



## ALPTIGIN

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**ALPTIGIN** (Tk., “hero prince”), Turkish military slave commander of the Samanids and founder of Turkish power in eastern Afghanistan (d. 352/963). Apparently brought as a slave from the Central Asian steppes, Alptigin rose in the hierarchy of the Samanid army until he became head of the royal guard (*ḥāḡeb al-ḥojjāb*) under Amir Nūḡ b. Naṣr (331-43/943-54). Under the latter’s successor ‘Abd-al-Malek b. Nūḡ (343-50/954-61) he enjoyed great favor, becoming governor of Balk and then commander-in-chief of the Samanid army in Khorasan, and in effect nominating the vizier Abū ‘Alī Moḡammad Baḡ’amī to power. Hence when ‘Abd-al-Malek suddenly died in Šawwāl, 350/November, 961, Alptigin and Baḡ’amī endeavored to secure the succession for the late amir’s young son Naṣr, no doubt hoping to enjoy de facto power in the state as the ruler’s tutors. However, the army, under such leaders as Fā’eq Kāṣṣa, preferred ‘Abd-al-Malek’s brother Maṣṣūr b. Nūḡ, and successfully raised him to the throne; Naṣr b. ‘Abd-al-Malek’s tenure of power lasted only one day. With the failure of his putsch, Alptigin was left isolated, since his erstwhile protégé Baḡ’amī speedily went over to the new regime. He therefore decided to withdraw with his personal guard to Balk, where he turned and defeated an army sent in pursuit of him by Amir Maṣṣūr (Rabī’ I, 351/April, 962). He judged it prudent to withdraw to the periphery of the Samanid empire, probably consciously following the example of the general Qaratigin Esfījābī, who had withdrawn to Bost in southern Afghanistan over thirty years before and established a line of Turkish local rulers there. Alptigin proceeded to Ġazna in eastern Afghanistan, defeating en route the local rulers of Bāmīān and Kabul, and wresting Ġazna from its ruler Abū ‘Alī or Abū Bakr Lavīk or



Anūk, kinsman of the Kābolšāh. Shortly afterwards, Alptigin regularized his position by securing an investiture patent as governor of Ġazna from the Samanid capital Bukhara, but he died in Šaʿbān, 352/September, 963. He was succeeded briefly by his son Abū Eshāq Ebrāhīm (or Eshāq b. Ebrāhīm) and an ephemeral line of Turkish slave commanders which culminated in 366/977 with the nomination of Alptigin's own former slave Sebūktigin, founder of the Ghaznavid line. Alptigin's establishment in Ġazna thus presages the rise of that town as a mecca for Muslim *ḡāzīs* attracted by the prospects of rich plunder in the Indian plains.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The sources for early Ghaznavid history, such as Gardīzī; Naršakī; Ebn al-Aṭīr; Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt*; and Šabānkāraʿī, *Maǰmaʿ al-ansāb* (which contains the *Pand-nāma* of Sebūktigin), contain historical data, to be supplemented by the romanticized account of the origins and succession of Sebūktigin as Alptigin's protégé in *Nezām-al-molk*, *Sīāsat-nāma*, ch. 27, and the semi-legendary story of Alptigin's relations with the Ismaʿīlis in *ibid.*, ch. 46.

These sources are used in the secondary literature: Barthold, *Turkestan*, pp. 249-51, 261.

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