



## ASFĀR B. ŠĪRŪYA

**ASFĀR B. ŠĪRŪYA** (Asfār is a local Caspian form of Mid. Pers. *aswār*, NPers. *savār* “rider, cavalryman;” Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 46), a military leader from Lāhījān in Gīlān. In the early decades of the 4th/10th century, after the breakdown of caliphal control in northwestern Persia, he carved out a momentary share of power in Ṭabarestān, Daylam, and the regions along the southern rim of the Alborz mountains. According to Ḥamza Eṣfahānī, he stemmed from the Gīlī tribe of Vardād-Āvandān. Asfār rose to prominence in the confused struggles for control in Ṭabarestān after the death in 304/917 of the ‘Alid ruler there, Ḥasan b. ‘Alī Oṭrūš, al-Nāṣer le’l-Ḥaqq; in these struggles Ḥasan b. Qāsem (called *al-dā’ī al-ṣaḡīr*, “the lesser missionary”) finally emerged victorious. This was also the period when the Samanids were attempting to extend their power westwards from Khorasan into the Caspian provinces, countering Zaidite Shi’ism there and supporting the Sunnite cause against it. Asfār now appears as the opponent and rival for power of the Daylamī chief Mākān b. Kākī (Kākūya; q.v.), and then in alliance with the Samanid general in Khorasan, Moḥammad b. Moḥaffar Moḥtājī. He was able to wrest Ṭabarestān from the ‘Alids only temporarily, but was subsequently appointed governor of Gorgān by the Samanid Amīr Naṣr b. Aḥmad. With the help of another soldier of fortune from Gīlān, Mardāvīj b. Zīār (q.v.), he was then able to defeat and suppress the rule of the *dā’ī* Ḥasan b. Qāsem (316/928).

Asfār now established his control over Ray, Qazvīn and other parts of Jebāl, at first ostensibly as representative of the Samanids, but then as an independent ruler, adopting the insignia of royalty at Ray in defiance of Amīr Naṣr and the



ʿAbbasid caliph, al-Moqtader. At Qazvīn he is said to have massacred many of the inhabitants, burnt the markets, killed the muezzin, pulled down mosques, and forbidden the performance of the *ṣalāt* (these latter measures indicating that Asfār was not a Muslim but a nationalist who despised Arab domination and hoped to revive an Iranian empire); he further imposed a poll-tax on all people in Qazvīn, including foreign merchants there, thereby raising an enormous sum. His excesses caused his former lieutenant Mardāvīj to decide on his removal. Mardāvīj allied with the Mosaferid or Sallarid ruler of Ṭārom, Moḥammad b. Mosāfer; and Asfār was pursued into Khorasan, having to abandon the treasure which he had amassed and left in the fortress of Alamūt in Daylam. Having reached Bayhaq, Asfār turned back, hoping to rescue his treasure at Alamūt, but, at Ṭālaqān, between Qazvīn and Zanĵān, he was overtaken and killed by Mardāvīj, most probably in 319/931.

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