



ARSLĀNŠĀH

ARSLĀNŠĀH b. Mas'ud (III) b. Ebrāhīm, Abu'l-Molūk Solṭān-al-Dawla, Ghaznavid sultan (r. 509-11/1116-18). The alternative form of his name, Malek Arslān or Arsalān, is the more common one. When Malek Arslān's father, Mas'ud III, died in 508/1115, his second son Azod-al-dawla Šīrzād succeeded briefly as sultan in Ġazna. He reigned just one year, according to Ḥamdallāh Mostawfī, when his brother Malek Arslān, Mas'ud's third son, overthrew and killed him and then assumed the crown in Ġazna on Wednesday, 6 Šawwāl 509/22 February 1116. Malek Arslān was Mas'ud's son by the Saljuq princess Jawhar Kātūn bt. Malekšāh, the so-called "Maḥd-e 'Erāq." Mindful of the struggle which he had just had in order to gain the throne, he immediately had all his remaining brothers imprisoned or blinded. The only one to escape was his half brother Bahrāmšāh, Mas'ud's son by another wife; fortunately for himself, he was in Zamīn Dāvar, and he now prepared to contest with Malek Arslān for power in the Ghaznavid empire. He tried to raise a revolt at Tegīnābād (the site of which is unknown; it probably lay near modern Kandahār), but his forces were beaten. He had to flee westwards to Sīstān and Kermān, and Malek Arslān was soon able to make firm his authority throughout eastern Afghanistan and northwestern India. Bahrāmšāh made his way to the court at Marv of the eastern Saljuq sultan, Saṅjar b. Malekšāh, and soon achieved an honored place there. Overcoming an initial reluctance to interfere in internal Ghaznavid affairs and to attack his own sister's son, Saṅjar nevertheless now intervened in support of Bahrāmšāh. A Saljuq army was joined at Bost by a force from the vassal Saffarid amir of Sīstān, Tāj-al-dīn Abu'l-Faẓl Naṣr b. Kālaf; and their combined forces inflicted an initial defeat



on Malek Arslān. The latter attempted in vain to buy off Sanjar's attack. In 510/1117 a decisive battle that took place on the plain of Šahrābād Ġazna, in which the Ghaznavid forces, despite their core of fearsome war elephants, were routed. Sanjar entered Ġazna and placed Bahrāmšāh on the throne as his tributary, while Malek Arslān fled to the Ghaznavid possessions in India. There he collected an army from the trusted governor Moḥammad b. 'Alī of the Bū Ḥalīm Šaybānī family, and once Sanjar's supporting army had evacuated Ġazna, he returned to his former capital, whence Bahrāmšāh had fled without attempting resistance. Sanjar had to send a fresh expedition to replace Bahrāmšāh on the throne. Malek Arslān, after only a month's occupation of Ġazna, was captured; according to Ebn al-Aṭīr, he was executed by Bahrāmšāh in Jomādā II, 512/September-October, 1118, at the age of 27.

The sources record little of internal happenings during Malek Arslān's reign, filled as it was with fighting. A violent fire in the markets of Ġazna, caused by a falling thunderbolt, was later viewed as a portent of the coming violence. Apart from the cruel behavior towards his brothers, nothing is known about Malek Arslān's character; but the Ghaznavid poet 'Oṭmān Moḳtārī addressed to him a considerable number of eulogistic odes, as did also Mas'ūd-e Sa'd-e Salmān. His vizier was the Šams-al-wozarā' Qoṭb-al-dīn Yūsof, who is known, however, only through the poems dedicated to him by 'Oṭmān Moḳtārī. The remaining Ghaznavid sultans were all from the line of Bahrāmšāh, hence the prophetic hope expressed in Malek Arslān's patronymic "Father of kings" was unfulfilled.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The most detailed account of the contest between Malek Arslān and Bahrāmšāh is given by Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, pp. 504-08 (*sub anno* 508).

Briefer accounts are given in Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-e nāšerī*, ed. Ḥabībī², Kabul, 1342-43 Š./1963-64, I, p. 241; tr. Raverty, London, 1881, I, pp. 107-09, as well as by the Saljuq historians (Ḥosaynī, Bondārī, and later Persian and Indo-Muslim sources such as Mostawfī, Mīrkvānda and Ferešta. There is anecdotal material in the collections of 'Awfī, *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt* (Hyderabad, 2 parts, 1965-67)



and Faḡr-e Modabber Mobārakšāh, *Ādāb al-ḡarb wa'l-šajā'a*. For the eulogies of Malek Arslān, see the *Dīvān* of 'Oṡmān Moḡtārī, Tehran, 1341 Š./1962-63, ed. Homā'i, and that of Mas'ūd-e Sa'd, ed. R. Yāsemī, Tehran, 1318 Š./1939-40.

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