



## CHOBANIDS

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**CHOBANIDS** (Chupanids, Pers. Čūpānīān), a family of Mongol origin descended from the amir Čobān (or Čūpān, Ar. Jūbān) Noyan. Its members ruled over Azarbaijan, Arrān, and parts of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and west central Persia from the death of Abū Saʿīd on 13 Rabīʿ II 736/30 November 1335 until the death of Malek Ašraf, grandson of Čobān, in 758/1357. Although at first the Chobanids maintained the fiction that they were vassals of the ruling house of Hülegü (Hülāgū), after the collapse of Il-khanid authority they became effectively independent rulers of the areas that they were able to seize. It is possible to identify four different phases in the history of the Chobanids: the rise and fall of Čobān, recovery and unity during the rise of Ḥasan(-e) Kūček, fratricidal divisions once the family was in power, and the reign of Malek Ašraf and the end of Chobanid rule.

*The rise and fall of Čobān.* Amir Čobān, the eponymous founder of the dynasty (see [Table 41](#)), was a member of the Soldūs (Sūldūs) tribe and traced his ancestry back to Sorġān (Sūrġān) Šīra, who assisted Čengīz (Chinggis) Khan in his early rise to power (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāmeʿ al-tawārīk*, Baku, pp. 443-47). Čobān's grandfather was Amir Tūdāʿūn (Todāvön), who was killed at the battle of Albestān/Āblestān (Eblistan) against the Mamluks in the spring of 675/1277 (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāmeʿ al-tawārīk*, Moscow, p. 144; Āqsarāʿī, pp. 113-14; Baybars Maṣūri, p. 84). Of Čobān's father, Malek, little is recorded. Čobān himself served as a senior commander under Ġāzān Khan, notably on his three expeditions against Syria, and was finally promoted by Öljeitü (Ūljāytū) to the rank of chief military commander (variously termed *amīr-e aʿzam*, *amīr-e*



*tūmān*, *amīr al-omarā'*, or *beglarbegī*; see, e.g., 'Omarī, p. 93) in 706/1307, following the death of Qotloğšāh on campaign in Gilān (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 72, 76). Čobān's relations with the ruling family and his own personal influence had already been strengthened by his betrothal to Dowlandī Kātūn, daughter of Öljeitü, in 704/1305, and the marriage was consummated in 707/1307 (Qāšānī, pp. 43, 73). During Öljeitü's reign Čobān's paramount role continued almost unimpeded, except for the powerful influence that the civilian viziers, notably Tāj-al-Dīn 'Alīšāh, exercised over the sultan in directions that were not always consonant with the interests of the Mongol chiefs (Qāšānī, pp. 195-96).

On his deathbed in 716/1316 Öljeitü commended Čobān to his twelve-year old son and successor, Sultan Abū Sa'īd, who duly confirmed Čobān's position as chief amir (*Tārīk-e Waṣṣāf*, p. 619). In the decade that followed the Chobanid dynasty reached the peak of its power and also suffered its first major setback. That Čobān's position was resented is demonstrated by a conspiracy of leading amirs against him in 719/1319, following his high-handed treatment of Qūrom(i)šī (whose career until then had largely paralleled Čobān's own) for military negligence. The sultan's intervention proved crucial, and the coalition was defeated (Šabānkāra'ī, pp. 274-78; *Tārīk-egozīda*, ed. Browne, pp. 604-06; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 144-51), though at least one of the conspirators, Abū Sa'īd's uncle Īrenjīn, seems to have believed that he was acting with the sultan's blessing (Šafadī, X, 22; cf. Naṭanzī, pp. 142-43). After that the Il-khanid realm was under the control of the Chobanids (Šabānkāra'ī, p. 278), and the sultan had to wait another eight years before a pretext arose for striking against the family.

Although the fall of Čobān's third son, [Demašq K̄vāja](#), who had dominated Abū Sa'īd's administration since 719/1319, was precipitated by reports of his activities in the sultan's harem (Ebn Baṭṭūṭa, tr. Gibb, pp. 337-38; Abu'l-Fedā, tr., p. 87; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 168-69), his previous conduct had already prepared the ground. Not only his own rudeness, but also his extravagant expenditure of the wealth he had amassed, while the sultan himself did not even possess a treasury, caused resentment (Šabānkāra'ī, p. 280; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 165), which was fanned by the incompetent and vindictive vizier, Rokn-al-Dīn Šāyen, formerly a senior assistant to Čobān (see *Tārīk-egozīda*, ed. Browne, p. 607; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 162, 166; K̄vādamīr, pp. 323-24). Contributing to the resentment was Čobān's attitude to the sultan's infatuation with his daughter Bağdād Kātūn, who was already married to Shaikh Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg Jalāyerī (Šabānkāra'ī, pp. 295-96; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 163-64). The execution of Demašq



Ḳvāja in Šawwāl 727/August 1327 was followed by a general attack on the Chobanid position. Following the failure of attempts at mediation by Shaikh ‘Alā’-al-Dīn Semnānī and in the face of the considerable forces that had assembled around Abū Sa‘īd, Čobān himself, abandoned by most of his troops, fled to Herat. Despite ancient ties of loyalty, the ruler of Herat, Malek Ġiāṭ-al-Dīn Kart, caused Čobān and his son by Dowlandī Ḳātūn, Jelā’ū Khan, to be executed early in Moḥarram 728/November 1327 (Šabānkāra’ī, pp. 282-84; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 174-78; Samarqandī, pp. 65-77).

Others of the family who perished at that time were Ḥasan, Temürtāš (Tīmürtāš), and Shaikh Maḥmūd, the first, second, and fourth sons of Čobān respectively. Ḥasan had been viceroy of Khorasan and Māzandarān and had separated from his father before the latter’s flight to Herat. He took refuge with Uzbek, khan of the Golden Horde, in whose service he died of wounds received in battle. Ḥasan’s eldest son, Tāleš, who had been governor of Isfahan, Fārs, and Kermān, had accompanied him, and he also died, in the Dašt-e Qeqčāq; one of his brothers, Qūč-Ḥosayn, was later put to death by order of Solaymān Khan, in 744/1343 (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 180-84, 218; Samarqandī, pp. 78-84). Shaikh Maḥmūd, governor of Armenia and Georgia, was brought to Tabrīz and killed after the fall of Demašq Ḳvāja. One of his four sons, Pīr-Ḥosayn, was later to play an important role in the recovery of Chobanid fortunes, before being poisoned by Shaikh Ḥasan(-e) Kūček in 743/1342 (see below).

Temürtāš, who had been viceroy of Rūm since the fall of Īrenjīn in 719/1319, had rebelled in 722/1322 but had been pardoned on the intervention of his father; his behavior back at court is alleged to have been responsible for the death of the vizier Tāj-al-Dīn ‘Alīšāh (Aharī, p. 152; Abu’l-Fedā, tr., pp. 83-84, put his revolt in 724/1324, the year of ‘Alīšāh’s death). On hearing the news of the disgrace of his family, Temürtāš fled to the court of the Mamluk sultan, al-Malek al-Nāṣer Moḥammad, with a safe-conduct from his “brother” Aitamiš. He received a warm reception in Cairo, but his own arrogant behavior, coupled with the entreaties of Abū Sa‘īd, led al-Nāṣer to execute him in Ramazān or early Šawwāl 728/July-August 1328 (Šafadī, X, pp. 400-03; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 181-83; Abu’l-Fedā, tr., p. 90; Maqrīzī, II/1, pp. 292-300; Little, pp. 395-97). Temürtāš’s sons included Shaikh Ḥasan(-e) Kūček, Malek Ašraf, Malek Aštar, and Mešr Malek. It was the first two who seized and held onto power after the death of Abū Sa‘īd.

Čobān’s first four sons, as well as his daughter Baġdād Ḳātūn, had all been



born of the same mother; three other sons, Sīūkšāh, Yāgī Bāstī/Bastī, and Nowrūz, had been born to him by Kordūčīn, probably his second wife. Still another son, Sorġān (Sūrġān, sometimes Sīūrġān, and also Sūrġān Šīra, after his ancestor, see Şafadī, XI, p. 222; Samarqandī, pp. 74, 84), was born to him by Sātī Beg, Abū Saʿīd's uterine sister, to whom he had been betrothed at the sultan's accession and whom he had married in 719/1319, thus consolidating his hold on power (*Tārīk-eWaşşāf*, p. 619; *Tārīk-egozīda*, ed. Browne, p. 606). Sorġān played an active role in the events following Abū Saʿīd's death, usually operating in collaboration with his mother. He survived until 746/1345 (see below). Demaşq K̄vāja left no sons, but he had four daughters, one of whom, Delšād K̄ātūn, was also to play a part in the tangled events to come (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 183).

The main instrument in the revival of Chobanid fortunes after this major setback was the beautiful Baġdād K̄ātūn, whom her husband now thought it prudent to divorce in favor of Abū Saʿīd. She quickly achieved a position of great authority, receiving the title K̄odāvandgār (Great lord), and was responsible for preventing the marriage of Čobān's wife (and thus her own stepmother) Kordūčīn to his killer, Malek Ġiāt-al-Dīn, to whom she had been promised in advance of the deed. Baġdād K̄ātūn also sent the bodies of Čobān and Jelā'ū Khan to the Ḥejāz for burial (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 177, 179; 'Omarī, pp. 102-03). Sorġān and his mother, Sātī Beg, were treated respectfully and later lived in Qarābāġ and Moġān (Aharī, pp. 156-57). Baġdād K̄ātūn is reported to have had great influence over Abū Saʿīd (see, e.g., 'Omarī, p. 67), and there may be grounds for believing the story that she was responsible for his death, told in colorful detail by Ebn Baṭṭūṭa (tr. Gibb, pp. 340-41). Whether this murder, if it was hers, was an act of revenge for her former husband, Ḥasan Bozorg, or her father, Čobān, is uncertain; [Arpā Khan](#) charged her with it and with summoning Ozbek Khan of the Golden Horde to advance against him and had her swiftly executed on 29 Rabī' 736/16 November 1336 (Šabānkāra'ī, pp. 295-96; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 191). Assertions that she continued to connive with Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg in 731/1331 or 732/1332 have been found to be without substance (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 186-87; Aharī, p. 156). That she became jealous of her niece and protégée Delšād K̄ātūn (daughter of Demaşq K̄vāja), whom she had introduced into the sultan's harem, is widely reported; Šabānkāra'ī (p. 295) notes that she lost her pride and arrogance in her regret for this action, contrary to the impression given by Ḥāfez-e Abrū (p. 191).

*The rise of Ḥasan(-e) Kūček.* The death of Abū Saʿīd without an heir and the



absence of an obvious candidate for the succession left the second generation of Chobanids free to fish in the muddy waters that now closed over the head of the ruling family. The offspring of Temürtāš were the main protagonists in a complex game of shifting alliances, sometimes against other members of the Chobanid family, though at first the tendency was toward solidarity. Women played an important part in these struggles, representing a continuity of legitimate authority. One of Arpā's first actions following his defeat of Ozbek was to marry Sātī Beg, sister of Abū Sa'īd and former wife of Čobān, in Rajab 736/February-March 1336 (Aharī, p. 159; Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, p. 192). Similarly, it was Demašq K̄vāja's daughter Delšād K̄ātūn, pregnant with a child by Abū Sa'īd, whose flight to the Oirat governor of Diārbakr, 'Alī Pādšāh, provoked the first internal attack on Arpā Khan's position. In a battle near Marāga on 18 Ramaẓān/10 April, in which Čobān's son Sorġān participated on the side of Arpā, the Il-khanid was defeated; he was later captured and killed (Šabānkāra'ī, pp. 300-302; Aharī, p. 159; Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 194-96). Two days after the battle 'Alī Pādšāh established his Hülegüid puppet, Mūsā Khan, on the vacant throne. This triumph was short-lived, for Shaikh Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg put forward his own candidate, Moḥammad Khan, whom he installed in Tabrīz after first killing 'Alī Pādšāh and putting Mūsā Khan to flight in a strange battle of fluctuating fortunes at Qarā Darra on 14 Ɖu'l-ḥejja/24 July 1336 (Šabānkāra'ī, pp. 303-5; Aharī, p. 162). This time Sorġān was on the winning side, and he and his mother were dispatched to Qarābāg, where he remained as governor of the region (Aharī, pp. 162-64). Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg followed up this triumph by marrying the desirable Delšād K̄ātūn, recently delivered of her daughter, thus giving a splendid final twist to the tale of these incestuous marital relationships (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 198-99). Delšād later gave birth to Shaikh Oways, first heir to the Jalayerid succession of Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg, but nevertheless on more than one occasion she also demonstrated loyalty to Ḥasan's rivals, her own Chobanid family (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 206, 227).

This rivalry began to develop in the course of the two years 737-38/1337-38, during which Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg and his puppet Moḥammad were consolidating their rule over the western and northwestern parts of the former Il-khanid realm. During 738/1338 Shaikh Ḥasan(-e) Kūček, the nineteen-year-old son of Temürtāš, carried out the first of many deceptions that characterized his single-minded pursuit of power. Maintaining that his father had escaped execution in Cairo, he arranged for a slave to impersonate him; this man, whose name was Qarā-Jarī, may have been the issue of a liaison between Čobān and a Georgian princess, which would account for his physical resem-



blance to Temürtāš (Šojā'ī, p. 50). He was married to Temürtāš's widow, and, according to some hostile accounts (e.g., Aharī, p. 65; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 202; Šojā'ī, p. 49), the new pretender, Ḥasan(-e) Kūček, attracted to his banner (which read, "Temürtāš is the freedman [*atīq*] of God"; Šojā'ī, p. 38) a collection of disenchanting hooligans and troublemakers. Despite the efforts of the Mamluk sultan al-Nāṣer Moḥammad to expose the impostor, the movement gained momentum and provided a rallying point for the scattered Chobanids (Šojā'ī, pp. 36-39; Šabānkāra'ī, pp. 311-12). Ḥasan(-e) Kūček marched east from Qarā Ḥešār to try conclusions with Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg. The opposing armies met in Alāṭāq on 27 Du'l-ḥejja 738/16 July 1338, and the outcome was a triumph for the newly cohesive Chobanid forces. On the eve of battle another of Ḥasan(-e) Kūček's tricks seems to have led Pīr-Ḥosayn, son of Shaikh Maḥmūd b. Čobān and Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg's newly appointed governor of Tabrīz, to desert his mentor, and another son of Shaikh Maḥmūd was instrumental in the defeat of Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg's right wing. Sorḡān and his mother, who had previously been faithful to the Jalayerids, also deserted (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 200, 202-03; Aharī, p. 165; Samarqandī, p. 138). It was to them that Ḥasan(-e) Kūček fled during a temporary setback. Following the execution of the puppet Moḥammad Khan, the false Temürtāš tried to eliminate his own sponsor, supposedly urged on by Ḥājī Beg, son of Ḥasan b. Čobān (Aharī, p. 166), but the attempt failed, and Qarā-Jarī himself was put to flight by Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg, by then operating from the Solṭāniya region. If the account is true, these events foreshadowed the divisions in Chobanid unity that became apparent once power had been achieved.

Ḥasan(-e) Kūček, aware of the Chobanid loyalties of Sorḡān and Sātī Beg and of their antipathy to Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg, denounced the false Temürtāš and raised Sātī Beg to the throne at the beginning of 739/July-August 1338. As she was the sister of Abū Sa'īd, this act could be claimed as a demonstration of loyalty to the Il-khanid house. An uneasy truce prevailed during the winter of 739/1338-39, though Ḥasan(-e) Kūček was not above playing on the better nature of Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg to promote the fiction that they shared an identity of interests and family loyalties, thanks to the pivotal positions of Delšād Kātūn and Sātī Beg. The queen was Ḥasan(-e) Kūček's best card, and he played it again to remove the threat of Ṭaḡāy Temür (Ṭaḡā [Ṭoḡā] Tīmūr), a descendant of one of Čengīz Khan's brothers (see [central asia vi. in the 10th-12th/16th-18th centuries](#)), who had come from Khorasan in Rajab 739/January-February 1339 at the invitation of Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg. Ḥasan(-e) Kūček, who had also been in touch with Ṭaḡāy Temür over the winter, offered



him the hand of Sātī Beg and sought written assurances of Ṭaġāy Temür's favor. These assurances, once received, were gleefully forwarded to Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg, who was already regretting having brought in the Khorasanis. Outwitted and disillusioned, Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg returned to Baghdad; the gullible Ṭaġāy Temür had no option but to retreat forlornly to Khorasan late in 739/July 1339 (Šabānkāra'ī, pp. 310-11; Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 205-07; Aharī, pp. 166-67).

Ḥasan(-e) Kūček, suspicious of Sātī Beg but too aware of her value to discard her, forced her to marry his new Hülegüid candidate for the throne, Solaymān Khan, whom he installed, judging from the evidence of the coinage, late in 739/May 1339 (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, p. 208; Faṣīḥ, III, p. 56; Šojā'ī, pp. 57, 68; see also Album, 1984, pp. 78-79). The polarization of forces in western Persia was complete, and Ḥasan(-e) Kūček sought a decisive outcome against his rival. Joined by Pīr-Ḥosayn, who had been ejected from Fārs, and by Sorġān from Qarābāġ, the Chobanid forces assembled in Ūjān and met the advancing Jalayerid army in the Jaġātū/Čaġātū (Zarrīnarūd) valley near Marāġa on 29 Du'l-ḥejja 740/26 June 1340. Ḥasan(-e) Kūček gained a substantial victory (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 209-10). Sorġān was named as governor of 'Erāq-e 'Ajam, and Pīr-Ḥosayn returned to Fārs. The triumph of the Chobanids was complete, but the remainder of Ḥasan(-e) Kūček's violent reign was marked by widening divisions within the family.

*Fratricidal divisions.* Ḥasan(-e) Kūček's uncles Yāġī Bāstī and Sorġān were the first to defect. Sorġān, perhaps reflecting his mother's dissatisfaction with the way that she had been treated, is reported to have taken refuge with Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg in Baghdad, where he joined a coalition with Ḥāġī Ṭaġāy (Ṭoġān), ruler of Dīārbakr, whose territories had been ravaged by Ḥasan(-e) Kūček. The alliance gained the material support of the dying Mamluk sultan, al-Nāṣer Moḥammad, but Ḥasan(-e) Kūček was able to detach Sorġān from the coalition by means of the usual device of a deceitful letter, which nullified al-Nāṣer's assistance (Šojā'ī, pp. 99-100; Album, 1985, pp. 73-75). Sorġān apparently then repaired to Ray, where he entered into treacherous correspondence with Ṭaġāy Temür, whose brother Amīr Shaikh 'Alī Kāvon invaded Iraq. The Khorasanis were defeated by Malek Ašraf (brother of Ḥasan(-e) Kūček) late in 741/1341. Sorġān was captured in Solṭānīya in 742/1341 and imprisoned in Qarā Ḥeṣār (Aharī, pp. 168-69; Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 210-13; Samarqandī, pp. 172-76).

Yāġī Bāstī's activities were more complex, for he became embroiled in events



in Fārs, which was the object of contention among the Chobanids, the Inju'ids, and the Mozaffarids. During the course of 741-42/1341 Yāgī Bāstī took refuge with the accommodating Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg in Baghdad. From there he was dispatched, with Mas'ūdšāh Īnjū, another refugee, to help the latter recover Shiraz from Pīr-Ḥosayn, who had recaptured the city in Jomādā 11741/November-December 1340. The expulsion of Pīr-Ḥosayn had, however, already been achieved by **Abū Eshāq Īnjū**, who had called on the assistance of Malek Ašraf. Defeated by his cousin in Šafar 743/August 1342, Pīr-Ḥosayn fled north, where, understandably confused as to where his support lay but unaccountably trusting in the good faith of Ḥasan(-e) Kūček (also his cousin), he was arrested and poisoned in Tabrīz (Ebn Zarkūb, pp. 77-79; Faṣīḥ, III, p. 62; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 213, 215; Samarqandī, pp. 176-77). Malek Ašraf himself attempted to take Shiraz but was unsuccessful and returned to Azarbaijan (Naṭanzī, pp. 175-76). Yāgī Bāstī, arriving in Fārs shortly afterward, was briefly able to establish himself in Shiraz by treacherously murdering Mas'ūdšāh, before being ousted by the partisans of Abū Eshāq (Šawwāl 743/March 1343; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 215-16; Šabānkāra'ī, pp. 312-13).

Yāgī Bāstī once more resorted to the sanctuary of Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg in Baghdad, where he joined Malek Ašraf. The latter was also becoming wary of his sanguinary brother, and, on returning north, had fled first to Georgia (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 214, 216; Ahari, p. 169). Ḥasan(-e) Kūček effortlessly tricked Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg into detaching himself from this threatening partnership, but the following year Yāgī Bāstī and Malek Ašraf sacked Abarqūh and were marching south to attack Shiraz when they received news of the murder of Ḥasan(-e) Kūček at the hands of his wife, 'Ezzat Molk, who was fearful that her infidelity had been discovered. She and some accomplices attacked him during the night of 27 Rajab 744/15 December 1343 and crushed his testicles. The murder was not discovered for three days, so greatly were Ḥasan's attendants in dread of their master. 'Ezzat Molk and her women were then rounded up, killed, dismembered and eaten by Ḥasan's enraged supporters (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 217-18; Samarqandī, pp. 188-90; according to *Ḥabīb al-sīar*, Tehran, III, p. 231, the mutilated bodies were given to dogs as food). A more light-hearted version of these sickening scenes provides another reason for the long delay in discovering the murder: According to Šafadī (XI, p. 412), Ḥasan was accustomed to spending two or three days in the baths to dream up tricks, which could account for his absence; he was secretly buried in his mausoleum in Tabrīz, and no one turned a hair at his disappearance.



All sources agree on Ḥasan(-e) Kūček's extraordinary powers of duplicity; his success in seizing and then retaining power in a period of unrestrained competition for the remains of the Il-khanid empire was based both on this deceitfulness and on his readiness to resort to violence, not least against his Chobanid cousins (e.g., Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 180, 183). On the positive side, he was a successful military commander, and his building program in Tabrīz indicates that he did not overlook the need to project a constructive image of his government. Among the buildings he founded was the Ostād-Šāgerd mosque (Qāzī Aḥmad, pp. 23-24); it is of interest that he asked the Mamluk sultan to return his father Temürtāš's remains (Maqrīzī, II/3, p. 648) for burial in Tabrīz, which again indicates some sense of dynastic identification, notwithstanding the presence of the token sultan, Solaymān Khan. He retained the services of Ġiāt-al-Dīn Moḥammad 'Alīšāh, a descendant of Tāj-al-Dīn 'Alīšāh, as vizier throughout his reign (Kvāndamīr, pp. 333-34); hostile sources refer to his rule as oppressive and marked by an increase in taxation (Aharī, p. 168).

*The reign of Malek Ašraf and the end of Chobanid rule.* The generally welcomed death of Ḥasan(-e) Kūček merely paved the way for the even more distasteful tyranny of his brother, Malek Ašraf. Solaymān Khan, still nominally sovereign in Chobanid territories, appealed to Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg for assistance as a three-cornered struggle developed among Malek Ašraf and his uncles Yāgī Bāstī and Sorḡān, the latter having escaped from Qarā Ḥešār to join the other two. Initially they divided up Ḥasan(-e) Kucek's realm among themselves (Aharī, pp. 170-71), but their cooperation was short-lived. Malek Ašraf defeated Sorḡān, who then joined Solaymān Khan and Sātī Beg; but, when Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg wisely withdrew his support, all three retired to Dīārbakr. Following a further defeat at the hands of Malek Ašraf in 746/1345, Sorḡān and his party fled into Anatolia. From there he sought and obtained Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg's protection, but his excesses led at last to his execution by his hosts (Aharī, p. 172; Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 223-24; Samarqandī, pp. 191-93). The fate of Sātī Beg and her third husband, Solaymān Khan, is not recorded, but coinage in her name is found from Ḥešn Kayfā and in the name of Solaymān Khan from Dīārbakr and Jazīra in 745 (Album, 1984, pp. 80, 100). Meanwhile in Tabrīz Malek Ašraf secretly murdered Yāgī Bāstī, before retiring for the winter of 745/1344-45 to Qarābāg (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, p. 225). The elimination of his uncles left Malek Ašraf in sole possession of the Chobanid legacy. He installed his *qabjājī* (wardrobe keeper), Nūšīrvān, on the throne under the name Anūšīrvān-e 'Adel after the illustrious Sasanian king Kōsrow I, and exercised power in his name (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, p. 224).



The continuing presence of his rival Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg in Baghdad remained a spur to Chobanid intervention in Iraq, but a force led by Malek Ašraf's brother Malek Aštar failed to take the city in spring-summer 748/1347 and was repelled with heavy losses. Malek Ašraf's aspirations in Fārs were also disappointed. An expedition to the south in the spring of 751/1350 got no farther than Isfahan, where the inhabitants resisted the intruders. Malek Ašraf had to be content with extracting a heavy payment for departing and with a promise that the *koṭba* (Friday sermon) would be read and coins struck in the name of Anūšīrvān (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, p. 229). This reverse was followed by diplomatic overtures to the Mamluks, who refused, however, to abandon their pro-Jalayerid stance (Maqrīzī, II/3, pp. 820-21).

As his reign progressed, Malek Ašraf seems to have gone mad, in a manner reminiscent of Nāder Shah Afšār in the 12th/18th century. Morbid suspicions (doubtless justified) about the loyalty of his officials, extreme rapacity, and violence characterized the last years of his rule, which coincided with the appearance of the bubonic plague in northern Persia. During that time a great exodus from Azarbaijan was reported; many people sought refuge in the lands north of the Kor, which were governed by Jānī Beg of the Golden Horde. It was from that direction that salvation came, for Jānī Beg was persuaded to invade in the late spring of 758/1357. Malek Ašraf fled with his ill-gotten treasures, which benefited only his conqueror (*Šajarat al-atrāk*, p. 233): He was captured and hanged in Tabrīz amid scenes of great popular rejoicing. Having sent a mission to Cairo with rich gifts (Maqrīzī, III/1, p. 34), Jānī Beg returned to the north, taking Malek Ašraf's mother and children with him. The daughter, Solṭānbakṭ, is last heard of in Shiraz; Malek Ašraf's son, Temürtāš, was killed by Shaikh Oways, the son and heir of Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg, in 761/1360 (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 238-39; Samarqandī, pp. 290-94).

Even contemporary sources that are not openly partisan leave little doubt as to the verdict on twenty years of Chobanid rule. The sons of Temürtāš were treacherous and violent, and their rule was seen as a reversion to the early days of Mongol exploitation in Persia, before the reforming and stabilizing policies of Ġāzān Khan; the absence of a paramount ruler strong enough to contain them left amirs, guided by their tribal interests, scope for internecine fighting and opportunistic loyalties. An allusion by Malek Ašraf to the laws of Čengīz Khan that prohibited the Mongols from living in cities (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, p. 223) is significant, particularly in invidious comparisons with the rival Jalayerids, best exemplified in the famous story of an exchange of insults



outside Baghdad in 748/1347 (Aharī, p. 173). It is worth emphasizing that adverse views on the Chobanids did not embrace Amir Čobān himself, whose many virtues, both military and religious, are stressed in the sources. His descendants managed to dominate the first two decades after the death of Abū Saʿīd, and, though they did not control the whole of the former Il-khanid realm, at least the heartland, incorporating the traditional winter pastures in Qarābāg and Arrān, as well as the capital at Tabrīz, theirs was (see *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, B VIII/12, 1986, map 19.1. “The Dynasties Following the Il-ḥānid Empire and the Campaigns of Tīmūr”; for the geographical extent of the Chobanid realms; and Album, 1984, for the distribution of their mint towns). This ephemeral success indicates the strength of their power base and considerable leadership abilities. It may be suspected that Ḥasan(-e) Kūček, had he lived longer (he died at the age of twenty-five), might have created a strong and stable government capable of expansion. It was the excesses of his brother that finally alienated support for the Chobanid cause. Yet even Malek Ašraf was aware of the harmful economic dislocation in Azarbaijan consequent upon the incessant fighting, oppressive taxation, and lack of central control, as shown by his offer of a safe-conduct for the return of Persian merchants who had sought refuge in Mamluk Egypt (Maqrīzī, II/3, p. 863). The Black Death put the final touches to the miseries of northwestern Persia and left the Chobanids’ successors with the monumental task of repairing the damage.

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[Table 41](#). The Chobanids