



EBN AL-‘AMĪD

EBN AL-‘AMĪD, cognomen of two famous viziers of the 4th/10th century: Abu’l-Faẓl and his son Abu’l-Faṭḥ. The father of the first was called Ḥoseyn. Tawḥīdī claims that this Ḥoseyn was of humble origin, a *naḳḳāl* (wheat-sifter) in the grain market of Qom (*Aḳlāq al-wazīrayn*, p. 82). This, however, is probably not true. After occupying major administrative posts, Ḥoseyn was appointed chief of the chancery (*dīwān al-rasā’el*) at the court of the Sāmānid amir Nūḥ b. Naṣr in Khorasan and was given two honorific titles: “Amīd” (chief; doyen) and “Shaikh.”

Not much is known about Ḥoseyn’s son, Abu’l-Faẓl before he became the vizier of Rokn-al-Dawla, the Buyid sultan who ruled a district which included Ray, Hamadān, and Isfahan; but the fact that he occupied such a post indicates that he took the same line as his father. His early education combined Arabic poetry and Greek sciences and philosophy. His fame as a vizier spread far and wide, and many poets and men of letters were attracted to his court. The poet Motanabbī in one of his panegyrics speaks of him as one who had met Aristotle, Alexander, and Ptolemy. Meskawayh and Tawḥīdī both confirm his interest in philosophy, but the latter adds that Abu’l-Faẓl did not hesitate to kill his adversaries—a trait not quite befitting a philosopher. During his vizirate, Abu’l-Faẓl won several honorific titles: “Ra’īs,” “Ostād,” “the second Jāḥeẓ,” etc.

Apart from a collection of epistles and some poetry, Abu’l-Faẓl left no books. Tawḥīdī copied some wise sayings and proverbs from a book by him entitled *al-Ḳalq wa’ l-ḳolq*, but this book remained in draft form (*Aḳlāq al-wazīrayn*, p. 328; *al-Baṣā’er* VI, p. 165). In his style, he was not as fond of *saj’* (rhymed prose)



as his contemporary Ṣāḥeb b. 'Abbād was. He admired Jāḥeẓ's style a great deal, but could not emulate it well. This was due, according to Tawḥīdī, to the fact that Abu'l-Faẓl lacked several of the natural and circumstantial qualities which Jāḥeẓ possessed (*Emtā'*, I, p. 66).

When Abu'l-Faẓl died in 360/971, he was succeeded in the vizirate by his son of twenty-two years, Abu'l-Fatḥ, who served two Buyid sultans: Rokn-al-Dawla and his son Mo'ayyad-al-Dawla. Abu'l-Fatḥ was a good prose writer, in the manner of the secretaries of the *dīvān*, and was highly respected by the military. For this reason, he was given the title "Ḍu'l-kefāyatayn," that is, master of both the pen and the sword. Six years into his vizirate, in 366/977, he was killed after having fallen out of favor with the powerful Buyid sultan 'Azod-al-Dawla; he had also indulged excessively in pleasures, to the point of being oblivious to the intrigues being concocted around him. According to Ṣābī, however, his violent end was due to two factors: a) Rokn-al-Dawla's lenient treatment of him, and b) the fact that he had inherited rather than earned the vizirate (Ṭa'ālebī, *Yatīma* II, p. 217).

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