



EBN AL-QAṢṢĀB, ABŪ 'ABD- ALLĀH ABU'L-MOẒAFFAR MO'AYYAD-AL-DĪN MOḤAMMAD

EBN AL-QAṢṢĀB, ABŪ 'ABD-ALLĀH ABU'L-MOẒAFFAR MO'AYYAD-AL-DĪN MOḤAMMAD b. 'Alī, Shi'ite vizier of the caliph al-Nāṣer from 590/1194 to 592/1195 (b. ca 522/1128). A Persian born in Shiraz, Ebn al-Qaṣṣāb went at a young age to Baghdad where his father was a butcher (whence his name) in Darb al-Baṣṛiya. Entering government service, he became an expert on finance and taxation and in 578/1182-83 a protege of the powerful Shi'ite superintendant of palace affairs (*ostād al-dār*) Ebn al-Ṣāḥeb. After his patron fell from favor in 583/1188, Ebn al-Qaṣṣāb found a post in the chancellery (*dīvān al-enšā'*). In the following years his display of talent in both military and financial affairs gained him appointment as deputy vizier (there being no vizier at all between 585 and 590) and then in 590/1194 as vizier. Immediately after his appointment he was sent off to take control of the dissident province of Kūzestān, with which he was closely familiar. There he consolidated his position and is reported to have been considering making himself independent of caliphal control. Possibly as a means of preventing this, al-Nāṣer sent him as an ambassador to the K̄vārazmšāh 'Alā'-al-Dīn Tekeš, who had just defeated and killed the last Saljūq sultan, Ṭoğrel III. He was charged



with gaining Tekeš’s submission to caliphal authority. Ebn al-Qaṣṣāb’s undiplomatic haughtiness in seeking to carry out this charge brought about a severance of relations between the caliph and the K̅vārazmšāh. Having retreated to avoid an unwanted battle after the failure of his mission, Ebn al-Qaṣṣāb returned shortly with full military force and gained complete control, against little opposition, over western Persia as far as Ray. After a few months, Tekeš sought to open negotiations, but Ebn al-Qaṣṣāb refused. The Khwarazmian army marched on Hamadān, but before a battle was fought Ebn al-Qaṣṣāb died in 592/1196 at the age of over seventy years. His army was subsequently defeated, and the victorious K̅vārazmšāh had his body exhumed and his head exhibited as an alleged battle trophy.

That Ebn al-Qaṣṣāb was an energetic and talented administrator and military leader is affirmed by the sources, but some Sunnite historians deplore his Shi’ism. Prior to his rise to the vizirate, leaders of the Hanbalite law school in Baghdad had been extremely influential in the government. His appointment may possibly be seen, therefore, as marking a change in the religious policy of al-Nāṣer toward curtailing Hanbalite power and giving greater favor to moderate Shi’ites, especially since several later viziers were also Shi’ite. It should be noted, however, that Ebn al-Qaṣṣāb’s retinue included prominent Sunnite as well as Shi’ite figures (Ebn al-Aṭīr, XII, p. 123).

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