



KHWARAZMSHAHS III. THE LINE OF ANUŠTIGIN

After the Saljuq takeover in Khwarazm in the early 1040s, the Saljuq Sultans appointed various governors in the province, including [Alp Arslān](#)'s (r. 1063-72) son Arslān Arġun, a son of the vizier Neẓām-al-Molk (1018-92), and several Turkish *ġolām* commanders (see [BARDA](#) and [BARDADĀRI](#)). One of these last was [Anuštigin Ġarča'i](#), Malek Šāh's (r. 1073-92) *taštdār*, or keeper of the royal washing bowls, who was appointed *ca.* 470/1077 as nominal Khwarazmshah. It was not, however, until the sultanate of Berk-Yaruq (Bark-Yāroq) b. Malek Šāh (r. 1094-1105) that another military slave commander, Ekinči b. Qočqar, became governor with the official title of Khwarazmshah in 490/1097. He was killed almost immediately, and the governor of Khorasan, the Amir-e Dād Ḥabaši, now gave the office to Anuštigin's son Qoṭb-al-Din Abu'l-Fatḥ Arslāntigin Moḥammad (r. 1097-1127; see Bosworth, 1968, pp. 142-43), thus inaugurating the fourth and most splendid of the lines of the Khwarazmshahs, whose power lasted for over 130 years (490-628/1097-1231), until the incoming Mongols ended their dominion (for the successive Khwarazmshahs and their reigns, see Bosworth, 1996, no. 89, pp. 178-80).

These Khwarazmshahs were, at least until the death of Sultan Sanjar (r. 1118-57) in 552/1157 and the subsequent steep decline of the Great Saljuqs, vassals of the Saljuqs, but latterly they were able to pursue entirely independent policies. For a brief while, they built up an extensive empire and were the dominant power in the Islamic East, even threatening the Abbasid



Caliph in Baghdad, before they were in turn overwhelmed by the Mongols in the 13th century.

Qoṭb-al-Din Arslāntigin Moḥammad governed as a faithful vassal of Sanjar. He led a Khwarazmian contingent in Sanjar's army when the latter marched into western Persia and Iraq against his nephew Maḥmud b. Moḥammad b. Malek Šāh in 513/1119, and acted as a mediator between the Qara-khanid ruler in Samarqand, Arslān Khan Moḥammad (r. 1102-29), and malcontents in his khanate in 507/1113-14 (Kafesoğlu, pp. 43-44; Bosworth, 1968, pp. 120, 139-40).

Arslāntigin's son 'Alā'-al-Din Qizilarslān Atsiz (r. 521-51/1127-56) was originally equally loyal to Sanjar, and in 524/1130 accompanied the Sultan on his campaign against Arslān Khan Moḥammad and then in 529/1135 on the campaign against the Ghaznavid Bahrām Šāh b. Mas'ud III (r. 1117-57?). But thereafter he began to pursue a much more independent line and was the real founder of the dynasty's glory, though still nominally being Sanjar's vassal. He rebelled against Sanjar in 536/1141-42, but in return suffered two invasions of Khwarazm by Sanjar, and he also had to pay tribute to the pagan Qara Khitay invaders of Transoxania from the northern and eastern parts of Inner Asia. He had more success against the pagan Turks of the steppes to the west of Khwarazm and in the Manḡišlaq peninsula to the east of the Caspian Sea, but the extent of his power was still essentially confined to Khwarazm itself (see Kafesoğlu, pp. 44-72; Bosworth, 1968, pp. 143-46, 150).

Atsiz's son and successor Tāj-al-Donyā wa'l-Din Abu'l-Faṭḥ Il-Arslān (r. 551-67/1156-72) was fortunate in that Sanjar's death and the decay of Great Saljuq power in western Persia left him a free hand for intervening in Transoxania against the Qara-khanids there; for although both the Khwarazmshahs and the Qara-khanids continued to be tributary to the Qara Khitay, the latter left Il-Arslān largely alone provided that tribute was paid regularly. Il-Arslān was thus able to invade Transoxania in 553/1158 in aid of Qarluq tribal rebels against the Khan of Samarqand, Čaḡrī Khan 'Ali, and in 560/1165 he led an abortive invasion of Khorasan against the Oghuz (see [GOZZ](#)) amirs who had assumed power there after Sanjar's death (see Kafesoğlu, pp. 73-83; Bosworth, 1968, pp. 185-88).

'Alā'-al-Din Tekeš (r. 567-96/1172-1200), Il-Arslān's son and successor, continued the expansionist policies of his father. Although he obtained his throne with Qara Khitay help, he soon threw off their yoke and repelled the resulting Qara Khitay invasion of Khwarazm; even so, for most of his reign he



remained faithful to his suzerains. In northern Khorasan, he became involved in a protracted struggle, which lasted for nearly twenty years, with his brother and rival for power, Solṭān Šāh, and with the Ghurid Sultan Giāṭ-al-Din Moḥammad (r. 1163-1203). Tekeš cultivated close links with the Oghuz and Qepčāq tribes to the north of Khwarazm and the Aral Sea, and recruited them into his army for the expansionist policies now aimed at Persia. Many of these Turkmens were still pagan, and they gained notoriety in Persia for their barbarous violence and cruelty. In 588/1192 Tekeš came to Rayy and western Persia, demanding recognition as supreme ruler over those lands, and two years later, in 590/1194, he defeated and killed the last Great Saljuq Sultan Ṭoḡrīl III b. Arslān (r. 1176-94). He was poised to attack Iraq and overturn the Abbasid caliphate, but his death was the signal for a rising and general massacre of the hated Khwarazmian troops in the Persian lands (see Kafesoğlu, pp. 83-146; Bosworth, 1968, pp. 181-83, 188-92).

Tekeš's son and successor 'Alā'-al-Din Moḥammad (r. 596-617/1200-20) managed, with Qara Khitay help, finally to eject the Ghurids from Khorasan, and when the Ghurid empire started to break up, he took over much of their territory in Khorasan and northern Afghanistan. He also succeeded to gain much of the Qara-khanids' authority in Transoxania, and renewed his father's anti-Abbasid policy in western Persia, threatening to depose the Caliph al-Nāṣer (r. 1180-1225) and set up an Alid in his place, but his campaign in western Persia was halted by the winter weather of 614/1217-18 (see Kafesoğlu, pp. 147-283; Bosworth, 1968, pp. 183-84, 192-95).

By now, the menace of the Mongols in the Semirech'e and on the northern fringes of Transoxania was growing. The last Khwarazmshah, 'Alā'-al-Din Moḥammad's son Jalāl-al-Din Mengüberti (r. 1220-31; the exact form of this Turkish designation remains obscure) soon had to abandon the Khwarazmian capital Gorgānj and flee to India for three years (1221-24). He then moved to western Persia and was involved in warfare against the local Atabegs, the Caliph al-Nāṣer, the Saljuqs of Rum, and the Georgians. Jalāl-al-Din managed to repel a Mongol attack on Isfahan in 624/1227, but he was killed in Diyarbakır in 628/1231. With his death, the once imposing, but in practice transient, Khwarazmian empire did not exist any more, and almost all of the eastern Islamic lands and much of the Middle East passed under Mongol control.

Little specific is known about the internal functioning of the Khwarazmian state, but its bureaucracy, directed as it was by Persian officials, must have followed the Saljuq model. This is the impression gained from the various



Khwarazmian chancery and financial documents preserved in the collections of *enšā'* documents and epistles from this period. The authors of at least three of these collections—Rašid-al-Din Vaṭvāṭ (d. 1182-83 or 1187-88), with his two collections of *rasā'el*, and Bahā'-al-Din Baġdādi, compiler of the important *Ketāb al-tawaṣṣol elā al-tarassol*—were heads of the Khwarazmian chancery. The Khwarazmshahs had viziers as their chief executives, on the traditional pattern, and only as the dynasty approached its end did 'Alā'-al-Din Moḥammad in *ca.* 615/1218 divide up the office amongst six commissioners (*wakildārs*; see Kafesoġlu, pp. 5-8, 17; Horst, pp. 10-12, 25, and *passim*). Nor is much specifically known of court life in Gorgānj under the Khwarazmshahs, but they had, like other rulers of their age, their court eulogists, and as well as being a noted stylist, Rašid-al-Din Vaṭvāṭ also had a considerable reputation as a poet in Persian.

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