



ḲORŠĀH, ROKN-AL-DIN

ḲORŠĀH, ROKN-AL-DIN (b. Rudbār, ca. 627/1230; k. in Mongolia, 655/1257), Nezāri Ismaʿīli imam and the last lord of [Alamut](#). Rokn-al-Din, also known just as Ḳoršāh, was the eldest son of ʿAlāʾ-al-Din Moḥammad III (r. 618-53/1221-55), and, in his childhood, he was designated by his father to succeed to the Nezāri Ismaʿīli imamate. Upon the murder of his father in the fortress of Širkuh on the last day of Šawwāl 653/1 December 1255, Rokn-al-Din succeeded to the leadership of the Nezāri state, *daʿwa* (see [DAT](#)), and community. He would rule for exactly one year as the eighth and last lord of Alamut, in a turbulent period coinciding with the [Mongol](#) invasion of Persia (Daftary, 2007, pp. 391-92).

By the time of Rokn-al-Din's accession, the Persian Nezāris of Qohestān and Qumes had already experienced a foretaste of the Mongol catastrophe. Under the circumstances, the new Nezāri ruler immediately started negotiating with the Mongols by sending an envoy to Yasaʾor Noyān, the Mongol commander in [Hamadān](#), offering his intended submission. The Nezāri envoy was told that Rokn-al-Din should present himself in person before [Hülegü](#), whose arrival in Persia was then imminent. The youthful Rokn-al-Din was thus drawn into a complex, and ultimately futile, series of negotiations with the invading Mongols (Daftary, 2007, p. 392).

The sources are ambiguous regarding Rokn-al-Din's overall policy towards the Mongols. Vacillating between submission and resistance, the Nezāri imam seems to have sought a compromise solution, hoping to avert at least the Mongol destruction of Alamut and the other chief Nezāri fortress communities of Persia. From the time of Hülegü's arrival in Persia at the head of a major



Mongol expedition, in Rabi' I 654/April 1256, the Nezāri imam dispatched numerous embassies, headed variously by his vizier Šams-al-Din Gilaki or one of his own brothers, to Hülegü (Jovayni, III, p. 263-65, tr., II, pp. 714-16). The Mongol conqueror, however, persisted in his demands for Rokn-al-Din's total submission and his orders for the surrender of Alamut and other Nezāri strongholds.

By the middle of Ša'bān 654/September 1256, however, Hülegü had already launched his assault on the Nezāri strongholds of [Rudbār](#). Soon, various Mongol armies operating in Persia converged on the fortress of Maymundež, near Alamut, where the Nezāri imam was then residing. On 18 Šawwāl 654/8 November 1256, Hülegü himself encamped on a hilltop facing Maymundež. He made a further appeal to Rokn-al-Din Ḳoršāh to surrender, but he was told that the Nezāri imam was absent from Maymundež and that nothing could be decided without his consent. After the failure of a final round of Nezāri-Mongol negotiations, followed by a few days of fierce fighting, Rokn-al-Din, who had in fact still been present in Maymundež, asked for safe conduct. The decree (*yarliġ*) of safe conduct was drawn by 'Aṭā-Malek Jovayni, the famous historian, who was then acting as Hülegü's secretary and accompanied the Mongol conqueror on his campaigns against the Nezāri Isma'ilis of Persia (Jovayni, III, pp. 266-67, tr., II, pp. 716-17; Daftary, 2007, pp. 394-95).

On 29 Šawwāl 654/19 November 1256, Rokn-al-Din Ḳoršāh, accompanied by his vizier Mo'ayyad-al-Din and other Nezāri dignitaries, as well as [Nasir-al-Din Tusi](#) descended from Maymundež and presented himself before Hülegü. This marked the close of the Nezāri Isma'ili state of Persia, founded some 166 years earlier by [Ḥasan Šabbāh](#).

Rokn-al-Din was treated respectfully by the Mongols while they still needed him to arrange for the surrender of the Nezāri fortresses. Indeed, some forty fortresses surrendered on his orders and were in due course demolished by the Mongols after the evacuation of their garrisons. Alamut, the seat of the Nezāri state, did not surrender until the end of Du'l-qa'da 654/December 1256, and Lamasar held out for another year, while [Gerdkuh](#) in Qumes resisted its Mongol besiegers until 669/1270. Jovayni, who had been allowed by Hülegü to examine the library of Alamut, has left a vivid description of this majestic castle before its systematic demolition by the Mongols (Jovayni, III, pp. 186, 269-73; tr., II, pp. 666, 719-21).

As Rokn-al-Din Ḳoršāh's usefulness to the Mongols approached its end, Hülegü



approved his curious request to visit the Great Khan Möngke in Qaraqorum. On 1 Rabi' I 655/19 March 1257, the Nezāri imam set out on his fateful journey to Mongolia, accompanied by nine companions and a group of Mongol guards. Rokn-al-Din was not evidently treated respectfully by his guards, and by the time the party reached [Bukhara](#), he had to engage in fist-fighting with his Mongol minders. Once in Qaraqorum, or its vicinity, Möngke refused to see Rokn-al-Din, on the pretext that he still had not delivered Lamasar and Gerdkuh to the Mongols. By that time, the Great Khan had already sanctioned a general massacre of all the Persian Nezāris who were in Mongol custody (Jovayni, III, pp. 275-77, tr., II, pp. 723-24).

Rokn-al-Din Ḳoršāh's own tragic end came sometime in the late spring of 655/1257. On his return journey, somewhere along the edge of the Khangai mountains in northwestern Mongolia, Rokn-al-Din Ḳoršāh and his companions were put to the sword by their Mongol guards. Meanwhile, Rokn-al-Din's family and dependents detained at Qazvin were also murdered by their Mongol custodians. Only a son, Šams-al-Din Moḥammad, who had been taken to a safe place earlier, survived; and he became the progenitor of the Nezāri Ismā'ili imams of subsequent times (Jovayni, III, pp. 277-78; tr., II, pp. 724-25; Daftary, 2007, pp. 396-97).

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