



## JOSTANIDS

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**JOSTANIDS**, also referred to as Āl-e Jostān and Āl-e Vahsudān (Eṣṭakri, p. 204; Moḥelli, p. 225), a local dynasty that ruled from Rudbār in Deylam, the mountainous district of Gilān (q.v.) during the late 8th and early 9th centuries. They are known mainly for their resistance against the incursions of Arab armies into Gilān during the 8th-9th centuries, particularly in connection with the conflicts between the 'Abbasid caliphs and the Zaydis of the Caspian Sea area (e.g., see Balāḍori, p. 317; Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru, p. 431). The earliest piece of evidence about them dates from 805, when Marzbān b. Jostān, upon receiving the guarantee of safe-conduct from the caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd, visited the latter in Ray and received gifts and robes of honor from him (Ṭabari, III, p. 705, tr. XXX, pp. 254-55; Ebn al-Aṭir, VI, pp. 191-92). The last king of this family mentioned in sources is Mahdī son of Ẓosrow-Firuz, who lost power before 931 when another local dynasty, Salarids/Kangarids, conquered Deylam (Şāleḫi, p. 474; Kasravi, p. 33). The names Jostān and Vahsudān are common in both families. Aḥmad Kasravi's plausible suggestion that the Jostanids continued to rule for another century as minor princes is a possibility (Kasravi, p. 34). Likewise, Jostān-e Ebrāhim, who is mentioned by Nāṣer-e Ẓosrow as the capable ruler of Ṭārom, most probably had nothing to do with the Jostanid dynasty (Nāṣer-e Ẓosrow, pp. 6-8).

### THE DYNASTY

*Jostān I.* He was most likely the king of Deylam about 791, when the 'Alid Abu'l-Ḥosayn Yaḥyā b. 'Abd-Allāh, went to Deylam, and a year later, supported by Jostān, announced his movement against the 'Abbasids. Hārūn al-Rašīd sent



an army commanded by the Barmakid (see [BARMAKIDS](#)) Faʿl b. Yaḥyā against Deylam, and advised him, in case he was unable to take Yaḥyā prisoner, to use money and political stratagems to make them obey. Faʿl wrote letters to both Jostān and Yaḥyā and promised the former 1,000,000 derhams to withdraw his support of Yaḥyā, which Jostān refused to do. Eventually, after Hārūn al-Rašid sent Yaḥyā gifts and a guarantee of safe-conduct written in his own hand, he joined the camp of Faʿl, who took him to Baghdad (Ṭabari, III, p. 613, tr., XXX, pp. 116-17; Ebn al-Aṭir, VI, p. 126; Moḥelli, 174, 178-79, 190, 196-97). There is no more report of this Jostān.

*Marzbān I.* He is son of Jostān I and the first Jostanid ruler about whom we have some historical evidence. He was already ruling in 805, when he came to Rey to submit his allegiance to Hārūn al-Rašid (see above), but exactly when he came to power is not known.

*Abu Laylā.* He is the next ruler we hear about, but our information about him is limited to a passing note in Ṭabari (III, p. 1015, tr., XXXII, p. 64) and Ebn al-Aṭir (IV, pp. 327-28), according to whom, in 815, he lost his domain to ‘Abd-Allāh b. Kordādbeh, the ruler of Ṭa-barestān, who also took him prisoner. Aḥmad Kasravi doubted the accuracy of this information on the grounds that it is not mentioned by earlier historians, namely Ya‘qubi and Balāḍori (Kasravi, pp. 24-25).

*Jostān II.* We know nothing about him, since there is no information about the Jostanids after the capture of Abu Laylā in 815 until we hear of Vahsudān b. Jostān, who was in power in 864. It therefore stands to reason to suppose that Jostān II came to power after the captivity of Abu Laylā.

*Vahsudān II,* son of Jostān II. Vahsudān’s name is mentioned in connection with the movement of the Zaydi leader Ḥasan b. Zayd, known as al-Dā‘i al-Kabir. There is no report of when he became king, but he was already in power in 865, when Ḥasan b. Zayd rose in Ṭabarestān. Local rulers, including Vahsudān, had pledged their allegiance to Ḥasan, but Vahsudān withdrew his own after about a year and died a few days later (Ṭabari, III, pp. 1527-28, tr., XXXV, pp. 23-24; Ebn Esfandiār, I, p. 235).

*Jostān III.* He is the son of Vahsudān II and the best-known figure in the Jostanid dynasty. He ruled for fifty years, which mostly coincided with the activities of Ḥasan b. Zayd, to whom he maintained allegiance. In 866, or 867 according to Ebn Esfandiār (I, p. 243), Jostān along with the representatives of



Ḥasan b. Zayd, attacked Ray and forced the 'Abbasid governor, 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Aziz, to flee. He also killed a large number of the people and took many prisoners and left the city only after the people of the town paid him 2,000,000 derhams (Ṭabari, III, p. 1686, tr., XXXV, p. 144; Ebn al-Aṭir, VIII, p. 177). There are also reports about the conquest of Qazvin, Abhar, and Zanjān in the same year by Ḥosayn Kawkabi, the representative of Ḥasan b. Zayd in Jostān's camp. The conquest was short-lived, however, as a year later the caliph's general Musā b. Boḡā routed Kawkabi outside Qazvin and retook the town (Ṭabari, III, p. 1693-94, tr., XXXV, pp. 150-51; Balāḡori, pp. 324-25; Ebn Esfandiār, I, pp. 243-44; Awliā'-Allāh Āmoli, p. 96; Kasravi, p. 26). We have no further information concerning Jostān III himself, but his son Vahsudān is said to have made an unsuccessful attack on Qazvin in 873, probably on behalf of Ḥasan b. Zayd (Ṭabari, III, p. 1880, tr., XXXVI, p. 156; Ebn al-Aṭir, VII, p. 267). There is no mention of any contingents of Jostanid warriors in the army of Ḥasan b. Zayd in 873, when he faced Ya'qub b. Layṭ, who had invaded Ṭabarestān, although a certain Deylamite leader called Ḳoršād b. Jilāw had joined the Zaydi army at the head of a powerful force (Ṭabari, III, p. 1885, tr. XXXVI, p. 160; Ebn al-Aṭir, VII, p. 268; Ebn Esfandiār, I, pp. 245-46; *Tāriḳ-e Sistān*, pp. 223-24). Ḥasan b. Zayd died in 883-84, and his brother Moḥammad, known as al-Dā'i al-Ṣaḡir and al-Dā'i al-Ḥaqq, who succeeded him in the leadership of the movement, apparently enjoyed Jostān's allegiance (Ebn Esfandiār, I, pp. 249-50; Awliā'-Allāh Āmoli, pp. 97-98; Kasravi, 27). Jostān's support of Moḥammad led to the ruin of a good deal of Jostān's domain when conflict broke out between Moḥammad and Rāfe' b. Harṭama, a soldier of fortune who had gained ascendancy in Khorasan after the fall of the Taherids. Eventually, Jostān turned over to Rāfe' all the belongings of Moḥammad, and the two sides made peace on the condition that Jostān could keep Moḥammad but should never again assist him in any adventure (Ebn Esfandiār, I, pp. 253-54; Awliā'-Allāh Āmoli, p. 99; Ebn al-Aṭir, VII, p. 434; Kasravi, p. 27).

The year 895 may be considered the beginning of the end of the Jostanid's power, as a coalition between Rāfe' and Moḥammad made the latter the dominant force throughout Ṭabarestān and Gilān (Ebn Esfandiār I, pp. 254-56). They both were, however, soon defeated and killed by outside powers. Rāfe', who had lost his dominant position in Khorasan in the face of the Saffarid's rising power, was killed in 896, and Moḥammad was killed in Gorgān in 900 while fighting a Samanid army sent against him (Ṭabari, III, pp. 2201, tr. XXXVIII, pp. 91-92; Ebn al-Aṭir, VII, pp. 504-5; Ebn Esfandiār, I, pp. 256-57). It did not take long before Abu Moḥammad Ḥasan b. 'Ali, a Zaydi leader known



as al-Nāṣer al-Kabir and Oṭruš, who had fled the area after the defeat and death of Moḥammad b. Zayd, returned to Ṭabarestān and made common cause with the head of the Samanid army, Moḥammad b. Hārūn, who had fallen out with his Samanid overlord. Jostān III also joined and swore allegiance to him; according to the Zaydi author al-Nāṭeq be'l-Ḥaqq, he was invited by Jostān. Their joined forces were routed by the Samanid army under Aḥmad b. Esmā'il (Ṭabari, III, pp. 2221-22, tr., XXXVIII, p. 117; Ebn al-Aṭir, VII, p. 522; Ebn Esfandiār, I, pp. 259-60, 262-63; al-Nāṭeq be'l-Ḥaqq, pp. 88-89; Awliā'-Allāh Āmoli, pp. 104-5). Nāṣer began missionary activities among the local population by building mosques and converting people to Islam, which led to friction with Jostān and, reportedly, a number of battles between them (al-Nāṭeq be'l-Ḥaqq, p. 89; Ṣābi, pp. 23, 29; Abu'l-'Abbās Ḥasani, p. 75; Awliā'-Allāh Āmoli, p. 106). His rising power alarmed the Samanids, who sent an army against him, which was soundly defeated at Čālus in 913 despite its superior number (Ebn al-Aṭir, VIII, pp. 81-82; Mar'aši, pp. 143-45). Nāṣer was alive until 916, and Jostān III, whose power had diminished considerably with the rise of Nāṣer, died some time in the 910s (Moḥelli, pp. 225-26).

*End of Jostanids.* The decline of Jostanid power started with the loss of the dynasty's independence when Jostān III submitted to the overlordship of al-Nāṣer al-Kabir. There is almost no information concerning this dynasty for three decades following 902. Then the three following names are mentioned without any clue to help determine the exact dates.

'Ali b. Vahsudān. 'Ali was an agent of the caliphate and served in official positions in various cities, including Isfahan, Ray, Damāvand, Qazvin, Abhar, and Zanjān during the years 912-16 (Meskuya, V, pp. 79-93, 103; Ebn al-Aṭir, VIII, pp. 74, 97, 102). He is referred to as a brother of Jostān III and also was accused of having killed him (Ṣāleḥi, p. 474), but it seems that he actually was the latter's grandson. Moḥammad b. Zakariā' Rāzi dedicated to 'Ali his book on medicine, *al-Ṭebb al-maleki*, most probably when 'Ali was the governor of Ray. 'Ali b. Yusof Qeṭṭi (p. 172) mentions him as the lord (*ṣāḥeb*) of Ṭabarestān, which is evidently not accurate. Reports on his death vary in some details. According to more reliable sources, he was killed in his bed by Moḥammad b. Mosāfer (not Aḥmad as in Ebn al-Aṭir) in Qazvin after 917 (Ebn al-Aṭir, VIII, p. 103; Mas'udi, sec. 3588, is incorrect in saying that he was killed in Ray; Ebn Esfan-diār, I, p. 281; Kasravi, p. 32, suggests 919 or later for the date of 'Ali's death).

*Kosrowfiruz*, son of Jostān III. He was one of the rulers of Gilān and Deylamān



who were called upon by al-Nāṣer al-Kabir around 916 to come and pledge their allegiances to him (Ebn Esfandiār, I, p. 274; Awliā'-Allāh Āmoli, p. 109). Kōsrowfiruz was subservient to his own uncle, 'Ali b. Vahsudān, who represented the authority of the caliph in Eraq-e Ajami. According to Şāleḫi (p. 474), he was killed in a battle against Mohammad b. Mosāfer.

The last member of the dynasty mentioned is Mahdi, son of Kōsrowfiruz. The only piece of information that we have about him is that, defeated in a battle against Mohammad b. Mosāfer, he ran away to Asfār in search of support (ibid), upon which Mohammad b. Mosāfer, the founder of the Mosaferid dynasty, became the new ruler of Gilān (Kasravi, pp. 33-34).

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