

Papers on Inner Asia
No. 30

Charles Melville
University of Cambridge

**THE FALL OF AMIR CHUPAN
AND THE DECLINE OF THE ILKHANATE, 1327-37:
A decade of discord in Mongol Iran**

**INDIANA UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR INNER ASIAN STUDIES**

**Bloomington, Indiana
1999**

Indiana University
Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies

PAPERS ON INNER ASIA

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(Subseries: Central Asia)

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1999

ISSN 0893-1860

CONTENTS

PREFACE	2
INTRODUCTION	6
Sources	8
PROLOGUE: THE FALL OF DIMASHQ KHWAJA	12
THE FALL OF CHUPAN	19
DISINTEGRATION OF THE ILKHANATE	29
The disgrace of 'Ali-Padshah	30
The revolt of Narin Taghai	33
The conspiracy of Mahmud-Shah Injü	36
AFTER THE DEATH OF ABU SA'ID	43
The installation of Arpa Ke'ün	44
'Ali-Padshah and the 'Oirat moment'	46
The temporary success of Shaikh-Hasan Ilegeni	53
VIZIERS AND AMIRS: THE ROLE OF GHIYATH AL-DIN	60
Ghiyath al-Din and Arpa Ke'ün	61
Ghiyath al-Din and 'Ali-Padshah	63
Ghiyath al-Din and Shaikh-Hasan	66
The amirs	68
CONCLUSION	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY	75
Index	85

PREFACE

The reign of the last generally acknowledged Ilkhan, Abu Sa'id (1317-35), has attracted relatively little attention, despite the fact that he ruled longer than any previous member of his dynasty. A typical if extreme example of this is Donald Wilber's remark, "a brief chronicle should suffice for the reign of Abu Sa'id".¹ Things have progressed since then, and we have some very competent general surveys that set out the course of events in this period.² Nevertheless, compared with the formative years of Mongol rule, the later phase of maturity and achievement (however measured) has offered little stimulus to research.

Bound up with the interest or otherwise in Abu Sa'id's reign is the question of the 'decline and fall' of the Ilkhanate. The period apparently gets short shrift from Wilber because the heroic days are over, and "it would have taken a greater figure than this ruler, who was a mere youth during most of his reign, to arrest the ever-accelerating decline." Others, however, see "formidable obstacles" to locating the roots of Ilkhanid decline in Abu Sa'id's reign. For Jackson, Abu Sa'id's last years "have an air of greater stability than the era of nominal rule" (i.e. under Amir Chupan's domination).³ Clearly, the notion of decline is linked to the perception of an eventual fall, but decline itself is rather difficult to identify in its own right. Before we can address such broader questions, it would be helpful to have a more critical picture of the final stages of Ilkhanid rule, notoriously chaotic and for this reason too, perhaps, usually passed over with a few well-chosen phrases about anarchy, factionalism and no need to dwell on the sordid details.

¹ *The architecture of Islamic Iran*, p. 26.

² Spuler, *Die Mongolen*, esp. pp. 99-110 and Boyle, in *CHI*, V, pp. 406-14. See also Jackson, "Abū Sa'id" and Khatibi, "Abū Sa'id Bahādur".

³ "Abū Sa'id", p. 376.