



BAL'AMĪ, ABU'L-FAẒL MOḤAMMAD

BAL'AMĪ, ABU'L-FAẒL MOḤAMMAD B. 'OBAYD-ALLĀH B. MOḤAMMAD BAL'AMĪ TAMĪMĪ, vizier to the Samanid amir Naṣr b. Aḥmad, father of the vizier and historian Abū 'Alī Moḥammad b. Moḥammad Baḷ'amī (see [amīrak baḷ'amī](#)) and thus member of a distinguished family in the service of the rulers of Transoxania and Khorasan. The unusual *nesba* Baḷ'amī is explained by Sam'ānī, *Ketāb al-ansāb* (Leiden, fol. 90a = ed. Hyderabad, II, pp. 313-14) as either from Baḷ'am, a place in Anatolia which the Omayyad general Maslama b. 'Abd-al-Malek raided and occupied, or else from Baḷ'amān, a village of the Marv oasis where the vizier's forebears had settled since the time of Qotayba b. Moslem (q.v.). Whatever the family's origins—and it is unknown whether they were of pure Arab blood or had been non-Arab, presumably Iranian, *mawālī* or clients of the Arab tribe of Tamīm—they moved to Bukhara where, Sam'ānī states, Baḷ'amīs were still living in his own time (6th/12th century).

Sam'ānī's information here that Abu'l-FaẒl Moḥammad first served [Amīr Esmā'īl b. Aḥmad](#) (r. 279-95/892-907) is uncorroborated in the historical sources. He only appears in the reign of Esmā'īl's grandson Naṣr II b. Aḥmad (r. 301-31/913-42; q.v.). At some unknown date, but probably about 309/921, he became vizier to Naṣr in succession to Abu'l-FaẒl b. Ya'qūb Nīšāpūrī (Maqdesī, p. 337), and from then onwards, he is sporadically mentioned in the sources (Gardīzī, Ebn al-Aṭīr) as involved in military and diplomatic activities. Already in 309/921 he was with the Samanid forces suppressing in a battle near Ṭūs the



revolt of Daylamite Laylī b. No'mān on behalf of the Zaydī 'Alid al-Dā'ī elā'l-Ḥaqq Ḥasan b. Qāsem; in the next year, he combined with the Turkish commander of the Samanids Sīmjūr Dawātī in Ṭabarestān against the Daylamite Mākān b. Kākī (q.v.); and in 321/933 he was with Amir Naṣr in Gorgān conducting operations against the Daylamite ruler of Jebāl and Ray, Mardāvīj b. Zīār (q.v.).

Baḷ'amī also interceded for the release from jail of the commander Abū 'Alī Moḥammad b. Elyās (see [āl-e elyās](#)), who subsequently established for himself a virtually autonomous principality in Kermān; and for the general Ḥosayn b. 'Alī Marvazī or Marv-al-rūḍī, who seems to have been caught up in the Isma'īli Shi'ite movement in Transoxania during the last years of Naṣr b. Aḥmad's reign (see for this episode, Barthold, *Turkestan*², pp. 242-44). Ṭa'ālebī quotes verses of thanks by Ḥosayn addressed to Baḷ'amī after his release from imprisonment in the citadel of Herat (*Yatīma* [Cairo] IV, p. 85, French tr. C. Barbier de Meynard, in *JA*, series 5, 1, 1853, p. 204). Baḷ'amī also played a decisive role in the crisis of the popular revolt in Bukhara, at some date between 317/929 and 320/932, led by the baker Abū Bakr. The amir's brothers, eager for power, were released from prison, and Naṣr himself was absent at Nīšāpūr. By coming to terms with the son of Ḥosayn b. 'Alī Marvazī, Baḷ'amī was able to secure the amir's crossing of the Oxus, his return to the capital, and the quelling of the rebellion.

Baḷ'amī was clearly, together with Jayhānī, the driving force during what seems to have been the reign of a weak and impressionable ruler. He is further praised, e.g., by Sam'ānī, as a maecenas and encourager of poets and scholars, including of the poet Rūdakī (q.v.), and public buildings erected by him at Marv and Bukhara are mentioned. Not surprisingly, Neẓām-al-Molk praises the Baḷ'amīs as the viziers par excellence of the Samanids (*Sīāsāt-nāma*, ed. Darke¹, 1347 Š./1968, p. 218, tr. idem, London, 1968, p. 178). A collection of royal decrees (*tawqī'āt*) drafted by Baḷ'amī is mentioned by Neẓāmī 'Arūzī (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. M. Qazvīnī, rev. M. Mo'īn, Tehran, 1333 Š./1954, text, p. 22, notes, pp. 23-24, 469). His vizierate endured until 326/938, according to Ebn al-Aṭīr, when he was succeeded in that office by Abū 'Alī Moḥammad Jayhānī. Baḷ'amī died on the night of 10 Šafar 329/13-14 November 940, according to Sam'ānī.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Ebn al-Aṭīr (repr.), VIII, pp. 125, 132, 263, 278, 378.

Nāṣer-al-Dīn Monšī Kermānī, *Nasā'em al-aṣḥār*, ed. Jalāl-al-Dīn Ormavī, Tehran, 1338 Š./1959, p. 35, reproduced in Sayf al-Dīn 'Oqaylī, *Ātāral-wozarā'*, ed. Ormavī, Tehran, 1337 Š./1959, pp. 146-47 (brief, uninformative and inaccurate).

Eṣṭakrī, pp. 260, 307.

Moqaddasī, (Maqdesī), p. 317.

Studies: Barthold, *Turkestan*², pp. 241ff.

D. M. Dunlop, "Baḷ'amī," in *ET*² I, p. 984.