



## AYBAK, QOṬB-AL-DĪN

**AYBAK, QOṬB-AL-DĪN**, founder of the Mo‘ezzī or Slave Dynasty and the first Muslim king of India, also called Ībak (moon chieftain) and Aybak Šel (lit., of the damaged little finger; this interpretation of the name is preferred by Thomas, *Pathān Kings of Delhi*, p. 32). In the second half of the 6th/12th century, while still a boy, he was brought from Turkestan to Nišāpūr and sold to Qāzī Faḡr-al-dīn ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz Kūfī, the governor, who brought him up and provided for him the training in soldierly arts and some religious education (Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 487). He was again sold, as a youth, to the Ghurid sultan Mo‘ezz-al-dīn Šehāb-al-dīn Moḥammad (r. 569-602/1173-1206); he was in charge of the forage supply for the Ghurid army in their battle of 586/1190 against the K̄vārazmšāh Solṭānšāh and in 588/1192, when Mo‘ezz-al-dīn Moḥammad conquered northern India, the latter posted him as governor at Kohrām (‘Ešāmī, *Fotūḥ*, p. 71). In the same year Aybak occupied the forts of Meerut (Mīrat) and Delhi; the latter became the seat of Muslim rule.

In 590/1194 he reinforced Mo‘ezz-al-dīn with 50,000 troops in an attack against Jai Chand of Qannauj and the next year took the forts of Thankar (identified with Bayana by Ferešta, tr. Briggs, I, pp. 100-02), Kaliwar (Kālenjar or Gwalior), Budaun (Badā’ūn), and Kol (Aligarh), and conquered Nahrwala (Gujarat). In 593/1197 Anhalwara was subdued and in 599/1203 Ranthambor fell. In 601/1205 Mo‘ezz-al-dīn personally moved against the Khokar tribes who infested western Punjab and threatened the Ghurid line of communication and was joined by Aybak. The rebels were subdued and Aybak was confirmed as Mo‘ezz-al-dīn’s viceroy in India (Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt* 1, pp. 445-50). On Mo‘ezz-



al-dīn's assassination on 3 Ša'bān 602/15 March 1206, the local governors acknowledged Aybak as the supreme ruler of India, and this was confirmed a few months later by the Ghurid court at Ġazna (Jūzjānī, tr. Raverty, p. 525). The province of Punjab was still claimed by Tāj-al-dīn Yıldız of Ġazna and Nāṣer-al-dīn Qobāča of Multan-Sindh, who were Aybak's father-in-law and son-in-law respectively, as well as his rivals for the control of the Ghurid conquest of India. In order to check them, Aybak left Delhi for Lahore, where he reportedly proclaimed himself king on 18 Du'l-qa'da 602/27 June 1206.

Aybak was a just and liberal ruler, celebrated for his disciplined administration, orthodoxy, and munificence, qualities that have been attributed to his early training at Nišāpūr under the supervision of Qāzī Faḡr-al-dīn. His compassion and lack of prejudice earned him the respect of the Hindus, the majority of his subjects. The peace and comfort enjoyed during his reign attracted scores of scholars, poets, theologians, and spiritual leaders to Lahore, and trade, industry, agriculture, and education flourished (ʿAbd-al-Ḥaqq, *Aḡbār al-akyār*, pp. 29-37). He died in mid-Jomādā, 607/October, 1210, in Lahore from an accident at a polo game (ʿEšāmī, *Fotūḥ*, p. 101).

His tomb with its impressive dome was built by his successor Šams-al-dīn Iltutmiš (*Tārīḡ-emobārakšāhī*, p. 16) at the back of Anarkali Market. After the establishment of English rule in Punjab (1848), it served to house a library and a church (Jūzjānī, tr. Raverty, p. 529). It seems that the tomb was then neglected until the new government had it restored in 1947; in 1970 an imposing tomb was raised on the model of Ḳaljī and Slave Dynasty architecture.

Aybak is credited with the construction of the first two mosques in India, the Qowwat-al-eslām mosque in Delhi in 587/1191-92 (on a temple plinth), and another one at Ajmer at about the same time (actually a converted Hindu college). Both were built using materials taken from Hindu temples. After the additions made by Iltutmiš (Iletmiš), the Qowwat-al-eslām mosque had a total area, including courtyard, of about 50,000 sq ft, with gilded domes and pointed arches 52 ft high. In 602/1206 Aybak built the white palace which is mentioned in histories up to the reign of Ġiāṭ-al-dīn Balban (r. 664-86/1266-87).

The most famous of his architectural undertakings is the Qoṭb Menār in Delhi, originally meant to be a tower for the call to prayer. The tower was extended by Iltutmiš to the total height of 69.7 m. In 1794 it stood 242 ft high but later on the sixth and seventh stories, damaged by an earthquake, were removed to



avoid their possible collapse (sir Sayyed Aḥmad Khan, *Ātār al-ṣanādīd*, ed. S. Moʻīn-al-ḥaqq, Karachi, 1966, p. 69).

Aybak was succeeded in Lahore by his adopted son Ārāmbakš Shah, whom the nobility raised to the throne (Jūzjānī, tr. Raverty, pp. 529-30), but he was soon killed during a march on Delhi where Iltumiš, Aybak's son-in-law, had been proclaimed king.

Aybak, like the other Turkish generals of Moʻezz-al-dīn continued to uphold Ghurid policies and traditions in India (C. E. Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties*, Edinburgh, 1967, p. 185) and contributed to the spreading of Persian language and culture on the subcontinent.

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