

Khāṣṣ Beg b. Palang-Eri

Khāṣṣ Beg b. Palang-Eri (d. Šafar 548/April–May 1153) was the most powerful *amīr* at the court of the Saljūq sultans of Iraq in the fourth decade of the sixth/twelfth century. His name was Beg Arslan (Nīshāpūrī, 192). According to an augmented version of the *Saljūq-nāma*, the most ancient chronicle of the Saljūqs, Khāṣṣ Beg grew up among a group of Turkmens who had their summer pastures on Mount Sabalān, in Eastern Azarbaijan, and their winter pastures probably in the Transcaucasian region of Mughān or Arrān, by the River Araxes (Faḍlallāh, 121–2; Lambton, 241). His parents, who were tribal leaders, had been involved in Saljūq politics during the sultanate of Toghrīl II (r. 526–9/1132–4) (Durand-Guédy, 1147, 168). The name of Khāṣṣ Beg's father is written "B.L.N.K.R.Y" in the sources. It has been read alternatively "Palang-Eri" (leopard/panther-man, hence heroic warrior), "Palangarī," or "Belengerī" and remains problematic (Bosworth, Notes, 104).

Possibly, Saljūq sultan Mas'ūd b. Muḥammad (r. 529–47/1134–52) met Khāṣṣ Beg in 540/1146 (Durand-Guédy, Goodbye?, 130). The sultan, who had lost most of his power to the great *amīrs* of servile origin, saw in him a potential ally to break their stranglehold. Because of his proximity to the sultan, Arslan Beg was nicknamed Khāṣṣ Beg (lit., the Turkmen *amīr* [beg] at the special service of the sultan [khāṣṣ]), a title equivalent to the Turkic *ināq* used in the sources after the Mongol conquest (Sümer, *Oğuzlar*, 402).

Khāṣṣ Beg's career took off in 541/1146–7, when a triumvirate of the great *amīrs* of Fars (Boz-Aba, d. 542/1147), Rayy (Abbās, d. 541/1147), and eastern

Azerbaijan and Arrān (Ibn Toghan-Yürek, d. 541/1147) put Mas'ūd under tutelage. During a campaign led by his master, Ibn Toghan-Yürek, against the Georgians, Khāṣṣ Beg killed him, took control of his *iqṭā'* (land grant), and established his pre-eminence over the other *amīrs* of north-western Iran. Eventually, he marched on the capital Hamadān, at the head of a coalition of *amīrs*, to help Mas'ūd against Boz-Aba. The great Battle of Qara-Tegin (4 Šafar 542/5 July 1147), during which Boz-Aba was captured, made Khāṣṣ Beg the strongman of the Saljūq sultanate of Iraq. During the campaign he had managed to have put all Azerbaijan under his sway; he had his rivals killed (Boz-Aba after Qara-Tegin, the *amīr* Tatar the following year). He eventually became *hājib* (chamberlain), which meant he had monitored the access to the sultan. He also became *atabeg* (tutor) of a very young son of Mas'ūd (Qumī, 159). The Supreme sultan Sanjar (d. 552/1157), the head of the Saljūq family who was based in Khurasan, became preoccupied by Khāṣṣ-Beg's power but failed to curb it. When Mas'ūd died in 547/1152, Khāṣṣ Beg organised the succession in Hamadān and had Malik-Shāh b. Maḥmūd (d. 555/1160) recognised as sultan, deposing him after only three months and replacing him with his brother Muḥammad II b. Maḥmūd (r. 548–54/1153–9). However as soon as Muḥammad II arrived at Hamadān, he had Khāṣṣ Beg killed by *amīrs* who resented his pre-eminence.

Khāṣṣ Beg's career (as that of his ally Shumla, d. 570/1174–5, the lord of Khūzistān, in South-Western Iran) shows that the Turkmens continued to play an important role in politics and warfare after the Saljūq conquest of the first half of the fifth/eleventh century (Durand-Guédy,