dīn now assumed command of Bahā'-al-dīn Sām's army and marched into Zamīn Dāvar (the region of modern Qandahār). A battle took place there



near the town of Tegīnābād, in which the Ghurid infantry, behind the protection of a wall of padded shields, managed to overcome the Ghaznavids’ war-elephants and cavalry. Bahrāmšāh fled towards Ġazna and, after further reverses, retired to the Ghaznavid provinces in northern India. Ġazna was now given over to a frightful sacking by ‘Alā’-al-dīn, which earned him the sobriquet of “the World-Incendiary” (Jahānsūz). All the tombs of the Ghaznavid sultans were broken into and the corpses exhumed and burnt, with the exception of those of Maḥmūd, Mas‘ūd, and Ebrāhīm; the rich public buildings and libraries of the Ghaznavids, erected from the booty of India, were despoiled; and exemplary vengeance was taken on all those in any way implicated in the previous killings of the Ghurid leaders. After this disaster, Ġazna never recovered its former glory and became a petty provincial town. ‘Alā’-al-dīn then marched southwards to Bost and destroyed the palaces and buildings of the Ghaznavids there (545/1150-51).

He now aspired to a loftier position than that of a chieftain in Ġūr. In imitation of Ghaznavid and Saljuq practice, he adopted the honorific title of *al-solṭān al-mo‘azzam* instead of that of mere *malek*, and started using the ceremonial parasol (*čatr*) as one of the insignia of royalty. He further resolved to throw off the suzerainty of the Saljuqs. In 547/1152 he ceased paying tribute to Sanjar and advanced westwards from Fīrūzkūh down the Harī-rūd valley against Herat. He was, however, decisively defeated by the Saljuq army at Nāb and held prisoner by Sanjar in Khorasan for two years, until a large ransom was forthcoming. It was presumably during this period of ‘Alā’-al-dīn’s captivity that Bahrāmšāh returned from India and resumed his ancestral throne in Ġazna, though his son and successor Ḳosrowšāh soon afterwards had to abandon it definitively.

During ‘Alā’-al-dīn’s imprisonment, Ġūr fell into chaos; and a rival chief, Nāṣer-al-dīn Ḥosayn b. Moḥammad Madīnī, seized power in Fīrūzkūh. But he was killed just before ‘Alā’-al-dīn returned to receive his patrimony. The last years of his life, up to his death in 556/1161, were devoted to extending Šansabānī authority into Ġaṛčestān, Ṭoḳārestān, and Bāmīān in the north, and into Zamīn Dāvar in the south. It also appears that, during this period, ‘Alā’-al-dīn favorably entertained the propaganda of Isma‘īli missionaries (*do‘āt*) from Alamūt in northern Persia. He thus allowed this extremist Shi‘ite sect to get a hold within Ġūr, until it was suppressed in the ensuing reign of ‘Alā’-al-dīn’s son and successor Sayf-al-dīn Moḥammad (556-58/1161-63).



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