



MAS'UDI IV. PERSIAN FIGURES OF THE EARLY CALIPHAL PERIOD

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The governor of Madā'en under 'Omar was the ascetic Salmān Fāresi, who wore wool and ate barley bread. On his deathbed, he expressed his fear that he would be punished for owning too much, even though his house contained nothing but a few utensils (*Moruj* III, sec. 1527).

'Omar forbade non-Arabs (*ʿajam*) to enter Medina, but made an exception for [Abu Lo'lo'a](#), a Zoroastrian carpenter, painter, and blacksmith from Nehāvand recommended by Moğira b. Šo'ba. Abu Lo'lo'a asked 'Omar to reduce his tax assessment (*ḵarāj*) of two dirhams a day, but the caliph refused. Infuriated, Abu Lo'lo'a stabbed him to death and then killed himself (*Moruj* III, secs. 1559-60).

During the struggle between 'Ali b. Abi Ṭāleb and Mo'āwia, three Ḵāreji dissidents swore to execute the two contenders, along with 'Amr b. 'Āṣ, governor of Egypt. According to one account, the assassin sent against 'Amr was Zādawayh, a *mawlā* of the Banu 'Anbar. He killed Ḵāreja, judge of Egypt, mistaking him for 'Amr, and was executed (*Moruj* III, secs. 1730, 1740).



The Barmaki family of viziers was descended from a custodian of the fire-temple in Balkh (see [BARMAKIDS](#)). The family had some connection with the king of the Turks, and with the Umayyad caliph Hešām. Yaḥyā b. Qāleḍb. Barmak and his sons Ja'far and Faḏl managed the government under Rashid. Yaḥyā convened scholars and sectarians to discuss such matters as “latency and manifestation, eternity and createdness, negation and affirmation, motion and rest, contiguity and separation, existence and non-existence, particles and the *ṭafra* (the “leap” postulated to solve Zeno’s paradox), bodies and accidents, the confirmation and denial of reliability (of transmitters), denial and affirmation of (divine) attributes, capacity to act and responsibility for actions, essence, quantity, quiddity, attribution, generation and corruption, whether the imamate is conferred by decree or by election, and all the rest of the topics covered in dialectical theology” (*Moruj IV*, sec. 2564). In 187/803, Rašid deposed the Barmakis, executing Ja'far and imprisoning Yaḥyā and Faḏl. One account has it that they denied him access to money, another that they secretly released an Alid prisoner, and yet another that Ja'far consummated his marriage to Rašid’s sister ‘Abbāsa against the caliph’s orders (*Moruj IV*, secs. 2559-618).

Two ‘Abbasid caliphs were born to slave mothers identified as coming from regions associated with Iran: al-Ma'mun (r. 198-218/813-33), born to Marājel, from Bādḡis; and al-Motawakkel (r. 232-47/847-61) born to Šojā', from Ṭokārestān (Mas'udi, 1894, pp. 349, 361). Other caliphal mothers may have been Iranian but are not identified as such.

Several Persian physicians were active at the caliphal court. [Jebril b. Boktišu'](#), physician to al-Rašid, conducted an experiment to demonstrate the effect of eating a certain fish along with wine and cold water (*Moruj IV*, sec. 2511). A “Persian practitioner” (*motaṭabbeḥ fāresi*) from Ṭus predicted Rašid’s death on the basis of a urine sample (*Moruj IV*, sec. 2554). Ebn Māsawayh or Māsuya attended al-Ma'mun on his deathbed and advised al-Mo'tašem on a sauce for fish (*Moruj IV*, secs. 2783, 2789-90). The physicians Boktišu', Ebn Māsawayh, and Miḳā'il participated in a discussion with the caliph al-Wāteq on “how medical knowledge is attained and its principles acquired, whether by sense perception, inference, first principles, or tradition” (*Moruj IV*, secs 2857-869).

In a jocular speech, the buffoon 'Ali b. Jonayd Eskāfi compared caliphal protocol with “the conditions set by Jassās Šāši and Qalawayh the Mimic” (*Moruj IV*, secs. 2791-92).



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