

Razia Sultana

Raziya Sultana, sometime **Raziyya Sultan**, (1205 – October 13, 1240) was the Sultan of Delhi from 10 November 1236 to 14 October 1240. A member of the Mamluk dynasty, she is known for being the only female ever to rule the Delhi Sultanate.^[1]

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Early life and career

Razia Sultana was the daughter of Shams-ud-din Iltutmish^[2] who had begun life as a Turk slave and ended it as Sultan of Delhi.^[3] Iltutmish had been a great favorite of his master, Qutb ud din Aibak, the first Sultan of Delhi, and had been married to his daughter Turkan Khatun. She was the mother of Razia.^{[4][5]} She had a full-brother named Nasiruddin Mahmud.^[6] Razia being a member of the ruling family, grew up in privileged circumstances and was close to the levers of power both within the harem (where her mother was dominant) and in the court, where she was a favorite of both her maternal grandfather and her father. This was in contrast with her half-brothers Rukn ud din Firuz, and Muiz ud din Bahram who were the sons of former slave-girls, and thus grew up quite distant from the centers of power

When Razia was five years old, Qutubuddin Aibak died and was succeeded by Iltutmish. Razia was a favorite of her father, and as a child was allowed to be present around him while he dealt with affairs of state. Later, like some other princesses of the time, she was trained to administer a kingdom if required, in the absence of her father or her husband.^[7] Her abilities and diligence, no less than her mother's royal lineage, commended Razia to Iltutmish and made her a confirmed favorite with him. Nevertheless, Iltutmish's eldest son Nasiruddin Mahmud (Razia's brother) was groomed by Iltutmish to succeed him.

However, Nasir ud din Mahmud died suddenly in 1229 CE, and Iltutmish was at a loss as to a successor, because he felt that none of his several surviving sons, born of his other wives, were worthy of the throne.^[3] In 1230, he had to leave the capital in order to lead an invasion against Gwalior. During his absence, Razia acted as a competent regent, with the assistance of the Sultan's trusted

Razia Sultan	
<i>Sultan</i>	
 Grave of Razia Sultan in Bulbul-i-Khan near Turkmen Gate, Delhi	
Sultan of Delhi	
Reign	10 November 1236 – 14 October 1240
Coronation	10 November 1236
Predecessor	Rukn ud din Firuz
Successor	Muiz ud din Bahram
Born	c.  1205 Budaun, Uttar Pradesh, India
Died	14 October 1240 (aged 35) Delhi, Delhi Sultanate
Burial	Bulbul-i-Khan near Turkmen Gate, Delhi
Spouse	Malik Altunia
Full name	Raziya Begum bint. Shams-ud-Din Iltutmish
Regnal name	Jalâlat-ud-Dîn Raziyâ
House	Mamluk
Father	Iltutmish
Mother	Qutub Begum
Religion	Islam

minister. Iltutmish returned to Delhi in 1231 after having captured Gwalior, and the issue of succession was foremost on his mind. Iltutmish became the first sultan to appoint a woman as his successor when he designated Razia as his heir apparent. Razia was the first and only female ruler of Delhi Sultanate. However, after Iltutmish died on Wednesday 30 April 1236, Razia's half-brother Rukn ud din Firuz was elevated to the throne instead.

Rukn ud din Firuz's reign was short. With Iltutmish's widow Shah Turkaan for all practical purposes running the government, Rukn ud din abandoned himself to the pursuit of personal pleasure and debauchery, to the outrage of the citizenry. On November 9, 1236, both Rukn ud din and his mother Shah Turkaan were assassinated^[8] after only six months in power. With reluctance, the nobility agreed to allow Razia to reign as Sultana of Delhi.^[9]

Razia was an efficient ruler and possessed all the qualities of a monarch. According to Minhaj-i-Siraj, she was "sagacious, just, beneficent, the patron of the learned, a dispenser of justice, the cherisher of her subjects, and of warlike talent, and endowed with all the admirable attributes and qualifications necessary for a king. She is also famous for her romantic involvement and legends with her lover and later turned husband, Malik Ikhtiar-ud-din Altunia "^[10]

Love life and marriage

Razia and Malik Ikhtiar-ud-din Altunia, the governor of Bathinda, were childhood friends. Some recognize them as childhood sweethearts who were strongly in love with each other. However, when Altunia was in Bathinda, the Turkic aristocracy spread rumors about Razia's romantic involvement with Jamal-ud-Din Yaqut, an Abyssinian Siddi (Habshi) slave. This triggered Altunia's jealousy and he led a rebellion against Razia, simply with the intention of getting her back.^[11]

Death

Meanwhile, Razia's half-brother, Muiz ud din Bahram, had usurped the throne. Altunia and Razia undertook a military campaign to take back the sultanate from Bahram, but they were defeated on the 24th of Rabi' al-awwal 638 A.H. (October 1240). They fled Delhi and reached Kaithal the next day, where their remaining forces abandoned them. They were killed on the 25th of Rabi' al-awwal 638 A.H.,^[12] this date corresponds to October 13, 1240.^[13] Bahram, for his part, reigned from 1240 to 1242, but would be dethroned for incompetence.

The place of Razia's burial is disputed by historians. There are 3 places where Razia is claimed to be buried. They are Delhi, Kaithal and Tonk, Rajasthan^[14]

Legacy

Razia was reportedly devoted to the cause of her empire and to her subjects. There is no record that she made any attempt to remain aloof from her subjects, rather it appears she preferred to mingle among them. She especially protected and preserved the indigenous cultures of her Hindu subjects during her reign.^[15] Her reign was characterised as spirited and dynamic by many



Billon Jital of Razia

In popular culture

Razia Sultan is a 1983 biopic on Razia Sultan, with Hema Malini taking the titular role.^[16]

In 2015, & TV started airing Razia Sultan, a TV series on the life of Razia Sultan, starring Pankhuri Awasthy. It highlighted her tough journey towards becoming a Sultana and her much spoken about passionate love life with Altunia.^[17]

Claimed burial sites

There are conflicting accounts regarding her actual site of grave. No archaeological or documentary evidences are found to confirm the site of her grave. The dispute is whether she was buried in Kaithal^[18] or Delhi or Tonk, and also where were Altunia and Yakut buried.

It is claimed that Razia's grave lies in neglected condition among the narrow lanes of Old Delhi that is in a courtyard in Bulbul-i-khana, Shahjahanabad, near the Tirkman Gate entrance!^[19]

There is a tradition that Razia Sultana was buried in Kaithal.^[20] Altunia was also buried next to her. There was also a masjid nearby. Viceroy of India (Lord Linlithgow) in 1938 came to kaithal to visit Razia's tomb. He approved a special grant for the restoration of the tomb.^[21] After that Director General Archaeology India visited the tomb but due to second world war, the grant could not be spent on the restoration.



Grave of Razia Sultan in Bulbul-i-Khan near Turkoman Gate, Delhi



Tomb of Razia Sultan in Mohalla Bulbuli Khana



Painting depicting tomb of Razia Sultana in Kaithal during 19th century

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Preceded by Rukn ud din Firuz	Mamluk Dynasty 1236–1240	Succeeded by Muiz ud din Bahram
Preceded by Rukn ud din Firuz	Sultan of Delhi 1236–1240	Succeeded by Muiz ud din Bahram

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External links

- Project Continua: Biography of Sultan Raziyya bint Iltutmish
- An Impartial History of the Only Empress of India : Jalalat -al-din Razia Sultan.(1236/7-40 C.E.) : <http://ishq-e-dilli.blogspot.in/2016/06/an-impartial-history-of-only-empress-of.html>
- Exploring Razia Sultan's Tomb at Mohalla Bulbuli Khana, Delhi <http://ishq-e-dilli.blogspot.in/2016/07/exploring-razia-sultans-tomb-at-mohalla.html>

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