



ATĀBAKĀN-E MARĀĠA

ATĀBAKĀN-E MARĀĠA (also called Aḥmadīlīs), a family of local rulers of Marāġa who ruled from the early 6th/12th century until 605/1208-09 in Marāġa itself and in Rū'īn Dez for some years after the Mongol conquest. They are often referred to as the Aḥmadīlī Dynasty because of a connection with Aḥmadīl b. Ebrāhīm b. Vahsūdān Rawwādī Kordī who is first mentioned by Ebn al-Aṭīr under the year 501/1107-08 and was named as ruler of Marāġa in 505/1111-12 (repr., X, pp. 447, 485). Aḥmadīlī himself was in the service of the Saljuq Sultan Moḥammad b. Malekšāh (r. 498-511/1105-18). There are questions about his ethnic background and how he relates to the Rawwadid Vahsūdān. Minorsky (*EI*¹ III, p. 263, *EI*² I, p. 300) and Kasravī (*Šahrīārān*, p. 230) regard him as a Kurdicized descendant of the Arab Rawwadids. He is noted for joining the force which Sultan Moḥammad sent against the Crusaders in 505/1111-12, for his desire to gain the lands of the Shah Armanid Sokmān Qoṭbī, and for hostility towards the Isma'īlis, according to Sebṭ b. al-Jawzī (*Mer'āt* VIII/1, p. 53) who reports that his *eqṭā'* yielded 4,000 dinars and that he had 5,000 horsemen in his service. This author places his assassination at the hands of the Isma'īlis in 508/1114-15, while Ebn al-Aṭīr puts it in Moḥarram, May-June of 510/1116 (X, p. 516).

Āq Sonqor Aḥmadīlī (ca. 516/1122-1123 to 528/1133-1134): Āq Sonqor is the first person who can be called an *atābak* (atabeg) of Marāġa and the clear founder of the line. Some writers, such as Kasravī (*Šahrīārān*, p. 232) and Šafā (*Adabīyāt* II, p. 44) regard him as the son of Aḥmadīl, but, aside from the evidence of his Turkish name, it should be noted that he is never referred to as



“Ebn Aḥmadīl,” only as “al-Aḥmadīlī,” a type of appellation which usually indicated a mamluk or freed-man of the person referred to in the *nesba*. In addition, the poet Neẓāmī Ganjāvī clearly refers to him as the founder of the line in the *Haft peykar* (p. 23), and it is unlikely that he would have made an error in this regard. He is referred to as one of the great mamluks of the Saljuq house by Ḥosaynī (*Aḵbār al-dawla al-saljūqīya*, p. 196). It is not known if Āq Songqor held Marāḡa before 516/1122-23. It was under the control of Mas‘ūd, brother of the Iraq Sultan Maḥmūd b. Moḥammad, who gave it to his *atābak*, Qasīm-al-dawla Borsoqī, in 514/1120-21, but after Mas‘ūd’s defeat at the hands of the sultan, it was apparently either given, or returned, to Āq Songqor who had it in 516/1122-23 when he tried to use his position as *atābak* of Ṭoḡrel b. Moḥammad to revolt against Maḥmūd and gain control of Azarbaijan. He failed but apparently got his land back and seems to have been faithful in his service to Maḥmūd for the next seven years or so. In 523/1129 Maḥmūd sent him into Arab Iraq in pursuit of the Mazyadid Dobays b. Şadaqa, for whom he and another amir were held responsible (Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, p. 655).

When Maḥmūd died in 525/1131, Āq Songqor was *atābak* of Ġiāṭ-al-dīn Dā‘ūd b. Maḥmūd. He and the sultan’s vizier, Abu’l-Qāsem Dargazīnī, proclaimed Dā‘ūd sultan in Azarbaijan and Jebāl, but they were defeated by Maḥmūd’s brother Rokn-al-dīn Ṭoḡrel, who had been made sultan by Sanjar, at Hamadān in 526/1131-1132. Ṭoḡrel’s brother, Mas‘ūd, had also opposed them and had been besieged by Āq Songqor in Tabrīz until he made peace. Ṭoḡrel set out after them and forced them to flee to Baghdad. There the caliph proclaimed Mas‘ūd sultan and Dā‘ūd his heir. After being outfitted by the caliph, they proceeded to Azarbaijan and Marāḡa where Āq Songqor apparently put considerable cash at the disposal of the expedition. Ṭoḡrel’s forces shut themselves up in Ardabīl where they were besieged by Āq Songqor and his Saljuqs. An attempt on the part of some of Ṭoḡrel’s amirs to raise the siege failed, and they were pursued to Hamadān where Ṭoḡrel himself was defeated and driven off in Şa‘bān, 528/May-June, 1134. Āq Songqor himself was murdered by Assassins in his tent at Hamadān. Bondarī (*Zobda*, p. 169) leads one to believe that the Ṭoḡrel’s vizier, Dargazīnī, instigated the murder, while Ebn al-Aṭīr (X, p. 686) reports that it was said that Mas‘ūd himself was responsible.

Noşrat-al-dīn Arslān Aba b. Āq Songqor (ca. 528/1133-34 to 570/1174-75): He was *atābak* in Marāḡa for a long time, but he is never at the focus of interest in the sources, and it is often difficult to see where he fits into the factional strife which marked so much of the reign of Mas‘ūd b. Moḥammad. He is first



mentioned by Ebn al-Aṭīr under the year 530/1135-36 as one of the amirs who gathered with the Saljuq Dā'ūd b. Maḥmūd in Baghdad in support of the ill-fated caliph, al-Rāšed. The next notices deal with his brother, Šīrgīr, who took troops to serve Mas'ūd's Azarbaijan-based *jāndār*, Jāvli (Čävli), in 540/1145-46, then again was among the commanders brought by Kāšš Beg Arslān b. Palangarī (Minorsky, "Beling-eri," *EI*², p. 300) to defeat Mas'ūd's enemy Būz Aba the amir of Fārs at Isfahan in 542/1147-48 (Bondārī, *Zobda*, p. 191-92). However, Bondārī (p. 217), also says that Kāšš Beg besieged Marāḡa in 541/1146-47. Rāvandī (*Rāḡat al-šodūr*, p. 244) also says that Mas'ūd himself besieged Marāḡa in Šawwāl, 545/February, 1151, took it in two days, and ordered the fortifications ruined. Rāvandī further reports that there was antagonism between Kāšš Beg and Atābak Arslān Aba and that they were reconciled in the castle of Rū'īn. This fortress, usually referred to as Rū'īn Dez, seems to have become the family stronghold. Minorsky (*EI*¹III, p. 264) suggests it was some ten miles above Marāḡa on the Sūfī Čay on the site of a place now called Yay-Šahar (summertown).

Arslān Aba and the *atābak* of Azarbaijan, İldegoz, protested when Sultan Moḡammad b. Maḥmūd killed Kāšš Beg in early 548/1153. From that time until 551/1156-57, Arslān Aba cooperated with İldegoz and other amirs against Moḡammad, joining them in the attempt to put Solaymānšāh b. Moḡammad on the throne in Hamadān. He also joined İldegoz in obtaining the expulsion of the Saljuq prince, Čaḡrī Beg, from Azarbaijan in 549/1154-55. The two then divided up the province between themselves, save for Ardabīl. But, after Sultan Moḡammad defeated İldegoz at Naḡjavān in 551/1156-57, he made Arslān Aba *wālī* of Azarbaijan, and when the sultan died in 554/1159-60, he entrusted his young son to the *atābak* of Marāḡa who refused to accept İldegoz's control of the sultanate of Iraq through his own ward, Sultan Arslānšāh. İldegoz sent his son, Moḡammad Jahān-pahlavān, against Arslān Aba who met and defeated the İldegozid with the assistance of troops sent to him by the Shah Arman of Kelāt (Aklat).

Arslān Aba usually opposed İldegoz and his ward, Arslānšāh, in the years between 556/1161 and 563/1168, when İldegoz was plagued by the opposition of İnānġ of Ray. Arslān Aba sent 5,000 troops to assist Ḥosām-al-dīn İnānġ in his rebellion of 556/1161, and, even though he took part in İldegoz's campaigns against the Georgians in 557/1161-62 and 558/1162-63, his opposition to İldegoz's control of the Saljuq sultanate of Iraq continued. He took advantage of İnānġ's renewed opposition to İldegoz in the years 561/1165-66 to 564/1168-69,



and Ebn al-Aṭīr (XI, p. 332) records that in 563/1167-68 [Ebn] Āq Sonqor requested that the caliph give the *koṭba* in the name of the Saljuq *malek*, son of Moḥammad, who was with him. This challenge to his supremacy caused İldegoz to send his son Jahān-pahlavān against Arslān Aba once again, and this time he was defeated and forced to shut himself up in Marāḡa, after which they made peace.

Falak-al-dīn (?), dates unknown. There is only one report in Ebn al-Aṭīr (XI, p. 423), which records that, when Moḥammad Jahān-pahlavān besieged Marāḡa in 570/1174-75, Ebn Āq Sonqor had died and left the city to his son, Falak-al-dīn. It is not clear whether his death was in 570 or somewhat before. Pahlavān besieged Rūʾin Dez, then Marāḡa itself, but was unable to take either. He had sent his brother, Qezel Arslān, to besiege Tabrīz, also under Aḥmadilī control at that time, and a peace was made in which Tabrīz was ceded to the İldegozids. Falak-al-dīn's reign would have to have ended sometime before 584/1188-89, as noted below. A notice by Ḥamdallāh Mostawfī (*Tārīk-egozīda*, p. 462), a much later author, claims that the “ruler of Marāḡa” was thinking of war with İldegoz after the death of Īnānĵ and that Pahlavān went and defeated him. It then says that Marāḡa was given as *eqṭāʿ* to the brothers ‘Alāʿ-al-dīn Karba (Karpa) and Rokn-al-dīn. This tradition eliminates Falak-al-dīn and seems to indicate that Arslān Aba was deposed in favor of ‘Alāʿ-al-dīn, who is known from other sources, and Rokn-al-dīn, who is not mentioned elsewhere. A scribal error in Browne's facsimile *Tārīk-egozīda* is probably responsible for Minorsky's entry of an otherwise unknown Qotloḡ into the family list (*EʿI*, p. 300).

‘Alāʿ-al-dīn Karpā (or Karpa) Arslān (before 584/1188-1189 to 604/1207-08; on the name see Kasravī, *Šahrīārān*, p. 232). The sources have no notices of the Aḥmadilīs for fourteen years, then we find in Rāvandī (*Rāḡat al-šodūr*, p. 347) that shortly after the last Saljuq sultan of Iraq, ʿOḡrel, had defeated the caliph's army at Dāy Marg in 584/1188-89, ‘Alāʿ-al-dīn of Marāḡa came to Hamadān to pay homage and was given charge of ʿOḡrel's son Berk-yaruq (Barkīāroq). The situation in Hamadān was not to the *atābak*'s liking, so he returned to Marāḡa. Again, we lack a connected account of ‘Alāʿ-al-dīn's reign.

He seems to have been a man of pronounced literary interests, since at his request the poet Neẓāmī Ganĵavī composed the *Haft peykar*. According to the poet (p. 22) he was a descendant of Āq Sonqor and he had two sons who are otherwise unknown to us, Noṣrat-al-dīn Moḥammad and Falak-al-dīn Aḥmad. We also learn at the end of the poem that it was sent to Rūʾin Dez, confirming



this place as the residence of the *atābaks*, and that it was finished 14 Ramazān 593/31 July 1197.

Ebn al-Aṭīr (XII, p. 236) reports that he planned to take Azarbaijan from the irresolute Ildegozid *atābak* of Azarbaijan, Abū Bakr, with the help of Moẓaffar-al-dīn Kūkborī of Erbel. Abū Bakr got assistance, however, and besieged ‘Alā’-al-dīn in Marāḡa. Peace was made with ‘Alā’-al-dīn ceding one of his fortresses and receiving Ošnū and Urmia from Abū Bakr, who actually had the last word. For ‘Alā’-al-dīn died in 604/1207-08, leaving his kingdom to a child, in this account, who died in 605/1208-09, allowing Abū Bakr to take all of the Aḥmadīlī possessions save Rū’īn Dez in which a faithful eunuch shut himself with the stores and treasures and presumably with a granddaughter, who is the last of the line we know about (Ebn al-Aṭīr, XII, p. 275).

There are two entries in Ebn al-Fowaṭī’s *Maǧma’ al-ādāb* which may complicate the list of rulers of the family. In one (pt. 2, p. 1070, no. 1598) there is an ‘Alā’-al-dīn b. Karba b. Noṣrat-al-dīn Aba Arslān b. Atābak Qarā Sonqor Aḥmadīlī. This is probably our ‘Alā’-al-dīn with his name and ancestors somewhat garbled. He is reported to have been partial to the learned and religious leaders, as well as to Sufism. Ebn al-Fowaṭī, quoting a work by Qāzī Afzal-al-dīn, the *Tārīḡ-eBīškīn*, also says that he died in Ḍu’l-qa’da of 604/1207-08, which agrees with Ebn al-Aṭīr, and that he was buried in his tomb which was attached to a *madrasa* not named in the text. If ‘Alā’-al-dīn was a tomb builder, he could have been responsible for the so-called Gonbad-e Kabūd which is from about the right period (Godard, *Monuments*, p. 9; Kārang, *Abnīa*, p. 15). The other person mentioned in the *Maǧma’ al-ādāb* (pt. 1, p. 27, no. 18) is more difficult to account for. He is called ‘Ezz-al-dīn Abu’l-Ḥāreṭ Arslān Aba b. Atābak Torkī Marāḡī and is said to have been killed in a battle near Tabrīz with one Noṣrat-al-dīn Bīškīn in 605/1208-09. It is not clear from his name whether he was even part of the family, just that he is supposed to have ruled in Marāḡa. The date of his death is the same as that of the child mentioned by Ebn al-Aṭīr (XII, p. 275), but Ebn al-Fowaṭī’s notice suggests that this person was an adult, as he was “*ṣāḡeb*” of a *madrasa* and was killed in battle. Even so, we do not know enough to rule out the possibility that he was a son of ‘Alā’-al-dīn, although his name is not the same as either one of the sons of ‘Alā’-al-dīn mentioned by the poet Neẓāmī.

The last certain recorded member of the family is the Salāfa Kātūn mentioned in Ebn al-Fowaṭī’s notice. She is apparently the woman referred to by Ebn al-Aṭīr (XII, p. 377) as being the ruler of Marāḡa and being in Rū’īn Dez when



Marāġa was taken by the Mongols in 617/1220-21. Nasavī (*Sīrat*, p. 232) who refers to her as one of the descendants or grandchildren (*ḥafada*) of *atābak* ‘Alā’-al-dīn, notes that she had been married to the deaf-mute, Malek-e Kāmūš Qezel Arslān by his father, the *atābak* of Azarbaijan, Uzbek. She apparently remained in Rū’īn Dez when Malek-e Kāmūš joined the K̄vārazmšāh Jalāl-al-dīn, whose service he later left for Alamūt where he died. Salāfa Kātūn was preparing to end the siege of her castle by the K̄vārazmšāh’s vizier, Šaraf al-molk, by marrying him when Jalāl-al-dīn arrived and claimed her for himself, installing a governor in Rū’īn Dez. Kāmūš’s son, Nošrat-al-dīn, who, according to Jovaynī (I, p. 116; II, p. 248), later received appointments from the Mongols, may have been by Salāfa Kātūn, but, according to Minorsky (*ET²I*, p. 301), this is not certain.

See also [Atābakān-e Ādarbāyjān](#); and [Atābakān-e Marāġa](#).

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