



## BALĀSĀĠŪN

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**BALĀSĀĠŪN**, a town of Central Asia, in early Islamic times the main settlement of the region known as Yeti-su or Semirechye “the land of the seven rivers,” now coming mainly within the eastern part of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The exact site of BalāsāġŪn is uncertain. Barthold, followed by subsequent Soviet scholars, suggested that its site is modern Aq-peshin near Frunze on the northern edge of the Kirgiz SSR, whilst O. I. Smirnova places it 15 miles/24 km to the southwest of Toqmaq (see Jovaynī, tr. Boyle, I, p. 58 n. 21). The early Islamic sources clearly locate it in the valley of the Ču river, but only Moqaddasī (Maqdesī), p. 275, gives any description of it; he calls ValāsakŪn large, populous, and prosperous. It must have been a Sogdian foundation, and in Maġmūd Kāšġarī’s time (second half of the 5th/11th century), Sogdian was still spoken there, together with Turkish; he states that the town also had the Turkish names of Quz-Ordu and Quz-Uluš (*Dīvānloġāt al-Tork*, tr. Besim Atalay, Ankara, 1939-41, I, pp. 30, 62, 64).

BalāsāġŪn is first mentioned by Muslim historians towards the end of the Samanid Amir Našr b. Aġmad’s (q.v.) reign, i.e., ca. 330-31/942-43, when it was overrun by infidel Turks and its Muslim inhabitants (probably trading elements operating from there, since BalāsāġŪn at this time lay well outside the *Dār al-Eslām*) appealed to Bukhara for help (Nezām-al-Molk, *Sīāsāt-nāma*, chap. 46, ed. H. Darke, Tehran, 1340 Š./1961, pp. 290, 295, tr. idem, London, 1960, pp. 220, 224). These Turks were probably the Qarluq founders, some decades later, of the [Qarakhanid](#) tribal confederation, who, from a military base at BalāsāġŪn, succeeded to the Samanid heritage in Transoxania; both



BalāsāġŪn and the nearby town in Farġāna of Ūzgand (Özgend) were to be important centers for the Qarakhanids, held by various members of the ruling family, such as Aġmad Ťoġān Khan b. HārŪn Boġrā Khan, brother of ‘Alītigin, who was in 416/1025 driven out of BalāsāġŪn by his other brother and rival YŪsof Qadīr Khan of Kāšġar and Ŗotan (Bayhaqī, cited in Barthold, *Turkestan*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 285, 294), so that henceforth, it seems to have fallen within the eastern Qarakhanid khanate. It was still only just within the boundaries of Islamic lands, and Ebn al-Aṭīr, ed. Tornberg, IX, pp. 355-56, ed. Beirut, IX, 520, records in 435/1043-44 the conversion of 10,000 tents of Turkish nomads who spent the summer in Bolġār on the Volga and the winter around BalāsāġŪn, and who had been harrying the Muslims in BalāsāġŪn and Kāšġar. The region played a significant cultural role amongst the Qarakhanids. The lexicographer Maġmūd Kāšġarī came from the nearby town of Barskān, and the Turkish language which he describes in his dictionary is essentially that of the local Ćegel, akin to the Qarluġ; and YŪsof Kāšġ Hāġeb, author of the pioneer Turkish *Mirror for Princes*, the *Qutaġgu bilig*, was actually a native of BalāsāġŪn and presented his book to the Qarakhanid ruler of Kāšġar.

In 531/1137 the GŪr Khan of the Qara Khitays (q.v.) conquered BalāsāġŪn from the Qarakhanids and set up his army camp, the Ŗosun-ordu (lit., strong ordu) in the Ću valley near the town (Jovaynī, tr. Boyle, I, p. 355; Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, tr. V. and T. Minorsky, Leiden, 1962, I, pp. 102-03). In the fighting between the Qarakhanids and the Ŗvārazmšāh Sultan ‘Alā’-al-Dīn Moġammad (q.v.) in the opening years of the 7th/13th century, the GŪr Khan reconquered BalāsāġŪn with great slaughter in 607/1210, according to Jovaynī (tr. Boyle, I, p. 360; Barthold, *Turkestan*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 326, 367); but shortly afterwards, it passed into the hands of Jengiz Khan’s Mongols as they advanced against the Nāymān Mongol rival commander KŪĉlŪġ, although the sources give no explicit details of the process (pace Barthold, *ibid.*, p. 402, cf. Boyle, “BalāsāġhŪn,” in *EI*<sup>2</sup>). Whether BalāsāġŪn was destroyed at this time or not, it certainly did not flourish under the Mongols, and it now disappears from historical mention.



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Given in the text. See also Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 487.

*Hodud al-‘alam*, tr. Minorsky, pp. 280, 291.

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