



## BARSKĀN

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**BARSKĀN**, or Barsgān, a place in central Asia, on the southern shores of the Īsīq-Göl, in the region known as Semirechye or Yeti-su “the land of the seven rivers,” in what is now the Kyrgyz Republic. In the medieval Islamic sources, the name seems also to have been applied, by a process of extension, to the tribe of Turks living in its vicinity. The author of *Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*, (tr. Minorsky, pp. 98, 116, cf. pp. 292-93 and map V at p. 279) describes this “upper” (i.e., farthest) Barskān (to be distinguished from a “lower” one in Transoxania; see Yāqūt, *Boldān*, Beirut, I, pp. 383-84) as a prosperous town, whose chief (*dehqān*) was from the Qarluq but whose inhabitants gave their preferential allegiance to the Toghuz-Oghuz, and he also states that there was a “river of Barskān,” presumably the Ču, which flows out of the Īsīq-Göl. The place is mentioned several times by Maḥmūd Kāšgarī, who spells it Barsgān, locates it in the territory of the Čegel tribe and says that it is named after a son of the mythical hero *Afrāsīāb* (*Dīvānloḡāt al-Tork*, tr. Besim Atalay, Ankara, 1939-41, I, pp. 392-93, III, pp. 135, 417-18 and passim; a legend about the origin of Barskān from the semilegendary exploits of Alexander the Great is given also by Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akbār*, ed. Ḥabībī, pp. 265-66, in his section on Barskān; cf. also Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, tr. V. and T. Minorsky, Leiden, 1962, III, p. 181).

Part of Barskān’s historical fame comes from the fact that Sebūktigin (q.v.), founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty in eastern Afghanistan, came from there, having been captured in tribal warfare and sold as a slave, according to the *Pand-nāma* attributed to Sebūktigin and reproduced by the later historian



Moḥammad Šabānkāra'ī (see Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 39 and *Later Ghaznavids*, pp. 134, 144). The Qarakhanid tribal confederation which took over Transoxania from the Samanids in the 5th/11th century seems to have arisen from the Qarluq and Čegel of the BarsĶān region, and, in the middle years of the 5th/11th century, BarsĶān was ruled by a Qarakhanid prince called Yinaltigin (Barthold, *Four Studies* I, pp. 89-90). In later times, however, it disappears from historical mention.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Given in the text.