



EBRĀHĪM B. MAS'ŪD

EBRĀHĪM B. MAS'ŪD (I) b. Maḥmūd b. Sebüktegīn, Abu'l-Mozaffar, Ṣahīr-al-Dawla, Rażī-al-Dīn, etc., Ghaznavid sultan (r. 451-92/1059-99). Ebrāhīm succeeded his brother Farroḳzād in Ġazna on 19 Ṣafar 451/April 6, 1059 (Bayhaqī, ed. Fayyāz, p. 483) at the age of twenty-seven; he and Farroḳzād were virtually the only survivors from the general massacre of Ghaznavid princes perpetrated by the usurping Turkish *ḡolām* commander Ṭoḡrīl in 443/1051-52. All subsequent Ghaznavid sultans were from the progeny of Ebrāhīm alone. His reign marks a rallying of Ghaznavid fortunes during the middle period of the empire's existence, after the disasters of Mas'ūd I's and Mawdūd's sultanates, when Jebāl, Khorasan, and Choresmia had been irrevocably lost to the Saljuqs. The empire, although somewhat truncated, was still powerful and extensive; and it was respected by other eastern Islamic potentates for its comparative antiquity and its wealth. A *modus vivendi* with the Saljuqs gradually took shape in the years just before Ebrāhīm's accession, and this left what is now known as Afghanistan divided in a roughly east-west fashion. The eastern part, comprising Kabul, Ġazna, Zābolestān, Zamīn Dāvar, and Bost, remained the heartland of the Ghaznavid empire; such parts of modern Pakistan as Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind, and the western Punjab formed the Indian possessions—the bases for raids into India. It may well be that this more compact and manageable kingdom was a source of strength rather than of weakness, enabling the Ghaznavids to survive for nearly a century and a half after Mas'ūd I's death in 432/1041, even if latterly only in the Punjab. Certainly, the sultans of the middle and later periods were able to give more whole-hearted attention to incursions against



the infidel Hindus than Mas'ūd had given, and this expansion into India may with justice be regarded as the historic mission of the sultans.

The achievement of a durable peace with the Saljuqs was a pressing task for Ebrāhīm on his accession. Towards the end of his reign, Farroḳzād had attacked the Saljuqs in Khorasan with some success, until [Alp Arslan](#) defeated the Ghaznavid forces. The ensuing peace negotiations seem to have extended into the beginning of Ebrāhīm's reign, involving an exchange of prisoners and a guarantee by each side henceforth to remain within the frontiers of their respective empires (Ebn al-Aṭīr, IX, p. 585, X, pp. 5-6; Bosworth, pp. 49, 51-52). Ebrāhīm seems to have recognized that the hopes of recovering the lost western territories were unrealistic (Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, p. 167). Only once did Ebrāhīm subsequently depart from this pacific policy towards the Saljuqs. When Alp Arslan's son Malekšāh came to power in 465/1072, he became involved in a succession struggle with his uncle Qāvord and his brothers. Ebrāhīm was tempted to take advantage of the situation and sent an expedition against Sakalkand near Baḡlān in northern Afghanistan which was, however, beaten off by the Saljuq commander Anūštegīn Ġarča'ī, the future Ḳvārazmšāh (465/1073; Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, pp. 78-79). This is the last episode of Ghaznavid-Saljuq warfare attested for his reign, except for the anecdotal story, according to which, Malekšāh massed troops at Esfezār, south of Herat, but was dissuaded from making war through the clever stratagem of Ebrāhīm's courtier Mehtar Rašīd (i.e., Jamāl-al-Molk Abu'l-Rošd Rašīd, patron of several contemporary poets). Mehtar Rašīd exaggerated the military power and riches of his master, and sowed dissension in the ranks of the Saljuq commanders by clever strokes of psychological warfare (Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, p. 167; Faḳr-e Modabber, pp. 149-61). There may conceivably be a kernel of truth to the tale, for it also refers to a marriage alliance which sealed the peace between the two empires. A daughter of Ebrāhīm had already married Alp Arslān's son Arslānšāh in 456/1064 (Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, p. 41); but this mention may be a reminiscence of the marriage of Ebrāhīm's son, Mas'ūd III (492-508/1099-1115), to Malekšāh's daughter Jawhar Ḳātūn, known as Maḥd-e 'Erāq (Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 240). Later sources state that the Saljuq sultans came to hold Ebrāhīm in such respect that they always addressed him as exalted father (*pedar-e bozorg*; Dawlatšāh, ed. Browne, p. 94). The only other region on the western fringes of the empire where one hears of activity by Ebrāhīm was that of Ġūr, the mountainous region of central Afghanistan, which had been brought into tributary status to Ġazna by Maḥmūd and Mas'ūd I. During the years of succession disputes and usurpation immediately preceding the reigns



of Farroqzād and Ebrāhīm, Ġūr fell away from Ghaznavid control. Ebrāhīm was, however, able to intervene when disputes arose within one of the local ruling families of Ġūr, the Šansabānīs (from whom arose later the Ghurid dynasty). A group of discontented chiefs appealed to the sultan at some unspecified date, asking him to intervene, so that a Ghaznavid army deposed the tyrannical ‘Abbās b. Šīt Šansabānī and set up his son Moḥammad as a Ghaznavid vassal (Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 330-32).

Ebrāhīm carried on the traditions of his forefathers as a leader of raids against the Hindus, though we are ill-informed about these Indian campaigns. Our main source is the brief account of Ebn al-Aṭīr (X, pp. 113-14), who is followed by later Indo-Muslim historians such as Ferešta. Hence, the mentions of warfare in India by the contemporary poets (e.g., Mas‘ūd-e Sa‘d, pp. 224-31) are especially valuable for supplementing Ebn al-Aṭīr’s very vague accounts of campaigns against unidentifiable rulers at unrecorded dates. The only clear identification in the historian’s account is of a campaign against Ajōdhan, modern Pāk-Patan, on the Sutlej River, later famed as the shrine of the Sohrawardīya saint Farīd-al-Dīn Ganj-e Šakar. During this period, Lahore continued to be the capital of Ghaznavid India and a great concentration-point for warriors and other enthusiasts for the faith.

Concerning Ebrāhīm’s internal policy, we learn that on accession, he took steps to remedy the social and economic disorders which had befallen the empire in the troubled years preceding his coming to power. Jūzjānī (*Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 238-40, tr. Raverty, pp. 102-06) mentions that he rebuilt ravaged towns and founded several new ones. In later historical sources and in the *adab* literature, Ebrāhīm acquired the reputation of a model ruler, wise, just, and benevolent; already, in his obituary notice, Ebn al-Aṭīr (X, p. 167) states that he used to copy each year a Qur’ān in his own hand and send it to Mecca. In the anecdotal literature, we find several stories stressing Ebrāhīm’s solicitude for the poor and overburdened of his subjects (Faḵr-e Modabber, pp. 102-03); but undeniably, the ruler who could hold on to his throne for over forty years and who kept the prestige of the Ghaznavid empire high could not have been ignorant of *Realpolitik*. It would be probably more correct to regard Ebrāhīm as a despot of the stamp of his father and grandfather, demanding implicit obedience from his subordinates, although possessing a more balanced judgement than Mas‘ūd I. His early vizier, Abū Sahl Ḳojandī, fell from his master’s grace and was blinded (Ḳvāndamīr, pp. 146-47); and Prince Sayf-al-Dawla Maḥmūd, despite his successes in India, seem to have been stripped of



power and to have come to an obscure end (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, comm., p. 123). Jūzjānī (*Ṭabaqāt*, p. 240) notes that, when Mas'ūd III came to the throne, he had to get rid of some oppressive financial practices from the previous reign. Indeed, the cost of a complex bureaucracy to run the empire and the upkeep of an opulent court life and culture must have been heavy, despite the inflow of bullion and plunder from India. We do not have specific information about palaces and gardens laid out by Ebrāhīm, as we possess for his father and for his son Mas'ūd III; but there can be no doubt that an elevated standard of living was maintained in Ġazna. The sultan himself was a distant figure, protected by an elaborate court ceremonial and surrounded by a palace guard of Turkish slave troops, sometimes described as *zarrīn-kamarān* (golden-belted ones; *Tārīk-e Sīstān*, p. 368). Ebrāhīm enjoyed a particularly rich array of honorific titles, many of them doubtless bestowed over his long period of rule by the 'Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, with whom he maintained good relations as their theoretical subordinate. These titles appear on his coins and on inscriptions from the Ghaznavid region; especially interesting is his adoption (e.g., on coins) of the official designation *al-solṭān al-mo'aẓẓam* or *al-a'ẓam* “most exalted sultan” (already used tentatively by Farroḳzād), which has been seen Dominique Sourdel as an aspect of Saljuq imperial influence within the Ghaznavid empire (Bosworth, pp. 55-56).

The high level of poetic achievement and genius at Ebrāhīm's court compares well with that of the early Ghaznavid period. Mas'ūd-e Sa'd-e Salmān, Abū'l-Faraj Rūnī, 'Oṭmān Moḳtārī, and Sanā'ī form an outstanding quadrumvirate of poets, and a good proportion of their poetry has been preserved. But there were also many other competent poets, some of them known only from exiguous citations, such as Abū Ḥanīfa Eskāfī, Rāšedī, Aḳtarī, Abū'l-'Alā' 'Aṭā', Abū Naṣr Fārsī, etc. (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, text, p. 44, comm., pp. 108-28; 'Awfī, *Lobāb* I pp. 71-74, II, pp. 241-42). According to 'Awfī's *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt* (Bosworth, p. 77), the sultan was himself the author of a manual on statecraft, the *Dastūr al-wozarā'*; if such a work ever existed, it may conceivably have been a collection of aphorisms on government of the familiar kind.

Ebrāhīm died on 5 Šawwāl 492/August 25, 1099, at the age sixty-eight years according to Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfī (*Tārīk-e gozīda*, ed. Browne, p. 404); he was buried, it seems, in the northeastern part of medieval Ġazna. He left behind a large number of sons and daughters, and Ebn Bābā mentions (tr. Bosworth, p. 143) that there ensued internecine disputes and conflicts before Mas'ūd III emerged as his father's successor. Ebrāhīm's contemporary reputation as a



ruler gradually accumulated with the great length of his reign; though his achievement as an administrator and as a maintainer of internal peace in the empire, after the turbulence of the middle decades of the century, probably owed much to the wisdom and expertise of his vizier 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd b. Aḥmad Ṣīrāzī, who served Ebrāhīm for 22 years and then his son Mas'ūd III for all his 16 years' reign.

In summation, we may view the reigns of Ebrāhīm and Mas'ūd III as forming a period of internal stability and of general external peace with the Saljuqs, permitting the vigorous deployment of Muslim incursions into India. It was only with their feebler successors that the once mighty Ghaznavid empire became a client state of the Saljuq sultan Sanjar and eventually succumbed to the Ghurids.

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