



ŠAMS-AL-DIN MOḤAMMAD

ŠAMS-AL-DIN MOḤAMMAD, Nezāri Ismaʿili imam (b. [Rudbār](#), in the late 640s/1240s; d. [Azarbaijan](#), ca. 710/1310-11). He was the sole surviving son of Rokn-al-Din [Koršāh](#), the last lord of [Alamut](#). Few biographical details are available for Šams-al-Din, who had received the *naṣṣ* or designation to succeed to the Nezāri Ismaʿili *imamate*. As a child, Šams-al-Din had witnessed the [Mongol](#) invasions that led to the destruction of the Nezāri state and fortress communities in Persia. According to Nezāri tradition, the youthful Šams-al-Din was taken to a safe place by a group of Nezāri dignitaries during the final stages of the Nezāri-Mongol negotiations, shortly before Rokn-al-Din [Koršāh](#) surrendered to the Mongols on 29 Šawwāl 654/19 November 1256. He, thus, escaped the tragic fate of his family, who were all murdered by the Mongols.

Šams-al-Din Moḥammad succeeded to the Nezāri *imamate* in the late spring of 655/1257, after the execution of his father in Mongolia. He evidently spent his entire life clandestinely in Azarbaijan, in Tabriz or its vicinity. Indeed, certain allusions in the versified *Safar-nāma* of Nezāri Qohestāni (d. 720/1320), an early post-Alamut Nezāri Ismaʿili poet from [Birjand](#), indicate that he evidently saw Šams-al-Din Moḥammad in 679/1280 in Tabriz, where the Nezāris had adopted the cover name of *Eḵwān-al-Šafāʾ* (see Nezāri Qohestāni, 2011, pp. 53-56; idem, 1992-94, I, pp. 105, 109).

In Azarbaijan, Šams-al-Din safeguarded his true identity by disguising himself as a Sufi and an embroiderer, whence his nickname of Zarduz. By then, the Persian Nezāris who had escaped the Mongol massacres had begun to observe precautionary dissimulation (*taqiya*) on a massive scale as Sufis or Sunni



Muslims. They had also been deprived of the central leadership of their imams and their *da'wa* headquarters, previously based at the fortress of Alamut. However, it seems that a few Nezāri groups had established contact with Šams-al-Din. In legendary accounts, and in oral traditions of the Nezāris, Šams-al-Din has been sometimes confused with Šams Tabrizi (Šehāb-al-Din Šāh Ḥosayni, p. 42; Fedā'i Korāsāni, p. 118; Ivanow, pp. 109-18), the spiritual guide of Mawlānā Jalāl-al-Din Rumi (d. 672/1273).

Šams-al-Din MoḤammad's long imamate coincided with an obscure period in the early post-Alamut history of the Nezāri Isma'ili community. It was during his time that the Nezāris to some extent regrouped and renewed their activities in Rudbār, while Gerdkuh, the last Nezāri fortress in Qumes, finally surrendered to the Mongols in 669/1270. Šams-al-Din MoḤammad, the progenitor of the subsequent Nezāri imams, died in Azarbaijan around 710/1310. A dispute over his succession split the Nezāri Isma'ilis and their line of imams into the rival Mo'meni (or MoḤammad-šāhi) and Qāsem-šāhi factions.

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