



ALP ARSLĀN

ALP ARSLĀN (b. Moḥarram, 420/January-February, 1029 according to Ebn al-Aṭīr, IX, p. 476; in 424/1032-33 according to Bondārī, *Histoire*, p. 47), Saljuq sultan from 455/1063 until his death in Rabīʿ I, 465/November-December, 1072. His Muslim name was Moḥammad (the Arab chroniclers regard “Alp Arslān” as a Turkish *laqab*). He was the son of the first Saljuq ruler of Khorasan, Čāġrī Beg Dāwūd, brother of ʿToġrel, the first sultan of the Great Saljuqs of Iraq and Iran. His titles are recorded in a contemporary report by Sebṭ b. al-Jawzī (*Merʿāt*, p. 113). Almost all primary evidence for his reign has disappeared; what is known comes mostly from later Arabic chronicles in the Baghdad tradition. Ebn al-Aṭīr (IX, p. 476) says that he was born just before the battle fought by his father and uncle with ʿAlīṭigin, the Qarakhanid ruler of Bukhara. He spent part of his adolescence around Balḵ, where his father seems to have been occupied with defending the Saljuq east against Ghaznavid attempts to reclaim it. He led troops against the Ghaznavids as early as 435/1043-44 (Ebn al-Aṭīr, IX, p. 518); he raided Fasā in Fārs, still Buyid territory, without the knowledge of his uncle, ʿToġrel (*ibid.*, IX, p. 564). It is clear that he had the confidence of his father, who was ill during his last years, so that the responsibility for military activity passed to Alp Arslān and his brothers, Yaqūtī and Qāvord. The sources do not agree on the date of Čāġrī Beg’s death (Ebn al-Aṭīr X, p. 6 gives Raġab, 451/1059; Ḥosaynī, *Aḵbār*, gives Šafar). A report in Ebn al-ʿAdīm (*Boġya*, p. 218) says that he made Alp Arslān his successor when he was ill and bestowed on him the government of Balḵ, Tokārestān, Termed, Vaḵš, and Valvāleġ; he also made peace with the Ghaznavids not long before his death (Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, p. 5), referring his three sons to answer



Ṭoġrel's call for aid against his rebellious brother, Ebrāhīm Yināl, whom they met and defeated near Ray (Ebn al-Aṭīr, IX, p. 645, where the dating is confused) in Jomādā II, 451/July-August, 1059 (according to Ḥosaynī, *Akbār*, p. 19).

Contrary to what some of the late sources say, Ṭoġrel chose Čaġrī Beg's son Solaymān as his successor; when he died at Ray on 8 Ramaẓān 455/4 September 1063 his vizier, 'Amīd-al-molk Kondorī, proclaimed Solaymān sultan. Alp Arslān, who had been the *malek* of Khorasan since his father's death, began to move west on hearing rumors of Ṭoġrel's demise (Sebt b. al-Jawzī, *Mer'āt*, pp. 99-102); he pulled back when they proved false, then moved decisively when definitive news arrived. Some of Ṭoġrel's officers, notably Erdem the *hāḡeb*, refused to accept Kondorī's proclamation of Solaymān and announced for Alp Arslān. Kondorī reversed himself as Alp Arslān approached and relegated Solaymān to the position of heir-apparent. The new sultan's first problem was to deal with his rebellious uncle Qotlomoš, who, having gathered a large army of Turkmans, had shut Kondorī up in Ray and devastated its environs. In Ḍu'l-ḡejja, 455/November-December, 1063, Alp Arslān led his troops across a dangerous salt-marsh to attack and rout Qotlomoš, who escaped into the mountains only to be killed by a fall from his horse.

There was no chance that Alp Arslān would retain Kondorī in his post. Sebt b. al-Jawzī (*Mer'āt*, p. 109) reports that Kondorī claimed to have told Alp Arslān to stay in Khorasan and apparently wrote a letter threatening him. The new sultan resented Kondorī's giving Ṭoġrel's money and treasures to the army and accused him of trying to buy control over the kingdom. There were also the ambitions of Neẓām-al-molk, who had succeeded his master 'Alī b. Šādān as Alp Arslān's vizier (Ebn al-'Adīm, *Boġya*, p. 218). Kondorī was dismissed, arrested, and later transported first to Nīšāpūr, then to Marv-al-rūd, where he was executed in 457/1065. Alp Arslān secured recognition from the caliph Qā'em in his uncle's place; judging by the titles he was granted, he was officially accorded the full rights of Ṭoġrel's position. He sent the caliph's daughter, Ṭoġrel's widow, back to Baghdad and did not himself try to marry into the caliph's family. He never entered Baghdad himself, although he maintained a military governor there who was once replaced at the caliph's request. Bosworth (*Camb. Hist. Iran* V, pp. 60-61) notes that his Iraqi policy kept him on good terms with the caliph and the Arab rulers of Iraq and Jazīra.

Alp Arslān was quick to resume his military activity. In Rabī' I, 456/February-March, 1064, he undertook a campaign in the northwest which resulted in



significant gains at the expense of Byzantine Armenia; Neẓām-al-molk and the sultan's son, Malekšāh, operated separately during part of the campaign, each taking a string of fortresses. They rejoined the sultan to take Sepīd Šahr and Ānī (Ḥosaynī, *Akbār*, pp. 34-41; Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, pp. 37-40). Alp Arslān's *fath-nāma* sent to Baghdad elicited congratulations from the caliph. By Ramaẓān, 456/August-September, 1064, Alp Arslān was back on the Iranian plateau; according to Ebn al-Aṭīr (X, p. 41), he went through Isfahan to Kermān, where he was received by his brother Qāvord, who ruled that province and had extended his control to 'Omān and the Persian Gulf. Qāvord aspired to rule Fārs as well and does not seem to have accepted the overlordship of his brother with good grace. The sultan went on to Marv from Kermān and married Malekšāh to the daughter of the Qarakhanid ruler of Transoxania and Arslānšāh, another son, to a daughter of the ruler of Ġazna. It must have been after this that he moved east to quell rebellions by the rulers of Kottal and Čagānīān and his uncle Yabgū, who was ruling at Herat. He again showed his courage in personally leading the assault on foot against the castle of the ruler of Kottal. Ebn al-Aṭīr's account (X, p. 34) is not clearly situated in the chronology of the first year.

In 457/1065 there were continued operations in the east with an advance to Jand and into the steppes. The sultan visited the tomb of his ancestor Saljuq, received the submission of the Jand Khan, and campaigned in the steppe, forcing other Turkmans, Qepčāqs, and Jāzeqs to submit to his authority. Ebn al-Aṭīr (X, p. 49) dates this campaign to 457, but Turan (*Selcuklular Tarihi*, pp. 113ff.) carries it into 458/1066. Bosworth (pp. 65-66) goes along with Ebn al-Aṭīr but casts some doubt on details of the campaign that depend on Mīr Kṡānd's late *Rawzat al-ṣafā'*. He also visited Gorgānj, ordered its rebuilding, and put Arslānšāh in charge of Kṡārazm. In 458/1066 at Rāyegān he required his amirs to take oaths to Malekšāh as heir apparent, whose name he ordered added to the *koṭba* throughout the empire. Then he divided the empire among his family and followers (Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, p. 50, employing the term *aqṭa'a*).

The older standard sources, such as Ebn al-Aṭīr, Bondārī, and Ḥosaynī, give no clear picture of the situation in Fārs and Kermān under Alp Arslān; better information is provided by Ebn al-Baḳī (pp. 131-33, 164-66) and Ebn Zarkūb (*Šīrāz-nāma*, pp. 18, 38-41), and the tradition they represent is confirmed, at least for Fārs, by the material in Sebṭ b. al-Jawzī's *Mer'āt* (pp. 91-92, 100, 118-20, 134, 137-39). Alp Arslān seems to have attempted to use the Šabānkāra chieftain, Faẓlūya (or Faẓlawayh), to keep his brother Qāvord in check in



Kermân. Fażlūya had taken Shiraz in 448/1056-57 from the Buyids. He lost Shiraz to Qāvord in Raġab, 454/July-August, 1062 (see N. M. Lowick, “Seljuq coins,” *Numismatic Chronicle*, ser. 7, 10, 1970, p. 251 for numismatic confirmation); when Fażlūya had the worst of a battle over Fārs in 456/1063-64, he went to Hamadān to Alp Arslān, who conferred the province on him. The sultan had to go himself against Qāvord via Fārs to enforce his new dispensation (in 461/1068-69; see H. Bowen, “The Last Buwayhids,” *JRAS* 1929, pp. 240-44). Fażlūya proved unreliable and rebelled in the same year, while Alp Arslān was in Kermân. He was captured by Neẓām-al-molk at the castle of Korša, forgiven by Alp Arslān, but on the advice of the vizier, not released. Transferred to Eṣṭaqr, he was killed there in 462/1069-70 while his followers were trying to free him (Ebn al-Aṭīr says this took place in 464/1071-72). Alp Arslān was unable to deal with Qāvord and returned north, leaving Malekšāh in charge of a garrison in Shiraz.

By 462/1069-70 the sultan was again preoccupied with his western frontiers. As part of a campaign by the Byzantine emperor, Romanus Diogenes, in response to the continual Turkish raiding into his territories, the Byzantines attacked Manbeġ in Syria and the upper Euphrates; negotiations and a truce followed (C. Cahen, “Alp Arslān,” *EI*² I, pp. 420-21; Bosworth, *Camb. Hist. Iran* V, p. 63). An embassy came from Nāṣer-al-dawla b. Ḥamdān in Egypt, backed by a group of Fatimid amirs, asking the sultan to do away with the Fatimids (Ebn al-ʿAdīm, *Boġya*, pp. 211ff.). An embassy (462/1069-70) announcing that the *koṭbā* at Mecca had been changed from the Fatimids to the ʿAbbasids and Alp Arslān may have increased his zeal for prosecuting the struggle against the anti-caliphate in Cairo. Neẓām-al-molk and his colleagues seem to have put anti-Shiʿite views before the sultan (*Sīāsāt-nāma*, pp. 204-08); there is not much doubt that his policy was to put an end to the Fatimid caliphate. Cahen (“Mantzikert;” “Pénétration turque”) points out that Saljuq activity must always be viewed both in terms of the wishes of the sultan and his Khorasanian, Sunni advisors, especially Neẓām-al-molk, and in terms of the desire of the sultan’s Turkman soldiers for plunder and pasture land; this may account in part for the confusion over the sultan’s real aims and objectives in marching west. Some of the reports state specifically that he was aiming at Egypt (Ebn al-ʿAdīm, *Boġya*, pp. 211, 216; also Cahen, “Campagne,” p. 623) in order to carry out his pro-ʿAbbasid policy. Even so, A. Sevim believes that his ultimate intention was the conquest of Anatolia (“Malazgirt Meydan Savaşı,” p. 219); certainly the Turkmans were inclined in that direction (Cahen, “Turkish Invasion,” pp. 143, 147-48), and Alp Arslān’s first campaign after becoming



sultan was in the northwest, demonstrating to his soldiers that he could lead them to new conquests and fresh booty. There were constant forays across the poorly defended Byzantine frontier, and Anatolia was considered a promising field of action. Afšīn, a Turkish border leader who had pursued the Nāvakī Turkmans (enemies of the sultan) all the way to Constantinople, returned to report that nothing in Anatolia could be defended by the Byzantines save the large cities and major strong points (Sebṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mer'āt*, p. 147).

Nevertheless, the campaign of 463/1070-71 seems to have been aimed at Egypt. Beginning at Hamadān in Ḍu'l-qa'da, 462/August-September, 1070 (*ibid.*, p. 143), Alp Arslān took Arjīš and Malāzgerd on his way west. At Mayyāfāreqīn Naṣr b. Marwān came out to do him homage. Passing by Āmed he besieged Rohā (Edessa) where, we are told, the Byzantines tricked him into burning his siege engines. Ḥarrān submitted with tribute. After crossing the Euphrates his troops seem to have fanned out in the whole region, some going to plunder the Banū Kelāb. Still in 462 (according to Ebn al-'Adīm, *Boğya*, p. 212) the sultan sent a message to the ruler of Aleppo, Maḥmūd b. Naṣr, who submitted himself only after a siege. Most of the earlier sources indicate that Alp Arslān heard of the movement of the Byzantine emperor Romanus Diogenes' huge army after Maḥmūd had submitted; in one of Ebn al-'Adīm's reports (*Boğya*, p. 216), he was already on his way to Egypt. He hastened to meet the enemy with a relatively small contingent and defeated them near Malāzgerd (Manzikert) on Friday, 27 Ḍu'l-qa'da 463/26 August 1071. It seems clear that Romanus had intended to put a definitive end to the Turkish menace; Alp Arslān's victory was the more complete because the emperor was deposed (Muslim sources for the battle are collected in A. Sevim's *İslām Kaynaklarına Göre Malazgirt Savaşı, Metinler ve Çevirileri*, Ankara, 1971; see also Cohen, "Mantzikert" and the *Selçuklu tarihi, Alparslan ve Malazgirt bibliyografyası*). Cahen ("Mantzikert," p. 622) does not believe that Alp Arslān intended the destruction of the Byzantine empire, but the defeat, capture, and subsequent deposition of the emperor were disastrous for the Byzantine cause. The way was open for continual Turkish raiding and settlement and the subsequent rise of the Rūm Saljuq sultanate, initially staffed by Iranian scribes and centered on Konya (Iconium).

After his success in the west, where Syria also came under his control, Alp Arslān prepared a major expedition for the conquest of Qarakhanid Transoxania. He had maintained reasonably good relations with the Qarakhanids during most of his reign: He had married the daughter of Qāder Khan Yūsuf; his sister 'Ā'eša was married to the Qarakhanid ruler of



Transoxania, Šams-al-molk Našr; and Malekšāh had married another Qarakhanid princess. According to Sebṭ b. al-Jawzī (*Mer'āt*, p. 165), Šams-al-molk had killed Alp Arslān's sister, saying that he suspected her of inciting the Saljuqs to invade his realm. Shortly after Alp Arslān crossed the Āmū Daryā, he was mortally wounded by a captive castellan who had been brought before him; he lingered for three or four days, then died in Rabī' I, 465/November-December, 1072 (Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, p. 73; Ḥosaynī, *Akbār*, p. 54). Cahen ("Alp Arslān") puts the correct date in January, 1073.

The relationship between Toğrel and Čağrī Beg Dāwūd, Alp Arslān's father, remains unclear. Čağrī Beg does not appear to have been subordinate to Toğrel in all respects, and thus it may not be correct to speak of a united Saljuq empire under the first sultan; in this sense, Alp Arslān is the first certain ruler of a united empire. His abilities as a general and judge of men enabled him to hold together a large collection of potentially rebellious relatives, vassal rulers, and military governors; when recalcitrance did occur, he was inclined to forgive. While still in Khorasan he entrusted the civil aspects of his affairs to Nežām-al-molk, who seems to have had his complete confidence, although Alp Arslān was apparently prepared to intervene himself in any part of his governmental apparatus. He also appears to have been well served by other Khorasanian bureaucrats, such as the *'amīd* of Khorasan, Moḥammad b. Maṣṣūr Nasavī (A. Eqbāl, *Wezārat dar 'ahd-e salāṭīn-e bozorg-e Saljūqī*, Tehran, 1338 Š./1959, pp. 54-102). The sources tend to idealize him as a devout champion of the faith, especially on the field of Manzikert, and as just and honest to a fault, although there are anecdotes which indicate that he could be harsh and destructive, especially when drunk (Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, p. 564; Ebn al-'Adīm, *Boğya*, pp. 215-16, 218; Sebṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mer'āt*, p. 138; Ḥosaynī, *Akbār*, p. 35). It seems clear from the *Sīāsāt-nāma* (pp. 88-89) that, if he satisfied his famous vizier in being rigorously Sunni in his policies, he made him unhappy by abolishing the intelligence service, feeling that it would set his friends against him. When he died so unexpectedly, he had already seen to it that his son and successor was securely designated and trained on the field of battle and in the council halls. He was largely responsible for establishing the conditions for the two decades of peace and stability that followed his death.

Little is known about the details of government during his reign. There are four *enšā'* documents which H. Horst (*Die Staatsverwaltung der Grosselgūgen und Ḥārazmšāhs (1038-1231)*, Wiesbaden, 1964, pp. 103, 113, 140, 147) believes to come from his time, and there is a *fath-nāma* for Baghdad which Ḥ.



Nakjavānī (“Fath-nāma-ye Solṭān Alb Arslān,” *Yağmā* 4/8, pp. 370-75) published as being his, though it may be from a later period. Culturally he provided the conditions in which Neẓām-al-molk could build his *madrasas*; the famous Neẓāmīya of Baghdad was finished during his reign. The work of his court poet, Borhānī, the father of Mo‘ezzī, seems to have perished (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. M. Mo‘īn, Tehran, 1331 Š./1952, pp. 195ff.).

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