



QOTLOĠ TARKĀN KĀTUN

QOTLOĠ TARKĀN KĀTUN (or Tarkan), ‘EŞMAT-AL-DONYĀ WA’L-DIN, [Qara Ketāy](#) ruler of [Kerman](#) (655-89/1257-83). She probably was born between 605-610/1208-1213 in Transoxania; she was enslaved during childhood and acquired by an old merchant from Isfahan, who raised her as his own daughter and provided her with an excellent education (Anonymous, p. 96). Other historians first mention Tarkān as a concubine of Ġiaṭ-al-Din Piršāh, a son of Sultan Moḥammad K̄ārazmšāh (Waṣṣāf, 1853, p. 287; for the name Tarkān/Tarkan, see Qazvini, pp. 62-63), and subsequently Borāq Ḥājeb, a chamberlain (*ḥājeb*) in Sultan Moḥammad’s service and the first Qotloġkāniya ruler of Kerman (Mostawfi, p. 530). Four months after Borāq’s death (20 Du’l-ḥejja 632/5 September 1235), his nephew and successor, Qoṭb-al-Din Moḥammad, married Tarkān. Yet in Ša’bān 633/April-May 1236, Ögedei, the Mongol Great Khan (r. 624-39/1227-41), granted Kerman to Borāq’s son. Qoṭb-al-Din set out for Ögedei’s court with his family and was sent to Transoxania. During this exile Tarkān’s intelligence, common sense, and sound judgement reportedly were essential for her husband’s welfare and made him the envy of the Transoxanian nobility (*omara*’; Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, pp. 26, 28, 31).

In Šawwāl 650/December 1252, Great Khan (Qā’ān) Möngke (r. 649-58/1251-60) reinstated Qoṭb-al-Din (Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, pp. 31, 32; Waṣṣāf, 1853, p. 289), but he died five years later in Ramazān 655 (Sep. 1257) and was succeeded by Tarkān Kātun in accordance with the unified decision of Kerman dignitaries and Mongol officials. [Hülegü Khan](#), however, assigned the military command to her son-in-law ‘Azod-al-Din, and only the civil affairs to her (Anonymous,



pp. 106-8). Apparently this division of power caused disturbance in Kerman. Tarkān, therefore, successfully appealed to Hülegü and obtained an order giving her full military and civil authority on behalf of Qoṭb-al-Din's minor children (Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, pp. 37-38; Faṣiḥ K̄āfi, II, p. 324). Right from the beginning of her reign, she built up excellent relations with the Il-khanid court (*ordu*) due to her frequent presence there (Anonymous, p. 240; Rašid-al-Din, II, p. 934) and lavish distribution of gifts (Waṣṣāf, 1853, p. 291). During her second visit immediately after Hülegü's death in 663/1265, Hülegü's successor, Abaqa (Pers. Abāqā; q.v.), granted her Sirjañ (Anonymous, 1976, p. 190), which was later assigned to her daughter, Pādšāh Kātun (Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, pp. 47, 54).

Obviously strong-willed and prudent, Tarkān Kātun sustained her rule even after her stepsons Ḥajjaḯ Solṯān and Jalāl-al-Din Soyurgātmeš attained majority. The marriage of Pādšāh Kātun to **Abaqa** 670/1272 further consolidated Tarkān's position (Anonymous, pp. 227-28; Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, pp. 47-48). Nevertheless, she had to deal with Ḥajjaḯ's growing insubordination, which reached its climax in 676/1277. Tarkān's assassination was planned but not carried out. Instead, Ḥajjaḯ urged her to dance during a feast (allegedly while he was drunk), and his drinking companions chanted a verse, demanding her abdication (*Pir-and čark o aḳtar o baḳt-e to now-javān/Ān beh ke pir nawbat-e ḳod bā javān dahad* [The sphere and stars are old, but your fortune is young/It is better that the old one hand over his turn to the young one]). Outwardly complying with his request, Tarkān sought immediate refuge in Sirjañ and left for the *ordu* in July (676/1277). There she stayed approximately one year. An order dividing the province never became effective, for as soon as Ḥajjaḯ learned of her return to Kerman, he instantly left for Sistan, finally seeking refuge in Delhi (Anonymous, pp. 259-62, 272; Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, pp. 48-49; Waziri, I, p. 446, n. 54).

Once again Tarkān was the undisputed ruler of Kerman, but before long Soyurgātmeš started to intervene. On 22 Jomādā I 679/19 September 1280, he returned from court. On Friday, 22 Jomādā II 679/19 October 1280, he had his name read in the address (*ḳoṭba*) of the Friday prayer alongside Tarkān's (Anonymous, p. 213) and appointed officials. Not willing to tolerate his insubordination, Tarkān sent a written complaint to Pādšāh Kātun. Promptly an order was issued forbidding Soyurgātmeš to interfere with state affairs and stripping him of his fiefs and offices (Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, p. 51).

The historians unanimously praise Tarkān's beneficial reign. She



administered justice equally and alleviated the hardship of her subjects (Anonymous, p. 112; Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, p. 38; Rašid-al-Din, II, p. 934). During the famine of 662-63/1263-64 she opened the granaries to suffering subjects, thus giving credit to her highly praised charity and compassion. This was not even diminished by unpopular measurements such as the tax assessment of Zahir-al-Molk Šaraf-al-Din Ḥasan, the chief administrator of the crown lands [*kāṣṣa*] (*ṣāḥeb-e daftar-e divān-e kāṣṣ*), in 673/1274-75, which hit the lower classes quite hard (Anonymous, pp. 130, 236-37).

Tarkān's name was read in the Friday *koṭba* and impressed on coins (Anonymous, p. 213; Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, p. 39; Markov, p. 435). Considering that she ruled longer than any other of the Qara Ketāy rulers, the statement that the region enjoyed stability as well as economic and cultural prosperity sounds an assumption quite reasonable. Religious leaders and scholars benefitted from Tarkān's patronage, and merchants flocked to Kerman, obviously considering it a rather safe haven (Anonymous, p. 175; Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, pp. 38, 41). Even though the prices for land and water increased and the region suffered from Nekudār's invasion, the situation in Kerman apparently was still better than elsewhere. In an effort to protect Kerman from these raids, Tarkān levied taxes on landed property in Ramaẓān 674/March 1276, using the income to secure the borders. In 678/1279 she financed the construction of fortresses by funds partly drawn from the administration (*diwān*) resources and partly from her subjects (Anonymous, pp. 212-13, 242, 244).

During her long reign Tarkān initiated a vast architectural project. There were at least five major buildings, including a *madrassa* (seminary), a hospital, and a mosque, each endowed with a *waqf* (pious foundation; Anonymous, pp. 108, 122, 177-79, 235; Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, pp. 39-40). She also ordered the construction of subterranean water channels (*qanāt*; Waziri, I, pp. 448-49). Approximately sixteen charitable foundations bear witness to her philanthropy (Anonymous, pp. 100, 108, 177-180, 224-26, 234-36, 44-247, 279, 280; Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, pp. 39, 40; Faṣiḥ Kāfi, II, pp. 324-25y).

Abaqa's death in 680/1282 marks the turning point in Tarkān's reign. Influenced by his mother Qutui, the Il-khan Aḥmad Tegüder assigned Kerman to Soyurgātmeš. Tarkān immediately traveled to the *ordu* to safeguard her interests. At Siāḥ Kuh she met with Pādšāḥ Kātun. On his way back from court, Soyurgātmeš passed by, and the order of dismissal was read to Tarkān. Reportedly she fainted, overwhelmed by fury and disappointment.



Nevertheless, she proceeded to court trying to regain her position, but even ‘Aṭā-Malek Jovayni’s support was of no avail. Already in frail health, Tarkān died the following summer (682/1283) in Ćarandaḅ, a section of Tabriz. Her daughter, Pādšāh Kātun, had her remains taken to Kerman and buried in Qobba Sabz, the tomb of the Qara Ketāys (Nāṣer-al-Din Monši, pp. 52, 54; Kṽāndamir, III, p. 269; Waziri, I, pp. 452-53, 458-59).

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