



## ḲALAF B. AḤMAD

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**ḲALAF B. AḤMAD** b. Moḥammad, Abu Aḥmad (d. 399/1009), Amir in Sistān of the “second line” of Saffarids, who ruled between 352/963 and 393/1003 and may be termed “the Khalafids” after an ancestor (the grandfather of the restored Amir Abu Ja‘far Aḥmad). He skillfully retained his political authority at a time when Sistān was under pressure from more powerful neighbors, such as his suzerains, the Samanids and, latterly, from the nascent might of the [Ghaznavids](#); and he achieved a reputation far beyond Sistān as a scholar of the religious sciences in his own right, as well as a patron of ulema and littérateurs at his court in Zarang.

Ḳalaf was the son of Amir Abu Ja‘far Aḥmad, who had restored the fortunes of the Saffarid house after the overthrow of the “first line” of the dynasty. Little is known of his early life, except that he was born in 326/937 (Yāqut, *Boldān* III, p. 192), and that from the age of about 20 years he appears on the coinage as his father’s heir. He seems to have spent many of his early years in study, including at Nišāpur, qualifying as a hadith-transmitter whose transmission was sound. Sam‘āni (VII, pp. 81-2) and Yāqut (III, p. 192) each provide lists of his Khurasanian teachers; he seems to have had a particular leaning to the Shafi‘ite legal school, and himself transmitted material to the celebrated Shafi‘ite biographer of the ulema in Nišāpur, Ebn al-Bayye‘ (Sam‘āni, VII, p. 82; see [ABŪ ‘ABD-ALLĀH B. AL-BAYYE‘](#)).

During the years after he succeeded his father on the throne in Zarang, he shared authority there with Abu’l-Ḥosayn Ṭāher b. Moḥammad, who was apparently a Saffarid on his mother’s side, and made him regent while he



himself departed on the hajj in 355/966 (*Tārik-e Sistān*, pp. 327-28, tr. pp. 268-69). On his return he required military help from the Samanids to regain his authority, but although Abu'l-Ḥosayn Ṭāher died in 359/970, the struggle to keep Ḳalaf out of his kingdom continued under his son Ḥosayn; according to the *Tārik-e Sistān* (pp. 335-41, tr. pp. 273-79), this civil warfare went on sporadically for some years. A new factor affected the politics of Sistān with the arrival of Sebüktegin, the Turkish ruler in Ghazna, who had recently seized control of [Bost](#) as well. Ḳalaf regained full control of Sistān only after Ḥosayn died in 373/983. It is probable that by now he had ceased to pay any tribute to the Samanids. Sebüktegin's power made Ḳalaf's claims over Bost increasingly difficult to maintain, and a precedent had been set for intervention in Sistān, which Sebüktegin's son Maḥmud was to revive some twenty years later.

The subsequent years were the zenith of Ḳalaf's fame. He received the honorific of *Wali-al-Dawla* from the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Qāder (Lane-Poole, III, pp. 16-17, no. 36, p. 18 no. 40; Miles, pp. 44-45, no. 56), and tranquility and security reigned in Sistān (*Tārik-e Sistān*, pp. 341-44, tr. pp. 279-81). Scholars and literary men flocked to his court, including the famed poet and secretary Abu'l-Faṭḥ Bosti, and the celebrated poet and author of *maqāmāt*, [Badi'-al-Zamān Hamadāni](#), who named his Ḳalafiyya *maqāma* (Hamadāni, p. 210) after the Amir. Above all, Ḳalaf achieved fame far beyond Sistān for commissioning an immense, hundred-volume Qur'an commentary; this non-extant work is said to have incorporated all earlier variants and commentaries. There was apparently a copy in the Ṣābuniya madrasa in Nišāpur in 'Otbi's time ('Otbi, I, p. 375; Ebn-al-Aṭir, IX, p. 173), and it is said to have been extant until the beginning of the 7th/13th century, its size doubtless militating against its being copied.

Ḳalaf adopted an expansionist policy towards the Buyids of Kermān, which he could not, however, sustain (*Tārik-e Sistān*, p. 345, tr. p. 281; Ebn al-Aṭir, IX, pp. 82-4). He quarreled with his own sons and became increasingly arbitrary and violent in his dealings with them. After he brought about his son Ṭāher's death in 392/1002, Ṭāher's troops sought help against Ḳalaf from Maḥmud of Ghazna. The general mood in Sistān now changed from support for the Saffarid house to a movement in favor of Ghaznavid rule. Maḥmud came personally with his army, besieged Ḳalaf in his Ṭāq fortress and overthrew him in 393/1002, thereafter incorporating Sistān into his own empire. Ḳalaf lingered in captivity, one made increasingly rigorous after his attempts at creating



intrigue against Maḥmud, until his death in 309/1009 (‘Oṭbi, I, pp. 373-74; Gardizi, p. 177; *Tāriḳ-e Sistān*, pp. 352-53, tr. 287-88). With his deposition, the Saffarid line almost certainly came to an end, since there are no firm grounds for connecting the later Maleks of Nimruz with the former dynasty.

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