



ĒLTOTMEŠ, ŠAMS-AL-DĪN

ĒLTOTMEŠ, ŠAMS-AL-DĪN (d. 633/1236), first Sultan of Delhi. A member of the Ölberi tribe (for the correct spelling, see Golden) of the Qipčaq, he was enslaved at an early age and purchased in Delhi by Qoṭb-al-Dīn Āybeg, then one of the military commanders in India on behalf of the Ghurid Sultan Mo'ezz-al-Dīn Moḥammad b. Sām (r. 599-602/1203-6). He rose in his master's favor, obtaining the post of *amīr-e šekār* (master of the hunt) and in succession the governorship of Gwalior and the *eqṭā's* of Baran and Badā'ūn, and married Āybeg's daughter. Following Moḥammad's murder in 602/1206, Āybeg established himself as an autonomous ruler of the Indian territories with his capital at Lahore, and when Āybeg died in 607/1210-11, Ēltotmeš was summoned from Badā'ūn to Delhi to take over the government. Āybeg's son Ārāmšāh was defeated and killed, but it was some years before Ēltotmeš overcame fellow commanders elsewhere in northern India. In particular he enjoyed no authority over another of Moḥammad's Turkish slaves, Qamar-al-Dīn Qobača (Qobāča), who ruled lower Sind and now occupied Lahore, or over the Kalaj officers who governed west Bengal from Lakhnauti. Initially, Ēltotmeš bolstered his position by acknowledging the sovereignty of Moḥammad's successor at Ġazna, his slave Tāj-al-Dīn Yildīz (Yeldūz).

The rise of Delhi and its ruler was greatly assisted by developments beyond the Indus. In 612/1216 Yildīz was dislodged by the K'ārazmšāh and fled into the Punjab, where he was overthrown by Ēltotmeš near Sāmāna; thereafter, Ēltotmeš assumed the style of sultan. The destruction of the Chorasmian empire in turn by the Mongols in 618-19/1221-22 gave the infant Delhi polity a



vital respite: the K̄vārazmšāh's son Jalāl-al-Dīn took refuge in the Punjab but did more damage to Delhi's neighbors than to the Sultanate and eventually left for Persia in 621/1224. The Mongol onslaught also brought into India numerous Muslim fugitives who entered Ēltotmeš's service as warriors and bureaucrats. It was doubtless this access of strength which enabled Ēltotmeš to absorb Qobača's dominions (625/1228), to reduce Jalāl-al-Dīn's lieutenants in the northwest Punjab (627/1229-30) and to conquer Lakhnauti (628/1230-31), thereby becoming the sole Muslim ruler in India. Ēltotmeš's operations against the independent Hindu powers were equally spectacular but their effects were more shortlived. Early in his reign he reduced Jālōr to tributary status, and later he captured Ranthanbōr (623/1226), Mandōr (624/1227), and Gwalior (630/1232) and plundered in Mālwa (632/1234-35); but any Muslim garrisons left in these regions were withdrawn within a few years of his death.

Ēltotmeš, who in 626/1229 had received a diploma of investiture from the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Mostaṣer, died on 20 Ša'bān 633/29 April 1236. He was succeeded by four of his children, including his eldest daughter Ražīya and a grandson, but their reigns were dominated by the Turkish slave elite built up by Ēltotmeš, and in 664/1266 his dynasty was supplanted by one of these Turkish officers, Ġīāt-al-Dīn Balaban. Although the basis of Muslim power in India had been laid by Āybeg's victories in the late 6th/12th century, Ēltotmeš must be regarded as the real architect of the Delhi Sultanate. The poets and scholars who enjoyed his patronage included Tāj Režā, Faḡr-e Modabber, who dedicated to him the *Ādāb al-ḡarbwa'l-šajā'a* (q.v.), and Ḥasan Nežāmī, whose florid *Tāj al-ma'āṭer* is an important source for the era of the Muslim conquest.

See also [DELHI SULTANATE](#).

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