



‘ALĪ B. ‘ĪSĀ B. MĀHĀN

‘ALĪ B. ‘ĪSĀ B. MĀHĀN (d. 196/812), officer in the service of the ‘Abbasids. He was commander of the guard under the caliph Maḥdī (158-69/775-85) and entrusted by Hādī (169-70/785-86) with the functions of secretary of the army (though he does not seem to have been *ḥājeb* at the same time, as reported by Jahšīārī, who may have confused *ḥejāba* with command of the guard). At first, Hārūn al-Rašīd (170-93/786-809) kept Ebn Māhān near himself; then, disregarding the advice of Yaḥyā b. Kāled Barmakī, he named him governor of Khorasan (180/796) to replace Fażl b. Yaḥyā. According to the chroniclers, Ebn Māhān extorted from the populace, had some notables executed, and levied huge taxes on the countryside, acts which permitted him to shower the caliph with gifts. He is also accused of having participated in the plot against the Barmakids. In 189/805 Rašīd came to suspect him of wishing to make himself independent and was about to dismiss him, but Ebn Māhān succeeded in convincing the caliph of his good faith and appeased him by multiplying his gifts. His oppressive policies probably caused the revolt of Rāfe‘ b. Layṭ in 190/806. In 192/808 the caliph himself was forced to conduct an expedition to Khorasan. At the death of Rašīd, Ebn Māhān rallied to the cause of Amīn (193-98/809-13). He was one of the first to support Fażl b. Rabī‘ in pressing the new caliph to withdraw from Ma‘mūn his designation as heir presumptive; he wrote in this cause to all the functionaries dependent on him. In 195/811, he was chosen to command the army sent from Baghdad against that of Ma‘mūn commanded by Ṭāher b. Ḥosayn; at this time he was also named governor of Jabal, Hamadān, Isfahan, and Qom. The armies met near Ray, and though much superior in numbers, Ebn Māhān’s army was easily routed after he was



struck down by a man named Dā’ūd Siāh K̅vārazmī. His body was stripped and his head was sent to Fażl b. Sahl, an ally of Ma’mūn. Ma’mūn’s description of his anxiety and sudden joy at this is reported by Jahšīārī, in a fragment recorded by M. ‘Awād (*Lost Fragments of Kitāb al-Wuzarā’ wa’l-Kuttāb*, Beirut, 1965, pp. 38-42).

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