



IL-ARSLĀN

IL-ARSLĀN, ABU'L-FATH, Chorasmian king of the line of Anuštegin Ġarča'i (r. 1156-72). He was the son and successor of 'Alā'-Din Atsīz b. Moḥammad (see [ATSĪZ ĠARČA'I](#)), who had skillfully preserved the autonomy of Chorasmia (see [CHORASMIA ii.](#)) and had taken a prominent role in affairs during his father's lifetime. He became governor of Jand on the lower Syr Darya after it had been taken from its local ruler, and took part in the abortive invasion of Khorasan of 1156, which ended in Atsīz's death (Jovayni, II, pp. 10-13; tr. Boyle, I, pp. 284-87; Barthold, *Turkestan*³, pp. 328-31; Kafesoğlu, pp. 60-61, 68-72).

Il-Arslān thus ascended the throne on 3 Rajab 551/22 August 1156, securing his position by imprisoning or executing potential rivals (Jovayni, II, p. 14; tr. Boyle, I, p. 287; Ebn al-Aṭir, Beirut, XI, p. 209). The imprisonment of the Saljuqid Sultan Sanjar by the Ghuzz (see [ĠOZZ](#)) and his death in 1157 meant that Il-Arslān, who had been confirmed in his succession by the sultan just before his death, was in practice free to rule, under the light and distant overlordship of the Qara Khitay, as an independent ruler. His relations with Sanjar's successor, the Qara-khanid Maḥmud, were good, but he now treated with the ruler of Khorasan on equal terms, signing himself in letters to Maḥmud as *moḳleṣ* "sincere friend" instead of the *banda* "bondsmen," with which his father had addressed the Saljuq sultan (Barthold, p. 332). He also entered into friendly relations with the Saljuq ruler in the west, Sultan Moḥammad (II) b. Maḥmud (II), encouraging the latter to come eastwards and reassert Saljuq authority over Khorasan, probably aware that the declining power of the Saljuqs in Iraq and western Persia would make this improbable,



as indeed proved to be the case (Barthold, pp. 332-33).

Il-Arslān was now undeniably the most powerful ruler in the Islamic East. He first of all intervened in the struggles of the Qara-khanids of Transoxania with their recalcitrant Qarluq amirs. In 553/1158 he invaded the region with the aim of assisting the dissidents against the Khan of Samarqand, Čağrı Khan ‘Ali b. Ḥasan, although peace was made through the mediation of the religious leaders of the city (Jovayni, II, p. 15; tr. Boyle, I, p. 288; alternative account in Ebn-al Aṭir, Beirut, XI, pp. 310-11; Barthold, p. 334). After this, he turned his attention to Khorasan, and helped the Ghozz chief, Ektiār-al-Din Aytāq, who had fled to Chorasmia, to reestablish his position in Dahestān and Gorgān against the rival Yağmur Khan (556/1161). Within Khorasan proper, the Ghozz leader Mo’ayyad-al-Din Ay-Aba, overthrew Maḥmud Khan in 1162, styling himself “emperor of Khorasan and king of the east” (*kosrow-e Kōrāsān wa malek al-mašreq*), and now acknowledged the Saljuq sultan in the west, Arslān Shah, as his overlord (Bayhaqi, p. 284; Ebn al-Aṭir, Beirut, XI, pp. 261, 271-72; Barthold, p. 335). Il-Arslān hoped to take advantage of the confused situation in Khorasan, and in 560/1165 invaded it, besieging Ay-Aba in the citadel of Šadyāk at Nišāpur, but failed to capture it and had to withdraw (Ḥosayni, pp. 162-64; Ebn al-Aṭir, Beirut, XI, pp. 282-83, 293, 315-16; Jovayni, p. 16; tr. Boyle, I, p. 289, placing the Nišāpur expedition in 558/1163, whereas Bayhaqi, p. 284, records the presence of Chorasmian troops at Bayhaq in 562/1167; Barthold, p. 335; Kafesoğlu, pp. 76-80). However, he could only watch when the Qara Khitay invaded Transoxania in about 560/1165 and attacked the Qara-khanids; and in 566/1170 or, more probably, 567/1171, his failure to pay tribute provoked an invasion of Chorasmia by the Qara Khitay. It was repelled, but Il-Arslān fell ill and returned to his capital Gorgānj to die on 9 Rajab 567/7 March 1172 (Ḥo-sayni, p. 166, a more probable date than the 568/1172-73 of Ebn al-Aṭir, Beirut, XI, pp. 375, 377; cf. Kafesoğlu, p. 83), to be succeeded by his eldest son ‘Alā’-al-Din Tekiš.

We are poorly informed about court life at Gorgānj under Il-Arslān, although the flourishing intellectual environment of his father’s time (see ATSİZ) undoubtedly lived on, and the stylist and poet Rašid-al-Din Vaṭvāt (q.v.) continued to head the chancery for Il-Arslān. Dawlatšāh (pp. 140-41) speaks of the poet Sayf-al-Din Esfarangi being attracted from Bukhara to the shah’s court, and also links Il-Arslān with Sayyed Esmā’il Jorjāni, the celebrated physician and author of the encyclopedic work on medicine *Daḳira-ye k’ārazmšāhi* (q.v.), which is dedicated to Il-Arslān’s father.



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