



## LANBASAR

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**LANBASAR** (the form in Rašid-al-Din and Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi; popular pronunciation, and the form used by Jovayni, Lam(m)asar), an important fortress of the Nezāri *Ismaʿilis* in the valley of the Šāhrud river, a tributary of the *Safidrud*, in the mountainous district of *Rudbār*, within the region of medieval Islamic *Daylam* in northwestern Iran. Its precise location is in the valley of the Šāhrud's minor affluent, the Nāyinrud, just off the main river valley (lat 36°33' N, long 50°13' E; Mostawfi, pp. 60-61; tr., pp. 66-67; Le Strange, pp. 220-21; Krawulsky, pp. 276-77). It protected the valley of *Alamut* from attacks; hence it was strategically important for the defense of the network of *Ismaʿili* strongholds in the region. It had been seized, according to *Jovayni* (III, pp. 208-9; tr., II, p. 679), in 495/1102 from a local Daylami chief by the lieutenant and eventual successor of the *Ismaʿili* leader Ḥasan Šabbāḥ, *Kiā Bozorg-Omid*, who held it for the next twenty years until he became Ḥasan Šabbāḥ's successor at Alamut.

Lanbasar was visited by *Freya Stark* in 1931 (Stark, pp. 234-51) and *Vladimir Ivanow* in 1958 (Ivanow, pp. 60-74), both of whom left descriptions, but the most frequent visitor and author of the fullest descriptions has been Peter Willey (Willey, 1963 and 2005). The site slopes at 30° and measures some 480 m by 190 m, with easily defensible surrounding slopes. The outer walls of the fortress can be traced quite clearly, and within these are a main citadel and the remains of stables. There is an extensive and complex water catchment system, with no fewer than fifteen cisterns dug into the rock plus a man-made channel or *kāriz* across the neck of land, linking the fortress site of Lanbasar



with the adjacent main mountain mass, which would supplement in summer and autumn the rainwater collected within the cisterns during winter and spring; water could also be obtained from the Nāyinrud. Willey estimates that these water supplies would have been sufficient for a garrison of 500 men and their horses and mules during hot summer months and were presumably adequate for the needs of the Ismaʿili defenders even during its year-long siege by the Mongols after the fall of Alamut to Hülegü's troops in 654/1256 (see below; for detailed descriptions, see Willey, 1963, pp. 267-79; idem, 2005, pp. 128-33, with plans and illustrations). In his campaign in northwestern Iran against the Ismaʿilis, the Saljuq sultan Moḥammad b. Malekšāh sent his commander Atābak Nuštegin against Lanbasar and Alamut. Lanbasar was besieged in 511/1117, but the attack failed to capture it and the siege had to be lifted when the sultan died (Jovayni, III, p. 212; tr., II, p. 681; cf. Willey, 2005, p. 129). An attack by the troops of sultan Maḥmud b. Moḥammad some ten years later likewise failed (Hodgson, p. 102). In the next century, the last Ismaʿili Grand Master, Rokn-al-Din Koršāh (q.v.), submitted to Hülegü when the Mongols overran Iran and handed over some forty Ismaʿili strongholds. Lanbasar, however, held out for a year until it surrendered to Hülegü's general Dayer Buqā in 655/1257, but was presumably thereafter abandoned (Jovayni, III, pp. 268-74; tr., II, pp. 718-22; Hodgson pp. 269-70; Daftary, 1990, pp. 428-29; Willey, 2005, p. 129).

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