



## ABŪ SA'ĪD BAHĀDOR KHAN

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**ABŪ SA'ĪD BAHĀDOR KHAN**, 'ALĀ'-AL-DONYĀ-WA'L-DĪN, ninth Il-khan of Iran, the son and successor of Öljeitü (Ūljāytü). The more correct form of his name is Bū Sa'īd, as stated by Şafadī (*al-Wāfi*, p. 322) and confirmed by documents (see V. Minorsky, "A Mongol Decree of 720/1320 to the Family of Shaykh Zāhid," *BSOAS* 16, 1954: Busayid), but Abū Sa'īd is the name by which he is generally known in history. He was born of Ḥājjī Kātūn at Ūjān on 8 Du'l-qa'da 704/2 June 1305 and subsequently became his father's sole heir through the deaths of his elder brothers. In 715/1315, under the guardianship of the amir Sevīnč, he was sent east, in accordance with a custom that had lapsed, as a nominal viceroy of Khorasan and Māzandarān. On Öljeitü's death in Ramažān, 716/December, 1316 he was brought back by Sevīnč to Solţāniya and was formally enthroned at a date given by Mostawfī (p. 601) as Şafar, 717/April-May, 1317, by Şabānkāra'ī (*Maġma'*, fol. 259r) as 5 Jomādā I 717/16 August 1317, and by the encyclopedist Maġmūd Āmolī (*Nafā'es al-fonūn*, ed. A. Şa'rānī and E. Mīānġī, Tehran, 1377-79/1958-60, II, p. 262) as 23 Rabī' II 717/5 July 1317.

The delay appears to have been due in part to the ambitions of Sevīnč, who wanted to displace the *amīr-e olūs*, Čoban (Čübān), and whom rumor linked with the disturbances that broke out in Khorasan following the new Il-khan's departure. In Moġarram, 717/March, 1317 the amir Yasā'ul, whom Abū Sa'īd had left in charge of the province, was killed at the instigation of a subordinate, Begtüt, and of the Chaghatayid prince Yasā'ūr, who had arrived as a fugitive from Turkestan towards the end of Öljeitü's reign and had been



granted pasturelands south of Oxus. Initially the murderers camouflaged their designs with protestations of loyalty to the Il-khan, but in 718/1318 they rose in open revolt and invaded Māzandarān. The resistance of local dynasts to their rear, notably Gīāt-al-dīn, the Kartid ruler of Herat (see [Āl-e Kart](#)), obliged them soon to restrict their operations to Khorasan, however, and the insurrection had virtually collapsed by the time Abū Sa'īd's forces under Amir Ḥosayn, the ancestor of the Jalayerid dynasty, arrived in the spring of 719/1319. Yasā'ūr was slain by his Chaghatayid relatives in the following year.

More dangerous was the simultaneous rising that occurred nearer to the Il-khan's seasonal residences. In the first shock of an invasion of Azarbaijan by Özbek, khan of the Golden Horde, early in 719/1319, some of Abū Sa'īd's commanders had failed to act with sufficient vigor. Following the enemy's withdrawal, therefore, Čoban, who since the timely death of Sevīnč in Du'l-qa'da, 717/January, 1318 had enjoyed an undisputed position, severely disciplined one of these generals, the amir Qorūmšī, for dereliction of duty. Qorūmšī thereupon rose in rebellion, supported by another disgruntled amir, Īreñčīn, and advanced on Solṭānīya. But in a fierce engagement not far from Mīāna on 1 Jomādā I 719/20 June 1319 they were routed, thanks to the personal intervention of the Il-khan, whose troops had been on the point of flight, and the two rebel leaders were captured and cruelly executed in Solṭānīya. From this episode dates Abū Sa'īd's assumption of the style of Bahādor ("hero").

The early years of Abū Sa'īd's reign witnessed the downfall of the great historian and statesman Rašīd-al-dīn Faḡlallāh, who had been joint vizier with Tāj-al-dīn 'Alīšāh since Öljeitü's time but had finally succumbed to the tireless intrigues of his colleague and rival. After a temporary disgrace and retirement, from which he had been recalled through the efforts of Čoban, Rašīd-al-dīn was tried by the *amīr-e olūs* for having allegedly poisoned the Il-khan's father and was put to death in Jomādā I, 718/July, 1318. Thereafter 'Alīšāh enjoyed sole authority until his own death in 724/1324, the only chief minister under the Il-khans to die of natural causes. Following a brief interlude in which his two sons disputed the office, it passed to Rokn-al-dīn Šā'en, a client of Čoban's, though given the power of the Chobanids his authority was purely nominal.

The same could be said of the Il-khan himself during the era of Čoban's ascendancy, which was to last until the eleventh year of the reign; and the Egyptian chronicler Mofaẓẓal reports that Abū Sa'īd himself, in an effort to shake off this tutelage, had been originally behind Qorūmšī's revolt (*Nahī*, text,



p. 7; tr., p. 61). Soon after its suppression, Čoban was given the Il-khan's sister Sātī Beg in marriage, and the provinces were effectively divided up among him and his family. Of his sons, Temürtāš was viceroy in Anatolia (Rūm); Shaikh Maḥmūd in Georgia; Ḥasan, after Amir Ḥosayn's death in 722/1322, in Khorasan; and Demašq K̄vāja in Azarbaijan and the two Iraqs, exercising also the functions of vizier in place of Rokn-al-dīn Šā'en; Tāleš b. Ḥasan governed Fārs and Kermān. Not even the revolt of Temürtāš in 721/1321-22 reduced the family's power, since Čoban simply obtained Abū Sa'īd's permission to march in person against his son, who was brought to court only to be pardoned and reinstated by the Il-khan. In the event, it was not so much the curtailment of his political authority as a slight to his conjugal pride which stung Abū Sa'īd into ridding himself of his masters. Already thwarted in his designs on Čoban's daughter Baḡdād Kātūn, the wife of Shaikh Ḥasan b. Amīr Ḥosayn, the Il-khan soon had cause to contrast his fortunes with those of Demašq K̄vāja, who was making inroads into the royal harem. On 5 Jomādā I 727/24 August 1327 Abū Sa'īd had Demašq K̄vāja put to death in Solṭāniya and then issued orders for the extermination of the entire family. Čoban, who was at this time campaigning in Khorasan, at first advanced west, but following an unsuccessful attempt to secure mediation between himself and his sovereign he was deserted by the majority of his forces on the eve of battle and resolved on flight. Taking refuge in Herat, he was treacherously killed by its ruler Ġiāṭ-al-dīn in response to an order from Abū Sa'īd in Moḥarram, 728/November-December, 1327. On learning of his father's death, Temürtāš fled from Rūm to Egypt, where he was initially received with honor but was subsequently executed in Šawwāl, 728/August, 1328, his head being sent to Il-khan. The other members of the family either fled or were captured and put to death.

Abū Sa'īd now personally assumed the reigns of government, ably assisted for the remainder of his lifetime by the new vizier, Rašīd-al-dīn's son Ġiāṭ-al-dīn Moḥammad. The office of *amīr-e olūs* was given to Shaikh Ḥasan, possibly in compensation for the loss of Baḡdād Kātūn, whom he was compelled to relinquish to the Il-khan. In 732/1331-32 he was accused of plotting with his former wife against Abū Sa'īd and was banished to the fortress of Komāk on the Euphrates, but he was pardoned in the following year and appointed to the governorship of Rūm. Three years earlier the Il-khan had been forced to suppress a rebellion by the viceroy of Khorasan, Nārīn Tagāi, who was executed on 1 Šawwāl 729/29 July 1329. These appear to have been the only instances of disaffection to trouble Abū Sa'īd's last years.



Foreign relations during Abū Sa'īd's reign wear, in certain respects, a markedly different appearance from those of his predecessors. Diplomatic contacts with Muslim India, which had been hostile as recently as Öljeitü's reign (Waṣṣāf, p. 528), grew both more frequent and more amicable under his son, who exchanged costly gifts with the Delhi Sultan Moḥammad b. Toḡloq from at least 728/1328 down to his death (Šabānkāra'ī, *Majma'*, fols. 189r, 264v-65r). Attempts by the Delhi court to draw the Il-khan into a joint operations against their mutual enemies, the Chaghatayid rulers of Central Asia, however, bore no fruit (correspondence in *Bayāz-e Tāj-al-dīn Aḥmad Wazīr*, ed. Ī. Afšār and M. Teymūrī, Tehran, 1353 Š./1974, pp. 404ff.), even though Abū Sa'īd's relations with the Chaghatayids had steadily worsened. Cooperation against Yasā'ūr following his rebellion, in 720/1320, had been succeeded by Chaghatayid attacks on Khorasan in 722/1322 ('Aynī, in V. G. von Tiesenbaum, *Sbornik materialov otnosyashchikhsya k istorii Zolotoi Ordy I*, St. Petersburg, 1884, p. 494) and possibly in 728/1328 (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, *Dayl*, p. 185). In 726/1326 the Il-khan's forces under Ḥasan b. Čoban had gone over to the offensive, expelling the Chaghatayid prince Tarmašīrīn from the Ġazna region, though only temporarily, it seems, since Ebn Baṭṭūṭa found Ġazna occupied by Tarmašīrīn's representatives seven years later (tr. H. A. R. Gibb, *Travels*, Cambridge, 1958-71, III, pp. 561, 589).

Of the far greater significance was the rapprochement with the Mamluk sultans of Egypt. In 720/1320 a merchant named Maǰd-al-dīn Sallāmī was responsible for beginning negotiations between the two powers which resulted in the treaty of Aleppo two years later, thus bringing to a close the six decades of intermittent hostilities that dated from Hülegü's invasion of Syria in 658/1260 and the Mongol defeat at 'Ayn Jālūt. The political advantages of the treaty were to be displayed in the Mamluk sultan's execution of Temürtāš, referred to above, and in his cool response to future overtures from the Golden Horde for military cooperation against Iran. Nevertheless, the economic benefits resulting from this new found harmony on the Syrian frontier doubtless loomed still larger in the minds of both the sultan and the Mongols (see S. Y. Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter*, Wiesbaden, 1965, pp. 71ff.).

With the Il-khans' other traditional enemy, the Golden Horde, however, relations remained as hostile as before. After his invasion of 719/1319 and his defeat by Abū Sa'īd and Čoban on the river Kor, Özbek continued to stir up trouble whenever possible. If later Mamluk writers are to be believed, he was



in correspondence with Yasā'ūr and made an abortive attempt to send aid to Qorūmšī and Īreṇčīn (Ebn Doqmāq, in Tiesenhausen, *Sbornik* I, pp. 319ff.; 'Aynī, in *ibid.*, pp. 488ff.); while in 720/1321 Abū Sa'īd was obliged to dispatch troops to expel Özbeg's brother Ġāzān from Georgia. Upon a further incursion by the army of the Golden Horde in 725/1325, Čoban carried the war into Özbeg's own territory, which he devastated in reprisal. But the khan of the Golden Horde returned to the offensive at the very end of Abū Sa'īd's reign, and the Il-khan was in fact advancing to meet him at the time of his death. Abū Sa'īd died at his headquarters in the Qarābāġ region on 13 Rabī' II 736/30 November 1335, and was buried at Solṭānīya. It was believed that he had been poisoned by Baġdād Kātūn, whom he had neglected of late in favor of her niece, Demašq K'āja's daughter Delšād Kātūn.

Ebn Baṭṭūṭa, who claims to have seen Abū Sa'īd as a young man in Baghdad, describes him as “the most beautiful of God's creatures in features” (*Travels* II, p. 336), and he seems to have enjoyed a uniformly high reputation among his contemporaries. He is depicted as a cultured prince, who wrote a good hand in both the Mongol and the Arabic scripts and had achieved skill as a musician, and he was, moreover, the only Il-khan to compose Persian poetry, of which two specimens are preserved in the *Tārīk-e Šayk' Oways* (text, pp. 155-56). We also learn from the same work that Abū Sa'īd enjoyed the conversation of various 'olamā' (text, pp. 152-53; tr., p. 54). His adherence to the orthodox faith certainly contrasts sharply with the Shi'ite sympathies of his father and may well be a factor underlying the rapprochement with Egypt, though it is noteworthy that the Mamluk chronicler Ebn al-Dawādārī (*Kanz al-dorar* IX, ed. H. R. Roemer, Cairo, 1960, p. 313) attributes this rather to the influence of Čoban. Towards the Christians Abū Sa'īd's attitude is difficult to assess. He is said by Šafadī (*al-Wāfi*, p. 323) to have demolished the churches in Baghdad and to have actively encouraged conversion to Islam. Yet his reign witnessed the creation, through a bull of Pope John XXII dated 1 May 1318, of a Latin archbishopric of Solṭānīya along with a dependent episcopal hierarchy, and Western visitors such as Jordanus of Severac give no evidence that Il-khan impeded the ensuing missionary activity. Abū Sa'īd's tolerance may sometimes, of course, have sprung from economic motives, as when in his commercial treaty with Venice in 1320 he granted permission for *frari Latini* to build oratories in the cities of his empire.

At his death Abū Sa'īd left no issue by any of his numerous wives, though Delšād Kātūn was to give birth to a daughter seven months later. The absence



of a son, and indeed of any close male relative, to succeed him proved catastrophic for the Il-khanid state. For the next decade or more it was racked by disputes among rival claimants from the imperial family, of whom some, such as Abū Sa'īd's immediate successor Arpā, were not even direct descendants of Hülegü. Later 8th/14th century writers therefore looked back on Abū Sa'īd's reign as a golden age. In Aharī's words, for example, "the time of his government was the best period of the domination of the Mongols" (*Tārīk-e Šayk Oways*, tr., p. 51). For the modern historian it is tempting to locate the roots of the decline of Il-khanid Iran in Abū Sa'īd's own time, but there are formidable obstacles to so doing. One is the problem of sources. We simply do not possess any source for Abū Sa'īd's era comparable in authority and depth with Rašīd-al-dīn's survey of Ġāzān's reign or even with Kāšānī's inferior coverage of that of Öljeitü. A second obstacle lies in what we actually discern of Abū Sa'īd's own quality as a ruler. The shadowy character of his sovereignty during Čoban's ascendancy was admittedly a byword among contemporary observers such as Ebn Baṭṭūṭa (II, p. 337) and 'Omarī (*Masālek al-abšār*, tr. K. Lech, Wiesbaden, 1968, p. 157). Yet even in this period the young Il-khan displayed signs of great energy, as in the crisis of 719/1319, and after Čoban's downfall the sources afford no further indications of weakness or lethargy. Abū Sa'īd's last years have an air of greater stability than the era of nominal rule.

See also: [Chobanids](#), Il-khans.

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