



ČOBĀN

ČOBĀN (Čūpān, Ar. Jūbān; ca. 660-727/1262-1327), eponymous founder of the [Chobanid dynasty](#) and the leading Mongol amir of the late Il-khanid period. He effectively ruled Persia from 716/1316 until his fall in 727/November 1327, when he was in his sixties (Šabānkāraʿī, p. 283; Šafadī, XI, p. 222).

Čobān was a member of the Sūldūs tribe. His grandfather, Todāvon (Tudāʿūn or Tudān) Bahādor, served Hūlāgū Khan on a campaign against the Golden Horde in 661/1262 and was made governor of Dīārbakr and Dīār Rabīʿa (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāmeʿ-*al-tawārīk**, Bākū, pp. 89, 91, ed. Quatremère, pp. 394, 402). He was later sent by [Abaqa Khan](#) to Khorasan (*Tārīk-eWaṣṣāf*, p. 73) and finally to Asia Minor, where he was killed at the battle of Albestān/Ālbestān (Elbistan) in 675/1277 (Āqsarāʿī, pp. 113-14). It is possible that Todāvon's son Malek accompanied his father on this campaign (Banākatī, p. 427) and shared the same fate; otherwise, it is surprising that nothing is recorded of Čobān's father except that he was with Hūlāgū's forces on the march against Baghdad (Samarqandī, p. 56). Malek's brother Akrūnčī is mentioned in connection with a mission to Georgia in about 1318 (Brosset, p. 642).

Political career. On the death of [Argūn](#), Čobān was among those amirs who supported the accession of Geykātū rather than [Bāydū](#) (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-eġāzānī*, 1957, pp. 80, 82), and in 694/1295, thanks to the diplomacy of Amir Nowrūz, he abandoned Bāydū for Ġāzān (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-eġāzānī*, 1940, p. 89; Mostawfī, p. 602). His services were rewarded with high commands under Ġāzān Khan (see below), and, when Öljeitū (Ūljāytū) succeeded his brother in 703/1304, he recognized Čobān's importance by betrothing him to his daughter



Dowlandī on 21 Ša'bān 704/19 March 1305 (Qāšānī, p. 43). The death of the senior amir, Qotloğšāh, on the Gīlān campaign in 706/1307 paved the way for Čobān's promotion to *amīr-e olūs* (*amīr al-omarā'*; Šabānkāra'ī, pp. 270, 280; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 76), and on 1 Rabī' II 707/30 September 1307 his marriage to Dowlandī was consummated (Qāšānī, p. 73).

The following year Čobān carried out raids into Georgia (Qāšānī, p. 82; Brosset, p. 604) and thereafter spent the bulk of his time in Arrān and Mūgān, where his winter quarters were located, though regularly returning to Öljeitü's *ordū* in Solṭānīya (Qāšānī, pp. 89, 127, 136). During Öljeitü's reign Čobān enjoyed considerable power, though resenting the influence that Persian civilians, such as the vizier Tāj-al-Dīn 'Alīšāh, were able to exert on the sultan (Qāšānī, pp. 195-96). Perhaps the greatest threat to his authority came from the renegade Mamluk amir Qarasonqur (Qarāsonqūr), to whom, after 712/1312, Öljeitü is said to have entrusted full authority throughout his kingdoms, earning him Čobān's hostility and rivalry (Ebn al-Dawādārī, IX, pp. 234, 252, 256, 269-71; see also Little, 1970, pp. 118-23), though there is no indication of this in Persian sources. During Čobān's return from a campaign in Anatolia in 714/1314 his wife Dowlandī Kātūn died (Qāšānī, p. 179), but his connections with the ruling family were renewed in 717/1317, when he was betrothed to Sātī Beg, Öljeitü's other surviving daughter, on the accession of her brother, [Abū Sa'īd](#) (*Tārīk-e Waṣṣāf*, p. 619; see also Samarqandī, p. 54; Waṣṣāf, p. 610, implausibly suggested that Sātī Beg was already betrothed to Čobān when he set out for Anatolia, i.e., before the death of Dowlandī).

The new sultan, Abū Sa'īd, who was a minor, confirmed Čobān in his rank as *amīr al-omarā'*, as recommended by his father (*Tārīk-e Waṣṣāf*, p. 619; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 119). Following the death of his rival Sevīnč (Sevenj) in Du'l-qa'da 717/January 1318, Čobān attained paramount power in the Il-khanate, holding the *al-tamgā*, or great seal (see Sayf Heravī, pp. 673, 694; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 137). Among the first events of this period was Čobān's desertion of the vizier Rašīd-al-Dīn, a former friend and associate, whom Čobān had persuaded to reenter political life much against Rašīd-al-Dīn's better judgment. Čobān's change of heart was blamed on the intrigues of Tāj-al-Dīn 'Alīšāh, but he hardly emerges from the episode with credit (Mostawfī, p. 613; Ebn al-Šoqā'ī, pp. 211-12; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 126-29). The incident demonstrates a continuing ambiguity in Čobān's relations with the Persian bureaucratic classes. His new power was resisted by several amirs, among them Īreñčīn (Īrenjīn) and Qorūmšī (Qūromīšī), who were both members of the Mongol Kerait tribe and resented



Čobān's claims to authority over them (Mostawfī, p. 614; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 144). Qorūmšī had recently been disciplined by Čobān, and Īreṇčīn was hostile because, when his oppressive governorship in Anatolia had provoked a revolt in 714/1314, Čobān had been sent by Öljeitü to quell it (Qāšānī, pp. 166, 168-71; Āqсарā'ī, pp. 304-12, suggested that this happened at the beginning of Abū Sa'īd's reign). Īreṇčīn was then made governor of Dīārbakr but was later replaced by Sūtāy (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 123, 146); he appears to have believed that he was acting against Čobān with the young sultan's blessing (Naṭanzī, p. 143), which is the interpretation of the revolt of the amirs given by Mamluk historians (e.g., Nowayrī, cited by D'Ohsson, pp. 637-42; Şafadī, X, p. 22; Maqrīzī, II, p. 195; Ebn Taġrīberdī, IX, pp. 272-73). However, Abū Sa'īd remained loyal to his regent, and his active role in the ensuing battle, which took place between Mīāna and Zanjān won the day (Şabānkara'ī, pp. 274-77; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 144-51). Tāj-al-Dīn 'Alīšāh was also conspicuous in his support for Čobān, doubtless obliged to him for the removal of Rašīd-al-Dīn. This victory gave Čobān the opportunity to strengthen his position further by removing various enemies, and, following the battle, Čobān and his family enjoyed unrivaled power (Şabānkara'ī, p. 278; see also 'Omarī, p. 99). His marriage to Sātī Beg was consummated on 20 Rajab 719/6 September 1319 (Mostawfī, p. 615).

Although his earliest encounters with Egypt had been hostile, Čobān is credited with Öljeitü's decision to withdraw from the siege of Raḥba in 712/1312 (see below). His inclinations toward the Mamluks were such that Qarasonqur was able to threaten to reveal letters allegedly written by Čobān to the Mamluk sultan al-Malek al-Nāşer indicating his desire to defect (Ebn al-Dawādārī, IX, pp. 270-71). Čobān's diplomacy intensified from the moment he assumed effective authority as Abū Sa'īd's regent, and a stream of embassies culminated in a negotiated peace between the Mongols and the Mamluks in 723/1323 (Maqrīzī, II, pp. 163, 175, 208-11, 242), for which Čobān is awarded much of the credit (Ebn al-Dawādārī, IX, p. 313; Şafadī, XI, p. 220; see also Little, 1986, for the role of Aitamiş in these negotiations, and Čobān's later request for one of his sons to marry a daughter of al-Malek al-Nāşer).

Čobān's custom was to spend most of his time in the frontier region around Darband, coming to court two or three times a year but spending most of his time with the army (Şabānkara'ī, p. 280; Aharī, tr., p. 54, text, p. 153; see also 'Omarī, p. 100). In the winter of 722/1322-23 Čobān was obliged to march into Anatolia to discipline his rebellious son Temürtāş (Tīmürtāş), and to bring him



before Abū Saʿīd, who pardoned him (Mostawfī, pp. 615-16). The first signs of a change in Abū Saʿīd's attitude to the Chobanids came only in 725/1325, in connection with the sultan's passion for Čobān's daughter, Baġdād Kātūn, who had been married two years earlier to Shaikh Ḥasan-e Bozorg Īlekānī. Čobān's efforts to distract the sultan, who was just entering manhood, proved fruitless (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 163-65). Čobān's lack of complaisance brought to a head grievances directed chiefly against another of Čobān's sons, Demašq K̲vāja, who was overstepping his position at court while his father was away. Čobān's interests were also poorly served by his former agent Rokn-al-Dīn Šāyen, who had been made vizier on the death of Tāj-al-Dīn 'Alīšāh in Jomādā II 724/ June 1324. Čobān deemed it expedient to remove his ungrateful protégé from the center of intrigue, and he took him to Khorasan to engage the forces of the Chaghatayid prince Tarmašīrīn (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 165-66; Mostawfī, pp. 617-18). At the outset of this expedition, the great khan, Yesūn Temūr, had made Čobān *amīr al-omarā'* of Īrān and Tūrān, and possibly China and the Dašt-e Qepčāq, as well, and he was therefore at the peak of his power (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 167; Ahari, tr., pp. 54-55, p. 153). In his absence the cocksure and overbearing Demašq K̲vāja soon presented Abū Saʿīd with a pretext for moving against him, and his downfall was achieved with the aid of an ominous ruse, the head of a Kurdish bandit being passed off as the head of Čobān, allegedly executed in Khorasan on the sultan's orders (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 168-70).

Events then moved swiftly to the downfall of Čobān himself. Although initially there was no outward change in Abū Saʿīd's favor, Čobān marched west, prepared to regain power by force if necessary (Šabānkara'ī, p. 282; Mostawfī, p. 619; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 173). Following the failure of mediation by Shaikh 'Alā'-al-Dīn Semnānī, Čobān confronted Abū Saʿīd near Ray, but before battle could be joined he was abandoned by several amirs and turned in flight across the desert. Against the advice of his remaining adherents, he turned to Herat, rejecting the idea of seeking Chaghatayid help as inconsistent with his good name and advancing years. He was executed on the orders of the amir of Herat, Ġiāṭ-al-Dīn Kart, who had been promised the hand of Čobān's wife Kordočīn (Kordūjīn) in return for his treachery; Čobān's amputated finger arrived in Qarābāġ in (late) Moḥarram 728/December 1327, where it was hung in the *bāzār* of the *ordū* amid great rejoicing (Šabānkara'ī, pp. 282-84; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, pp. 174-78; Maqrīzī, II, p. 303; see also Abu'l-Fedā, tr. Holt, p. 87). A Georgian chronicler, interestingly, dates the disintegration of the Il-khanate from Čobān's death (Brosset, p. 646), though his account is very abbreviated.



Military campaigns. Apart from his majesty, power, and ability to rule, Čobān's biographers consistently draw attention to his bravery (e.g., Qāšānī, p. 8). A lifetime of campaigning reveals Čobān as an experienced and valiant general, capable of dashing maneuvers and of winning the loyalty of his men, by whom he was deserted at the last only because of the resolution displayed by Abū Sa'īd. Čobān's bravery was demonstrated in his first reported battle in Rabī' II 688/April-May 1289, when he was in his twenties, against an army sent by Amir Noqai (or Nūqāy) of the Golden Horde (Mostawfī, p. 598; ed. Browne, p. 588). He later undertook victorious campaigns against this traditional enemy in 708/1308, 719/1319, and 725/1325. Ebn al-Dawādārī (IX, p. 272-79) suggested that a further expedition against Toqtā Khan (1291-1312) was mounted in 713/1313 (sic), but this is not confirmed elsewhere (cf. Little, 1970, pp. 121-23). Čobān's summer quarters were strategically placed in the sensitive border area of Qaṣr-e Ṭāq and Gokča Deñiz (Kükja Tenkiz; Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 222).

On another front, in 698/1299 Čobān was sent to eastern Anatolia ahead of the army under Qotloğšāh to deal with the revolt of Sulemīš (Sülāmīš), whom he defeated in a surprise night attack without waiting for the bulk of the Mongol army to come up (Āqsarā'ī, pp. 245-46; Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-eğāzānī*, 1940, pp. 122-23); he conducted further campaigns in Anatolia in 714-15/1314-15 and 722/1322-3 (see above).

Čobān also participated in Ġāzān's three Syrian expeditions. In 699/1299 he was stationed in Ġāzān's center at the battle of Wādī Kaẓendār (east of Ḥamāh), in which he played an active part (Brosset, p. 631). When Ġāzān later retired from Syria, Čobān was left behind with Qotloğšāh to hold the conquered territories. He led the vanguard on the inconclusive Syrian campaign of 700/1300 (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-eğāzānī*, 1940, pp. 126, 130, 132) and played a particularly notable role in the disastrous third campaign of 702/1303. Against Čobān's advice, Qotloğšāh sought to give battle with the Egyptians before securing Damascus, and there is evidence of fatal disagreement between the two generals at the ensuing battle of Marj Šoffar (*Tārīk-eWaṣṣāf*, pp. 409-12). On returning to Ġāzān, Qotloğšāh was severely reprimanded and given eighty-seven blows. Čobān, who stayed with the army throughout the long retreat and maintained the troops' morale, was received with honor but still given three blows for the sake of appearances (*Tārīk-eWaṣṣāf*, p. 414; Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-eğāzānī*, 1940, p. 149; Aharī, tr. p. 48, text, pp. 145-46).

Čobān was similarly one of the few amirs to emerge with credit from Öljeitü's



ill-fated campaign in Gilān in 706/1307 (Qāšānī, p. 69; Brosset, pp. 637-38). In 712/1312 Öljeitü launched an assault on Raḥba, evidently prompted by Qarasonqur, who had held out the prospect that Syria would fall easily to a Mongol invasion. When it came to the siege of Raḥba itself, Čobān's hostility to the whole project and to Qarasonqur in particular seems to have led him to persuade Öljeitü to abandon the expedition, voicing his concern for the fate of the Muslim inhabitants of the town and at the impropriety of fighting fellow Muslims, particularly in Ramažān (Şafadī, XI, p. 221; Ebn Ḥajar, II, p. 79; cf. Ebn al-Dawādārī, IX, pp. 261-62).

Piety and good works. Unusually for a Mongol amir, Čobān's services to Islam were applauded in the works of Mamluk historians. Apart from his behavior at Raḥba, this trait is revealed early in his period of dominion over Abū Sa'īd, for in 720/1320 measures were taken against wine drinking, brothels, and places of entertainment. Churches in the Tabrīz region were destroyed and mosques renovated, apparently in response to a series of natural disasters (Nowayrī, quoted by D'Ohsson, pp. 644-46; Maqrīzī, II, p. 211). The following year, more remarkably, Čobān asked to be granted an estate out of the dead lands of Egypt, so that he could bring it back into cultivation and bequeath it as a *waqf* (pious endowment) to the shrine at Mecca (Maqrīzī, II, p. 230). In 725/1325 Čobān sponsored the important project of restoring the water supply to Mecca, which was achieved in four months, early in 726/1326 (Maqrīzī, II, pp. 274-75). After his death his daughter Baġdād Kātūn arranged for his body to be sent with the Iraḡi pilgrimage caravan to Mecca, where it was taken through the rites of the *ḥajj*. Perhaps owing to some lingering resentment at Čobān's charitable interventions in the holy cities, al-Malek al-Nāşer would not allow him to be buried in the mausoleum that he had built for himself in Medina; he was finally buried in the Baqī' cemetery there (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, p. 179; Şafadī, p. 221; *Nozhat al-qolūb*, ed. Le Strange, pp. 4, 13).

Persian sources also portray Čobān as a pious and sincere Muslim, conspicuous for his justice and good faith (e.g., Şabānkara'ī, p. 285). Among his other good works Ḥāfez-e Abrū (p. 179) mentioned a number of buildings constructed on the routes to Syria and Egypt. This image of the ideal Muslim ruler is tarnished by the episode in 724/1324 of the alleged inheritance of the estates of Nāz Kātūn in the Hamadān and Qazvīn region, where Čobān's agents acted with great oppression; Čobān could be persuaded to renounce his claims only upon being compensated with a province in Anatolia (Samarqandī, pp. 56-57). The incident reveals a persistent fundamental clash in outlook with



that of the civilian bureaucracy; the vizier Tāj-al-Dīn ‘Alīšāh, who had to buy off Čobān’s agents with his own money, died later the same year, apparently wearied by the tribulations of office (cf. Aharī, tr., pp. 53-54, text, p. 152). Čobān’s services to Islam may have been largely for foreign consumption, but his loyalty and staunchness in the cause of the Il-khanate were, as Ḥāfez-e Abrū remarked (p. 179), too great to describe in detail.

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(Charles Melville)