



ČEGEL

ČEGEL (Jekel), name of a Turkish people in Central Asia known in Persian poetry for the extraordinary beauty of their youths. The earliest reference to them in Islamic sources is found in *Ğodūd al-ālam*, which gives a somewhat confused definition of their territory (cf. their location vis-à-vis the Toks, ed. Sotūda, pp. 81, 83, tr. Minorsky, pp. 98, 99) but describes the people as good-natured (*nīk-ṭab*), sociable (*āmīzanda*), and friendly (*mehrbān*). They were mostly nomadic, living in tents and felt hunts (*kargāh*), and breeding cattle, sheep, and horses. They were wealthy and populous and some of them worshipped the sun and stars (ed. Sotūda, pp. 83-84, tr. pp. 98-99). The next reference to them is by Moqaddasī (pp. 48, 263, 274-75), who mentions the fortress town of Jekel near ʿarāz (Talas, near the present day Awlīā Ata) in the region of *Asfijāb*. The town had a citadel, and the Friday mosque was located in the marketplace. It was repeatedly attacked by the neighboring Ğozz, who came to apply the term Čegel to any Turkish tribe to the east of Amu Darya (Barthold, in *ET*¹ IV, p. 904). According to Maḥmūd Kāšġarī (apud Barthold, loc. cit.) the Čegel lived in three areas: the nomad Čegel, who lived on the river Ili; the Čegel of the villages near Kāšġar; and the people of the town Jekel near Asbījāb. Minorsky (*Ğodūd al-ālam*, comm. pp. 297-99), utilizing Gardīzī's description of two routes crossing the Čegel country towards Barskān (ed. Ḥabībī, pp. 265-66, 279), concluded that the tribe's territory lay to the east of the Ili-Chu watershed in the north and southwest of the lake Issyk Kul (Īseġkūl) and was bounded on the west by the Kalkoġ (Qarloġ) and Toksī Turks. The Čegel to the southwest of the lake were subject to a ruler of their own called *taksīn* (Gardīzī, p. 266; *Mojmal*, ed. Bahār, p. 421; *Ğodūd al-ālam*, tr. Minorsky,



comm., p. 297 and n. 4). According to a report by Abū Dolaf preserved by Yāqūt (*Boldān* III, pp. 446-47), the Čegel married their sisters and daughters, a small number of them practiced Christianity, but none of them was Zoroastrian (the authenticity of Abū Dolaf's report has been questioned by Minorsky; see Abū Dolaf, Pers. tr., pp. 14-26, 31-33). A passage by Neẓām-al-Molk indicates that a good number of them had embraced Islam by the mid-5th/11th century

The Čegel arrived in Transoxiana with the Qarakhanids and formed the core of their army in the 5th/11th century. Detachments of them were stationed in Samarqand and elsewhere in Transoxiana during Malekšāh's campaign in Central Asia in 482/1089. Malekšāh's neglect to give for the Čegel the customary banquet that the Saljuqs gave for tribal chiefs caused the revolt of the Čegel in Samarqand once Malekšāh had returned to Khorasan. Saljuq's authority was soon restored in Samarqand, and the leader of the Čegel, referred to as 'Ayn-al-Dawla, was executed (Ebn-al-Aṭīr, X, pp. 170-73; Neẓām-al-Molk, p. 170; Barthold, *Turkestan*³, p. 317 and n. 2).

The Čegel are also mentioned as excellent archers (e.g., Enjū Šīrāzī II, pp. 1564-65). Their reputation for good looks made their name a recurrent term in Persian poetry (e.g., Dehḡodā, s.v.). Ḥāfeẓ sometimes refers to the beloved as *šam'e Čegel* ("the Čegel's candle"; *Dīvān*, pp. 323, 331, 344). Their youths were also captured and sold as slaves in Persia and elsewhere. Kaykāvūs b. Eskandar (p. 115), however, described Čegel slaves (*ğolām*) as the laziest of all Turkish slaves.

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