

Iran and the East

In the East a new power was rising—that of the Turks. At first these came as individuals—slaves recruited by capture or purchase and trained for military duties. Many reached high positions, becoming generals, governors, and founders of dynasties. They were followed by incursions of free Turks, still in their own tribal organization and under their own leaders. The most important of these were the Seljuqs, a family which appears to have entered the Islamic lands in the late tenth century and which established the great Sultanate during the eleventh century. The first passage is translated from an Arabic chronicle and is probably based on a Turkish family or tribal tradition. The following three are taken from Persian chronicles; one of them deals with an episode in Ghaznavid history; the others with Seljuq rulers. The final passage shows very clearly the new and reduced role assigned to the Caliphate under the aegis of the Sultanate.

18. The Ancestor of the Seljuqs (Tenth Century?)

Tuqaq, which in the Turkish language means iron bow, was a man of resource, discernment, and competence. The king of the Turks left the reins of government in his hands and was illuminated by the lamps of his judgment and resource. One day the king of the Turks, whose name was Yabgū, mustered his soldiers to invade the land of Islam. The amir Tuqaq stopped him from this. The king of the Turks saw in this opposition to himself. Tuqaq went too far and slapped the king's face. The king gave orders to seize and bind him. The amir Tuqaq, becoming angry, resorted to the mercy of God [gap in original] separated from

him, and they carried the king to his house. He stayed quietly, like a hyena in its lair, and was perplexed as to his conduct and opinion. He chose to go to amir Tuqaq and conciliate him. Yabgū, the king of the Turks, kept his wives hidden in his heart until amir Tuqaq died. When the amir Seljuq, the son of the amir Tuqaq, reached the age of puberty, the king of the Turks gave him the command of the army and conferred on him the title Subashi, which in their language means commander of the army.

The wife of the king of the Turks used to make her husband fear the amir Seljuq ibn Tuqaq and prevented him from trusting him or being at ease with him. This woman did not hide herself from him. One day she said to her husband, "Kingship is barren and cannot bear partnership. You will not savor the wine of kingship unless Seljuq is killed, and the dawn of your dominion will not shine unless you let him taste the cup of death. For soon he will trouble your realm and strive for your destruction." This was said within the sight and hearing of amir Seljuq. Thereupon the amir Seljuq went with his horses and soldiers to the land of Islam and was vouchsafed the bliss of the true religion. Choosing the neighborhood of Jand, he drove out the infidel rulers and established himself there. Amir Seljuq lived for a hundred years. One night in a dream he saw himself ejaculate a fire, the sparks of which reached to the East and to the West. He asked an interpreter of dreams, who said, "From your seed kings will be born who will rule the farthest ends of the world."

Al-Ḥusaynī, *Akhbār al-Dawla al-Saljūqiyya*, pp. 1-2.

19. The Looting of Āmul (1035)

Amir Maṣ'ūd, may God be pleased with him, reached Āmul on Saturday, 12 Rabī' I [426/January 25, 1035], in safety, triumph, and victory. He stopped at a place and gave orders to set up the pavilion and the big tent, and he made camp there in good fortune. Then he told the chief of the office of chancery, Abū Naṣr, that letters must be sent all over the land, by the hand of messengers, announcing the victory which had been won. The letters

were written and soldiers and palace pages took them. On Friday he held an audience, with great pomp, at which the 'Alawī¹ and the notables of the city all came to pay their respects. Then the amir said to his vizier, "Sit down in the tent and seat the 'Alawī and the notables of the city, for we have a message for them." So the vizier went to the tent and he seated these people. Then the amir began to drink and make merry, and the boon companions and the revelers joined him. Meanwhile, Abū Nasr returned, having endured much trouble in dispatching the victory letters and the messengers. I was on duty in the office of chancery when a retainer came and summoned me. I took ink and paper and went before the throne. He made me a sign to sit, and I sat. The amir said, "Write: This is what must be collected from Āmul and Ṭabaristān and what must be collected by Abū Sahl Ismā'il. Nishāpūri gold, 1 million dinars; Greek and other robes, 1000 pieces; *Mahfūri*² and carpets, 1000 pieces; garments, 5000 pieces."

I wrote this down. Then I rose, and he said, "Take this copy to the vizier and give him my message. Let him tell these people that they must arrange to supply what we have demanded quickly and in full so that we shall not be obliged to send a collector or to write orders of assignment for the army to seize the money by force."

I took the copy to the vizier and presented it to him secretly and gave him the message. He laughed and said to me, "You see how they loot and burn this country and ruin our reputation. They will not get 3000 dirhams! This is a great sin! Even if they turn all Khurāsān upside down, they will not get this gold and these clothes. As for the Sultan, he is busy drinking wine. When he said this, he was thinking of his own luxuries and money and treasures." Then the vizier turned to the 'Alawī and the notables of Āmul and said, "Know that the Gurgānis, after having unsheathed their swords against their sovereign and rebelled against him and been scattered, will certainly not see this country with their own eyes again. He will set up a strong ruler here, like the

¹ A descendant of 'Alī, and therefore a leading figure among the townspeople.

² A kind of textile.

one in Khārazm, to establish order in this country, and you will be free from troubles."

The Āmulis called down blessings, and then he said, "And know that our lord, the Sultan, has spent a great deal of money to send his army here and to overcome these oppressors, and a contribution to him from these parts would therefore be proper." They said, "We shall obey and do all that is within our power, but this country is poor and its people are impoverished. Our contribution was fixed by decree some time ago as, from Āmul and Ṭabaristān, 100,000 dirhams and an equal quantity of *mahfūris* and carpets. If he asks for more than this, the subjects will endure great hardship. What, therefore, does the lord vizier command now?"

"The Sultan," said the vizier, "has commanded what is in this letter and has given Abu'l-Faḍl such and such a message." Then he read the letter to them and explained the message and said, "I will make it easier for you, in such a way that what is written in the document will come from Gurgān and Ṭabaristān and Sāri and all these parts so that you should not suffer hardship."

When the Āmulis heard this statement they stood aghast and did not know what to do, and they said, "We cannot reply to this offhand, for no one is able to pay all this money. If it is permitted, we shall return to our people and tell them all about it."

The vizier said to me, "Tell the Sultan what you have heard." So I went and told him, and he replied, "That is fine. Today they have gone to their people; tomorrow they will return ready to pay. This money must come quickly so that we do not have to stay here long."

I came and I said this, and the Āmulis returned in the deepest distress. The vizier also returned, and the next day the Sultan held an audience. After the audience, when he was alone with the vizier, he said to him, "What should be done today about this money?"

To this the vizier replied, "May my master's life be long! I would be happier if the treasury could be filled from the country, but this amount is immense, and the Āmulis yesterday gave a very poor response. What, therefore, does my master command?"

"What is written in the document," said the Sultan, "is required

from Āmul alone. If they comply willingly, well and good; if they do not, then we must send Abū Sahl Ismā'īl to the city to take a larger amount by force."

The vizier returned to the tent and assembled the Āmulis, of whom far fewer had come this time, and told them what the Sultan had said.

The 'Alawī and the qāḍī said, "Yesterday we held a meeting and went over this matter. A great lamentation arose, and, indeed, they made no response and went away. It is certain that last night many people fled from the city. But we could not flee, for we would not commit a sin, and we remain obedient. Now it is for the Sultan and the lord vizier to decide what the situation requires."

The vizier knew that what they said was the truth, but he did not dare to speak. He therefore summoned Abū Sahl Ismā'īl, entrusted the notables to him, and sent him to the city. Abū Sahl convened a *diwān* and assembled the people, and those who fell into his hands informed him about those who had fled, so that there was no place in the city from which wailing and lamentation did not arise. The horsemen and the foot soldiers went and seized the fugitives and brought them back, and Abū Sahl Ismā'īl distributed written assignments to the army to collect their pay from the people. They set fire to the city and did whatever they wanted and took whomever they wanted, and it was like the end of the world. The *diwān* did its work, and the Sultan was not aware of what was happening, and no one had the courage to inform him of it and tell him the truth. In four days the army collected 160,000 dinars, as well as twice that amount in random looting, and also various provisions. This gave rise to a great scandal, in that seven or eight months later it became known that some of the afflicted from this city went to Baghdad and appealed to the Caliph, and it was said that they even went on to Mecca, may God preserve it. The men of Āmul are weak but they are eloquent and litigious, and they were right in what they said.

All these crimes and misdeeds are the fault of Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Irāqī and the others, but it was the duty of the amir, may God be pleased with him, to take proper care in such matters. It is very hard for me to write such words with my pen, but what else can

I do? In history there is no complaisance. If those who were with us in Āmul read these chapters and desire justice, they will say that what I have written is the truth.

Bayhaqī, *Tārikh*, pp. 460-462.

20. Sultan Malikshāh (1072-1092)

The army which was always at the side of Malikshāh and whose names were recorded in the muster rolls of the *diwān* consisted of 45,000 horsemen. Their fiefs [*iqṭā'*] were scattered in different parts of the realm so that wherever they went they should have fodder and expenses ready at hand. The justice and statecraft of Sultan Malikshāh were such that during his time nobody suffered any injustice. And if any man appeared, claiming to have suffered an injustice, no one interposed to deny him access. He spoke with the Sultan face-to-face and demanded justice. As the proverb says, "Whose zeal is great, his value is high." Among the good deeds of Sultan Malikshāh are the water reservoirs which he had constructed on the road to the Ḥijāz, the abolition of tolls and protection tax on the pilgrim road, and the granting of an *iqṭā'* and revenues to the amir of the two holy places, who previously used to take seven red dinars from every pilgrim. He showed much kindness to the desert Arabs and the sojourners [*muḥājir*] of the mighty Ka'ba, and some of these revenues still remain.

*Give your religion a share of your worldliness
and yourself be censor over yourself
Give every one of your limbs reins of sense
and reason, and a bridle of piety.*

Among sports and spectacles his favorite was hunting. I saw his hunt book, written by the hand of Abū Ṭāhir Khātūnī, in which it was recorded that in one day the Sultan had hit seventy gazelles with arrows. It was his rule to give a Maghribī dinar to the poor for every quarry he hit. In every hunting ground in Iraq and Khurāsān he made towers of hoofs of gazelles and wild asses. In the land of Transoxania, in the Arabian desert, in Marj, Khūzistān and the province of Iṣfahān, wherever there was plentiful hunting, he left memorials.