



## BAHRĀMŠĀH B. MAS'ŪD (III)

**BAHRĀMŠĀH B. MAS'ŪD III B. EBRĀHĪM, ABU'L-MOẒAFFAR**, Ghaznavid sultan in eastern Afghanistan and northwestern India with the favored honorific title (among many) of Yamīn-al-Dawla wa Amīn-al-Mella, reigned 511-?552/1117-?1157. Bahrāmšāh was one of Mas'ūd III's several sons, though probably not by the latter's wife Jawhar Kātūn, daughter of Malekšāh, the Mahd-e 'Erāq, mother of his short-reigned predecessor [Arslānšāh](#).

When Mas'ūd III died in 508/1115, a struggle for the succession ensued among his sons, with the throne passing briefly to the dead sultan's second and third sons Šīrzīl and Arslānšāh. Bahrāmšāh escaped imprisonment by the latter through being fortunately away from Ġazna in Zamīndāvar at the time of his father's death. He failed to assert his claim militarily at Tīgīnābād in the vicinity of modern Kandahār, hence fled via Sīstān to the court of the Saljuq sultan of the east, Sanjar. Sanjar (who was impressed by Bahrāmšāh's skill with the spear and bow, according to an anecdote of Faḡr-e Modabber's) provided military help for the Ghaznavid claimant, and a joint Saljuq-Saffarid army defeated Arslānšāh outside Ġazna in 510/1117 and placed Bahrāmšāh on the throne there. Bahrāmšāh nevertheless had to flee when Arslānšāh returned with an army from India, but the return of a Saljuq force enabled Bahrāmšāh to secure his position once more and to dispose of Arslānšāh once and for all (512/1118).

Bahrāmšāh now began an undisputed reign of some four decades, almost as lengthy as that of his grandfather [Ebrāhīm b. Mas'ūd I](#), remaining, except for one brief episode, the faithful vassal of Sanjar and the Saljuqs, a dependence



expressed in the inclusion of Sanjar's name, together with that of the 'Abbasid caliph, on the coinage which Bahrāmšāh minted for use in eastern Afghanistan. Also, the Ghaznavid had to dispatch his eldest son Dawlatšāh to the Saljuq court at Marv as a hostage and to pay a heavy tribute to Sanjar. Only once did Bahrāmšāh's restiveness at this last requirement break out into positive action, when in 529/1135 he renounced allegiance and the payment of tribute to Sanjar; but the advent of a Saljuq army, which plundered Ġazna and drove Bahrāmšāh temporarily into India, brought him to heel again, and it is possible that he fought alongside other dependent princes of the Saljuqs in Sanjar's army in 536/1141 at the battle of the Qatvān Steppe against the Qarā Ketāy.

The money to pay this tribute doubtless stemmed mainly from the plunder of India, which continued, as in earlier Ghaznavid times, to serve as a milch cow for the sultans, although precise details of the Ghaznavid campaigns there are lacking in both the Islamic and the indigenous Indian sources. We do, however, know about Bahrāmšāh's expedition into India during the early years of his reign in order to suppress a rebellion by the general Moḥammad b. 'Alī Bāḥālīmī (see [bū ḥalīm](#)) and his son Mo'taşem in the western Panjab.

Bahrāmšāh's later years were clouded by threats from the rising power of the Šansabānī family of Ġūr in central Afghanistan (see [ghurids](#)). Bahrāmšāh's attempts to extend the traditional suzerainty of his house over the Ghurids brought a riposte from the latter. Sayf-al-Dīn Sūrī, Bahā'-al-Dīn Sūrī and 'Alā'-al-Dīn Ḥosayn captured Ġazna in 543/1148, but the next year Bahrāmšāh reappeared from the Indian frontier lands and took his vengeance on the Ghurid leaders and those in Ġazna who had collaborated with them. These measures provoked 'Alā'-al-Dīn Ḥosayn's second expedition against Ġazna, which led to its destruction as an imperial capital and center of art and culture for the eastern Islamic world and earned for the Ghurid the unenviable nickname of Jahānsūz "world-incendiary" (these events are probably to be placed in 544 or 545/1150). The sumptuous buildings erected by the Ghaznavids from the spoils of India and the rich libraries assembled there were now destroyed or dispersed, and on his march back to Ġūr 'Alā'-al-Dīn further devastated Ghaznavid palaces at Bost and probably also at Laškari [Bāzār](#).

Bahrāmšāh only dared to return from India to Ġazna after 'Alā'-al-Dīn had been rash enough to provoke Sanjar and to suffer a defeat from the latter near Herat (547/1152). The date of Bahrāmšāh's death is uncertain, but indirect



evidence from the sources would seem to place it in 552/1157. He was succeeded by his son Ƙosrowšāh, under whom the Ghaznavid empire entered its final phase of being reduced to its northwest Indian provinces before the Ghurids dealt it its death-blow in 586/1186.

The Ghaznavid empire, dependent as it was on the Saljuqs and increasingly threatened by the Ghurids, was in Bahrāmšāh's reign only a shadow of what it had been in the previous century. Yet from the literary and cultural point of view, his reign was one of autumnal splendor, for his court was adorned by such outstanding figures of Persian literature as 'Otmān Moḳtārī and Mas'ūd-e Sa'd-e Salmān in the early years of his sultanate, and Sanā'ī, Sayyed Ḥasan and Abu'l-Ma'ālī Naṣr-Allāh in the main part of his reign.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The main primary sources are Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-e nāṣerī*, ed. Ḥabībī, 2nd ed., I, pp. 241-43, 336-45, tr. Raverty, I, pp. 108-11, 340-61, and Ebn al-Aṭīr, years 508, 529, 532, 541, 543, 547, to which details can be added from the sources for Saljuq history (Bondārī, Ḥosaynī) and from later Persian and Indo-Muslim sources like Mostawfī, Mīrḳvānd, and Ferešta. In the absence of more extensive purely historical sources, the supplementary details which can be gleaned from *adab* works like Faḳr-e Modabber's *Ādāb al-ḥarb wa'l-šajā'a* and 'Awfī's *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt*, and from the *dīvāns* of contemporary poets, are of special significance. These sources are utilized by Gulam Mustafa Khan, "A History of Bahrām Shāh of Ghaznīn," *Islamic Culture* 23, 1949, pp. 62-91, 199-235 (also published separately), and by Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids*, pp. 91-120, and idem in *Camb. Hist. Iran* V, pp. 158-61.

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