



## ARGŪN ĀQĀ

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**ARGŪN ĀQĀ** (Turkish *arġun* “half breed” and Mongol *aqā* “elder brother”), Mongol administrator in Iran (d. 673/1275). He belonged to the Oirat tribe, and his father, Taiču, according to Jovaynī, was a commander of a thousand. Rašīd-al-dīn (*Jāmeʿ al-tawārīk* I, ed. A. A. Romaskevich et. al., Moscow, 1968, pp. 139, 230), on the other hand, describes Argūn’s father as a poor man who, in a famine year, was obliged to barter his son for a leg of beef. The amir Qadan of the Jalayir tribe, into whose hands he thus passed, sent him together with his own son Ilüge to enter the service of the Great Khan Ögedei (Ügädāy). Having mastered the Uighur script and been enrolled among the Great Khan’s secretaries (*bitikčīān*) at an early age, he was deputed to investigate the charges against Körgüz (Kürgüz), the governor of Khorasan. What followed is related in a somewhat confused fashion by Jovaynī, but it seems that after Körgüz had been cleared, Argūn was appointed as his colleague (*nöker*) with the function of tribute collector (*basqāq*). Körgüz subsequently paid little heed to this arrangement, and Argūn retired to the east; the detailed, though chronologically unreliable, narrative of Sayfī (*Tārīk-nāma-ye Hārat*, ed. M. L. al-Şeddīqī, Calcutta, 1944, pp. 127-37, 175) indicates that the two men exercised conflicting authority for a time. Following Ögedei’s death in 639/1241, Argūn was nominated by the governor’s enemies to arrest him and take him to Mongolia, where Körgüz was put to death. Argūn was then appointed his successor, with responsibility for all territories west of the Oxus as far as Anatolia (Rūm). Jovaynī dates this second arrival in Khorasan in 641/1243-44.

In 644/1246 he was summoned to attend the election and enthronement of the



Great Khan Güyüg, Ögedei's son, who confirmed him in office. Arġūn's return to the west, where he visited Azarbaijan, appears to have coincided with the papal mission to that region headed by the Dominican friar Ascelin. He is surely identical with the "magnus consiliarius" named "Anguta" who, according to Ascelin's colleague Simon of Saint-Quentin (*Histoire des Tartares*, ed. J. Richard, Paris, 1965, pp. 110, 112), arrived on 17 July 1247 at the encampment of the Mongol general Baiju (Bāyǰū) with authority from Güyüg to govern Georgia. This identification was rejected by Paul Pelliot ("Les Mongols et la papauté," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 24, 1924, p. 312), who preferred to see in "Anguta" the general Elġigidei (Īčīkadāy). But Elġigidei, who received orders from Güyüg to assume the command of the Mongol army in southwest Asia only in September, 1247 (*Yüan Shih*, chap. 2, tr. W. Abramowski, *Zentralasiatische Studien* 10, 1976, p. 152), did not reach Iran until around the time of the Great Khan's death in April, 1248 (Kirakos, p. 218), when Arġūn, himself on his way to Mongolia to combat intrigues against him at court, met him in Central Asia and was induced to turn back and attend to the provisioning of Elġigidei's forces (Jovaynī, tr. Boyle, II, p. 512). It was not until the late summer of 647/ 1249 that Arġūn was free to resume his interrupted journey and secure the dismissal of the charges against him by Güyüg's widow—the Great Khan having died in April, 1248 (Kirakos Ganjakec'i, tr. L. A. Khanlaryan, *Istoriya Armenii*, Moscow, 1976, p. 218). The pains he took on this occasion to ingratiate himself with every branch of the imperial family enabled him to survive the upheavals of the next few years, when so many members of Ögedei's line and their adherents were executed, among them the general Elġigidei, commander of the Mongol army in southwest Asia. On his third journey to Mongolia, in 649/1251, Arġūn arrived too late for the enthronement of the victorious candidate, Mōngke (Mangū), but his authority over the western regions was once more confirmed and the frontier regions that Güyüg had entrusted to Elġigidei were restored to him (Jovaynī, tr. Boyle, II p. 597; see also I, p. 257). His fourth and last journey to the east, prompted by renewed conspiracies against him at the Great Khan's court and the dispatch of an inspector to examine his accounts, coincided with the westward advance of a great army under Mōngke's brother Hülegü (Hülāgū, q.v.), who detained him for several months in Transoxiana. Once he could proceed, in the early spring of 654/1256, he was again successful in thwarting his enemies, although according to an Armenian source (M. F. Brosset, *Histoire de la Siounie*, St. Petersburg, 1864-66, I, pp. 232-33) he had been put in chains and was saved only through the intercession of Prince Smbat Orbelian.



As was his predecessor, Körgüz, Arġūn was served by members of the established Iranian bureaucracy, among whom Jovaynī's father, the *ṣāheb-dīvān* Bahā'-al-dīn, deputized for him in his absence in 1246; the historian himself served Arġūn ten years later. Commenting favorably upon Arġūn's regime, Jovaynī claims that he put a stop to the encroachments by the military on the settled population of Azarbaijan and abolished the illegal taxes levied by the hated Šaraf-al-dīn K̄vārazmī in Khorasan. But until Mōngke's reign the finances of Iran were in a chaotic condition, as Arġūn admitted during his visit to Mongolia in 649-50/1251-52, and his chief importance lies in the changes that resulted from his representations to the Great Khan on that occasion. Following his return in 651/1253 a census was conducted in Khorasan and northwestern Iran and a new tax introduced. This was the *qopčūr*, originally a pasture tax levied only on the nomads but now extended, apparently, to include a poll tax on the sedentary population; designed to systematize the collection of revenue, it had already been instituted in Transoxiana. It can only have caused resentment among the Muslims, and the Christian author Kirakos, in stark contrast with Jovaynī, has nothing favorable to say concerning Arġūn's exactions: his harsh treatment of certain Armenian princes, such as Jalāl of Kačen, whom he had executed in 659/1261, made him especially hateful.

After his last journey to Mongolia Arġūn remained in the west, serving Hülegü and his son Abaqa in turn, according to Rašīd-al-dīn (*Jāme' al-tawārīk* III, ed. A. A. 'Alizāda, Baku, 1957, p. 102), as tax-farmer general (*moqāte'e mamālek*). In 657-79/1259-61 he directed military operations against rebel princes in Georgia, and a year or so later was sent to Khorasan with Abaqa to cooperate with the Chaghatayid prince Alġu against the Golden Horde (Kirakos, tr. p. 237). He was still in attendance on Abaqa when the latter succeeded Hülegü in 663/1265, and subsequently acted as deputy to the new Il-khan's brother Tübšīn, governor of Khorasan, taking part in the war against the invading Chaghatayid forces in 668/1269-70. His last recorded act was the conduct of a fresh census in Georgia in 671 or 672/1273 (A. G. Galstyan, *Armyanskie istochniki o mongolakh*, Moscow, 1962, p. 36). Arġūn died in the pasturelands of Rādkān, near Ṭūs, on 20 Du'l-ḥejja 673/17 June 1275 (Waṣṣāf, *Taǰziat al-amṣār*, lithog. ed., Bombay, 1269/1853, p. 313); he left a number of sons, of whom the most celebrated was Nowrūz, the Mongol general executed in 696/1297 under Ġāzān Khan. No other authority corroborates the assertion of Kirakos (tr., p. 235) that Arġūn Āqā was a Muslim.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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See also J. A. Boyle, *Camb. Hist. Iran* V, pp. 337-40. B. Spuler, *Mongolen*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 40-53.

On the name Arġūn, see P. Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, Paris, 1959-63, I, pp. 47-51.

(P. Jackson)