
A Mongol-Ismâ'îlî Alliance?:

*Thoughts on the Mongols and Assassins**

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Upon the completion of Hülegü's (d. 1265) destruction of the strongholds of the Ismâ'îlîs, often called the Assassins, in Northern Iran in 1256, Juvainî (1226–1283), the chronicler and *wazîr* to the Mongol prince, wrote:

So was the world cleansed which had been polluted by their evil. Wayfarers now ply to and fro without fear or dread or the inconvenience of paying a toll and pray for the [continued] fortune of the happy King who uprooted their foundations and left no trace of any one of them. And in truth that act was the balm of Moslem wounds and the cure to the disorders of the Faith. Let those who shall come after this age and era know the extent of the mischief they wrought and the confusion they cast into the hearts of men. Such as were on terms of agreement with them, whether kings of former times or contemporary rulers, went in fear and trembling [for their lives] and [such as were] hostile to them were day and night in the straits of prison for dread of their scoundrelly [sic] minions. It was a cup that had been filled to overflowing; it seems as a wind that had died.¹

This is the last paragraph of Juvainî's account of the history and destruction of the Ismâ'îlî state. From it one might form the opinion that the struggle against the Ismâ'îlîs had been long and spiteful for the Mongols as well as the Muslims. For the latter, this at times had been very true. For the former, on the other hand, while their relationship with the Ismâ'îlîs existed for approximately forty years, what is primarily remembered is the destruction of the Ismâ'îlîs at the hands of the Mongols. Although it was certainly a significant act, that particular episode within their relationship, if one includes the usual cited incident that sparked the Mongols' ire towards the so-called Assassins, lasted for approximately five years. The incident that triggered the annihilation of the Ismâ'îlîs was a rumoured attempt on the life of Möngke Qaγan (r. 1251–1259).

Yet, what was their relationship prior to this episode? Considering that the Mongols left no opposition before them, it is surprising that the Ismâ'îlîs lasted until the mid-thirteenth century when the rest of Iran had come under Mongol control in the 1230s. What took

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¹ 'Ata- Malik Juvainî, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World-Conqueror*, translated by J. A. Boyle (1st edition, Manchester, 1958) (later edition, Seattle, 1997), p. 725 (henceforth Juvainî).

place between the initial Mongol incursions into Iran in the 1220s and the final campaign in 1255–56? Considering the enigma and legends that shroud the Ismâ'îlîs, it is most surprising how few scholars have conducted formal research on them. Marshall Hodgson, of course, wrote the classic work, *The Order of Assassins*, which remains unparalleled. Bernard Lewis has also delved into the study of the Ismâ'îlîs in a thin but highly readable volume appropriately entitled *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*. Both works trace the history of the Ismâ'îlîs and study their motives throughout their history including the post-Mongol period, but although both scholars do devote a section to the Mongol period, this is only cursory, albeit with some thought provoking analysis.² Farhad Daftary is possibly the most productive scholar currently studying the Ismâ'îlîs.³ Not only has he written several volumes on various aspects of the Ismâ'îlîs, but he has also organised conferences and a volume of collected papers on them. But, while Daftary and others have explored other avenues of research on the Ismâ'îlîs, little has been examined specifically in terms of the Ismâ'îlî-Mongol relations. Charles Melville, for instance, has explored the Mamlûk use of the Syrian branch of the Ismâ'îlîs in the Mamlûks' struggles against the Il-Khans, but he is more of the exception than the rule. Indeed, after Hodgson's and Lewis's work, there remains a curious gap. Perhaps this is because Hodgson was so thorough, and Lewis's work, though less extensive, nicely compliments Hodgson's volume.

To begin the study of Ismâ'îlî-Mongol relations prior to 1250, we must also take into account relations with other powers for both parties during that time period. In the early 1220s the Mongols invaded the Khwârazmian Empire, which antagonised the Ismâ'îlîs, both before and after the Mongol devastation of that empire. Bernard Lewis notes that although the Ismâ'îlîs fought the Khwârazmians, they maintained "friendly relations with the two main enemies of the Khorazmians [sic] – The Caliph in the West and the Mongols in the East".⁴ Indeed, in 1228 an Ismâ'îlî envoy, Badr al-Dîn crossed the Amû Daryâ and visited the Mongol court. The Khwârazmians under Jalâl al-Dîn (r. 1220–1231) also noted the Ismâ'îlîs' friendly relations with the Mongols as they massacred an Ismâ'îlî caravan because they suspected that it harboured a Mongol envoy.⁵

Although the Khwârazmian Empire was short-lived, its rulers managed to antagonise virtually all of their neighbours. Thus one might conclude that the early period of Ismâ'îlî-Mongol relations consisted of an alliance against first the Khwârazmian Empire and then later against Jalâl al-Dîn Khwârazmshâh's attempt to re-establish Khwârazmian dominance in Iran and 'Irâq 'Ajamî. There is certainly evidence of this.

During the first Mongol invasions of Khurâsân, the Ismâ'îlîs controlled parts of Quhistân. During this war, numerous refugees streamed to take shelter under the protection of the Ismâ'îlîs where they were not plundered, and in fact, many of the more notable refugees

² Marshall Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins* (S'Gravenhage, 1955); Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (1st edition, London, 1967) (later edition, New York, 1987).

³ Farhad Daftary, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Isma'îlîs* (London & New York, 1994); and his *The Ismâ'îlîs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990) and *A Short History of the Ismailis: Traditions of a Muslim Community*, Islamic Surveys (Edinburgh, 1998).

⁴ Lewis, *The Assassins*, p. 86.

⁵ Muḥammad al-Nasawî, *Sîrat Sulṭân Jalâl al-Dîn Mankubîrtî*, (Cairo, 1953), p. 265; Muḥammad al-Nasawî, *Histoire du Sultan Djelâl ed-din Mankobîrtî*, translated from Arabic by O. Houdas, (Paris, 1895), p. 262; Lewis, *The Assassins*, p. 86; Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 252.

received gifts. Perhaps the most vitriolic of chroniclers of the Mongol period, Jûzjânî, also took refuge in Quhistân where he could only praise the Ismâ'îlîs.⁶ From this episode, certain conclusions may be surmised. The first is that, if the refugees headed towards Quhistân, from which in previous periods the Ismâ'îlîs had launched attacks, and that the rulers could provide gifts, it should be apparent that Mongol forces did not raid the region. Lewis even suggests that the Ismâ'îlîs of Quhistân were immune from Mongol attack.⁷ It is very important to remember that during the era of the Seljuk and the Khwârazmian Empires, the Ismâ'îlîs of Quhistân invaded Sîstân, Khurâsân, and other surrounding regions.⁸ Thus, for refugees of these regions to flock to the Ismâ'îlîs is indicative of a very safe haven in a storm, even for traditional enemies. Even Naşîr al-Dîn al-Tûsî (1201–1274) took refuge in the Ismâ'îlî fortresses of Quhistân around 619 A.H./1222.⁹

In addition, Jalâl al-Dîn Ḥasan III (r. 1210–1221), the ruler of the Ismâ'îlîs during this period, had already made arrangements with the Mongols:

[Ḥasan III] was noticeably loyal to the Caliph. This is supposed to have gone so far that when the (pagan) Mongols invaded (Sunni) Khwârazm territory, allegedly at the invitation of the (secretly Shî'ite) Caliph, the Ismâ'îlîs claimed that Ḥasan sent them a friendly embassy even before the invasion. Juwaynî, who, unlike Rashîd al-Dîn, doubts this claim, admits that they were the first to make their submission after the Mongols crossed the river Oxus.¹⁰

Juwaynî wrote that the Ismâ'îlîs did claim to have secretly sent couriers to submit to Chingis Khan (1165/67–1227) as he approached the Khwârazmian territory. Juwaynî appeared to be unsure of the veracity of their claims, yet at the same time acknowledged some almost indisputable evidence:

This was alleged by the Heretics and the truth is not clear, but this much is evident, that when the armies of the World-Conquering Emperor Chingiz-Khan entered the countries of Islam, the first ruler on this side of the Oxus to send ambassadors, and present his duty, and accept allegiance was Jalâl-al-Dîn.¹¹

The fact that Jalâl al-Dîn Ḥasan III appeared in the presence of Chingis Khan and offered his submission provides evidence that the Mongols and the Ismâ'îlîs had some sort of relationship. Yet, Juwaynî, writing almost forty years afterwards, and modern historians, such as Lewis and Hodgson, were still not convinced. Perhaps Juwaynî found the idea of the Mongols, his employers, collaborating with the Ismâ'îlîs too odious an idea.

⁶ Minhâj Sirâj Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât-i-Nâsirî* (*A General History of the Muhammadan dynasties of Asia*), 2 Vols., translated from the Persian by Major H. G. Raverty, (New Delhi, 1970), p. 1197; Minhâj Sirâj Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât-i-Nâsirî*, Vol. 2 (Lahore, 1975), p. 313; Minhâj Sirâj Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât-i-Nâsirî*, 2 Vols., edited by 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabîbî (Kabul, 1964–65), pp. 699–700.

⁷ Lewis, *The Assassins*, p. 90.

⁸ C. Edmund Bosworth, "The Isma'ilis of Quhistân and the Maliks of Nîmrûz or Sîstân", in *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought*, edited by Farhad Daftary (Cambridge, 1996), p. 224.

⁹ Hamid Dabashi, "The Philosopher/Vizier Khwâja Nasîr al-Dîn al-Tûsî and the Ismâ'îlîs", in *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought*, edited by Farhad Daftary (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 231–232. Al-Tûsî later went to Alamût, as well.

¹⁰ Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 223.

¹¹ Juwaynî, p. 703. Jalâl al-Dîn in this reference does not refer to the Khwârazmshâh, but rather to Jalâl al-Dîn Ḥasan, ruler of the Ismâ'îlîs. 'Atâ Malik-i Juwaynî, *The Târîkh-i-Jahân-gushâ: Part III*, edited by Mirza Muhammad (Leiden, 1937), p. 248. (henceforth Juwaynî).

While the Mongols effectively ended the Khwârazmian Empire, it still maintained a semblance of cohesion, albeit under a more territorially amorphous shape under the leadership of Jalâl al-Dîn. The Ismâ'îlîs of Alamût attempted to take advantage of the disorder after the Mongol invasion. Hodgson observes that “they seemed to have tried to make hay – perhaps in active alliance with the Mongols and certainly not in hostility to them”.¹² By attacking Khwârazmian towns, such as Dâmghân and others, the Ismâ'îlîs extended their influence further into Iran. The expansion of the Ismâ'îlîs under Muḥammad III (1221–1255), ended after six years when Jalâl al-Dîn Khwârazmshâh returned from India, where he had taken shelter from the Mongols in 1221.¹³

Perhaps some of the doubt concerning the submission stems from the later destruction of the Ismâ'îlî state. When Möngke ascended the Mongol throne, he turned back an Ismâ'îlî embassy. In addition, Baiju, the Mongol commander in the Middle East, sent Möngke a report stating that the Mongols’ two most “obstinate enemies were the Caliph and the Ismailis”.¹⁴ Others also urged Möngke to crush the Ismâ'îlîs. The *qadi* of Qazvîn, Shams al-Dîn, went to Möngke’s court in order to procure aid against the Ismâ'îlîs. He appeared wearing a chain mail shirt beneath his robes, as a precaution against an Ismâ'îlî attack. He informed the Khan that the Ismâ'îlîs held several forts, and their religion was contrary to that of Muslims, Christians, and the Mongols. Furthermore, if the Mongols lost power, the Ismâ'îlîs would surely take their place. Upon this news, Möngke mandated his armies stationed in Iran, ‘Irâq ‘Ajamî, Khurâsân, and ‘Irâq to conquer Quhistân and Alamût and destroy the Ismâ'îlîs. Jûzjâni wrote that this took ten years.¹⁵ If Jûzjâni’s assertion is to be believed, then perhaps the conflict between the Ismâ'îlîs and the Mongols began prior to Möngke’s reign.

According to Hodgson, by the time of Möngke’s ascension, two Mongol armies were stationed in Iran. One of them was commanded by Baiju. Although Baiju informed Möngke of the dangers of the Caliph and the Ismâ'îlîs, he was told to attack Rûm, leading Hodgson to wonder if the Ismâ'îlîs and Mongols still were allies or maintained a positive diplomatic relationship at this time. Hodgson, despite having suspicions of a Mongol alliance, also writes that “the Ismâ'îlîs had probably been bolder than most in resisting the Mongol tide, and Muslim hatred will have exacerbated the Mongol resentment”.¹⁶ Despite evidence from the sources indicating an alliance or submission by the Ismâ'îlîs, Hodgson seems unable to accept this. If, as surmised by Hodgson, the Ismâ'îlîs had been working with the Mongols during the Ismâ'îlîs’ attempts to expand their power after the destruction of the Khwârazmian Empire, or had submitted to the Mongols on the arrival of Chingis Khan, then how could they have been bolder in resisting the Mongol tide?

¹² Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, pp. 250–251.

¹³ Al-Nasawî (Cairo), p. 228; Nasawî (Paris), pp. 219–220; Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 251.

¹⁴ Lewis, *The Assassins*, p. 91.

¹⁵ Jûzjâni (New Delhi), p. 1189; Jûzjâni (Kabul), p. 698; Jûzjâni, Vol. 2 (Lahore), p. 231.

¹⁶ Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 259. Hodgson does not state his source for the orders to attack Anatolia or Baiju’s statement. Considering that Baiju defeated the Saljûqs at Kôse Dagh in 1243, it seems odd that he would be ordered to invade again as the Saljûqs submitted after their defeat. Perhaps Baiju sent his report prior to Möngke’s enthronement? For the most part, Hodgson consulted Nasawî, Juvainî, and Rashîd al-Dîn, and almost total reliance on Juvainî and Rashîd al-Dîn after the death of Jalâl al-Dîn.

Hodgson believes that the Ismâ'îlîs, although occasionally working with the Mongols for their own benefit, also had aspirations of world domination:

The Ismâ'îlîs almost matched the Mongols in the length of their reach, and perhaps the breadth of their ambitions; it is not surprising that they could not remain allies to the Mongols when it became clear that these intended to dominate the world on a permanent basis. Hasan III had, with a minimum of actual effort, and a maximum of allies, introduced the Ismâ'îlîs to the taste of expansion in the broader world.¹⁷

Here Hodgson again refers to the Mongols and the Ismâ'îlîs as allies, but he contends that the complete break with the Mongols came when Möngke turned away the Ismâ'îlî ambassadors.¹⁸ The Mongols had additional reasons for wishing to end any cordial relations with the Ismâ'îlîs. William of Rubruck reported that it was thought that four hundred Ismâ'îlîs had entered the empire in an attempt to assassinate Möngke.¹⁹ Due to this, the Mongols carefully investigated any foreigners who arrived at Qaraqorum. As a response to the alleged attempt, Möngke ordered Hülegü to “kill them all”.²⁰ Thus we are left with Hodgson’s rather puzzling debate with himself over whether or not they were allies, and also Jûzjânî’s perplexing comment that the Mongol efforts to destroy the Ismâ'îlîs took ten years. If Jûzjânî’s comment is correct, then the souring of relations between the Mongols and Ismâ'îlîs took place in 1246. Jûzjânî is partially correct, however, the relations between the Ismâ'îlîs and the Mongols declined much earlier than 1246.

After the death of Jalâl al-Dîn Khwârazmshâh in 1231, relations between the Ismâ'îlîs and the Mongols deteriorated. It appears that they both applied the maxim of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” and after that enemy no longer existed, they became enemies. Hodgson suspects that, following Jalâl al-Dîn death’s, they “no doubt fell to quarrelling with the Mongols who succeeded to his place”.²¹ The Ismâ'îlîs lost Dâmghân in 1231, though it is not clear if they resisted the Mongols. Then in 1238 the Ismâ'îlîs of Syria sent an embassy to the West in the hopes of forming a Christian-Muslim alliance against the Mongols.²²

The Mongols certainly did not wait for the leisurely arrival of Hülegü before commencing their attacks on the Ismâ'îlîs. Ket-Bukha (d.1260) led forces in Rûdbâr and Quhistân in 1252.²³ His lieutenant suffered defeat at Gird Kûh, which Ket-Bukha also besieged, but also failed to capture. Ket-Bukha then shifted his attention to Quhistân, which essentially amounted to constant raiding. At times, the Mongol general successfully captured a city, but then failed to hold it.²⁴ Overall, the Ismâ'îlî fortresses were very imposing, which is not surprising considering their long history of holding off the onslaughts of Saljûqs and Khwârazmians.

¹⁷ Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 255.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Christopher Dawson (ed.), *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, translated by a nun of Stanbrook Abbey (London, 1955), p. 184.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

²¹ Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 254.

²² Matthew Paris, *English History*, Vol. I, translated by J. A. Giles, (New York, 1968), p. 131.

²³ Ket-Bukha was Hülegü’s vanguard commander. He later died at the hands of the Mamlûks after being defeated at the battle of 'Ayn Jalût in 1260.

²⁴ Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 260.

Matters changed with the approach of Hülegü at the head of an enormous army. In 1256 Khwursâh (r. 1255–1256), the Ismâ'îlî *imam* and ruler in this period, wrote to Yasûr²⁵, the Mongol commander in the 'Irâq 'Ajamî region, to inform him that he wanted to submit. Yasûr consequently instructed Khwursâh to go before Hülegü in Khurâsân. Meanwhile, the process of negotiations did not detain the Mongol attacks. Yasûr invaded Rûdbâr. Again, this activity appeared to be more a question of constant raiding rather than a sustained attempt at conquest. If the Mongols met too much resistance, they simply went elsewhere to ravage the countryside.²⁶

Ket-Bukha also took advantage of Khwursâh's negotiations in 1256. He overran most of Quhistân. In typical Mongol fashion, he killed most of the population excluding the artisans. At this juncture, Nâssir al-Dîn, the *muhtashim* of the region, came to Hülegü to submit, but explained that he could not submit on behalf of the entire region. Hülegü accepted his surrender and rewarded him with the town of Tûn.²⁷ Meanwhile, most of the fortresses continued to hold out, even after orders from Khwursâh instructed them to surrender. Khwursâh did agree to demolish several fortresses in Rûdbâr, but when the demolition was delayed, Hülegü sent Mongol observers to ensure that his decree was carried out.

Despite their negotiations, Khwursâh never went to Hülegü. Instead he sent proxies. Eventually Hülegü promised him complete protection from retribution if Khwursâh would destroy all of his fortresses and come in person. As an act of good faith, Hülegü also ordered Yasûr's army to cease its operations in Rûdbâr and return to 'Irâq 'Ajamî.²⁸ When Khwursâh did not fulfil his obligations, Hülegü then began to execute Ismâ'îlî notables who fell into his hands as well as intensifying his attacks on Ismâ'îlî strongholds.²⁹

Alamût did surrender without a fight, however the great fortresses of Lammasar and Gird Kûh never did. Lammasar eventually fell in 1257 as Hülegü simply bypassed it after leaving a small force to lay siege to it. After the surrender of Khwursâh and Alamût, Hülegü had most members of the leading families executed or sold into slavery to ensure that the Ismâ'îlîs would remain leaderless.³⁰ Before his execution while *en route* to Mongolia, the Mongols did use Khwursâh to obtain the surrender of approximately one hundred fortresses.

Thanks to Juvainî, we have very detailed information about the destruction of the Ismâ'îlîs. There is no question that once the Mongols decided to destroy them, negotiations were simply a ruse to expedite the process. Yet there are certain questions that remain. Was there a formal alliance? The sources are rather vague and hence scholars such as Hodgson and Lewis appear to have their own ideas, even though they never commit themselves to a precise answer.

From the data at hand, although Juvainî appeared somewhat dubious about it, Jalâl al-Dîn Hasan appears to have submitted to Chingis Khan just before the Khwârazmian war. Thus diplomatic contact had been established. Next, during the Khwârazmian war, the citizenry

²⁵ Yasûr was the Mongol commander stationed in the region of Hamadhân during this period. Baiju was stationed in Transcaucasia while Yasûr controlled western Iran.

²⁶ Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 266.

²⁷ Daftary, *The Ismâ'îlîs*, pp. 423–4; Dabashi, "The Philosopher/Vizier", p. 232.

²⁸ Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 266.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

of the empire fled to Quhistân to take shelter. This region was not attacked by the Mongols; nor was it conquered by the Mongols subsequently, as Ket-Bukha continually made attacks in that region in 1255. During Chormaqan's (fl. 1220–1240) invasion of Iran and Transcaucasia, he conquered or obtained the submission of virtually all of Iran, but neither Quhistân nor the Ismâ'îlî possessions around Alamût are mentioned.³¹

Was this simply because one of Chormaqan's principal activities was to hunt down Jalâl al-Dîn Khwârazmshâh? Perhaps, but then after Jalâl al-Dîn Khwârazmshâh's death, Chormaqan focused most of his activities towards the conquest of Transcaucasia. Additional evidence pointing to the fact that the Mongols did not conquer the Ismâ'îlî regions is Baiju's statement that the Ismâ'îlîs and the Abbasid Caliph remained the most obstinate foes of the Mongols in the region. Yet, in 1243, Baiju defeated the Saljûqs of Rûm rather than dealing with the Ismâ'îlîs. So what was the status of the Ismâ'îlîs in the empire at this time?

It was very unlike the Mongols to continue to advance if there was the threat of rebellion or enemies behind their lines. If nothing else, they used to leave a contingent to contain the enemy while the main armies continued forth. None of the sources seem to indicate that such a force existed in Iran for that purpose. Considering the vehemence that Juvainî held for the Ismâ'îlîs, it is unlikely that he would not have noted such a force prior to the arrival of Hülegü. He does mention the activities of other commanders, but not that they were there much earlier.

Also, in 1243, the Saljûq Sultanate of Rûm, though a relatively major regional power at the time, was not an expansive power and hence a threat to the Mongol holdings in Transcaucasia. Thus there was no reason to necessitate Baiju's campaign into Rûm should the Ismâ'îlîs have posed a threat. So, at the very least it appears that a formal peace existed between the Ismâ'îlîs and the Mongols.

When did the peace end? Although an exact date cannot be ascertained, one can be relatively confident that the peace ended after 1243. This conclusion is based on three pieces of evidence. The first is that Baiju did not feel threatened by the Ismâ'îlîs in 1243, and so he was able to invade Anatolia. It must be remembered that when Chormaqan invaded Iran and Transcaucasia he had no more than 50,000 men, and more likely 30,000. For such a vast region, this was not an adequate force to risk a two front war; indeed Quhistân represented virtually a third front. There is no indication that Baiju's forces increased substantially, even with the addition of the Georgian and Armenian contingents that accompanied him against the Saljûqs.

The event that triggered the conflict was an assassination, not an attempt on Möngke, Baiju's comments, or even the pleas of assistance from the *qadi* of Qazvîn. The victim was Chaghatai Qorchi, one of Chormaqan's lieutenants.³² Baiju was also one of Chormaqan's lieutenants, but he received the promotion to Chormaqan's position after the latter died

³¹ Chormaqan initially received his orders from Chingis Khan, but did not actually enter the region until 1230 to depose of Jalâl al-Dîn's predations.

³² Rashîd al-Dîn, *Jâmi' al-tavârikh*, edited by B. Karimî, Vol. 2. (Tehran, 1970), p. 56; Rashîd al-Dîn, *Jâmi' u't-Tavârikh: A History of the Mongols*, Part One, translated by W. M. Thackston, (Cambridge, 1998), p. 42; Juwayni, p. 277; Juvainî, p. 724; M. Brosset, *Histoire de la Georgie: Depuis l'Antiquité Jusqu'au XIXe Siècle*, (St. Petersburg, 1849), p. 530; J. A. Boyle, "Kirakos of Ganjak on the Mongols", *Central Asiatic Journal* 8 (1963), p. 211, reprinted in *The Mongol World Empire* (London, 1977). The exact date of his death is uncertain, but probably after the end of Chormaqan's life in 1240 or 1241.

in 1240/41. The reason for the assassination remains unclear, however with the removal of Jalâl al-Dîn Khwârazmshâh, the Saljûqs of Rûm, and Chormaqan's securing of Transcaucasia and Iran, the Mongols may have decided that the time was ripe to move against the Ismâ'îlîs since they remained the sole independent power in the region.

The final piece of evidence is that the assassination could not have occurred during Chormaqan's tenure, as he never attacked the Ismâ'îlîs. Since Chormaqan was in the region for approximately ten years, if the assassination had taken place during Chormaqan's time, he would have had the opportunity to attempt retribution. Furthermore, there is no mention of the assassination during his tenure in any of the sources. Thus, sometime between 1241 and 1251 (the ascension of Möngke to the throne) relations broke down between the Mongols and the Ismâ'îlîs.

The time frame can be narrowed down further with evidence from Bar Hebraeus and Juvainî. Both authors noted that at Güyük's coronation in 1246, he drove the envoy of the Ismâ'îlîs away and insulted him.³³ Furthermore, Güyük sent Eljigitei to the region with an army to deal with the Ismâ'îlîs:

... while to the West he dispatched Eljigitei and a large army. And he commanded that from every prince two men out of every ten should join Eljigitei, that all the men in that region should mount horse with him, that two out of every ten Taziks should go along and that they should begin by attacking the Heretics. And that he himself should follow after.³⁴

Although Eljigitei certainly did enter the Middle East, there appears to be no evidence that he carried out any operations against the Ismâ'îlîs. Indeed, other evidence indicates that his arrival in the region served to replace Baiju as the commander of the *tanma* army stationed there since Chormaqan's arrival and thus gave Güyük an ally there against Batu.³⁵ Indeed, Eljigitei's presence reinforces the argument that the Mongols had decided to end their peaceful relationship with the Ismâ'îlîs, and that he may have actually been sent to take over Chaghatai Qorchi's command.

The question that remains is whether or not the Mongols and the Ismâ'îlîs had an alliance? Again, the evidence seems convincing, but Hodgson and even Lewis, though it appears they both want to accept it, cannot. One reason is perhaps their use of sources. Naturally both rely heavily on Juvainî and Rashîd al-Dîn. Hodgson also uses al-Nasawî and Jûzjânî frequently. One chronicler who received less attention was the author of the *al-Kâmil fî al-ta'rikh*, Ibn al-Athîr. With the abundance of information provided by Juvainî and the copious amount of information in Ibn al-Athîr's work, it would be easy to miss a few comments concerning the Mongols and Ismâ'îlîs.

³³ Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abu'l-Faraj 1225–1286, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus, Being the First Part of His Political History of the World* (Amsterdam, 1976), p. 411; Juvainî, pp. 257–258; Juwaynî, pp. 212–213.

³⁴ Juvainî, p. 256; Juwaynî, p. 212.

³⁵ Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umarî, *Kitâb Masâlik al-abşâr wa mamâlik al-amşâr: Mamâlik Bayt Jinkiz Khân*, edited and translated by K. Lech, *Asiatische Forschungen*, Vol. 14 (Wiesbaden, 1968), pp. 15–16. Of course, one must keep in mind that al-'Umarî, as a citizen of the Mamlûk Sultanate, tended to view the Jochids of the Golden Horde much more favourably than the Toluids of the Il-Khanate.

Like Chingis Khan, Chormaqan received a visitor from the Ismâ'îlîs prior to crossing the Amû Daryâ. According to Ibn al-Athîr:

An official of the Ismâ'îlî Mulaḥidah was sent to the Tatars. He made known to them the weakness of Jalâl al-Dîn, with his defeat. He urged [the Mongols] to proceed to him, and follow up on [Jalâl al-Dîn's] weakness. And [the Ismâ'îlî official] guaranteed to them victory over [Jalâl al-Dîn] truly if they proceed to him.³⁶

The rest, so to speak, is history. From there, the Mongols relentlessly pursued Jalâl al-Dîn until he died at the hands of a few Kurdish peasants after he narrowly eluded capture by the Mongols. Should this passing of intelligence be considered simply an obligation of a vassal to his suzerain? Considering that the Ismâ'îlîs sent an official to Chormaqan before he even entered the territory, probably not. Also, usually vassals were required to supply troops on Mongol campaigns. There is no mention of this. Besides the passing of the military intelligence, one must not overlook that not only did the Ismâ'îlîs inform Chormaqan concerning Jalâl al-Dîn's presence, but also they provided an approximation of his military strength. Although Ibn al-Athîr did not write in great details about the event, the stress laid by the Ismâ'îlî official on the Mongols' need to proceed against Jalâl al-Dîn seems indicative of the fact that the Ismâ'îlîs possessed knowledge of where to find him. Thus, we have the Ismâ'îlîs also serving as spies. Considering their ability for disguise and infiltration, this should not be surprising.

In light of this evidence, it would be fair to conclude that the Mongols and the Ismâ'îlîs possessed a relationship that extended into an alliance, which exceeded the typical relations of a vassal to the Mongols. The fact that the Ismâ'îlîs never supplied troops, sent tribute, or paid a visit to the camp of Chormaqan after he conquered much of the Middle East, much less the court of Ögödei, is indicative that they were not suborn to the Mongols. Indeed, during the reigns of Chingis Khan and Ögödei, the Ismâ'îlîs provided intelligence for operations against the Khwârazmshâhs.

Their presence at the coronation of Güyük demonstrates that the Ismâ'îlîs did alter their relationship with the Mongols as they appeared to recognise Güyük's authority.³⁷ It is perhaps at this time that they sought reconciliation and to make amends with the Mongols upon weighing the consequences of Chaghatai Qorchi's death. Güyük's dismissal of the Ismâ'îlî envoys demonstrates that an offence against a Mongol commander was not something taken lightly.

Nevertheless, the fact that they did come to Güyük's court at the time of his enthronement does indicate a different relationship with the Mongols than the one that they had held in the past. To our knowledge, the Ismâ'îlîs did not send a representative to Ögödei's coronation. Thus, it appears that they were not vassals or otherwise suborn to the Mongols. On the other hand, the passing of military intelligence and meeting with Mongol generals to convey this information does suggest at least some level of intimacy. In sum, Mongols did possess some form of military alliance with the Ismâ'îlîs rather than a relationship based on vassalage or submission.

³⁶ Ibn al-Athîr, *al-Kâmil fî al-Ta'rikh*, Vol. XII (Beirut, 1979), p. 495. The defeat to which Ibn al-Athîr is the defeat of Jalâl al-Dîn at the hands of 'Ala al-Dîn Kaïqubaidh and the Ayyûbid al-'Ashraf.

³⁷ Juvainî, p. 250; Juwaynî, p. 205.