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Shams al-Din Muhammad

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Shams al-Din Muhammad, the first post-Alamut Nizari Isma'ili *imam*, born in the late 640s AH / 1240s CE. He was the sole surviving son of Rukn al-Din Khurshah, the last lord of Alamut. The youthful Shams al-Din was taken into hiding during the final months of the Nizari state, shortly before the surrender of Alamut to the Mongols in Dhu al-Qa'da 654 AH / December 1256 CE. He succeeded to the Nizari imamate on the death of his father in the late spring of 655 AH / 1257 CE.

Shams al-Din reportedly lived his life clandestinely in Adharbayjan as an embroiderer, whence his nickname of Zarduz. Certain allusions in the still unpublished versified *Safar-nama* of Nizari Quhistani, a contemporary Nizari poet from Birjand, indicate that he evidently saw Shams al-Din, named by him as Shams al-Din Shah Nimruz 'Ali and Shah Shams, in Adharbayjan, possibly in Tabriz, in 679 AH / 1280 CE (see his *Diwan*, ed. M. Musaffa, Tehran 1371 *Sh.*/1992, 105, 109; Ch.G. Baiburdi, *Zhizn' i tvor'estvo Nizari Persidskogo poeta*, Moscow 1966, 158, 162). In legendary accounts, and in some oral traditions of the Isma'ilis, Shams al-Din has been identified with Shams-i Tabrizi, the spiritual guide of Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi.

Shams al-Din Muhammad's long imamate coincided with a difficult and obscure period in the post-Alamut history of the Nizari community. It was during his imamate that the Persian Nizaris, especially in Rudbar, reorganised themselves to some extent and temporarily reoccupied the fortress of Alamut, while the Syrian Nizaris became subjugated by the Mamluks. Shams al-Din Muhammad died around 710 AH / 1310-1311 CE. His succession was disputed by his sons, leading to the Muhammad Shahi-Qasim Shahi schism in the Nizari Isma'ili imamate and community.



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