

Abāqā (010005)

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## Gaykhātū b. Abāqā

**Gaykhātū b. Abāqā** (r. 690–4/1291–5), the second son of the Īlkhān Abāqā Khān (r. 663–80/1265–82), was the fifth ruler of the Īlkhānid dynasty. He was probably born between 640/1242 and 650/1252, and his mother, Nūqdān Khātūn, was a Tatar related to two of Chinggis (Genghis) Khān's wives. Buddhist monks bestowed him with the name Irinjin Dorjin ("Jewel Diamond") at his birth, but during or shortly after his coronation, he assumed the name Gaykhātū, which means "astonishing" in Mongolian.

Gaykhātū ascended to the throne after the death of his older brother Arghūn (690/1291), and he remained in power until his assassination in 694/1295. He was succeeded first by his cousin Bāydū (the sixth Īlkhānid ruler), who reigned only a few months, and then by Arghūn's son Ghāzān (r. 694–703/1295–1304), the seventh Īlkhānid ruler.

Primary sources generally present a negative view of Gaykhātū's reign, accusing him of extravagance, moral decay, and, most significantly, negligence of *yasa* (the collection of laws and decrees made

by Chinggis Khān (c. 557–624/1162–1227) and his heirs, primarily concerned with the administration of the Mongol empire). Most modern studies accept this assessment and dismiss him as an ineffective ruler. However, some scholars have recently reconsidered this interpretation, and while they do not dispute general notions about the period, they suggest that Gaykhātū's brief reign, along with his brother Arghūn's, played a transitional role at a critical turning point in Īlkhānid history. The Īlkhāns of this era attempted to tighten their control over resources and expand their authority via a more centralised administration that primarily relied on Persian-speaking bureaucrats (Hope, 135). The military elite (*noyan*, pl. *noyad*) regarded these changes as intrusions into their traditional sphere of influence and divergences from conventional Mongol administrative practices. The policies and reforms of Ghāzān Khān, Gaykhātū's nephew and successor, represent both the culmination and the resolution of these tensions. Moreover, in their drive for increased authority in this period, the Īlkhāns sought greater autonomy from the Great Khāns.

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