



MOHALLABI, ABU MOḤAMMAD

MOHALLABI, Abu Moḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Moḥammad b. Hārūn (903-63), vizier and literary patron.

Abu Moḥammad Mohallabi was born in 903. He was one of last members to achieve renown from the illustrious clan of the Mohallabids that traced its lineage back nine generations to the army commander al-Mohallab b. Abi Šofra (d. 702 or 703). There is little evidence on his early life, other than Mohallabi's own wistful poetic reflections on the poverty and dire circumstances of his youth (Ṭa'ālebi, II, pp. 223-24).

For much of his early adult life, Mohallabi was an administrator on behalf of several wealthy landowners in [Ahvāz](#). While in the service of one of these landowners, Mohallabi came to the attention of Abu Ja'far Šaymari, the chief administrator to Mo'ezz-al-Dawla, the Buyid (see [BUYIDS](#)) emir (Ar. *amir*) of Baghdad. Mohallabi accompanied Šaymari on several trips to [Baghdad](#) and the [Jebāl](#), and thus appears to have gained his confidence and that of the emir, Mo'ezz-al-Dawla (Yāqut, III, p. 980).

Career as vizier. After Šaymari's death in 950-51, Mo'ezz-al-Dawla selected Mohallabi to supervise his affairs in Iraq. The historian Meskawayh (II, pp. 124-5) stated that Mo'ezz-al-Dawla appointed Mohallabi on account of his knowledge about the vizierate, his courage, and his mastery of both the Arabic



and Persian languages. Similar to the other secretaries serving Buyid emirs, Mohallabi was first addressed with the title of *ostād*, not attaining the title of vizier until the year 956 (Donohue, p. 139).

Encouragement of letters. Contemporaries esteemed Mohallabi for his eloquence. Ebn al-Nadim (p. 149; see FEHREST) reports that his letters and signatory notes were collected in a *diwān*. The few examples of his correspondence that are extant, such as the poem-letter addressed to Abu al-Qāsim Tanuḳi (d. 952), the father of Abu ‘Ali al-Tanuḳi (d. 994) do little to distinguish him from the literary trends current among Buyid littérateurs of the 10th century. Mohallabi’s poetry likewise embodies the elegance and wit of courtiers (Ar. *ẓarf*) of the age. He authored love poetry for a young woman whom he provocatively names *al-tajanni* (the blamer), emphasizing his role as the submissive and tortured lover in a vein similar to ‘Abbās b. al-Aḥnāf (d. ca. 807) who referred to his beloved as *ẓalum* (tyrant) in his poetry (Ta‘ālebi, II, pp. 235-36).

Mohallabi enjoyed the cultivation of a large circle of scholars, littérateurs, and poets in Baghdad. Indeed, Abu Ḥayyān al-Tawḥidi (III, p. 213) believed Mohallabi to be an example of the manner in which one should practice patronage (Ar. *eṣṭenā’*). Contemporary sources recount, with some embellishment, the nightly revelries of Mohallabi’s court, such as the scene of well-known jurists dipping their long white beards into large golden drinking cups and then spraying one another with wine (Yāqut, IV, p. 1874).

The jurists and literati in Mohallabi’s circle represented the intellectual elite of Baghdad during the middle of the 10th century: the above-named jurist and litterateur Abu al-Qāsim al-Tanuḳi (d. 952), the literary anthologist Abu al-Faraj Esfahāni (d. 966), the epistolographer Abu Eshāq al-Ṣābi (d. 994), the poetic critic Abu ‘Ali al-Ḥātemi (d. 998), the Mo‘tazili theologian Abu ‘Abdallāh al-Basri (d. 980), the grammarian Abu Sa‘id al-Sirāfi (d. 979), and many other luminaries of Buyid intellectual and literary life. As a major patron, Mohallabi received many famed poets at his court, such as al-Sari al-Raffā’ (d. 972-73), ‘Ali b. Hārūn b. al-Munajjem (d. 962-3), Ebn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 1001), Ebn Sokkara al-Hāṣemi (d. 995), Ebn al-Baqqāl (d. ca. 986) as well as lesser lights such as ‘Ali b. Eshāq al-Zāhi (d. 963). Mohallabi appears to have held a somewhat hostile view towards the poet Motanabbi (d. 955), and was, if the report of Abu ‘Ali al-Ḥātemi is to be believed, instrumental in arranging for the public humiliation of this famed poet (Ḥātemi, pp. 2-3).



In the year 963, tensions began to surface between Mohallabi and the emir Mo'ezz-al-Dawla, allegedly over fears that the vizier was going to declare his independence from the emir. At this time, Mohallabi was sent on a military expedition to [Oman](#), where he contracted an illness from which he died on 18 September 963. Meskawayh (II, pp. 196-97) reports that Mohallabi died as a result of poisoning.

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