

**PROCEEDINGS OF
THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL
ISMAILI STUDIES CONFERENCE**

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Edited by

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CRITICAL INQUIRY, COURAGE, AND THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH: NOTES ON THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL ISMAILI STUDIES CONFERENCE

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Organizer, The 2nd International Ismaili Studies Conference

His Highness the Aga Khan embedded, in all our conversations, the importance of questioning our assumptions and pushing them towards a greater, more generous, more shared, and more diverse view of what he often called the good society.

Homi K. Bhabha, Keynote Address
The Second International Ismaili Studies Conference

Attendance at the Second International Ismaili Studies Conference was an act of courage for some of its participants. They had been concerned that they would be breaking an unwritten rule by being present at an event on Ismaili Studies that was organized independently of established Ismāʿīlī (Nizārī, Mustaʿlī, Druze etc.) institutions. Some institutional employees who were interested in attending had found themselves considering whether the conference was an “approved” gathering. Discussions before, during and after the event raised certain questions, including: 1) is approval required for such scholarly events? 2) is there a national or international body with the authority to grant permission for academic gatherings that have the word Ismāʿīlī in their titles? 3) are such conferences positioned against Ismāʿīlīs and Ismāʿīlī institutions? 4) what is the place of academic freedom (particularly relating to speech) at these gatherings? 5) what is the nature of Ismāʿīlī civil society?

The Ismaili Studies Conferences (ISC) are a progressive endeavour to provide opportunities for the presentation of research on the scholarly space termed broadly as Ismaili Studies and they serve as venues for academic discussion and debate. Among other aspects of intellectual activity, the conferences are sites for questioning assumptions and preconceptions. ISC upholds contemporary standards of scholarship and the Ismāʿīlī movement’s traditional respect for the human intellect (*ʿaql*), which is discussed below. ISC is not aligned with any communal, political, religious, or ideological body. Whereas its university-based organizers consider it important to engage with Ismāʿīlī institutions, they do not seek permission from any organization to hold events. ISC does not orient itself for or against any individual or institution; however, it recognizes that academic freedom and critical inquiry are integral to scholarship and that individual conference presenters may put forward research findings critical of specific entities. ISC offers a forum for respectful discussion and debate whose fundamental purpose is viewed as the advancement of knowledge.

Partnering with like-minded entities and endeavours globally, the conferences seek to offer a unique venue for the presentation of research on a broad range of topics conducted on Ismaili

Studies at academic establishments and by independent scholars. They provide multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and global platforms for pluralistic engagements and dialogue to foster intellectual exchanges and promote research. Whereas community-based and community affiliated research institutions are conducting and publishing important research, they tend to be limited in the areas that they study and in the kinds of critical inquiry they are able to present publicly. ISC provides a valuable platform for the presentation of papers which community-linked organizations are unable to accommodate at their public scholarly gatherings. Members of community affiliated institutions attending Ismaili Studies Conferences have noted these events provide opportunities for open discussion and debate that they have found unavailable to them in their own organizations. The dissemination of knowledge at ISC is beneficial to both academia and community.

ISC is conceptualized as a civil society institution that operates from the bottom up, rather than being controlled from above. The conferences move from one university to another in a decentralized and non-hierarchical manner. ISC encourages inclusive participation not exclusionary ownership. This allows for the involvement of a range of viewpoints, some of which may even be diametrically opposed to each other. The conferences' programs include plenary discussions where all participants, including those who are not presenting papers, have the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of Ismaili Studies' future. The requirement for participation is adherence to scholarly norms rather than religious or ideological leanings.

ISC expressly promotes the qualitatively superior study of the plurality of groups and entities identified with *Ismā'īlī* expressions of Islam as well others associated with but not creedally related to these expressions. The multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual, translocal, and transregional linkages between these groups with diverse doctrinal and socio-cultural histories as well as their relationships with the wider Islamicate and global contexts are of interest to ISC. Also of strong relevance are the engagements across religious boundaries and the expressions of thought and faith in between dominantly defined religious and cultural spaces. ISC welcomes the study of all geographical regions pertinent to the broad *Ismā'īlī* movement and values the study of its entire temporal presence without privileging specific historical periods. It holds that this inclusive approach provides for a robust and integral engagement with a broadly situated Ismaili Studies.

The following statement was published in the program of the Second International Ismaili Studies Conference

ISC principles: the conferences and related initiatives provide fora for

- Upholding high standards of critical scholarship
- Discussion and respectful debate on aspects of Ismaili Studies, a scholarly space that is conceptualized in a broad and interdisciplinary manner inclusive of a multiplicity of viewpoints, cultures, and expressions
- Peer-based scholarly assessments rather than hierarchical vetting
- Inclusionary participation rather than exclusionary ownership

No financial assistance has been received from communal institutions for the conferences; this is considered to be vital in maintaining the independence and impartiality of ISC. Support has been sought from the universities where they have been held. Eight Carleton University units provided funding for the second conference. Individual community members were also among the initial sources of funding and voluntary services for ISC2017. This assisted in obtaining substantial funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada, which required a competitive application that was adjudicated by peer academic reviewers. The conference was held during the Faculty of Public Affairs' Research Month which, in addition to funding, also contributed support in terms of logistics, publicity and student volunteers. The Ottawa Ismaili Council provided additional volunteers.

The first Ismaili Studies Conference, held at the University of Chicago in October 2014 (http://teachingislam.org/ismailistudies/ISC_Programme.html), was organized by Shiraz Hajiani and Michael J. Bechtel. University professors, scholars from other institutions, independent researchers, Ph.D. candidates, Ismā'īlī institutional religious education teachers, and other interested individuals attended. The presentations' topics included Ismaili (Nizārī and Musta'īlī) history and philosophy; Khoja Studies; Ismā'īlīs in Badakhshan; Ginans; digitization of materials; and contemporary Ismā'īlī music. More than 100 participants came from the USA, Canada, the UK, India, and Japan and included teachers and academic staff from community institutions in Canada, India, and the USA. The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) was represented by a head of department. This conference's success demonstrated that it was possible to hold a broad-based Ismaili Studies conference at an academic venue independently of communally affiliated Ismā'īlī institutions and that such an event would attract leading scholars in the field as well as community-based participation. ISC was conceptualized as a periodic scholarly gathering that would be organized in a university setting.

The second ISC was held two academic years later on March 9 and 10, 2017 at Carleton University under the aegis of the Carleton Centre for the Study of Islam. The conference was the largest ever academic gathering on Ismaili Studies. Its aim was to build on the outcomes of the first ISC which examined the "State of the Field." The 2017 conference sought to conduct a mapping of a pluralist scholarly space. One of its major goals was to highlight the inclusion of areas of study that are often not considered to be part of Ismaili Studies, such as the study of *Satpanth* and contemporary developments in Ismā'īlī communities. It encouraged participation by researchers engaged in a wide range of intellectual study on Ismā'īlīs in scholarly endeavours such as anthropology, communication studies, cultural studies, diaspora and migration studies, digital humanities, economics, education, ethnomusicology, history, international development, philosophy, political science, religious studies, and sociology. The conference's discussions and debates assisted in outlining the parameters and sectors of a broadly-conceptualized Ismaili Studies that examines not only the religiously-based manifestations but also other expressions of Ismailis in the past and the present. The geographic focus was inclusive of all major regions where Ismailis reside as indigenous peoples or in diaspora.

Planning, fundraising in the community, and work on the SSHRC application began a year before the event. A conference coordinator was hired by the Centre and a call for papers was distributed widely in May 2016. One of the first institutions to be informed of the plans to hold the conference was the Institute of Ismaili Studies, whose Co-Director kindly distributed the call for papers to its faculty members and whose Alumni Relations Coordinator sent it to former students. Musta'li and Druze institutions were also contacted. Over 120 submissions to deliver papers were received from around the world.

In light of the quality of many of the submissions, the conference sought to accommodate as many of them as possible. Some 40 per cent of the papers were accepted for presentation. 51 individuals delivered presentations in person; arrangements for two papers to be delivered by video link, and three other presenters sent their texts to be read for them at their panels. Due to the relatively large number of papers in the two day event, the panels were held simultaneously in three adjoining rooms at Carleton University's Richcraft conference facilities. The three tracks of the panels were arranged under: 1) Historical Presences, 2) Rethinking Heritage, and 3) Communities, Borders, Identities. Additionally, a two hour plenary participatory music workshop was conducted and exhibits on Ismā'īlī manuscripts and the Ugandan Asian Archive were displayed. More than 200 people attended the conference. Many sessions were packed to capacity; the audience members included professors and students, religious education teachers, Ismā'īlī institutional leaders, and community members from across Canada.

The conference's presenters hailed from five provinces of Canada and from 11 other countries: France, Germany, Hungary, India, Israel, Kenya, Lebanon, Pakistan, Tajikistan, the UK, and the USA. They represented 28 institutions of higher learning: Aga Khan University, Athabasca University, Cambridge University, Cape Breton University, Carleton University, Chicago University, Dr. BMN College, Harvard University, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Florida International University, Institute of Ismaili Studies, Károli Gáspár University, Laurentian University, Le centre national de la recherche scientifique, Oxford University, Syracuse University, Texas A&M International University, University of Alberta, University of California Los Angeles, University of Central Asia, University of Heidelberg, University of North Carolina, University of Ottawa, University of Toronto, University of Victoria, University of Western Ontario, University of Saskatchewan and York University. The presenters included senior academics, independent scholars, doctoral candidates and master's students, and staff members of the Ismaili Tariqa and Religious Education Board (ITREB). All major Nizārī Ismā'īlī post-secondary institutions (IIS, AKU and UCA) were represented as was a Druze affiliated institution, the Sami Makarem Foundation. The Spiritual Leader of Alavi Bohra Community sent a message of support, which was read at the opening plenary of the conference.

The Keynote Speaker of the Second International Ismaili Studies Conference was Professor Homi K. Bhabha, Director of the Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard University. He is a globally-renowned scholar on postcolonial literature and a leading thinker on issues of culture and migration. Among the numerous other prominent positions, Professor Bhabha has been a master jurist for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2007 and member of the Award's Steering Committee from 2008-2013. His speech, which was titled "Thoughts on Diasporic

Cosmopolitanism,” addressed some of the larger issues of the humanities. It weaved together the ethics of communication, intercultural translation, the moral imagination, and migration. Bhabha spoke about the liminality and cosmopolitanism of migrants’ lifeworlds; empowerment as an invitation to experiment with newer self-identifications; the negotiation of community interest under conditions of migratory displacement; cultural ambivalence and the splitting of minority identities in encounters with others; the relational sense of cultural value; thinking on the ongoing presence of the past-in-present rather than the polarity of tradition versus modernity; and the memories which a people chooses to commemorate and to forget. Professor Bhabha dedicated his keynote address to His Highness the Aga Khan. More than 400 people attended the lecture.

Apart from the invaluable contribution of academics, ISC values the important role played at ISC by independent scholars (i.e. those who are not attached to any academic, educational or research institution). Many are engaged in research initiatives that address topics that have been understudied, such as spaces of worship, *ginans*, recent history, and contemporary developments. Students also have a strong presence at ISC, which provide them with substantial opportunities to present their work and to receive feedback. Many of their carefully researched papers have examined various subjects in a fresh and innovative manner.

ISC2017’s two days provided for a rich set of presentations and discussions on multiple aspects of Ismaili Studies. Presentations drew from various periods, including the present, and from various geographical regions, including those that have been understudied such as South Asia, Afghanistan, and Africa. Substantial discussion was generated at the interactive plenary music workshop. The two exhibits also drew considerable attention. The town hall session at the end of the conference produced an engaged and animated series of discussions and debates. Participants broached issues such as the continuity of the conferences; the shape that ISC could take; the possibility of establishing a scholarly association; support for under-researched aspects of Ismaili Studies; the concern that Ismaili Studies not marginalize itself in relation to related areas of scholarship; the knowledge dissemination tools that could be considered for development; the importance of networking, especially for isolated scholars; a prize for the best student paper and other modes of supporting students’ careers; pathways for continual engagement with independent scholars; and the impact on vulnerable Ismā‘īlī communities of the use of the word “Ismā‘īlī” in conferences that raise sensitive issues. A book prize was announced at the conference; it will be awarded at subsequent ISC gatherings to the author(s) of a book that makes the best contribution to scholarship in an understudied area of Ismaili Studies.

Scholarship, Bias, and the Pursuit of Truth

ISC draws inspiration from the vital place accorded to the intellect (*‘aql*) in the various traditions of the Ismā‘īlī movement. Notwithstanding the separate paths that the Nizārī, Musta‘īlī and Druze communities took a thousand years ago, their respective present-day leaders all speak of the pre-eminence of the human intellect. It is viewed as a vital means to reach the ultimate goal of truth (*haqq*). The Ismā‘īlī dynasty generally known as “the Fatimids” referred to

itself as *al-da'wat al-haqq*, the call to truth; the Nizari mission in India was named *satpanth*, the true path or the path of truth. Ideas about the ethical use of the intellect to attain truth underlie this movement's view of the fundamental purpose of human existence. However, such a heuristic ideal has not eliminated the tension between received wisdom and the scholarly examination of the suppositions behind Ismā'īlī thought, beliefs and practices. As happens in the intellectual endeavour of most academic institutions, social factors shape how the pursuit of knowledge is conducted by Ismā'īlī organizations.

A central method of scholarship is the rigorous questioning of the preconceptions embedded in received accounts. Academic research is centred on the critical scrutiny of ideas and evidence. Universities and other scholarly institutes are mandated to support inquiry that objectively examines quantitative and qualitative data in order to understand social and natural phenomena. But institutional and personal biases often determine the ways in which projects are framed and conducted. Despite aspirations of carrying out "pure" research, scholarship is usually constrained by social, cultural, religious, political or ideological preconceptions and goals. Institutions can seek to lessen these factors' influence by establishing safeguards, such as ethical guidelines. Individuals' personal adherence to integrity and honesty in their research is also important in this respect. However, deeply ideological think tanks may police their employees' work to ensure only those outcomes that fit within institutionally-set parameters.

Notwithstanding such practices, the ideal of moving towards truth through scholarship remains an overall societal ideal. Absolute objectivity may not be humanly possible, but a sincere intention to study sources dispassionately remains a necessary position for the furtherance of knowledge. Preconceptions and assumptions are unavoidable in a working hypothesis formulated at the outset of a research project. However, one needs to be open to considering seriously the findings that may contradict it. This intellectual posture is integral to the critical inquiry that is necessary for the advancement of knowledge. Critical thinking is sometimes incorrectly thought of as criticism for its own sake or as endless argument that is designed to mislead. On the contrary, it involves a commitment to making apparent the preconceptions that distort the formulation of knowledge about a topic. It usually involves the uncovering of the biases and manipulation of information that have gone into constructing a particular interpretation that favours a specific individual, institution or idea.

The development of knowledge and the movement towards truth has shown itself to be a gradual and never-ending process. Discussion and debate are very much part of this journey. Ideas and findings are put forward in the public sphere, often at conferences where their veracity as well as researchers' precision, modes of analyses, and use of logic come under scrutiny. Debates may occur on matters such as general theories, the intricacies of an argument, the veracity of sources, the varying interpretations of a specific word in a text, or the finer points of evaluating evidence. Members of the academic audience may accept the presentation of the findings, they may reject them, or there may be an inconclusive outcome. Certain intangible factors can also be at play in influencing the agreement with the ideas put forward in a paper, such as the status of a particular conference speaker or the presenter's

rhetorical skill. The constitution of “truth” is less definitive in the humanities and the social sciences than in the hard sciences, although it is not necessarily absolute even in the latter.

Conventions of peer review for publications are designed to enable informed assessment by academic referees who are considered knowledgeable in the particular area of research. Blind reviews ensure that the referees do not know the identity of the writer and therefore do not defer to her status or lack thereof. This may not be a failsafe method, but it is viewed almost universally as the most effective means of ensuring high standards of publication. It is accepted as being far superior to procedures that only allow only for internal vetting within research institutions.

ISC recognizes the importance of integrity and courage in scholarly endeavours which take place in contexts of communal, social, political, institutional, and ideological pressures. Speaking truth to power often has a cost, but the pursuit of truth is acknowledged as a primary value in Ismā‘īlī and broader academic discourses. The role of the intellect in challenging assumptions, formulating questions, conducting research, recognizing one’s own biases, engaging in debate, and developing conclusions is vital. ISC seeks to make a strong contribution to Ismaili Studies by providing a forum for a conscientious search for truth.

The Way Forward

The continuity of ISC will depend on individual university professors taking up the challenge of organizing conferences in order to enable the regularity of the series. The following discussion, which relates to the organization of the second conference, may be useful to future organizers.

ISC2017’s success was due to a number of factors. It was important to have a substantial lead up period that ensured that the planning, logistics, and the holding of the event were carried out in strategic and systematic manners. Given that ISC is a new endeavour, it was vital to proceed in an optimal sequence, especially with respect to the dissemination of information, in order to minimize misunderstanding about its purposes among institutions, potential funders and participants, and communities at large. There were several discrete elements at various stages that required separate consideration: conceptualization, partnerships, fundraising, securing the venue and facilities, setting up the conference organizing team, recruitment of volunteers, publicity, assessment of submissions, program scheduling, event preparation, and event holding. Attention to details was vital, particularly with matters such as transportation, accommodation and catering, which address the human needs of participants. Above all, communication with various individuals and groups as well as constant vigilance about the way things were unfolding were of utmost importance. Many things do not happen according to plan and one has to be ready constantly to regroup and make adjustments in order to move forward.

Since this conference series is a new initiative, it is vital that ISC’s status and profile are protected and developed properly with a view to establishing a long-term institution. A concept document that laid out the primary principles for the conferences was shared with potential

partners and funders. If ISC is to remain an autonomous civil society organization whose primary aim is to foster research, dialogue and debate on Ismaili Studies, then it is crucial that it is not controlled by any single person, community, or institution. This decentralization should occur not only in the ISC's leadership but also with respect to partnerships and funding sources. The persons organizing future conferences should ensure that the structure does not become overly reliant on any particular entity. This is a challenge because it is not easy to raise funds for and organize a conference; one has to be disciplined in resisting offers from any one source to take up these responsibilities because such sources can demand control over who is permitted to speak and the kinds of topics to be discussed. The organizers of the first ISC were faced with this very problem in their initial fundraising efforts and realized that they needed to seek alternative sources of support.

The continuing success of ISC will be contingent on how well it protects the right of bona fide researchers to present their work, no matter how much others may disagree with it. Apart from ensuring the presence of established scholars, it is important to encourage the participation of students in the conferences. Any academic organization that is building for the long-term cannot afford to exclude the young researchers. There is also very good work being conducted on various aspects of Ismaili Studies by independent researchers who are not formally attached to academic institutions. Several of them are at the forefront of the study of neglected areas such as Satpanth, Khoja Studies, recent history, and contemporary developments. Independent scholars are also developing important digital databases relating to scholarly resources. Their inclusion in the conferences enables a dialogue between academics and community-based researchers that enriches the field as a whole. Both the ISC events to date have ended with a general discussion session among all participants about the role and future of the new institution. This is indicative of the importance that the organizers have placed on giving opportunities to a broad base of interested individuals to have a say on the future of Ismaili Studies. These characteristics of ISC were vital in obtaining a competitive conference grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The first ISC was held in the 2014-15 academic year and the second in 2016-17. It is expected that future events will occur every two years at various universities. The possibility of the conferences continuing is dependent on enterprising and conscientious professors stepping forward to organize events at various universities. It was important for the first two gatherings to have a broad range of topics in order to establish ISC's presence and profile. Whereas this may continue in forthcoming events, some gatherings may be designed to focus on a particular area. The first two conferences gatherings have already given impetus to the formation of a community of scholars dedicated to critical inquiry in Ismaili Studies. It is hoped that this community will strengthen with every subsequent conference and make a substantial contribution to the growth of knowledge in this area.

MESSAGE FROM SAIYEDNA HAATIM ZAKIYUDDIN SAHEB, TUS, 45TH SPIRITUAL LEADER OF ALAVI BOHRA COMMUNITY

Salaam to all the participants of the Conference,

We are pleased to convey our complimentary message to all the participants of the conference who have come here from 12 different countries.

We are equally thankful to the Carleton Centre for the Study of Islam who has organized and funded this conference on "Mapping a Pluralist Space in Isma'ili Studies".

Allah Ta'ala says in the Qur'an - And hold fast, all together, unto the bond with God, and do not draw apart from one another (3:103).

It is the matter of Pride for us to be a part of "Pluralist Space in Isma'ili Studies". Though due to some unavoidable circumstances we are unable to attend the conference but we look forward to be active participant in these studies in the future.

Though a minority community centered in India, we have congenial and friendly relations with the scholars engaged in Isma'ili Studies worldwide.

Not taking much of your precious time, lastly, we would like to say that "only Inclusion and Tolerance can save us from losing our Identity in this Hostile and Deceitfully Evolving World". "Let us be together and portray the true essence of our Beliefs, Customs and Practices".

Heartily Thanking you all for listening to this Message,

Fee Amaanillaah,

Yaa Ali Madad.

STATEMENT BY WISSAM TAI BOUDARGHAM, SAMI MAKAREM FOUNDATION

In order to comprehend the true identity of the Druze faith – Al Tawḥīd – one must go back in history to the dawn of time. Al Tawḥīd which is known as the Druze faith nowadays is like a chain with interconnected rings that extend way back to Amenhotep the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh and Hermes Trismegistus and even way before, and is also related to the Greek philosophy teachings by Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, passing through the Abrahamic religions from Adam, Noah, Ibrahim, Moses, Isa, to flourish in Islam where the word of the holy Quran was revealed to the prophet Muhammad PBUH through Archangel Gabriel. The holy book was taken on three levels by the followers of Islam: the exoteric level – the Sunni, those adhered to the *literal meaning of the Quran or known as Ahl Al-tanzil or Al-Islam and also known as Al-Shari'a*. The esoteric level were the Shi'a who interpreted the Quran allegorically; hence, they were called the People of Allegorical Interpretation *Ahl At-ta'wil or Al-Iman or Al-Tariqa*. And the third and final level *Al-Tawḥīd or Al-Ihsan or Al-Haqiqa* which is the Truth as declared by the Prophet's companion Abdallah ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab related after his father 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab¹ :

“بينما نحن عند رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ذات يوم، إذ طلع علينا رجل شديد بياض الثياب، شديد سواد الشعر، لا يرى عليه أثر السفر، ولا يعرفه أحد، حتى جلس إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، فأسند ركبتيه إلى ركبتيه، ووضع كفيه على فخذيه، وقال: "يا محمد، أخبرني عن الإسلام". فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "الإسلام أن تشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وإن محمداً رسول الله، وتقيم الصلاة، وتؤتي الزكاة، وتصوم رمضان وتحج البيت إن استطعت إليه سبيلاً". قال: "صدقت". قال: فعجبنا له، يسأله ويصدق. قال: "فأخبرني عن الإيمان". قال: "أن تؤمن بالله وملائكته وكتبه ورسله واليوم الآخر وتؤمن بالقدر خيره وشره". قال: "صدقت". قال: "فأخبرني عن الإحسان". قال: "أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه، فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك". قال: "فأخبرني عن الساعة". قال: "ما المسؤول عنها بأعلم من السائل". قال: "فأخبرني عن أمارتها". قال: "أن تلد الأمة رببتها، وأن ترى الحفاة العراة العالة رعاء الشاء يتطاولون في البنيان". قال: "ثم انطلق فلبثت ملياً. ثم قال لي: "يا عمر، أتدري من السائل؟" قلت: الله ورسوله اعلم. قال: "فإنه جبريل. أتاكم يعلمكم دينكم".

In that divine era as put by the late Dr. Sami Makarem in his book *Mysticism in the Druze Faith*:

The (Drūze) Tawḥīd Movement is an Islāmic Movement that branched out from Ismā'īlī Shī'ī Islām under the care of the sixth Fāṭimid Caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh. It formally began on Friday, the first of Muḥarram, 408/30th of May 1017. On that day, the Fāṭimid Caliph-Imām al-Ḥākim announced the inception of a new era of his reign. At the head of this new era, he appointed Ḥamza ibn 'Alī ibn Aḥmad of Zawzan as a senior vicegerent of His. The headquarters of this new period was Cairo, the capital of the Fāṭimid state. In order to understand this new era, one must go back to the day when al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh settled on the throne of the Faṭimid State as Caliph-Imām.

¹ Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf and others, *Al-Musnad al-Jāmi'*, vol. 13, pp. 484-486. "Ihsan is to worship God as though you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, then indeed He sees you"

The preceding Caliph-Imām al-‘Azīz Billāh had organized a military expedition against the Byzantines who were trying to re-conquer Bilād ash-Shām (Syria). The Fāṭimid army, under the leadership of Imām al-‘Azīz, had temporarily halted in the city of Bilbais, before crossing Egypt, to gather its forces and prepare to proceed the march into Syria. The army, however, did not continue on its way because of the Caliph’s sudden sickness which led to his passing away on the 28th of Ramadān, 386/14th of October 996. He was succeeded by Imām al-Manṣūr who was eleven years old. Imām al-Manṣūr’s Caliphal title was al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh.

On the next morning, the procession of Imām al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh returned to Cairo and arrived later that afternoon. The date was 29th of Ramadān,² the ninth month of the lunar year, the month of fasting. This day corresponded to the 15th of October, the tenth month of the solar year {the sun and the moon to a reckoning.}³

On the next day, the 30th of Ramadān/16th of October, the Caliph-Imām al-Ḥākim appeared before the people in the *Īwān* (palace). Meanwhile, in Cairo, town criers were calling:

“No burden and no imposition! God, the Most High, has reassured you that your possessions and your souls are safeguarded against whoever fights you or challenges you that his blood shall be shed and his possessions shall be rightfully taken away”.⁴

Dr. Makarem continues in his book:

By that announcement the ninth Imam of allegorical interpretation, the Imām al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh, had settled on the Fāṭimid throne in the ninth month of the lunar year which is the month of Ramdan. The month of Ramaḍān is compared to the Seal of Imāms as said in the book of *Ta`wīl ad-Da`ā`im*.⁵..... The Qur`ān says, "And who is there that has a fairer religion than he who submits his will to God being a

² Ibn Kallikān, *Wafayāt al-A`yān*, vol. 5, p. 375; Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā`iz wa al-Ītibār*, vol. 2, p. 28.

Ibn Taghrībardī, *An-Nujūm az-Zāhira*, vol. 4, p. 123.

³ Qur`ān, 55:5. {الشمس والقمر بحسبان}

⁴ Ibn Kallikān, *Wafayāt al-A`yān*, vol. 5, p. 375; Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā`iz wa al-Ītibār*, vol. 2, p. 28.

Ibn Taghrībardī, *An-Nujūm az-Zāhira*, vol. 4, p. 123. .

لا مؤونة ولا كلفة وقد أمنكم الله تعالى على أموالكم وأرواحكم. فمن عارضكم أو نازعكم فقد حلّ ماله ودمه.

⁵ Al-Qādī an-Nu`mān, *Ta`wīl ad-Da`ā`im*, vol. 3, p. 112.

وذلك ان شهر رمضان يكون مثل خاتم الائمة صاحب القيامة الذي يجمع الله عز وجل له أمر العباد ويظهر به دينه على العالم كله؛ لأن شهر رمضان تاسع شهور السنة. وفي الشهر التاسع تضع المرأة الحامل حملها، وفي السابع تكمل قوة الجنين. وقد تقدم القول اليكم انكم في عصر ذلك. وقيل إن ثالث السابع، وهو ثاني ثانیه الذي يتلوه من بعده، هو يكون الخاتم؛ وهو تاسع، كما يكون وضع الحمل كذلك.

good doer.” The Qur’ān also says “I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth, a man of pure faith; I am not of the idolaters.” The upright religion, therefore, can be realized by turning your face to the One Who originated the heavens and the earth. To turn your face towards other than God is, therefore, to associate others with God and to worship mere falsehood, while to turn your face towards God is pure cognizance. Cognizance is Tawḥīd. This is the real sense of the declaration made public in Cairo and elsewhere when al-Ḥākim settled on the throne of the Fāṭimid state as Caliph and Imām of the people of Islām, Īmān and Tawḥīd.

Al Tawḥīd or Al Ihsan in a simple definition, is all about working on the self to become the observer of the ultimate truth i.e. knowing God. It is realized by witnessing the beauty of all things through the veil of existence, dwelling into the subtle level of manifestation, becoming a divine being full of love, goodness, and beauty. Also the objective of Al Tawḥīd is to walk the path of the home coming journey At-Tawba (التوبة) which will lead to witnessing the truth with certitude as said by Ibn ‘Arabī, “You are a veiling cloud over your own self. You must first know the truth of yourself.”⁶

This level of knowledge and realization will be unveiled to the knowledge seeker only by the Will of God as-Sayyid Al-Amīr Jamāl ad-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh at-Tanūkhī, sent to one of his disciples, ash-Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Qādir Zayn ad-Dīn Rayyān in a letter:

“In reality, there is no place away from home except if it keeps you away from witnessing God. For the truthful, such a place is what keeps them away from beholding the lights divine. People came into existence for this sole purpose. Once united with Him they cease to be estranged. In fact, to be away from home is to be separate from the Lord, preoccupied with pleasures and mean desires, and inverted in falsehood and the abyss of falsehood. Such a person would be living in the wasteland of distress, struggling in wretchedness and extreme suffering, feeling the wrath of the Lord of the heavens. O God! Protect us from being blinded with ignorance!”⁷

⁶ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Isrā ilā maqām al-asrā*, p. 58. أنت غمامة على نفسك. فاعرف أولاً حقيقة نفسك.

⁷ As-Sayyid Al-Amīr, *Nuskhāt mā Katabahu ilā ash-Shaykh Abi ‘Abd al-Qādir Zayn ad-Dīn Rayyān*, a manuscript in the author’s possession.

وفي الحقيقة ما تَمَّ غربةٌ إلا بالحجة عن مشاهدة الحق، لأن المحققين غربتهم في حُببتهم عن مشاهدة الأنوار. لأن ما وُجد الخلق إلا لهذا الأمر، فإذا اتحدوا به لم يكونوا بغرباء، بل الغربة أن يكون العبد منقطعاً عن مولاه مشتغلاً بِلذاته وهواه، منكوساً في الباطل ومهواه، فهو في مَهْمِهِ البلاء وجهد الشقا وعظم العناء، وِعَضِبَ عليه ربُّ السما. نعوذ بالله من داء العمى.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

	MARCH 9, 2017		
8:00 – 8:30	Conference package pick-up & coffee / tea		
8:30 – 9:15	OPENING PLENARY (ATRIUM) <i>Received Wisdom and Critical Inquiry</i>		
	Room 2220	Room 2224	Room 2228
9:15 – 10:35	The Fatimids: Texts and Contexts	Ismailis and Others	Sacred and Secular Spaces
10:35 – 11:55	The Ismaili State in Iran	Khoja and Other Shia Studies	Digitizing Resources
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch		
1:15 – 2:30	KEYNOTE SPEECH (Singhal Family Theatre)		
2:40 – 4:00	Ikhwan al-Safa	Migration, Borders, Politics	Ginans
4:00 – 4:10	Coffee / Tea		
4:10 – 5:30	MUSIC WORKSHOP (ATRIUM)		
5:30 – 7:15	Dinner		

	MARCH 10, 2017		
	Room 2220	Room 2224	Room 2228
8:30 – 9:05	Coffee / Tea		
9:05 – 10:25	Nasir-i Khusraw	Ugandan Asian Expulsion	Reimagining Ismaili Ta'wil
10:35 - 11:55	19 th & 20 th Century Ismaili History in Africa	Identity, Practice and Participation in Canada	Ismailis of Badakhshan
12:00 – 1:15	Lunch		
1:15 – 2:35	Art and Music	Aga Khan IV: Ideas and Institutions	Religious Education
2:35 – 2:45	Coffee / tea		
2:45 – 4:45	<p align="center">TOWN HALL DISCUSSION (ATRIUM): <i>Exploring Future Directions of the Ismaili Conferences and Related Initiatives</i></p>		
4:45 – 5:00	Conference Wrap Up		

DETAILED CONFERENCE PROGRAM

March 9, 2017

8:00 am – 8:30 am (Conference package pick-up & coffee / tea)

8:30 am – 9:15 am

Opening Address (Atrium)

André Plourde (Dean, Faculty of Public Affairs, Carleton University)

Opening Plenary

Karim H. Karim (Director, Carleton Centre for the Study of Islam)

9:15 am – 10:35 am

Panel: The Fatimids: Texts and Contexts (Room 2220)

Chair: *Ismail K. Poonawala* (University of California, Los Angeles)

Paul E. Walker (University of Chicago), "The Minor Works of al-Sijistānī."

Shainool Jiwa (Institute of Ismaili Studies), "Fatimid-Abbasid Historiography: Between Heresy and Good-Governance."

Samer Traboulsi (University of North Carolina), "The Reliance of the Gnostics: Al-Ashrafānī and his Druze Universal History."

Panel: Ismailis and Others (Room 2224)

Chair: *Rubina Ramji* (Cape Breton University)

Michael Ebstein (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), "The Circular Vision of Existence in Classical Islamic Mysticism: From Ismā'īlī Writings to the Works of Ibn al-'Arabī."

Li-wei Chen (Aga Khan University), "The Mountain without the Old Man: *Xishiji* on Ismailis."

Mir Baiz Khan (ITREB Canada), "Chitrali Ismailis: Their Relations with Other Communities"

Panel: Sacred and Secular Spaces (Room 2228)

Chair: *H. Masud Taj* (Carleton University)

Rizwan Mawani (Independent Scholar), "The Jamatkhana: Exploring Its Prehistories and Hegemony in the 20th Century."

Aynur Kadir (Simon Fraser University), "Mapping the Sacred Landscape: An Ethnography of Mazar Shrine Pilgrimage among Tajiks in Xinjiang, China"

Vineet Gupta (University of Heidelberg, Germany), "Shrines and Identity: A Case Study of the Dargah of Pir Fakhruddin, Galiyakot."

10:35 am – 11:55 am

Panel: The Ismaili State in Iran (Room 2220)

Chair: *Shafiqe N. Virani* (University of Toronto)

Miklós Sárközy (Károli Gáspár University, Hungary), “The Mongol Road to Alamūt: The Re-evaluation of the Last Decades of the Nizārī Ismaili state.”

Karim Javan (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “Dīwān-i Qā’imiyāt: A Missing Chapter of Ismā’īlī History in Alamut.”

Shiraz Hajjani (University of Chicago), “*Munāzarāt* — a Siege Tactic Deployed by the Saljuqs and countered by Nizari Ismaili Proclamations of Islamic Pluralism.”

Panel: Khoja and Other Shia Studies (Room 2224)

Chair: *Paul E. Walker* (University of Chicago)

Iqbal Akhtar (Florida International University), “The Khoja Chronicle of Light.”

Ali Ahmad Rasekh (Independent Scholar), “Reconsidering Weber’s Theory of Authority through a Re-reading of the Charisma of the Ismaili Imams.”

Michel Boivin (Le Centre national de la recherche scientifique, France), “Authority and Bureaucratization: Discussing Anthropological Categories According to the Khoja Case Study.”

Panel: Digitizing Resources (Room 2228)

Chair: *Shane Hawkins* (Carleton University)

Karim Tharani (University of Saskatchewan), “Sound Approach: Digital Curation of Oral Traditions for Access and Preservation.”

Iqbal I. Dewji (Independent Scholar), “Khojawiki.org: A Transnational Oral History Documentation Project.”

Aslisho Qurboniev (University of Cambridge), “Project Identity: The Discursive Formation of Pamiri-Isma’ili Identity on the Internet.”

Nawazali A. Jiwa (Independent Scholar), “Towards an Online Searchable Database for Ismaili Studies.”

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm (LUNCH)

1:15 pm – 2:30 pm

Keynote Address (Singhal Family Theatre)

Homi K. Bhabha (Harvard University), “Thoughts on Diasporic Cosmopolitanism”

2:40 pm – 4:00 pm

Panel: Ikhwan al-Safa (Room 2220)

Chair: *Samer Traboulsi* (University of North Carolina)

Arzina Lalani (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “Faith and Awareness: *Risala fi’l Iman* in Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’.”

Ismail K. Poonawala (University of California, Los Angeles) “Pluralist Space and the *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’*.”

Panel: Migration, Borders, Politics (Room 2224)

Chair: Daniel McNeil (Carleton University)

Sadiq Habib (Independent Scholar), "How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land? On the Intergenerational Reproduction of Ismā'īlism in Post-Migratory Contexts."

Alnoor Gova (Independent Scholar), "'Unpacking AntiTerrorism' and its A/Effects on Muslims in Canada."

Panel: Ginans (Room 2228)

Chair: *Tazim R. Kassam* (Syracuse University)

Pyarali Jiwa (Independent Scholar), "The Electronic Ginan Library."

Shaheryar Liaquat Ali (Independent Scholar), "Unpublished Ginans."

Ali Jan Damani (Independent Scholar), "Nakhlanki Gita."

4:00 pm – 4:10 pm (COFFEE / TEA)

4:10 pm – 5:30 pm

Music Workshop (Atrium)

Hussein Janmohamed (University of Toronto), "O Canada! Intersections, Counterpoint, and Harmony through Choral Dialogue – An Interactive Workshop."

5:30 pm – 7:15 pm (DINNER)

MARCH 10, 2017

8:30 am – 9:05 am (COFFEE / TEA)

9:05 am – 10:25 am

Panel: Nasir-i Khusraw (Room 2220)

Chair: *Farhang Rajaee* (Carleton University)

Sunatullo Jonboboev (University of Central Asia), "The Reflections of Central Asians on Texts from Nasir Khusraw's 'Safar-name' and Folk Versions of his Travelogues."

Farhad Mortezaee (Independent Scholar), "Virtual Fatimid Cairo."

Marodsilton Muborakshoeva (Institute of Ismaili Studies), "Nasir Khusraw, the Muslim Scholastic."

Panel: Ugandan Asian Expulsion (Room 2224)

Chair: *Alia Paroo* (Texas A&M International University)

Shezan Muhammedi (University of Western Ontario), "'Gifts from Amin': Exploring the Resettlement of Ugandan Asian Refugees in Canada and the Partnership between the Aga Khan and Pierre Elliot Trudeau."

Patti Harper (Carleton University), "Memory Creation: The Archival Perspective."

Heather LeRoux (Carleton University), "Many Voices, One Story: The Ugandan Asian Archive Oral History Project."

Panel: Reimagining Ismaili Ta'wil (Room 2228)

Chair: *Ali S. Asani* (Harvard University)

Khalil Andani (Harvard University), "Reading Text through Pre-Text: Redefining Ismaili *Ta'wil*."

Paul Anderson (Harvard University), "Primeval: The Uses of *Ta'wil* to Mythologize and De-Mythologize in Ismā'īlī Genesis Narratives."

Faraz Alidina (Harvard University), "Aims and Applications of *Ta'wil* in Alamut Ismailism."

Aaron Viengkhou (Harvard University), "A New Model of Conversion: Esoteric Hermeneutics and Sapiential Narrative in the Ismā'īlī *Gināns*."

10:35 am - 11:55 am

Panel: 19th & 20th Century Ismaili History in Africa (Room 2220)

Chair: *Zulfikar A. Hirji* (York University)

Judy Aldrick (Independent Scholar), "The Sultan's Spymaster: Peera Dewjee of Zanzibar."

Alia Paroo (Texas A&M International University), "Resistance as an Expression of Loyalty: The Ismaili Muslims in Colonial Tanzania, 1920-1960."

Mala Pandurang (Dr. BMN College, India), "The Ismaili Khoja East African Asian Diasporicity: Exploring Pluralist Spaces in the Narratives of Sultan Somjee."

Panel: Identity, Practice and Participation in Canada (Room 2224)

Chair: *Melanie Adrian* (Carleton University)

Alyshea Cummins (University of Ottawa), "Redefining Islam in Canada: An Ismaili Muslim Movement."

Rubina Ramji (Cape Breton University), "Second Generation Ismaili Muslims in Canada: What Does it Mean to be Muslim?"

Reeshma Haji (Laurentian University), "Beyond Sectarian Boundaries: Dimensions of Muslim Canadian Religiosity and the Prediction of Sociocultural Attitudes."

Salima Versi (University of Alberta), "The Evolution of Identity: Khōjā Nizari Ismailism in Canada."

Panel: Ismailis of Badakhshan (Room 2228)

Chair: *Jeff Sahadeo* (Carleton University)

Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev (Institute of Ismaili Studies), "The Politics of Rule in Badakhshan and the Place of Ismā'īlīs."

Hakim Elnazarov (Institute of Ismaili Studies), "The Ismailis of Central Asia during the Colonial Era."

Abdulgamad Iloliev (Institute of Ismaili Studies), "The Ismā'īlīs of Tajikistan during Soviet Rule: Appropriation to a New Socio-Political Order."

Zamira Dildorbekova (Institute of Ismaili Studies), "The Shaping of 'Civil Society' by Tajik Ismailis through Discourses on Faith."

12:00 pm – 1:15 pm (LUNCH)

1:15 pm – 2:35 pm

Panel: Art and Music (Room 2220)

Chair: *Shainool Jiwa* (Institute of Ismaili Studies)

Ambreen Shehzad Hussaini (University of Victoria), “Choreography of Islamic Calligraphy: A Labour of Love? A Case Study of Pakistani Artist Mohammad Ismaili Gulgee.”

Karim Gillani (ITREB Kenya), “Rethinking Ginans: Sound, Recitation and Migration.”

Chorshanbe Goibnazarov (University of Central Asia), “Musical Instruments and Construction of Identities: The *Rubab* as an Expression of Religious, Cultural and National Identities.”

Panel: The Aga Khan: Ideas and Institutions (Room 2224)

Chair: *Reeshma Haji* (Laurentian University)

Otared Haider (University of Oxford), “Syrian Ismailis in the 20th Century: Educational Renaissance and Cultural Revival.”

Yahia Baiza (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “The Ismaili Imamate’s Development Intervention in Afghanistan, 2002-2017: Moving Beyond Humanitarian and International Aid.”

Al karim Karmali (Athabasca University), “Imamat Leadership and the Transparent Community: The Case of the Enabling Environment.”

Panel: Religious Education (Room 2228)

Chair: *Karim Tharani* (University of Saskatchewan)

Aleem Karmali (ITREB Canada), “Are the “Seven Pillars” Still Relevant in Contemporary Nizārī Thought? The Presentation of al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān in 21st Century Nizārī Religious Education.”

Daryoush Mohammad Poor (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “Problematising Pluralism among Ismailis: An Intellectual and Pedagogical Perspective.”

Shelina Adatia (University of Ottawa), “‘Unwrapping’ Rahim’s Story: Giftedness and Ismaili Religious Education.”

2:35 pm – 2:45 pm (COFFEE / TEA)

2:45 pm – 4:45 pm

Town Hall Discussion (Atrium)

“Exploring Future Directions of the Ismaili Conferences and Related Initiatives.”

4:45 pm – 5:00 pm (CONFERENCE WRAP UP)

EXCERPTS FROM PROFESSOR HOMI BHABHA'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS

I was honoured and pleased to accept the invitation to speak here today. Apart from the great persuasive powers of your colleague and my friend, Professor Karim, it was also because of the experience I had for several years working on the Aga Khan Architectural Award committee and my experience with a large group of Ismailis whose endeavour to really make a contribution to their communities which radiated beyond their communities, to civil society as a whole, was extraordinarily impressive to me. His Highness the Aga Khan embedded in all our conversations the importance of questioning our assumptions and pushing them towards a greater, more generous, more shared and more diverse view of what he often called the good society. So although there is no real immediate mode of communication, I would like to dedicate this talk to his Highness, both as an individual but also as an institution, and the institution he has built around him as part of a cultural movement, in the most positive sense, those six or nine years that I spent – regular meetings, regular conversations about how the built environment could emerge from brick and mortar into spirit and soul - was a very rare experience. And I would like today to acknowledge that and to thank him and to thank the Ismaili community, both here and elsewhere, for their embrace, their encouragement. I also want to thank the university here for bringing me to Carleton. It's a pleasure and an honour.

I want to start with a few lines from one of my very great inspirers, the poet W. H. Auden:

It's our turn now
To puzzle the unborn. No world
Wears as well as it should, but mortal or not,
A world has still to be built.

And indeed, these are Auden's line from a longer poem called "The Birth of Architecture."

"To puzzle the unborn," to think outside the box, is to engage with problems and seek solutions, that are emergent or incipient in the ongoing processes of social transformation. My involvement with the Aga Khan Architecture Award—as a member of both the Master Jury and the Steering Committee—persuaded me of the vital relationship between cultural innovation and the creativity, not the stability, the creativity of civic life. The potential for new infrastructure or planning initiatives; the viability of new building types; sustainability achieved through the deployment of local initiatives in the interest of new structural design or the invention of materials; the creation of communities of stakeholders through collaborative relationships between various sectors of society—these are only some ways in which "puzzling the unborn" produces *agents of change*—individual or institutional—capable of inaugurating new paradigms of social development, aesthetic experimentation and cultural progress.

A discussion document of the Aga Khan Development Network [AKDN] from its Civil Society Advisory Board makes a cogent link between civil society and the "good life." And let me quote from the document:

“Civil society can be seen as being drawn from three traditions: as part of society or associational life lived through groups and associations; as the kind of society that we want to see or the “good life”; and as ideas about how society is formed and shaped in the domain of the public space where different views on issues—such as good government—are expressed and negotiated.”

In Canada, you stand for us now, for those of us who live in the United States, an inspiration in this very, very same problem, this very same area. No place is untouched by change, no group of people is left without its own conflicts and contradictions. But the level of incivility that has been experienced in the United States by groups of minorities, by individuals for whom difference, and the negotiation of difference, and the intersections of differences is part of the very subjectivity with which they become citizens, that erasure has been remarkable and I know there are many of you from the United States here and you will understand the affect, not only the political rationality, but the affect, the passion with which I say these words.

The ethics of the good society—democratic rights, equal opportunities, respect for the beliefs and customs of communities, the dignity of the individual or groups—are protected and enacted in the governmental institutions that shape the public space at its best—the freedom of expression, dialogical civic democratic exchange, the equitable provision of health, safety at work, education and other aspects of human security. Civil society combines the provision of social goods with the equitable distribution of private and public bodies that work to protect and enhance both the “quality of life” and the common good.

Such a complex task is further complicated when the vast globalizing *Umma*, the world wide community of Muslims, transnational and extraterritorial, is faced with the responsibility to recognize and represent cultural and spiritual diversity. Multicultural societies are prone to the contestation of belief and custom, and only a confident civil society can turn these differences into civic conversations. In parts of the *Umma* there is potential for conflict when particular ethnic or religious populations are divided between those who continue to live in the national home and those who live abroad in a diasporic condition or a condition of refugees or a condition of exile, but seek to have an indigenous influence. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the internal challenges and opportunities within civil society formations are, on a smaller scale, true of the complex structure of the global *Umma* or the global community.

.....

The retrieval of memory for ethical and cosmopolitan ends demands that we identify not simply with the Other's presence as we know it or as we would want to know it. But with the Other's suffering that we are capable *ourselves* –that we are capable *ourselves of inflicting* - in order to inhabit the location of the foreigner's home, in all times and all places. I want to offer you as I end, a few lines from Adrienne Rich's poem, which is for me a ongoing problem, but an ongoing prophecy because here the duty of remembering is always anxiously acknowledged as being on the limits of forgetting - so that it is not the guilt of forgetting but the anxiety to remember again. I

hope I'm making this clear - not the guilt of *I might forget* but the anxiety of *I must remember*, which is to acknowledge that moment of forgetting - not to say that evil - that is where we acknowledge this fibrillation, this fibrillation, this anxious fibrillation.

Memory says: Want to do right? Don't count on me.
I'm a canal in Europe where bodies are floating
I'm a mass grave I'm the life that returns
I'm a table set with room for the Stranger
I'm a field with corners left for the landless
...
I sway in the learnings of the master-mystics
I have dreamed of Zion I've dreamed of world revolution
I have dreamed my children could live at last like others
I have walked the children of others through ranks of hatred
I'm a corpse dredged from a canal in Berlin
A river in Mississippi
I'm a woman standing
I am standing here in your poem unsatisfied
Lifting my smoky mirror [Adrienne Rich]

I am here is not repeated in the spirit of a world citizen exercising her sovereign grace. The pattern of repetition that agitates every line in the poem is a subtle poetics of anxiety assisting cosmopolitan memory to negotiate a knife-edge balance between civility and barbarism. Memory says "don't count on me, don't count on me." You have to take that responsibility. I'm not simply the agent. You have to become the agent. You have to - in these circumstances - you have to make yourself also the agent, the initiatory agent.

Adrienne Rich's poem returns us to the questions and concerns with which I began my talk. Rich creates a poetic space that aspires towards the political space of a civil society which the Aga Khan Development Network documented and justly defined as the kind of society that we want to see - the good society engage with ideas about how society is formed and shaped in the domain of the public space. The history that looms behind Rich's poem is the history of bad faith, failed governance, torture and terror, racism, genocide, poverty, oppression, censorship, landlessness. However, the horizon that just stands beyond her verse is an aspiration to a society based on the respect of difference, the articulation and dignity of the dispossessed, and equitable distribution of rights and freedoms. Above all, she makes a stirring argument for the importance of the poet as citizen, an ancient literary and cultural figure. Finding the courage of her craft to remind her readers and listeners of the primal importance of memory as a way of addressing the problems and the promise of a cosmopolitanism that is born out of an anxious ethics. Memory here is not a prompt to relive the past. It is a project, in the French sense of the word, a *project*. It is as much through a throwing out a risk to the future. Another great writer who has this sense of a project, of risking, is of course James Baldwin. And in the best traditions of humanistic pedagogy Adrian Rich asks us to remember how to live in a state of civility, no doubt dangerous in the present and the future.

I have dreamed my children could live at last like others
I have walked the children of others through ranks of hatred

See the way in which the lines turn:

I have dreamed my children could live [...] like others
I have walked the child[...] of others through ranks of hatred

The importance of slow reading and interpretation in the humanities cannot be exaggerated or overestimated.

In these lines we see the shadow of the prone lifeless body of Alan Kurdi. A child who could not live like others, a child who walks again and again through the ranks of hatred. But the poet's dream uttered in the midst of a historical nightmare is a challenge to her readers to assume the position of the moral witness. The moral witness is caught, as indeed we are, in a double time frame of cosmopolitan memory, surviving the testimony of the past while striving to possess the freedoms of the future. This complex temporal layering rather, like a montage itself, consists, one might say, *of a past that refuses to die confronted by a future that will not wait to be born*. In between the unreachable time of the past and the intransigent time of the future, lies our profound responsibility to conceive of the global humanities in the presence and in the present — at once pedagogical and poetic, aesthetic and civic. For, above all else, the home of the humanities is built on traditions of intellectual transition and ethical hospitality. The humanities belong to the foreigner's home, which is also and always the dwelling place of the citizen as refugee, the refugee as citizen. Thank you very much.

MUSIC WORKSHOP

Hussein Janmohamed (University of Toronto), “O Canada! Intersections, Counterpoint, and Harmony through Choral Dialogue – An Interactive Workshop.”

Choral music is the primary medium of my artistic enquiry. I am curious about the role choral music might have in helping Muslim youth to understand and express their identities in dialogue within a plural Canadian context. I use choral music not only to describe an historic Western art but also as a layered vocal sonic medium to create art. In my own life choral music and Ismaili devotional singing was central to faith formation, making friends, and informing a social conscience. Furthermore, in an environment of prejudice and racism I was forced to fluidly reimagine cultural, spiritual and material identity to gain a sense of belonging. Singing with others—be it a Bach chorale in four-part harmony or a devotional recitation in congregational unison—I gained spiritual strength that helped me better construct identity and relations with others. In order to make harmonious music in choir it was necessary to listen deeply work together compassionately, value and support the contribution of others and create beauty. In order to sound out devotion in *jamatkhana*, we had the added intention to commune with the divine. Be it in choir or Ismaili congregation when hearts were in sync heightened feeling infused the room—goose bumps forming on our skin, and electrifying chills running down our spines. It was in these goose bump moments when we seemed to be truly united. These goose bump moments echoed a spiritual dimension nurtured in singing, that helped me traversed high-paced interactions with diverse peoples.

Heart and Mind Education

Patel (2006) and Ramadan (2004) help illuminate why I might have felt this way. They reflect on how religious communities can affirm, sustain, and articulate religious identity within secular environments of “high-velocity interaction” (Patel, p. 22). Ramadan asks, “How can the flame of faith, the light of the spiritual life, and faithfulness to the teachings of Islam be preserved in environments that no longer refer to God and in educational systems that have little to say about religion?” (p. 126) Ramadan explains how first-generation migrants successfully transmitted an intuitive understanding of and a respect for faith. In some cases they came from countries where God (*Allah*) was in the social and sonic vocabulary of daily life. Hirschkind (2006) refers to this kind of sonic influence as an ‘ethical soundscape.’ Ramadan suggests that it was this ‘sense of God’ that passed into their children’s consciousness. For me, this ‘flame of faith’ was preserved in two ways: First, through being around Ismaili elders; and, second, through hearing and participating in sound worlds shaped by classical Western music (including choral), classic Hindi film music, devotional singing of *ginnan* and *stuti* at *jamatkhana*, and *git* (Ismaili social songs of praise) of the 70’s and 80’s.

Ramadan further argues that in a secular environment that reduces spirituality to ritual technicalities, second generation migrants must understand the context of traditional knowledge and with a critical spirit be able to understand, select, reform, and eventually innovate “in order to establish a faithful connection between the universal principles of Islam and the contingencies of the society in which Muslims live.” (p. 128). “Islamic education” Ramadan explains is concerned with joining education of the heart (God consciousness and awareness of responsibilities to ourselves and the human family at large); and education of the mind (understanding the messages of scriptural sources and their relation to everyday life). This

merging of heart and mind makes it possible for all “Muslims to enter into personal growth and, consequently to become autonomous in their lives, their choices, and, more generally, in the management of their freedom.”

For many in the Ismaili community (including myself) devotional recitations cultivated this education of the heart and mind. In a recent fieldwork enquiry (Janmohamed, 2015) on the relationship of *ginan* in community, adult Ismaili members described the peace and comfort found in listening to *ginan* throughout the day. Many discussed the ethical knowledge transmitted through this medium. Though very few, if any, “spoke about the function of the voice or the beauty of recitation to create an affect on the listener, one interlocutor used words like ‘taking in,’ ‘absorbing’ and ‘synthesizing the knowledge’ before being able to recite it well.” (19). This interlocutor explained the importance of listening and emphasizing that if people could listen differently they would be able to *absorb* the meaning of the *ginan*. Fortunately, for me, choral music fostered a similar education of heart and mind and nurtured a way to listen and produce sound in collaboration with others. It was through these intersecting resonances of faith and choral music through which I more confidently began to re-sound a sonic-aesthetic-ethical world in dialogue with a diverse Canadian society.

Re-Sounding

Over time experiences of singing in choir and in *jamatkhana* began to intersect. Sound worlds intersected in counterpoint revealing new possibilities for harmonious dialogue with society. I began adding simple harmonies to Ismaili devotional music—while in congregation in *jamatkhana*! I discovered melodies from the Ismaili context that shared harmonic structures with commonly known choral music and melodies from other traditions. I began improvising with Sufi, African and First Nations artists to compose music. I heard the world in a new way. Different ways of hearing the world amplified each other. My spiritual and material lives found a way to co-exist—in sound. I began asking if could feel goose bumps singing other people’s music with them, could they not feel goose bumps singing my music with me? This line of thought motivated composition. I was excited by the sonic effects of experimenting with my eclectic ‘ethical soundscape’ patching together music in dialogue with self, others and the environment. In the midst of negative representations of my cultural heritage, I was able to foster a spiritual disposition at the heart of my choral composition to re-sound in counterpoint a peaceful and positive expression of faith within the larger society.

The Workshop

This 90-minute workshop aimed to give delegates a first-hand experience of the resonances between Western choral art and Ismaili devotional recitation. More singing than talking is the motto. Delegates learned an easily rendered Ismaili devotional expression and/or *zikr*, group-singing techniques, adding basic choral harmonies to the devotional tune, and kinesthetically learned to shape, produce and articulate sound. Delegates had the opportunity to discuss their experience and enquire further into new thoughts, feelings, and possibilities about faith in dialogue with society that arise.

EXHIBITS

Ugandan Asian Archive Exhibit

Archives and Research Collections, Carleton University

In August of 1972 the President of Uganda, Idi Amin Dada, ordered the expulsion of all Asians in Uganda. They were given 90 days to leave the country, and tens of thousands of Asians in Uganda were displaced and forced to find homes elsewhere. The first plane of Ugandan Asians that were accepted to Canada arrived at Montreal-Dorval International Airport and the refugees were taken to a reception centre at the Canadian Forces Base, Longue-Pointe, Montreal. Across the country, service centres were set up to assist with settlement and to help new arrivals find jobs, housing, and ensure that basic needs were met.

The Ugandan Asian Archive exhibit will feature items housed at Archives and Research Collections in the Carleton University Library. This collection offers a unique assortment of materials related to the Asian expulsion from Uganda including newspaper clippings from Canadian and British newspapers, scrapbooks, and a hand written logbook that recorded the arrival of each plane in Montreal, and the destinations of the Ugandan Asian refugees who would go on to settle across the country. The exhibit will offer a sample of the material in the collection, which is also available in an online format.

Ismaili Manuscripts: Display of Manuscripts Dated from the 1700s to the early 1900s from Ismaili and Offshoot Branches

Najib Tajdin (Independent Scholar)

The Heritage Society's manuscript display is a tapestry of inks, colours, designs, styles, scripts, bindings and rare texts. The Heritage Society has, since its first SOS Khojki Conference in 1990, expanded its collection of Ismaili manuscripts. Its 30 years of continuous effort has resulted in one of the largest accessible collection of Khojki Satpanthi Ismaili manuscripts. The Satpanth denomination includes Satpanthi Guptis and Ismailis loyal to the Aga Khan, as well as Ismailis who branched out such as Athias and ImamShahis.

Satpanthi manuscripts in Khojki and Gujrati scripts generally contain prayers (dua), ceremonies, ginans (gnosis), history, farmans, astrology, mathematics, hadiths, qisas, records, accounts of the community and a variety of other subjects. The manuscripts on display include the oldest text of *Kalame Mowla*, unpublished ginans, 73 prayers of Athias, the *Dua* of the Ismailis as recited by Pir Shahbuddin Shah, farmans of Aga Janghi Shah, illustrated ImamShahi manuscripts with Burakh and Dul Dul, and correspondence in various languages from previous Imams with their original seals.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

The following pages of this document contain textual versions of the 2nd International Ismaili Studies Conference's presentations.

Editorial Note

The texts are arranged under the major conference themes of Historical Presences; Rethinking Heritage; and Communities, Borders, Identities. Following the conference, a number of presenters submitted papers of varying lengths, which were lightly edited for this Proceedings and are reproduced below. Some participants had used PowerPoint presentations; however, it was not possible to include them here due to the format of this document. Their presentations and those of others who did not submit longer versions of their papers are represented below by their original abstracts.

Beyond the publication of this conference proceedings, we are pursuing possibilities for publishing groupings of selected conference papers in edited books and special issues of journals.

THEME - HISTORICAL PRESENCES

Panel - The Fatimids: Texts and Contexts

Paul E. Walker (University of Chicago), “The Minor Works of al-Sijistānī.”

An important stage in the full recovery of the surviving corpus of a major figure is the addition of the smaller treatises, both those whose attribution is valid and those whose pedigree is suspect. Now with the recent publication of a critical edition of his *Ithbāt al-nubuwwāt* (Tehran, 2016) and of *al-Maqālīd* (Beirut, 2011), it is time to assess the other titles that bear al-Sijistānī’s name. It is often the mark of a thinker’s eminence that his name continues to attract attributions. In al-Sijistānī’s case we possess a number of minor works: *Ta’līf al-arwāḥ*, *Mawāzīn al-dīn*, *Khazā’in al-adilla*, *Tuḥfat al-mustajībīn*, *Musliyat al-aḥzān*, *Sullam al-najāt*, *al-Bāhira fi’l-mā’ād*, and perhaps others. The question now is which of them are actually his and why, and then why the rest are not. A second issue involves estimating what they offer, what value they might have. A third is why later authors chose to attribute or ascribe works to him; or to compose treatises that use ideas and concepts that sound as if he had written them.

Shainool Jiwa (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “Fatimid-Abbasid Historiography: Between Heresy and Good-Governance.”

The transition of Fatimid rule from North Africa to Egypt in 358/969, initiating their two century caliphate in the region, signaled a major shift in the socio-political and ideological dynamics of the mediaeval Mediterranean milieu. It placed them at the hub of the Islamic world, and brought them in territorial proximity to the ‘Abbasid heartlands. Ideologically, the Fatimid claim to ‘Alid descent posed an unprecedented challenge to ‘Abbasid claims of exclusive legitimacy to the caliphate, which reverberated long after the Fatimids were vanquished. This, together with the burgeoning of Fatimid political, social and economic influence across the region, provoked a sharp and almost indelible anti-Fatimid discourse in Sunni historiography.

Whilst anti-Fatimid polemic became ingrained in post-5th/11th century Sunnī histories, nonetheless, these accounts, oscillate between condemnation of the Fatimids and their doctrines, while also at times, praising individual Fatimid sovereigns’ characteristics, policies and their administrative legacies in Egypt.

Through select examples from major sources on the reign of al-‘Azīz bi’llāh (r. 365-386/976-996), the first Fatimid imam-caliph to begin his rule in Egypt, this paper aims to examine two central but often contrasting motifs employed in Sunnī medieval literature on the Fatimids, those which present the Fatimids as illegitimate rulers who are antithetical to the righteous and orthodox Abbasid caliphs, as well as those which positioned the Fatimids as models of good governance to be emulated by subsequent Muslim dynasties.

The dialectic between heresy and good governance

The paper argues that medieval Sunni perceptions of Fāṭimid rule were projected onto an inherent tension between notions of ‘heresy’ and ‘good governance’ as principles of legitimate rule. In that dialectic, the ‘Alid lineage of the Fāṭimids served as a recurring trope to delegitimize the doctrinal claims of the dynasty, in contrast to accounts concerning ‘good governance’ about particular imam-caliphs, thus legitimizing the Fatimid state.

The Fatimid claim of a divinely-designated *imāma* imbued in their ‘Alid descent posed the most serious and viable ideological challenge to the ‘Abbasid-Sunnī model. As is well known, the Abbasid rise to power in 750 had drawn upon ‘Hāshimid’ sentiments of restoring the rights of the family of Muḥammad [Āl-Muḥammad]. Having established themselves at the helm of affairs in 750, the Abbasids came to position themselves as the true successors of the Prophetic inheritance, a doctrine reiterated particularly in the violent casting aside of competing ‘Alid claims to authority in the two-decades after the ‘Abbasid rise to power.

The rise of the Fatimids, particularly in Egypt not only challenged the Abbasid venture at its core but also of the ‘Sunnī consensus’ that the ‘Abbāsīd model came to represent. The need to dislodge the authenticity of the Fatimid claim to the ‘Alid lineage therefore became imminent and critical to reaffirm the exclusive authoritativeness of the ‘Abbāsīd-Sunnī consensus. As such, the positioning of the Fatimids as Alids or non-Alids assumed a perennial feature in Sunnī Muslim historiography thereon.

As has been established by Ivanow, Lewis, Madelung and Daftary amongst others, the central thrust of the anti-Fāṭimid propaganda stemming from Sunnī *‘ulāma* as well as the ‘Abbāsīd political establishment was predicated on the denial of the ‘Alid lineage of the Fāṭimids. The turning point in anti Fatimid polemics is witnessed in the writings of Muḥammad b. Rizām (c. early 4th/10th century) and Akḥu Mūḥsin (in 372/982), which denigrate the Fāṭimids as dualists, atheists, Zoroastrians, materialists, etc., So effective was this propagation that thereafter, the “alternative lineage” became a standard feature of anti-Fāṭimid polemics. It was publicly manifest in the ‘Baghdād Manifesto’ issued by the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Qādir [r. 381-422/991-1031] in 402/1011, which was read out across ‘Abbāsīd lands. Subsequently, it became embedded into the eastern medieval Arabic Sunnī historiography on the Fatimids.

The impact of the pro-‘Abbāsīd polemic is notable in that almost every major post-Fatimid medieval Sunnī chronicle covering the Fatimids is compelled to engage in one way or another with the official ‘Abbāsīd discourse on the Fatimid lineage. These include the writings of Ibn Ḥammād (d. 628/1231), Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282) in his coverage of the first Imam-caliph al-Mahdī bi’ llāh, Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākushī (d. 8th/14th century), al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348 or 753/1352-3), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 784/1332), al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) and Ibn Taghrī Birdī (d. 874/1470) amongst others.

The coverage of the life and times of the Fatimid imam-caliph Al-‘Azīz bi’ llāh provides an instructive example of the ambivalence evident in Sunnī historians’ reportage on the Fatimids. Drawing upon eye-witness account of al-Musabbīhi (d?), Ibn Khallikān praises al-‘Azīz’s character by noting that, “the new sovereign was generous, brave and inclined to forgiveness, even when he had the power to punish,” to which authors such as Ibn Ḥammād, al-Maqrīzī add further characteristics, such as his good conduct, his interest in rare birds, and his dislike of shedding blood. Al-‘Azīz’s major urban constructions in Cairo are well-reported. He also gains renown for personally leading the Fatimid army against regional and local rivals, as well as for his extensive preparations to confront Byzantine incursions in Syria. Nonetheless, being a Shī‘ī Ismā‘īlī Fatimid Imam, al-‘Azīz’s ‘Alid credentials remain suspect.

Floating tropes: The anonymous note

Among the literary tropes related to the dialectic of heresy and good governance that permeate medieval Sunni narratives, is that of the ‘anonymous note’, which is found in several sources covering the reign of al-‘Azīz bi’ llāh. Among these is the report cited by Ibn Khallikān:

We have heard a doubtful genealogy proclaimed from the pulpit of the mosque; if what you say be true, name your ancestors up to the fifth degree; if you wish to prove your assertion, give us, for your genealogy, one which may be as certain as that of al-Ṭāʿī. If not, leave your pedigree in the shade and enter with us into the great family which includes all mankind. The most ambitious vainly desire to have a genealogy like that of the sons of Hashim (i.e. the Abbasids).”

Ibn Khallikān subsequently adds:

On another occasion he [al-ʿAzīz] found the following on a piece of paper: “We have borne with oppression and with tyranny, but not with infidelity nor folly. If you have the gift of knowing what is hidden, tell us the name of he who wrote this note.”

Subsequent sources, such as Ibn Taghrī Birdī, reproduce these notes verbatim on the authority of Ibn Khallikān, thus giving them continued currency. As is apparent, the two notes seek to disparage two aspects of the Fatimid claim. Firstly, their lineage to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and secondly, the claim of the authoritative knowledge of the Shīʿī imam (here denigrated into a claim of hidden knowledge of all things).

Notably, the use of the “anonymous note” cited above, comes to serve as a floating trope that can be ‘detached’ from the main narrative of one imam-caliph and placed into that of another one, thus allowing a given chronicler the means to insert a delegitimizing narrative for whichever imam-caliph they were covering. A case in point is Ibn ʿIdhārī’s *al-Bayān al-Mughrib* (composed around 712/1312-3). In his account on the first Fatimid al-Mahdī bi-llāh a similar narrative makes its appearance:

“Some of the *aḥdāth* of Qayrawān wrote the following two verses, and managed to get them to reach him [al-Mahdī] without him knowing how:

We accepted tyranny, but not infidelity or idiocy
Oh he who claims the unseen, who wrote this note?

Ibn ʿIdhārī’s narrative is followed by a postscript whereby the frustrated al-Mahdī seeks to find the identity of the perpetrators, but is ultimately unsuccessful.

Elsewhere, for the reign of the sixth imam-caliph al-Ḥākim as noted by Maamour, the ‘anonymous-note’ is deployed in a different setting, as an anonymous petition. Yet, the same text as the ‘anonymous note’ to al-ʿAzīz is invoked: “we have heard a doubtful genealogy proclaimed in the mosque, name your ancestor to the fifth degree,” etc.

The use of “anonymous-notes” extended further, however, to provide a commentary on the nature of the governance of Fatimid rulers.

The use of Christian and Jewish officials in the Fatimid administration is well-known, and recognized as continuation of the practice from the previous Tulunid and Ikhshidid regimes. Yet, for the more vehement anti-Fatimid historians, it provided an established motif of critique in Muslim historiography. Two prominent figures during the reign of al-ʿAzīz are singled out in this regard: the Christian vizier ʿIsā b Nestorius and his Jewish deputy in Syria, Menashe b. Ibrāhīm al-Qazzāz. Their deposition by al-ʿAzīz towards the later part of his reign is oftentimes presented by the historians as an act of good governance. In this case, it is the alleviation of ‘oppression’ by the removal of prominent Christian and Jewish bureaucrats, and their replacement by Muslim officials.

Notably, the complaint is made through an “anonymous-note.” Ibn al-Jawzī reports simply that al-‘Azīz “received a note from a woman” which stated:

By the one who strengthens the Jews by Menashsha and the Christians by Ibn Nasturas and who humiliates the Muslim by you, will you not investigate my matter? Then Aziz imprisoned the Jew and the Christian and imposed a 300,000 dinars fine on Isa.

The same narrative finds mention in Ibn al-Athīr, with the prefix that through these two figures, “the Christians and Jews became powerful and the Muslims were wronged.” Ibn al-Athīr’s report however has a distinctive element which “anonymizes” the sender. The verbatim note is “placed in the hands of a paper effigy,” which was positioned on the Imam-caliph’s processional route, “where he saw it, and ordered it to be taken; he saw it was made of paper, and he realized what was sought.”

That the trope is used to promote an ideal of ‘good-governance’ is distinctly manifest in al-Maqrīzī’s rendition of it. Undoubtedly the most pro-Fatimid of Sunnī historians, he describes al-‘Azīz’s reign in glowing terms. Quoting al-Qurtī (add who he is), he states that, “al-‘Azīz’s reign in Egypt was pointed out as a model, for the days were like ‘īds and wedding celebrations.” Immediately thereafter, al-Maqrīzī [citing Ibn al-Athīr] recounts the effigy and the anonymous note, following which he describes al-‘Azīz’s forgiving nature, kindness and magnanimity.”

Lineage as a motif and causal factor

The recurring motif of Fatimid lineage also gets deployed as a causal factor in the forging as well as the unravelling of relations between al-‘Azīz and other contemporary leading figures. A case in point is Ibn Zāfir’s extensive account of Fāṭimid-Būyid diplomatic encounters during the reign of al-‘Azīz. Likely inherited from a report of the anti-Fāṭimid polemicist Akhū Muḥsin, these pivot around the question of Fatimid lineage. ‘Āḍud al-Dawla reportedly initiates the diplomatic overtures with al-‘Azīz, but among the conditions that he stipulates is the presentation of the proof of the Fatimid lineage. Al-‘Azīz, aided by his scheming vizier Ya‘qūb b. Killis, and in some versions Muḥammad b. al-Nu‘mān, concocts a lineage which is to be delivered through a Būyid envoy, who is however murdered on his return journey to Iraq. Undeterred, ‘Āḍud consults the *ashraf* from Kufa, Basra and Baghdad, all of whom invalidate the Fatimid claim, prompting him to resolve marching against al-‘Azīz, a venture cut-short by ‘Āḍud’s own demise.

For Ibn Zāfir, the broad complexity of Fatimid-Būyid relations and the geo-political rivalry particularly in Syria and Northern Iraq are reduced to disbelief in the authenticity of the Fatimid lineage. Consequently, the commencement and the termination of potential rapprochement between the Būyid ruler ‘Āḍud al-Dawla and al-‘Azīz are described principally through this motif.

Notably, an encounter between al-‘Azīz and the Umayyad ruler of Andalucia are described through the same motif. While direct interaction between the Fatimids in Egypt and the Umayyads of Andalucia were almost non-existent, Ibn Khallikan reports that al-‘Azīz wrote to the Umayyad al-Ḥakam b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān to deride him. The latter retorted by saying, “you insult us because you know of us; if we knew you, we would reciprocate. Ibn Taghri Birdi (d. 1470 CE), adds that “was distressing for al-‘Azīz. He silenced him with this reply, meaning that he was not noble and that he did not even know his tribe, so that he could insult him.” In all likelihood, this encounter is apocryphal, as al-Hakam died on 16th October 976, two months after al-‘Azīz’s proclamation to the caliphate. Nonetheless, the fact that lineage is yet again invoked as a trope of legitimacy to authority is significant.

Historians such as Ibn Taghri Birdi who had an antipathy to Fatimid rule in Egypt, inverse tropes of good governance even when they report from eye-witness Fatimid accounts. Quoting from al-Musabbihi (d. 1030), Ibn Taghri Birdi notes in his *al-Nujum* that in al-‘Azīz’s time the Qasr al-Bahr was built in Cairo, which had no match to it in the east or the west. The Qasr al-Dhahab and Jami al-Qarafa were also built. “I [Ibn Taghri Birdi] say, the ruins of these have been obliterated such that it is as if they never existed.”

Samer Traboulsi (University of North Carolina), “The Reliance of the Gnostics: Al-Ashrafānī and his Druze Universal History.”

Druze studies are among the most underdeveloped subfields in Islamic studies mainly due to the unavailability of sources to scholars and the unwillingness of the religious class, the *‘uqqāl*, to share their well-kept esoteric knowledge with outsiders. As a result, our knowledge of the religious and intellectual history of the Druzes is mostly limited to their scriptures, *the Epistles of Wisdom*, which shed some light on the events surrounding the rise of the *da‘wa* during the first half of the 11th century. Beyond that, our knowledge of the Druze faith is extremely limited to the little information shared by some modern Druze scholars who allegedly have access to the inaccessible sources of their faith and to the work of 19th century orientalists who studied a few newly available Druze texts smuggled out of Syria.

In modern times, the jealously protected texts circulate within the close circles of the Druze sheikhs in hand-written lithographed editions produced in Suwayda in Southern Syria. One of the few volumes I had access to is Muḥammad al-Ashrafānī’s *‘Umdat al-‘Ārifīn fī Qiṣas al-Nabiyyīn* (The Reliance of the Gnostics in the Stories of the Prophets), a 790-page universal history of the Druzes in three volumes. Little is known about the author other than he lived in the 17th century and his book is the most important history of the community. Undoubtedly, the third volume which focuses on the events following the establishment of the faith is the most interesting since it fills a major gap in our knowledge of Druze history and the religious and political movements and struggles that shaped the community and its faith between the 11th and 17th centuries. However, the first two volumes offer an equally interesting reading of the Druze worldview as not only does it place its prophetic past in a Biblical and extra-Quranic milieu but it also adopts the Hellenic tradition in a way unprecedented in early Ismaili sources. The Druze reading of Fatimid history is another aspect of Ashrafānī’s work that is worth analyzing as Fatimid imams play a double role as the historic public figures and the secret reincarnation of the three *maqāms*, Abū Zakariyyā, ‘Alī, and al-Mu‘īll, a tradition which is unique to the Druzes. In short, *‘Umdat al-‘Ārifīn* provides new insights that will hopefully revive the interest in the study of the intellectual and religious history of the Druze faith in pre-modern times.

Panel - The Ismaili State in Iran

Miklós Sárközy (Károli Gáspár University, Hungary), “The Mongol Road to Alamūt: The Re-evaluation of the Last Decades of the Nizārī Ismaili state.”

Mongol rule was a watershed in the history of the Middle East. As is well documented, it was the forces of the Mongol Hülegü who eventually caused the fall of the Nizārī Ismaili state, in 654/1256. However, it would be too simplistic to limit our narrative to the sole event of the siege of Alamūt by the Mongols since our sources reveal a much more complex relationship between 617/1220 and 654/1256. Despite the relative brevity of this time period, Nizārī-Mongol contacts characteristically shaped the history of the Middle East.

The last years of Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan III were, marked by the menace of the Mongol conquest. As noted, the Nizārīs were well-informed concerning the political events of their age and Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan III was the first Muslim ruler to try to make terms with the Mongols after their crossing of the Oxus in August 616/1219. The period 616-619/1219-1222 saw the first Mongol attacks against Iran and Central Asia. It is not precisely known what the direct objective of the Nizārī visit in 616/1219 to the Mongol camp was, but perhaps the Nizārīs realized the menace the Mongols posed to the eastern Iranian world and wished to make diplomatic contacts with the Mongols before any potential onslaught. It was the vehemently anti-Nizārī Juwaynī who said that the Nizārīs were building contacts with the Mongols upon the arrival of Chingiz Khan at the Oxus river although some scholars have raised doubts about the claim. It is important to note that we do not hear of any Nizārī-Mongol clashes during the first Mongol attack against Iran. On the other hand, the Nizārīs of Quhistān hosted Khwārizmian and Khurāsāni refugees in their fortresses, which caused anxiety among the Nizārīs of Alamūt. According to Jūzjānī, the *muḥtasham* (governor) of Quhistān, when hosting Khwārizmian refugees after the first Mongol attack in about 617/1220, was immediately reprimanded by the vehemently anti-Khwārizmian ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad. The story preserved by Jūzjānī underpins our idea that some Nizārī groups (especially those of the Caspian provinces) may have helped or even served as guides for the Mongols against the Khwārizmians.

Lewis’s suggestion that Nizārī-ruled Quhistān was deliberately spared by the Mongols during their first attack against Iran cannot be entirely accepted since The *Shengwu qinzheng lu* (*Campaigns of Chingiz Khan*), a Chinese source written in the Yuan (Mongol) period, says that Tolui, the fourth son of Genghis Khan, plundered Nizārī-populated areas in Khurāsān, too: “[§51.2] In the winter, the Fourth Crown Prince also sacked Maruchaq, Yeke Maru, and Sirāqs cities, before moving on with his troops. [§51.3] In year *rén/xu* [Year of the Horse, or 619/1222], in the spring, he also sacked Tus, Nicha’ur, and other cities. Since just then the summer-heat was becoming excessive, His Majesty sent envoys summoning Tolui to make haste and return. As he was passing through the Mulayid realm, he totally plundered them. Crossing the Choqchoran River, he sacked Heri and other cities.

The fact that early Nizārī-Mongol contacts might not have been entirely unhappy is reflected in the *Dīwān-i Qā’imīyyāt*. Here, we see some interesting perceptions related to the Mongols as represented by some verse of the *qaṣīda* collection. Mongols and especially Chingiz Khān are depicted here as heroes who were helping the Nizārīs at the ‘end of times’. According to the *Dīwān-i Qā’imīyyāt*, Mongols play important parts within the *Qiyāma*; and Chingiz Khān had arrived in the Middle East by divine order of the Imam Qā’im. Some verses of the *Dīwān-i Qā’imīyyāt* state that Chingiz Khan was personally chosen by the Imam Qā’im his role, and that the Mongol ruler was destined to be on friendly relations with the Nizārīs and to spare Nizārī-controlled areas and their populations.

The fact that the Nizārīs remained passive or perhaps offered the Mongols logistical help against the Khwārizmians is possible in the light of evidence offered by the *Dīwān-i Qā’imīyyāt*. On the other hand, it is also conceivable that the *Dīwān-i Qā’imīyyāt* reflected only one side of Nizārī opinion as it is also known that some Nizārī groups assisted the Khwārizmian Jalāl al-Dīn Mingburnī when he crossed the Indus River in flight from the Mongols; and the Nizārī *muḥtasham* of Quhistān, Shihāb al-Dīn, hosted Khwārizmian refugees following the Mongol conquest of Central Asia, which gesture enraged the Nizārīs in Alamūt. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad promptly replaced the *muḥtasham* of Quhistān Shihāb al-Dīn because of the friendly attitude he had had towards the Khwārizmian refugees.

Nizārī optimism connected to the Mongol conquest can be seen in the *Rawḍat al-taslīm* of Nāṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī, a work by an important Ismaili author of these decades, we find a striking prophecy of the Nizārī conquest of Asian territories. The work states that the Nizārī Imam will first conquer the Caspian provinces, after taking Daylamān. Following the conquest of Māzandarān, Gīlān and Mughān, the Imam continues on his way to Hind, Rūm and Chīn. It is a matter of interpretation what we understand by Hind and Rūm; Hodgson thinks it refers to global areas, and does not see these terms as synonymous with present-day Punjab and Anatolia (which would seem to be more realistic goal for Nizārī activity in the early 13th century). However, given that this *Rawḍat al-taslīm* excerpt is quite a messianic prophecy, it would be futile to identify these passages of Ṭūsī with existing geographical areas.

However, the second sub-period of Mongol- Nizārī contacts, allegedly after 629/1231 is more complex in terms of historicity. As we have seen, some of the *qaṣā'id* of the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt* are in praise of the Mongols and may hint at a period of more cordial interactions between the two sides, inspired by their common enemy, the Khwārizmians.

A more mixed image can be drawn about the second major Mongol military operation under Ögedei (624-639/1227-1241), when the Mongols invaded Anatolia and parts of Iran in 637-640/1240-1243. Around 617/1220, the main enemy of the Nizārīs was not the emerging Mongol Empire, whose dimensions and military potential may have been unknown to the Nizārīs, but the Khwārizmians. Thus, passages relating to the second generations of the Chingizids, Chingiz-i thānī (referring to Ögedei himself) and a certain Chaghtāi are more filled with enmity against the Mongols, and the bravery of the *fidā'īs*, who were despatched against the Mongols, is emphasized, i.e. instead of the above-mentioned Mongol 'generosity'.

One of the most intriguing parts of the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt* tells the story of the two Chingizes as related to the second sub-period of the Nizārī state and the Mongols. According to these parts of the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt*, the Mongols led by Chingiz Khān first showed some mercy towards the Nizārīs and did not attack them because of the generosity of Chingiz Khān. The *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt* says that it was because of this generous attitude shown by Chingiz Khān and the Mongols towards the Nizārīs that led to Mongol supremacy in the Middle East. According to the *qaṣīda* 49 of the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt* a certain kind of divine blessing from the Nizārī Imam contributed to Mongol successes in the Middle East. Yet in *qaṣīda* 78 we learn that Chingiz Khān, who had been merciful towards the Nizārīs, later diverged from this divine path and wanted to imprison the Nizārī Imam, who, in response, sent *fidā'īs* to the Mongol camp to kill the Mongol ruler. Another legendary element belonging to the second sub-period and incorporated into this story is the account of 'Chingiz-i thānī' or that of Chingiz II (possibly Ögedei r. 624-639/1227-1241) who despatched his brother, Chaghtāi (= Chagatai), against the Nizārīs. This very fascinating story can be found in *qaṣīdas* 49 and 133. According to these odes, Chaghtāi planned to conquer the area of 'a thousand castles' (the areas controlled by the Nizārīs), but the divine grace of the Imam of Alamūt once again protected the Nizārīs from the Mongols, and Chaghtāi was also murdered by *fidā'īs* (according to the tale preserved in the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt*).

As for some identification of Chaghtāi, it is probable that the passages of the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt* refer to someone who could not be the same as the second son of Chingiz Khān as it is known that one of the most prominent *noyons*, Mongol military leaders, was also called Chaghtāi. Chaghatai Qorchi (Chaghatai the quiver bearer) was one of Chormaghan's lieutenants; and he appeared in 634/1236, in the Caucasus area, when he subjugated numerous important Georgio-Armenian fortresses. Chaghatai Qorchi noyon was active in Armenia and, according to Kirakos Gandzakets'i, he was killed by Ismaili agents after 638/1240. This significant episode is

mentioned by both Persian and Armenian sources. The alleged Nizārī killing of Chaghatai Qorchi was of huge importance since he was the single high-ranking Mongol victim of the Nizārīs before 654/1256.

May is right when he suggests that the killing of Chaghatai Qorchi was a Nizārī deed intended to divert or weaken Mongol military manoeuvres against the Nizārīs after the fall of the Khwārizmian Empire in 629/1231. By 641/1243, the Mongols (with substantial Nizārī support) had successfully eliminated the Khwārizmians and the Rūm Saljūqs and had secured areas of Transcaucasia and the Iranian lands for themselves. Their relations with the Nizārīs began to sour. May speculates that the killing of Chaghatai Qorchi could have occurred after the death of Chormaghan in 639/1241 since none of our sources relating to Chormaghan refer to this event under Chormaghan's tenure. If it had taken place before 639/1241, it would have had an echo in sources linked to Chormaghan.

It is also known that Baiju, the chief Mongol military governor of Persia after Chormaghan, wrote a letter to Möngke about the Nizārīs in 649/1251 which may be connected with the murder of Chaghatai Qorchi.

The deterioration of Mongol-Nizārī connections is attested to in other instances as well. Güyük used harsh language against the Nizārī envoys upon his enthronement in 644/1246. One of Güyük's informants with reference to the 'Nizārī problem' was perhaps Shiramun, the son of Chormaghan. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, in 644/1246 Güyük reiterated some of these Mongol complaints relating to the Nizārīs to the caliph's ambassador. The same year, Güyük sent Mongol army reinforcements with another Mongol leader Eljigitei to Persia (according to Juwaynī) although it is not stated explicitly that this new Mongol army was sent directly against the Nizārīs in northern Iran.

Besides Kirakos Gandzakets'i and the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt*, the Nizārī murder of Chaghatai Qorchi is confirmed by Rashīd al-Dīn, though the exact date is missing in his account, as is also the case with the narrative of Kirakos Gandzakets'i.

Karim Javan (Institute of Ismaili Studies), "Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt: A Missing Chapter of Ismā'īlī History in Alamūt."

Significance of the Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt

The publication of *Dīwān-i qā'imīyyāt*, the most important work of Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd which has survived is undoubtedly one of the most important events in the field of Ismā'īlī studies in recent years. Apart from presenting a new layer of Nizārī literature and a witness to the existence of a class of masters of poetry in this period, this *Dīwān* projects a vibrant picture of the world that the Nizārīs lived in from the eyes of a believer and an eyewitness. The information within the *Dīwān-i qā'imīyyāt* present us a colourful picture of different historical events taking place in Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd's lifetime, particularly in regards to the ambiguous era of Qiyāma. It also presents detailed accounts of their victories such as winning new important castles, and their selfless spirits in which they confronted the invading Mongol army.

The number of dīwāns

Based on different information that we have, we can be sure that the existing *Dīwān* is not the complete collection of Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd's poetry on the celebration of the Qiyāma era in Alamūt.

This is proved by his own explicit remarks at the end of his *Haft bāb*, (known as *Haft bāb-i Bābā Sayyidnā*) which is in fact the introduction to his first *Dīwān* completed around 595/1198. This *Dīwān* has not survived. In the seventh “Bāb” of this copy he says: “I have started the second *Dīwān* which is going to be around five thousand lines (*bayt*). If the light of the Divine Grace shines on me and life remains loyal, I will finish that *Dīwān*.” We don’t know what happened to the first *Dīwān*, and why only the introduction has preserved. However, we can be sure that the second *Dīwān* which he talks about in the *Haft bāb* is not the one that we have in our hands today, as the poems inside do not address issues relating to the era of Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan (d. 618/1219), and the name of this Imām is not mentioned in the *qaṣīdas*. What we know is that the first *Dīwān* which he talks about in his *Haft bāb* was finished almost forty years after the Proclamation of Alamūt that is during the reign of A‘lā’ Muḥamaad (d. 606/1211). We also know that the remaining *Dīwān* could not be the first *Dīwān*, since it has a different introduction and it covers the events almost two or three decades after 595/1198. According to explicit remark of the author in the introduction of the current *Dīwān*, the work has been completed in 631/1233 and was presented to Imām ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad. Therefore, the fate of the first *Dīwān* which was finished around 595/1198 is a mystery.

J. Badakhchani, the editor of the *Dīwān* believes that the dates on these introductory notes are the dates when Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd has revised his poems after 631/1233. However, there are indications that prove some of the poems have been written some years after this date. For example, there is a *qaṣīda* (No. 133) which is written on the occasion of the assassination of Chagatāy happened in 639-640/1241-1242. There is also a *qaṣīda* (No. 18) on the occasion of Kalbalāt’s assassination, the Mongol commander which took place after 637/1239. And finally, he refers to the assassination of the Guyūk Khān in the *qaṣīda* No. 49 which took place in 646/1248.

The fourth Dīwān, the second volume of the present one

Since the order of the poems in the published *Dīwān* is unfortunately different from the actual order in the manuscripts which are based on the “*rawīy*” (the letter before the rhyme letter), it is difficult to know on what basis the *Dīwān* has been divided into two volumes. Thankfully, a list of the *qaṣīdas* in the original order has been provided at the beginning which helps to study the content of both volumes. After a close examination of the poems in both volumes, I could found out that almost all of the poems written on historical occasions after 631/1233 are in the second volume, and those written on the occasions before this date are in the first volume. For example, the poem No. 133 on the assassination of Chagatai (d. 639/1241), poem No. 18 on the occasion of Kalbalāt assassination in 637/1239, and the poem on the assassination of Guyūk the Mongol Khān in 646/1248 are all in the second volume. Similarly, the poems such as No. 72 on the occasion of arrival of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwārazmshāh at Alamūt in 625/1228, the poem No. 73 on the seizure of Baṣṭām and Mihrīn Castles, and poem No. 124 on the assassination of Urkhān, the Khwārazmshāhī commander in 624/1227 are within the first volume.

There are only two exceptions which are written on occasions before 631/1233, but they have come in the second volume. However, there are some explanations on these cases. The first is the poem on the assassination of Ildgiz which has happened in 587/1191, and is part of the second volume. However, in the introductory note he dates it 632/1234. The second exception is the poem No. 100 which is on the completion of Tūn Castle in 626/1228, and has come in the second volume. However, this poem is signed by ‘Abd al-Raḥīm (Nāṣir al-Dīn) the Muḥtasham of Quhistān, and we do not know why it has been mentioned in the *Dīwān*.

Qā'imī, pen-name of Ra'īs Ḥasan

One of the ambiguities of the *Dīwān-i qā'imīyyāt* is the issue of authorship of number of the poems within this *Dīwān*. Shafī'ī Kadkanī in his introduction to the *Dīwān* writes that this

Dīwān could be a production of a group of Ismā'īlī poets whose collective poems on the topic of Qiyāma have been gathered and put into one *Dīwān*. However, this has not been customary during his time and there are strong reasons to suggest that this should not be the case. It is true that we come across number of poems within the *Dīwān* which do not fit within the framework of Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd's language, literary style and historical context. Some of them have been even signed with a different pen name such as "Qā'imī" which cannot be him, as he has usually used his first name "Ḥasan" as the pen name.

However, apart from the quality of these poems which are not to the same standards of the rest of Ḥasan's poetry, there is an indication in one of them in the *Dīwān* that strongly proves that "Qā'imī" is a completely a different person. According to these indications, it is clear that Qā'imī has actually been Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd's famous predecessor, Ra'īs Ḥasan (or Ra'īs-i Ajall) whom he mentions many times in his *Dīwān*. The first indication is in the *qaṣīda* No. 23, which seems to have been written as an "*istiqbāl*" of a *qaṣīda* by Qā'imī where he writes:

قائمی هم خود بر این وزن و قوافی گفته است	قطعه ای کان خود همین بحر بیان را گوهر است
مطلع آن را بیاور ختم این ابیات کن	کز تناسب در ره نظم آن به این لایق تر است
دوستان ما را چو مولانا محمد باور است	کار ما هر ساعت اندر ملک و دین بالاتر است.

"Qā'imī also has said a *qīṭ'a* [*qaṣīda*] in the same rhythm and rhyme which is the essence of this poem,

Bring its *maṭla'* (opening) here and end this poem, as for harmony in poetry that is more appropriate,

'O friends, since Mawlānā Muḥammad is our protector, every moment our affairs in the *mulk* and the *dīn* get better".

There are eight *qaṣīdas* in total which are signed by the Qā'imī pen name. However, in one of them there is an indication which could clarify the identity of this poet better. In the *qaṣīda* No. 86 which has been written in "*istiqbāl*" of a poem by Ra'īs Ḥasan, he inserts one of the lines of his poem in which the pen name of "Qā'imī" is mentioned:

کنار دور زمان پر ز لؤلؤ منثور	ز گفته های رئیس اجل کزان شده است
قیامت آمد و قائم به ورج کرد ظهور	در این قصیده عالی بیان که می گوید
که تا نتایج طبع مرا بود دستور	به اختیار در این بندگی کنم تضمین
که بر زمین پس از این قائمی رود رنجور"	"نزول رحمت قائم دگر بنگذارد

"The descending grace of the Qā'im will no longer allow that 'Qā'imī' walk on Earth wretched."

This poem proves that “Qā’imī” is in fact Ra’īs Ḥasan’s pen name or poetic signature (*takhalluṣ*). Therefore, the meaning of the poem would be that that by the Qā’im’s grace pouring on him, his (spiritual) illness will be cured.

As the final proof, there are seven poems in the *Dīwān* that have the name of ‘Alā Dhikrih al-Salām at the end as the “*radīf*”. However, at the introduction of the first poems, Ḥasan writes that he has written these “six” *qaṣīdas* in commemoration of ‘Alā Dhikrih al-Salām. In fact, all six of these *qaṣīdas* are in the first volume. The only *qaṣīda* with this *radīf* in the second volume is signed with the pen-name of “Qā’imī”:

بر تخت لايزال على ذكره السلام

بنشست تاج آل على ذكره السلام

What is the message of the Dīwān-i Qā’imīyyat?

The *Qaṣīdas* of *Dīwān-i qā’imīyyāt* have been written on different occasions on different topics, but in almost all of them, the celebration of the Qiyāma era is general theme in all of them. Sometimes they simply highlight a significant achievement or victory like the elimination of Ildgiz by three Fidā’īs, sometimes they are written on commemoration of the life of an Imām like those on praise of ‘Alā Dhikrih al-Salām, sometimes they are said on his personal feelings or individual spiritual moments, and sometimes they are poems as the result of a request by a certain friend to follow a celebrated poet or test his poetic quality in writing poetry with some difficult rhymes. Among the central themes of the *Dīwān* we can mention the following:

1. The new world of the Qiyama Era, where he writes:
 - ‘This blessed sword of *da’wa* unmistakably, will make obedient the [world] from China to Qayrawān under its rule,
 - The end of all eras of the world is manifested, and the sign of the Grand Era’s beginning came to light,
 - A huge *fitna* will take place in the whole world (*haft kishwar*), in such a way that few people will remain safe from its turbulence....,
 - In these auspicious days, the potential of his promises are turning into realities.’ (*Diwan-i Qā’imīyyat*, p. 328-329)
2. The fulfilment of ‘Alā Dhikrih al-Salām’s predictions on the final victory of the *da’wa*: the refuge of Ghiyāth al-Din Khwārazm Shāh and Malik Atābak Khāmūsh in Alamūt (624/1226). He writes:
 - There is no place of doubt and denial for anybody on the Qā’im’s Call (*da’wat*) [now],
 - [People] make their faces willingly a ground under the obedience feet of the Mighty State,...
 - Now, the mighty Sultān has tightened up his belt in your Exalted (‘Alā’) presence in honesty,
 - For your satisfaction, the King of the East Atābak has left his treasures, entourage and fearless army behind,...
 - The light of the Qā’imī banners will make the whole world free from the evil. (*Diwan-i Qā’imīyyat*, p. 202-203)
3. Nizārīs’ relationship with the Mongols: we made peace when they confronted us in good will (Qasida no. 124)
 - “By the Divine Will, the Ākhir-zamān turmoil is approaching from the Tātār’s army....,

- The first Khān who was Genghis dealt in good spirit with us; his banner waved high in sky, and he was victorious in every land...
- Then he changed path from good and inclined towards confrontation; in less than a year that symbol of scorn lost all his glory,
- By the wrath flames of the Lord of the Qiyāma, his life was devastated,
- The kingdom fell into the hands of the Qā'ān, who was in good terms [with us] from the beginning,
- Right when he thought evil and united with the devil, and broke the previous terms, and the lands of the "Truth" suffered by the passage of his army,
- For cutting the substance of his life length, the new moon rose up from the mount of might," (*Dīwān-i qā'imīyyāt*, pp. 150-152.)

Shiraz Hajiani (University of Chicago), "Munāzarāt — a Siege Tactic Deployed by the Saljuqs and countered by Nizari Ismaili Proclamations of Islamic Pluralism."

During the reign of Muhammad b. Malikshah (r. 1105/498-1118/511), the Saljuqs (fl. 1040/431-1194/590) intensified their military efforts against the Nizari Ismaili polity in Iran (fl. 1090/483-1256/654). Ilkhanid chronicles report that in the midst of the intense sieges of Nizari fortresses, the Saljuqs initiated religious disputations (*munāzarāt*) to challenge the legitimacy of Nizari Ismaili Shi'ism. This paper examines several such sieges in which the Saljuqs deployed the tactic of religious disputations as part of their effort to overwhelm their enemy. In face of such prolonged encirclements, destructions of crops, intense fighting, famine and starvation, the Nizaris countered the doctrinal attacks asserting the validity of their beliefs and argued for the recognition of themselves as one amongst the many Muslim communities of interpretation.

The analyses in the paper focus on the complex relationships between the Nizaris Ismailis and the Saljuqs and shed light on early examples of the alliance, if not the total cooption by the military ruling elite of the Sunni 'ulama' classes. The proclamations of Islamic pluralism by the Nizaris in face of severe military onslaught, setting aside universal claims for their *da'wa*, as early as the second decade of the polity, warrant revision of their self-representations and policies towards other interpretations of Islam and the periodisations of the phases of the Nizari polity in Iran.

Panel - Ikhwan al-Safa

Samer Traboulsi (University of North Carolina), "The Reliance of the Gnostics: Al-Ashrafānī and his Druze Universal History"

Druze studies are among the most underdeveloped subfields in Islamic studies mainly due to the unavailability of sources to scholars and the unwillingness of the religious class, the *'uqqāl*, to share their well-kept esoteric knowledge with outsiders. As a result, our knowledge of the religious and intellectual history of the Druzes is mostly limited to their scriptures, *the Epistles of Wisdom*, which shed some light on the events surrounding the rise of the *da'wa* in the first half of the 11th century. Beyond that, our knowledge of the Druze faith is extremely limited to the little information shared by some modern Druze scholars who allegedly have access to the otherwise-inaccessible sources of their faith and, also, to the works of 19th century orientalist who studied a few Druze texts smuggled out of Syria at the time.

In modern times, the jealously protected texts circulate within the close circles of the Druze sheikhs in hand-written lithographed editions produced in Suwayda in Southern Syria. One of the few volumes I had access to is Muḥammad al-Ashrafānī's *ʿUmdat al-ʿĀrifīn fī Qiṣas al-Nabiyyīn* (The Reliance of the Gnostics in the Stories of the Prophets), a 790-page universal history of the Druzes in three volumes. Little is known about the author. He lived in the 17th century and his book is regarded as the most important history of the community. Undoubtedly, the third volume which focuses on the events following the establishment of the *daʿwa* is the most interesting since it fills a major gap in our knowledge of Druze history and the religious and political movements and struggles that shaped the community and its faith between the 11th and 17th centuries. However, the first two volumes offer an equally interesting reading of the Druze worldview as not only does it place its prophetic past in a Biblical and extra-Quranic milieu but it also adopts the Hellenic tradition in a way unprecedented in early Ismaili sources. The Druze reading of Fatimid history is another aspect of Ashrafānī's work that is worth analyzing as Fatimid imams play a double role as the historic public figures and the secret reincarnation of the three *maqāms*, Abū Zakariyyā, ʿAlī, and al-Muʿill, a tradition which is unique to the Druzes. In short, *ʿUmdat al-ʿĀrifīn* provides new insights that will hopefully revive the interest in the study of the intellectual and religious history of the Druze faith in pre-modern times.

Arzina Lalani (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “Faith and Awareness: *Risala fi’l Iman in Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* .”

This study is based on the critical edition and translation of Epistle 46 *On the Essence of Faith* and prepared from textual variants of several manuscripts. It is part of a larger compendium of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* Series. They have received a fair share of attention within modern scholarship¹ but have never been a subject of critical editions and translations in their entirety, a task being undertaken by DARP-IIS, London. Yet, the initial uncertainties still remain on the dating, identity, affiliations and provenance of the text, despite these studies. Notwithstanding these concerns, we are on firmer grounds with the contents and themes of their epistles, which revolve around notions of awakening, purification and awareness.

Faith is acknowledged as a secured, experiential belief in the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) alongside realizing that one will be accounted for all of one's actions. A number of premises are connected, including knowledge and faith, characteristics of believers who attain this awareness and the potential of souls to receive celestial communication, either angelic or demonic. The voyage of the soul is set against a background of those who reject both, the essence and the existence of the soul, referred to as *ahl al-jadal*. As a concept, *jadal* – disputation is prevalent in the Quran, at times in the form of argumentation and at others, in the polemical rhetoric with some protagonists, real or implicit.¹ But, there is an overwhelming censure of *jadal* and terms such as *ikhtaṣama* and *yuhājūna* where the predominant usage is negative and not a compliment or a virtue.

Recognition of human dignity

Acknowledging the fact that all sciences are noble and pursuing these gives honour, the Ikhwan regard the recognition and reality of a human being as the noblest of matters and insist on seeking it by posing a question ‘what is the loftiest rank an individual can attain in this life?’ This entails how one acts or behaves in each situation until he attains the highest goal and that is, of meeting his Lord either in this world or in the next. Evidently meeting the Lord is for them, the highest goal a believer yearns for, wishing to move from the level of faith towards meeting the

object of faith, God Himself. They describe this as being “among the kernel of kernels and the roots of [all] sciences as well as being the origin of wisdom.”

Essence and existence of the soul

One of the most apparent proofs that alongside the bodies of all animals, there is another essence, non-material to be observed, is the aspect of sensing or feeling, of movement, sounds or speech and actions that exist quite apparently and which cannot be hidden but all of which is lost at the time of death. This is a proof that the noble essence has separated from its body. Another proof for the existence of the soul or self (*wujud al-nafs*) is the sadness and weeping of people when someone dies. If this were only over their bodies, then the bodies are still with them and if they so wished, these could even be preserved from alteration and decomposition using substances such as aloe vera, camphor and honey as well as others, but this does not benefit the sadness felt when that noble essence leaves especially. A further testimony on the soul being an essence - *jawhar* is that its actions derive independently from it without use of senses or movement of limbs. When a human being wishes to reflect on this deep mystifying knowledge and search its subtle meaning, he realizes a need to still the movement of limbs and leave aside deliberation on senses while shifting his thoughts within to perceive and understand that matter.

Individual potential

One of the recurring themes in the Faith Epistle is the individual potential of the soul or self – *nafs*, described as an aspect within that traverses the earth, beholding visions and scenarios while the body remains still. The voyage of the soul and its actualisation is portrayed in several parables –*hikaya*, serving as pedagogic tools and moral training to awaken the self from the slumber of negligence and perceive matters with an inner eye to recognise the beauty of one’s inner substance. It is only then that one lives in the spirit of the sciences, enjoying a blissful life aided by good fortune and become a pure, clean soul, illumined and joyous, having liberated from a grave, oppressive, altering and decaying body.

This transformation of an individual who has intermediate position between angels and animals is described vividly by the Ikhwan culminating in attaining bliss when the garden or *al-janna* is mentioned as a reward for the believers in the hereafter¹ wherein *Dar al-Salaam* is one of the eight Qur’anic gardens of paradise. In the Faith Epistle, it occurs also in relation to the *hikma* given to an individual who articulates marvels of wisdom by coining wondrous parables to the amazement of people around him. He then becomes a paradigm and an exemplar in the gloominess for people of his time. When asked how he received this wisdom, he replied he found my heart like a veiled mirror showing in it realities of things and found my tongue articulating correctly without revelation.

The mirror in is related in a different connotation in Jean Daniélou where there is a discussion about Gregory of Nyssa’s views on how human nature is endowed with freewill and how it transforms itself towards that which it inclines to. Thus in Gregory, the coats of skin in the form of human passions and animal instincts give the freedom to incline in one direction or another. They do not affect the real being, the image of God which in its adherence to the good, is modified and replaced by the animal aspect. It is this freedom of man which is a mirror, taking its form from the reality toward which it inclines. Gregory also introduced the characteristics of *epektasis*, the notion that mystical life is continuous transformation, an eternal *wandlung* - change because the soul’s participation is never exhausted in the infinity of divine essence. The image reflected depends on the polish of the mirror and just as a well-polished mirror reflects

the one before it clearly, similarly the individual who is purified of all worldly taints, reflects in purity the image of celestial beauty exemplifying the notion of a human being created in the image of God.

The transformation is usually connected to accounts of vision (*ru'ya*) in Islam but is beset with challenges among scholars. The Mu'tazila held that the faithful know God in their heart, the heart being the seat of knowledge. Others refute this, while al-Ash'ari comprehends vision 'without specifying how' insisting that references to God must be devoid of human qualities of similarity or comparison. The early debate in relation to whether or not the Prophet had vision of God and if so, how was He envisioned, has recently been explored, concluding that disagreements may have regional variations although on both sides of the divide, there were those who qualified sight 'of the heart'.

Ismail K. Poonawala (University of California, Los Angeles) "Pluralist Space and the Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'."

The authors of a famous encyclopedia of the philosophical sciences assumed the pseudonym *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (The Brethren of Purity), describing themselves as a group of fellow-seekers after truth. Members of a religio-political underground movement, they deliberately concealed their identity so that their treatises, entitled *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa-Khullān al-Wafā'* (The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and the Friends of Loyalty), would gain wider circulation and appeal to a broad cross-section of Arab society, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Over the centuries, the authorship of the *Epistles* has been ascribed to various individuals and groups, such as to Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), to the great astronomer and mathematician al-Majrīṭī (d. ca. 398/1007), and to the Mu'tazila, to the Qarāmiṭa of Baṣra and to the Ṣūfīs. The assertion of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023) that the treatises were composed by a group of learned men in Baṣra during the middle of the fourth/tenth century was widely accepted until recently. Al-Qifṭī (d. 646/1248), the famous biographer of physicians and philosophers, was the first to express his skepticism about al-Tawḥīdī's attribution.

In 1932, Ḥusayn al-Hamdānī stated that the Ismā'īlī Musta'li-Ṭayyibī tradition attributes the *Rasā'il* to the hidden imam Aḥmad. He also indicated certain marked features of the treatises that are manifestly Ismā'īlī in character. Yves Marquet, who authored numerous studies on the *Rasā'il*, believes that Ismā'īlīs composed the *Epistles* over a long period of time and perhaps the final form was settled upon around the middle of the fourth/tenth century. He further contends that the *Rasā'il* represent the oldest extant source for Ismā'īlī doctrines. In 1978, Abbas Hamdani deconstructed al-Tawḥīdī's theory and pointed out the untrustworthiness of his report. Additionally, he published the earliest reference to the *Rasā'il* found in the Ismā'īlī literature. He rejects Qarṣaṭī authorship of the *Epistles* and argues that they were compiled before the establishment of the Fāṭimid state in North Africa in 297/909 as an ideological and intellectual spearhead in support of Fāṭimid political activities. In short, the Ismā'īlī character of the *Epistles* is no longer in dispute.

I fully concur with Hamdani's findings. In my latest study, I reiterated that Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's narration does not stand up to close scrutiny and must be abandoned. Similarly I have refuted at length Stern and Madelung's thesis based on al-Tawḥīdī's account of the authorship and dating of the *Rasā'il*. All the internal evidence points to the fact that the authors of the *Rasā'il* were not affiliated with the Qarāmiṭa, and certainly their *Epistles* were composed much earlier than the middle of the fourth/tenth century. There are no traces of any influence from al-Fārābī's (d. 339/950) strand of Neoplatonism on their thought. I have, therefore, argued that as far as philosophy is concerned, the *Epistles* represent a post-Kindī (d. ca. 256/870)

component of Neoplatonism. Furthermore, I pointed out that the oldest extant copy of the *Rasā'il*, from 'Āṭif Efendi (MS 1681) in Istanbul and transcribed in 578/1182, is almost three centuries later than the first circulation of the encyclopedia. We can, therefore, state that the text of this manuscript, and, in turn, of the entire encyclopedia, is not well attested or documented. Myself and other editors (of the latest critical edition with an annotated English translation, published by the Oxford University Press) have indicated that extant manuscript copies of the *Epistles* are marred by copyists' intentional and unintentional interpolations. I think those interpolations occurred soon after the circulation of the *Rasā'il*, prior to the emergence of proto-archetypes and the subsequent establishment of various manuscript traditions adhering to these archetypes. My above assumption is based on the fact that there is a major lacuna of almost three centuries between the time of the *Rasā'il*'s composition and the transcription of the oldest extant copy as stated above. Unless new evidence comes to light, the present state of our knowledge will not change. Finally, I should add that if we concede that Ismā'īlīs compiled the *Rasā'il*, the identity of the group that did so cannot be precisely determined. The pre-Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī movement was a coalition composed of numerous groups with the goal of supplanting the 'Abbāsīd dynasty with a Shī'ī one. Nonetheless, the names of the authors will remain a mystery.

The philosophical system of the *Rasā'il* is a synthesis of reason and revelation wherein the cosmos is viewed as a unified, organic whole. The philosophical structure and the cosmology are derived from Neoplatonism and Neo-Pythagoreanism. Eclectic in nature, the system draws on various faiths and philosophies, with a strong undercurrent of rationalism and humanism. *The Brethren of Purity* offered a new political program under the aegis of an 'Alid imam, and their utopia, referred to as *al-madīna al-fāḍila* (the spiritual, virtuous city), or *dawlat ahl al-khayr* (the government of virtuous people), was to be governed by a law-giving philosopher-prophet. The organization and arrangement of the *Epistles* and their classification of the sciences reflect this ultimate objective.

Without going into further details about the superstructure of the hierarchy of beings originating with the Intellect emanating from One (God), humanity is described as the noblest of all creation. The other three kingdoms: minerals, plants, and animals, are made subservient to it. The unity and complexity of the human being's soul and body make him/her a microcosm. Humans, by virtue of their position in this hierarchy, are the central link in a long chain of beings; below them is the animal kingdom and above them is the world of angels, and they are connected to both. In the Perfect Human Being, who has realized his divine origin, the process of generation in descending order comes to an end and the reverse journey in ascending order starts. The human being, therefore, fulfills the purpose of creation. Given their grandiose view of the cosmic world, they also formulated a model of a pluralistic world held together by values of inclusiveness, tolerance and understanding between different religions and cultures. Yet, their so-called "liberal and inclusive" interpretation of Islam, put forward more than a millennium ago, was still rooted in the spirit of the Qur'ān, particularly the themes present in verses 62 of *sūrat al-Baqara* and 69 of *sūrat al-Mā'ida*,¹ along with verses 136 and 285 of *sūrat al-Baqara* and 84 of *sūrat Āl 'Imrān*.¹

The *Epistles* occupy a unique position in the history of Islamic thought and exercised a great influence on the Muslim elite. The existence of a large number of manuscript copies of the text (more than one hundred) scattered throughout the world is an eloquent witness to their popularity and influence. Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) understood very well that the threat of the Ismā'īlīs and the *Rasā'il* was not merely political but also intellectual. He perceived that it was not simply Mu'tazilite rationalism, for in their synthesis the Ismā'īlīs went far beyond rationalism to encompass the entire spectrum of scientific thought. They integrated the Greek sciences,

philosophy, and formal reasoning into one universal valid truth, synonymous with religious reality. Therefore, in addition to his *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭiniyya* (or *al-Mustazhiri*), which is exclusively devoted to refuting the newly formulated doctrine of *ta'lim* by Ḥasan-e Ṣabbāḥ (d. 518/1124), that one must accept the absolute authority of the infallible Imam in religious faith, he refuted the *Ismā'īlīs* in several other books. In some of those polemical works he loses his customary academic serenity and becomes almost shrill in his denunciation. Referring to the *Rasā'il* in his *Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (Deliverance from Error), which has been called Ghazālī's "*Apologia pro doctrina sua*," he states that the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* is really the refuse of philosophy. Because, he adds, their doctrines are based on the feeble beliefs of Pythagoras whose assumptions are the weakest of all philosophical principles and had already been refuted by Aristotle.

Panel - Nasir-i Khusraw

Sunatullo Jonboboev (University of Central Asia), "The Reflections of Central Asians on Texts from Nasir Khusraw's 'Safar-name'" and Folk Versions of his Travelogues."

We are comparing two forms of travelogues, one is written and documented by famous poet, philosopher, theologian of 11 c. from Khorasan to Cairo, and another are popular folk stories on Nasir's travelogue among the people of Badakhshan as parts of cultural studies. Here we try to use multidisciplinary approach. We rely on our reflections from two fields: one is interdisciplinary humanities education and the second is oral tradition or ethnography. The paper based partly on reflections of the participants Aga Khan Humanities Project's (AKHP UCA) workshops, the piece from the book of E. Hunsberger's "The Ruby of Badakhshan (on Nasir Khusraw), the discourse occurred during the workshops and our interpretation of some folk stories of Nasir's travels to Badakhshan. The goal of this article from one point of view is to show how the text on humanities can work for the reshaping the minds of young generation as an agents for social transformation and activism, challenging existing current negative social phenomenon's (like corruption etc.), inspiring to discuss and be inspired for positive social change and from other point of view how to maintain the existing social order.

Educational experience in Humanities shows that it is important for the young people to learn created life stories, sometimes imaginative, but sometimes based on the reality, being documented. Observation speaks that people create such stories not only to satisfy their creative nature as human beings, the needs for enriching fantasy, creating solid corpus of knowledge as memory, but usually they do it as respond to the current needs of societies, where they live, in an indirect way to motivate maintenance of society, change and development. Travel stories contain social idea, which observed by the writer in some other countries. The content of used text was about the organization of the state, the role of intellectuals in society and its administration, the state's care for its citizens, warriors, civil servants, and the conservation of religion, public administration, provision of citizens' security, the rituals and traditions of the Egyptians established by the caliph, etc.

There are the other reasons for the people to create and write such diverse stories, pass them through generations. If *Safar-name's* aim was to inspire the rulers of Central Asia to follow the path of prosperity using Cairo as a model and Nasir Khusraw's mission was to generate inspiration among the contemporaries for social transformation, especially the governances in his native lands, like Bukhara, Balk, Marv etc. (in general, the Khurasan, i.e. Eastern Iran), the purpose of the folk versions of Nasir's travels is different. There are many legends and stories anonymously and orally describing Nasir's journey from Balkh to Badakhshan, Hindu Kush and Kashmir. According to them, majority names of the villages in Pamirs had been named after

Nasir Khusraw, in the return of people's moral attitudes: generosity or in opposite their scarcity. Through reflected emotion in tales and stories local people try to maintain the traditional values and to keep existing moral and social order.

Majority of the names of the villages in Badakhshan according to the local people are named by Nasir Khusraw. The names were depended on the ethical qualities of the people, for example on their generosity or just stinginess during the visits. For example, the village of Sokhcharv named because of richness of this place with nuttrees... Here we can observe another story from the oral traditions of Badakhshan, the content of which has similarity with 'Safar-name'. This is the episode of visiting of Nasir and his brother the bath in Basra, which is reflected in oral story from Wakhan valley (of Badakhshan): Once, a stranger (people refer to him as *shakhs*) came to a village of Sang (the village which is now near Namadgut HPS), poorly dressed and nobody paid attention to him. No one has invited him to his house or offered him food. Then, this stranger went and dressed ornamented shiny garment entered the village again. Everybody was inviting him to their houses and offered him food and paid him a great respect. The stranger did not eat anything and stood up and told him that when he entered the village as a poor no one cared about him. Once I put on this shiny garment you started treating me as a respected guest. Then he cursed the people. The people of the village believe that this strange man was Nasir-i Khusraw and he cursed the people that they never become rich. So, they reach a certain level of richness, but then suddenly lose everything. Such oral stories gathered in the collections of Oral tradition of Pamir (Badakhshan) by the Institute of Humanities of Academy of Sciences Republic of Tajikistan, they studying this cultural heritage, produce books and publications based on it.

The mentioned case of good governance as part of Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) shows its effectiveness as part of humanities education and social move. Many participants of workshops (in Khujand, Tajikistan etc.) loudly voiced that 'such texts convey hope how to fight and overcome such social-economical phenomenon, the corruption' – well-spread after the collapse of Soviet Union, after independence. It was very sad picture when educators were involuntarily put into "mise-en-scène" of this contra-culture. One participant of the workshops said exactly the following: "before I was so much pessimistic regarding the confrontation to corruption in our country, but now after the reading of this text I understood that there are some precedents, model or the ways which make it possible to confront and relatively to get rid of such negative social phenomenon. The same reaction was not just in one university, or one Central Asian countries, but in all three countries where the workshops took place. It shows that interdisciplinary, integrated humanities curriculum, combination of concepts, different ideas from different time, space and civilization with interactive pedagogy can make huge change in the consciousness and possibly in the actions of the people if not directly, but indirectly. It shows that such stories are important to teach for the time of transformation of societies.

This case shows that how to 'enforce' the text on humanities, namely the written stories to work for the refreshing of the minds of young generation as an agents of social transformation and social activism, challenging existing current negative social phenomenon's, the lack of transparency and disregard of their time and space. Learning critically, deeply analyzing it and inspiring from the past students could discuss the role of social, cultural renaissance – revival of intellectual traditions in region promoting development, but at the same time minimizing the negative effects of the treats of pessimism, extremism and fundamentalism in the minds of contemporary citizens of Central Asia.

At the same time the two cases and two texts – the written and oral versions are different. Another case written by Nasir Khusraw in his Safarname on visiting the city of Basra by Nasir

and his brother, when they wanted to enter the bath, but because of their clothes they were denied is objective description of behaviors of people in Basra (and can be observed everywhere as usual attitude of local people to the strangers), and at the same time it is historic fact. The described folk story above about shakhs, i.e. Nasir Khusraw is socio-cultural phenomenon, the form of socialization of local cultural values. According the Emile Durkheim sacred as usual is social. Sacred can have both positive and negative effect (as it mention in this story: getting richness or losing everything). The need for absolute source, for sacred exist always with human being, it seems that even the human social and technological progress (which we are witnessing for last centuries) will not change the spiritual, social and cultural needs for the search of spirituality, cosmic ordering principle - in contrast to the chaotic principle of synthesis.

Our concluding remark is that written or oral forms of knowledge work not only for the maintaining social/moral order, but the activated knowledge flow (even if it have been chosen from intellectual store), importantly not too much glorified and exalted, can challenge the existing problematic social reality being, to some extent, effective mechanism inspiring development as well. The position of the Humanities project and its courses is that the past stories and store of knowledge should work for the present, but not the present should work for the past and to be subordinated by it, moreover devaluating the present humanistic values and democratic trends. If the written texts we need for organizing our present and future social lives, the oral texts we need to have access to absolute sources and power. As noted by Mircea Eliade, the rites, the sacred narrative, relics, temples, priests and sacrifices - all these social sides of the sacred, designed to play the role of original antennas and receivers tuned to the signals of the absolute source of sacred power. Myth as a symbol of strength will remain with human society as a part of collective consciousness and will participate on establishing social order.

In this paper we try to share some ideas, comparing these two forms of knowledge in order to wider interpretation of cultural phenomenon, better understand them and to get new feedbacks from the audience, in order to generate new knowledge on Ismaili and general human cultural heritage.

Farhad Mortezaee (Independent Scholar), “Virtual Fatimid Cairo.”



Cairo is a beautiful City home to millions of people and layered with more than a millennium of History. Unfortunately, there are not many historical records or books that can provide us a complete overall visual experience of Fatimid Cairo. Thus the main objective of this Project is to explore the recordings, writings, memoirs and documentations of historians and translate these narratives into virtual 3D representations that can later be used for educational and academic purposes. Also, it must be noted that this model is not aimed to be a perfect replica of ancient Cairo but expressive of the City's attributes because majority of the buildings, monuments, and walls were torn down and replaced. The purpose of this endeavour was a) academic research b) facilitating academic research c) educational tool d) increasing public reach through animations and storytelling.

The research approach can be summarized as the following: 1. how verbal descriptions of space can be visualized? 2. Archaeological data 3. Architectural / urban logics 4. Stylistic comparisons 5. Permanent landmarks such as topography 6. Surviving monuments.

Given the monumental scope of this project, we narrowed down the time period of the model to encompass the founding of Cairo from 969 CE and the peak of the Fatimid Cairo around 1050 CE. Additionally, this was also the period in which Cairo out-grew its sister-city. To further clarify the extents of the model, we decided to limit the list of objects to model those that were absolutely essential to the identity and constructive framework of the urban fabric of Cairo. Consequently, this list was divided into two categories of projects (permanent) that face minimal changes and still remain from the period and to projects (temporary) that were drastically transformed or demolished after the period. For instance, the long-term projects consisted of the general topography, The Nile River, The Mokattam Hills, the Great Pyramids of Giza, The Nilometer, Al-Azhar Mosque, Al-Hakim Mosque, Ibn-Tulun Mosque, Al-Amr Mosque, Bab-Zuwayla (South Gate), Bab al-Futuh (North Gate), and Bab al-Nasr (North-East Gate).

Moreover, these artefacts were used to draw the relevance and placement of monuments that no longer exist such as Al-Fustat, the Eastern and the Western Palaces, Kafur's Garden, a vast portion of the Jawhar Wall (Cairo's first wall), and other domestic buildings that would have occupied Cairo at that time. Some of our greatest challenges arose from the latter category due to the lack of evidence and visual references available from the time regarding these artefacts. Thus it was also the most vulnerable part of this project since we had to rely heavily on narratives and create these buildings while keeping in mind the building style, the practicality of the construction, the native vegetation of Egypt and the vernacular of the Fatimids. In summary, the 3D modelling challenges were: 1. Lack of details 2. Lack of characters, objects 3. Size of files for a small office computing capacity 4. Fluidity of archaeological data 5. Time consuming process 6. Understanding and tailoring the information for multiple audience 7. Remote team working 8. Design architects doing 3D models to create historic reconstruction 9. Agenda: what/why do we reconstruct Fatimid Cairo?

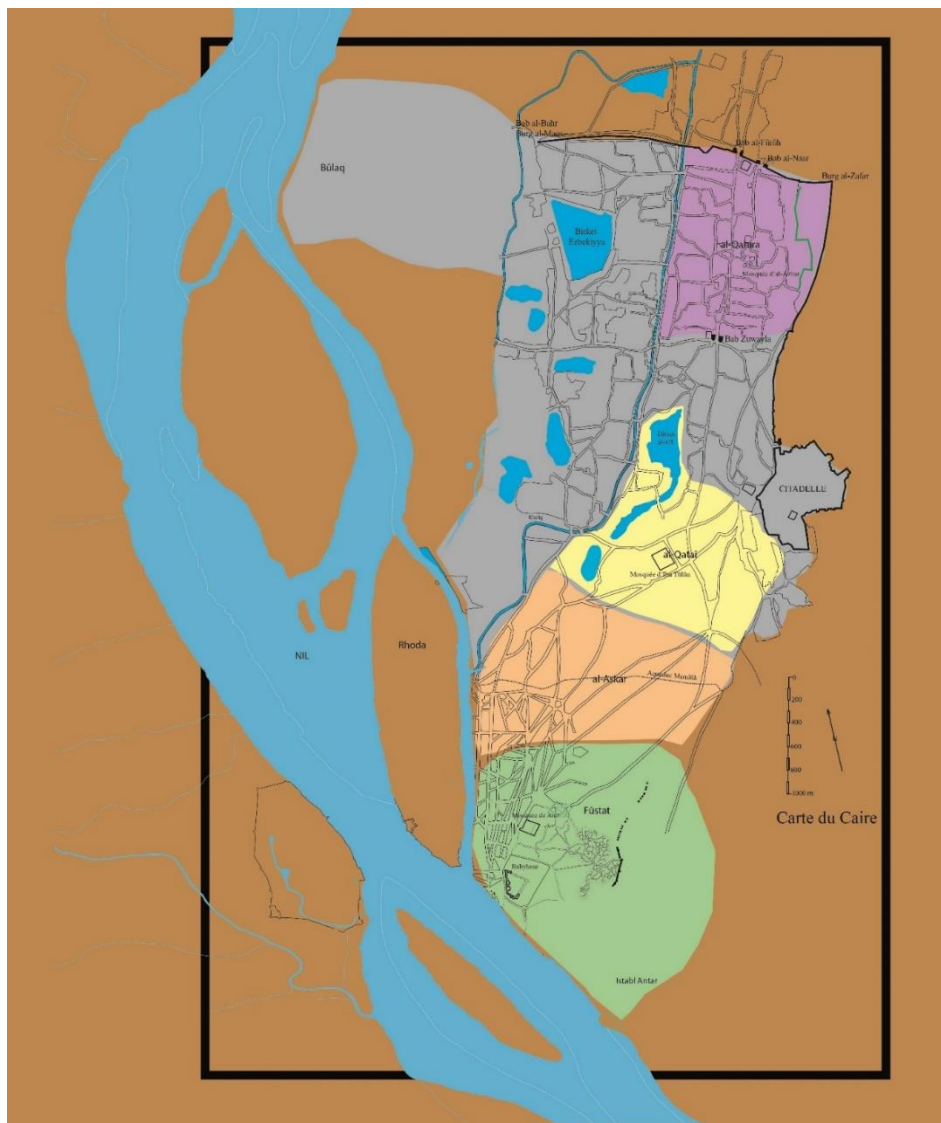


Figure1: Carte du Caire, depicting Medieval Cairo with The Nile on the West and Fustat in the South.

General Topography

Despite the fact that Cairo is developed on the plain of the Sahara desert, constructing a landscape in a computer can become cumbersome. To model the general topography there were a few tactics that we had to use since there were no maps with topography lines from the Fatimid times that we could relate to. Also, we realized that the Nile River has significantly shifted its course westward over the centuries (particularly the end west of Cairo) which disabled us to use any recent mapping of the Nile as well. Fortunately we were able to refer to context maps from various sources such as the *Arts of the City Victorious* by Jonathan M. Bloom, *Cairo* by Andre Raymond, and a detailed Cairo map by Stephane Pradines. Aside from the River the other most prominent feature of the site are the Mukattam Hills to the East. Fortunately, we were able to use the modelled topography from Google Earth and merge it with the River model to generate a cohesive landscape. Also, the Great Pyramids of Giza were added to further define the surrounding boundaries and contexts that profoundly influenced the Growth of Cairo.

Al-Fustat

Fustat which had been developed many years before Cairo was well known for its commercial and economic activity due to its close proximity to the Nile River. Fustat's port was a major intercontinental hub used to load and drop off goods. The development of Fustat was characterized by an organic arrangement of programme and street network compared to Cairo. However it was known for vast Bazaars and Caravansarais well dispersed around the City with some domestic residential buildings reaching up to seven stories concentrated mostly towards the center. Thus the skyline of the city described by some was that of a mountain. Although Cairo seemed to have a larger footprint and area than Fustat, their populations were far less distinguished. This was largely due to the centralized and denser urban fabric of Fustat as compared to the wide streets and vast public open spaces in Cairo. Unfortunately very little of the City has remained aside from the footprints of a handful of residential buildings which we used as a reference to study the building style and generate the rest of Fustat in a similar fashion. Eventually over time the occupying dynasties formed their own cities outside Fustat such as Al-Askar founded by the Abbasids in 750, and then a short-lived dynastic city known as Al-Qata'i was established by the Tulunids.

Al-Amr Mosque and Ibn Tulun Mosque

One of the Earliest and most influential mosques that we decided to include in the model was the Amr Mosque which is dedicated to and dates back to the Arab Commander Amr ibn al-As who established Fustat in 649. Even though the initial measures of the mosques were humble with neither a mehrab nor a minaret, the mosque went through many expansions and changes as it continued to serve as the main Mosque of Fustat. Similarly, when a military man of Turkish ancestry from Samarra name Ahmad Ibn-Tulun established his authority in Egypt in 878, he decided to build himself a city which came to be known as Al-Qatai. He also built a great mosque known as the Ibn-Tulun Mosque which has a compelling minaret with an exterior helical staircase evoking Samarra. Later in the centuries to come, these structures were influential in the construction and architecture of Fatimid mosques such as Al-Azhar mosque and Al-Hakim mosque. The critical and the challenging point was to build the models of these mosques in the conditions that they were in when Cairo developed rather than their current conditions, thus in a way undoing years of additions and expansions.

The Al-Azhar Mosque

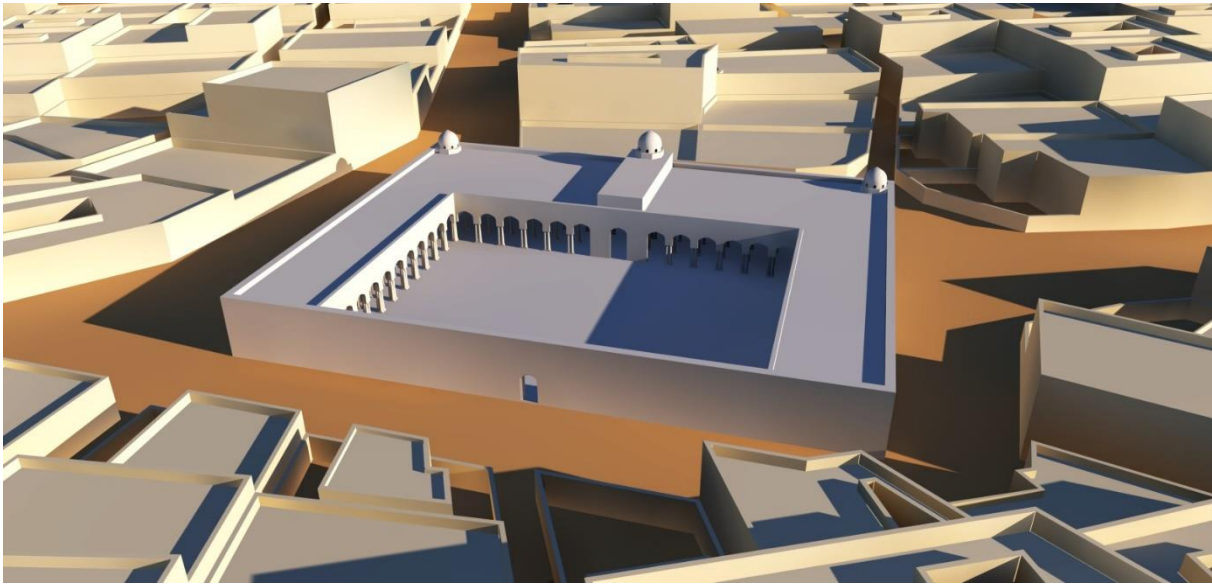


Figure 7: Al-Azhar Mosque rendering

We used a plan from the Archnet archives that depicted the layout of the Mosque from the earliest moments of its life. This plan consisted of the essential elements such as the interior arcades and colonnades, the simple rectangular exterior wall with entrance openings as well as an indication of the three domes close to the Qibla wall. With the plan in hand, it became easier to identify which elements to exclude from the current conditions of the mosque, thus we referred to contemporary photographs of the Mosque to transform the plan into a three dimensional entity.

The Al-Hakim Mosque

Similar to other buildings in this project, we realized that historically the Al-Hakim mosque had gone through extensive change and damage. Until recently what remained of the mosque were a few walls, arcades and the towers with a madrasa constructed in it from the early years of this century. Similar to the Al-Azhar mosque, we modelled the Mosque based on a simple plan from the Archnet Archives with careful recognition to the building style and practically of the designated time period.

The Fatimid Palaces in Cairo

Perhaps the most challenging and demanding part of this project was modeling the Fatimid Palaces in Cairo largely due to the fact that virtually nothing of these structures remains today. These Palaces were the epitome of monumental Fatimid Architecture and grandeur. Once the first City wall was complete, Jawhar began construction of the Great Eastern Palace which was known as Qasr Al-Dahab (The Golden Palace). The Eastern Palace was located in the heart of Cairo along the main thorough-fair that ran from Bab Al-Futuh to Bab Zuwayla. This was also the Palace in which the Caliph resided. A smaller Palace known as the Western Palce was constructed by Caliph Al-Aziz for his daughter, Sitt al-Mulk across from the Eastern Palace, and west of the Shari Al-Azam (The Great Avenue). The vast space that was created between the

Two Palaces was said to have equated to 2.5 hectares and was known as Bayn al-Qasarayn. (Figure 9)

Very few eye-witness accounts exist regarding the Palaces. One of the sources was written by the Poet, Philosopher, and traveller Nasir Khusraw who visited Cairo in 1047. In his memoirs, Nasir Khusraw describes the different parts of Cairo and the Palaces with a keen eye. However at the time, the narrative seems to have exaggerated the numbers. For example, Nasir Khusraw describes the banquet hall as 50,000 minas of sugar was used to decorate the Sultan's table, with a thousand statues and figurines and fruits that were made of sugar every day. The second major source remains from the fifteenth Century Mamluk historian Al-Maqrizi. He derived his knowledge of the Palaces from earlier Arabic texts and contemporary Fatimid accounts. Centuries later, Paul Ravaisse accumulated and coordinated Al-Maqrizi's writings into a map which depicted the shape of the Palaces in the center. (figure 9)

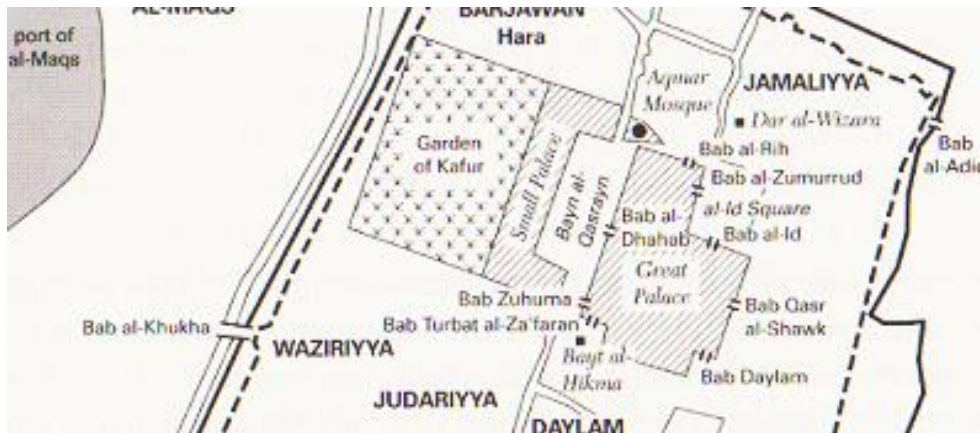


Figure 9: Map of Cairo by Paul Ravaisse

With this map in hand, we compiled the programme described by Nasir Khusraw and Al-Maqrizi and calculated how much area each would occupy to get the overall volume and capacity of each palace. For example, one of the magnificent aspects of the Eastern Palace was the Hall of Wisdom (Dar Al-Hikma) created by Caliph Al-Hakim in the year 1005. This was a space dedicated to people of all classes and religions to come together, discuss, learn and share their knowledge. The historian Abi Tayyib (1180-1230) described the institution (Dar Al-Hikma) as having a vast library that was said to house approximately 1.6 million volumes of books. From there we calculated that if the average thickness of the books was 1 inch and if each bookcase had 5 shelves and was 4 feet wide, it would contain 240 books. To complete a unit area, we added a second bookshelf opposite to the first with a 3 feet wide corridor (walking) space in between. Assuming that each shelf had a depth of about 12 inches, we concluded that each unit area would equal to 20 sqft while holding 480 books. (Figure 10)

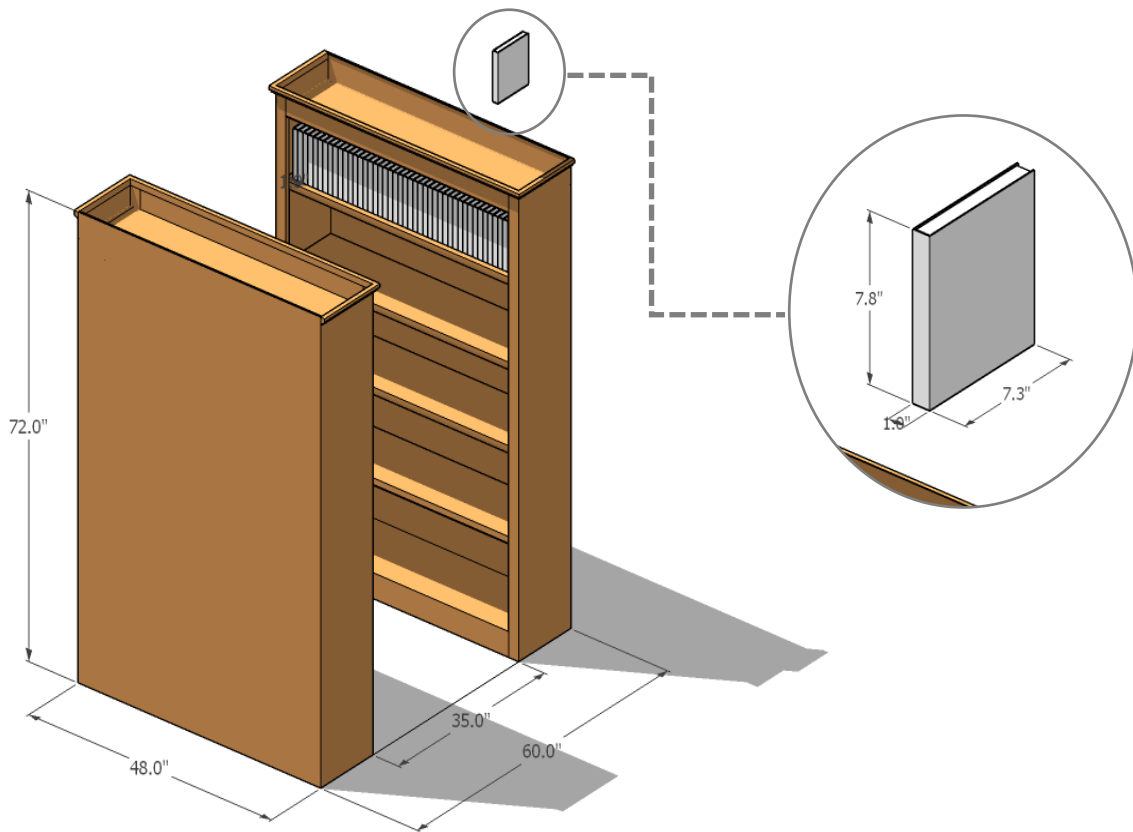


Figure 10: Diagram of the Library unit area.

Consequently we multiplied the area proportionately to 1.6 million books to get a total library area of 66,666 sqft. We rounded the area to 70,000 sqft to accommodate for seating space. We also learnt that the Eastern Palace was 3 storeys high and that Dar Al-Hikma was in the Southern Portion of the Palace. Thus we divided the area into 3 which equated to approximately 23,400 sqft per floor. Similarly, we derived the circulation corridors based on the nine gates that were depicted on the map. This became crucial when developing the Courtyard of the Eastern Palace since more of the volume had already been occupied by programme and creating circulation amongst nine entrances also requires a lot of volume. This led us to realize that the courtyard that was described was not nearly as big as some scholars had shown previously in their attempts. Nevertheless, the courtyard was developed in the language of a Charbagh with a reflective marble fountain in the center. (Figure 11)

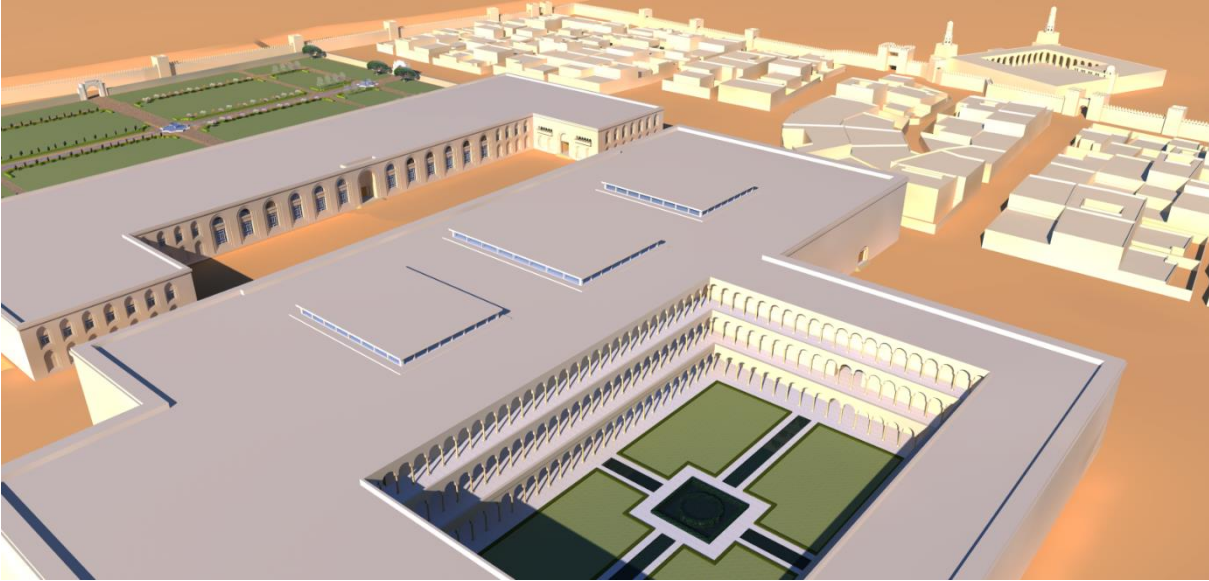


Figure 11: Fatimid Cairo Palaces rendering

Another very important aspect of the Palaces was the Fatimid style of the Façade. In this case we referred to the Fatimid Palace in Palermo Sicily known as the La Zisa Palace. (Figure 12) Similar to the Cairo Palace, it has a monumental entrance with a high arch. Also, the formal language of the Fatimid arch is very generous and well-rounded at the top almost imitating a semi-circle. And to add more depth to the façade, these arches are echoed and embossed at different offsets. Hence the observations from this study were reapplied to the Fatimid Palaces. (Figure 13)

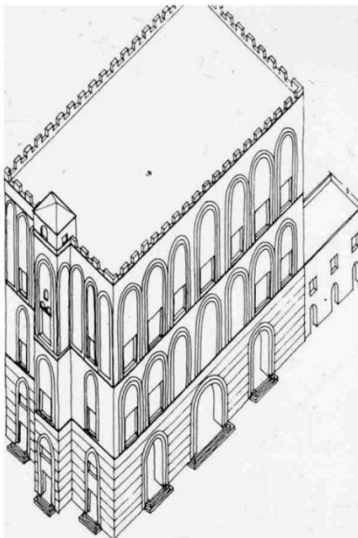


Figure 12: La Zisa Palace, Palermo Sicily

The Western Palace was constructed on a portion of the land that was previously used for Kafur's Palace and Garden (Before the Fatimids). Similar to the Eastern Palace's Garden, we devolped Kafur's garden in the persian style of a Charbagh but with entrances on all sides to establish it as a public Garden. The Garden is divided into four equal quadrants with a central axis running north-south. The central axis is much wider than the other pathways and includes three substantial fountains that are connected with elegant gutters embedded into the ground. We would also like to explore modelling the palaces based on the the palace of the Vizir in Mahdiyya or the palace of Ajdabiya in Libya. Additionally the Garden is decorated with hedges and trees native to Egypt such as Fig trees, Mullberry Trees, Sycamore trees and Lotus trees.



Figure 14: Kafur's Garden rendering

Other buildings in Cairo

Aside from the monuental Palaces, the Al-Azhar Mosque, Kafur's Garden and the Al-Hakim mosque, there was a vast amount of space deicated to domestic buildings and houses inside the fortified City. It is said that Cairo was divided into the different religious districts and open spaces with wide and projecting avenues. The great philosopher Nasir Khusraw describes the buildings as "stronger and higher than the gates" and that "every building is itself a fortress". He also adds that "most of the buildings are five storyes tall, although some are six". Unfortunately most of the maps that exist of Fatimid Cairo depict the extensively altered network of the City by Mamluks and the Ayyubids since all the grey network had been changed to seem more organic. Instead we used a site map derived by Nizar Al-Sayed when he had analyzed the construction of buildings in Cairo. At this stage we decided to construct the remaining building in a simplified massing format as it would function as filler material in the city. This was also in conjunction with acknowledging the computational limitations and lagging it would cause to detail every single house with doors and windows. Within the divided neighborhoods, we tried to add some variations to the heights and typologies of the buildings equally throughout Cairo. Unlike Al-Fustat, Cairo's formal geometry was described as more rectalinear and gridlike. This phenomenon greatly affected the end-product as Cairo's skyline was much different from Al-Fustat's.

This paper illustrated the first complete 3D reconstruction of Fatimid Cairo. There remains a lot of further research and work, perhaps this model can serve as a forum for all Fatimid researchers. While the majority of the model were developed without defendable archaeological data, we could not depict Cairo with blank chunks especially for younger audiences.



Marodsilton Muborakshoeva (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “Nasir Khusraw, the Muslim Scholastic.”

Based on the analyses of Nasir Khusraw’s major works and empirical evidence from field work, this paper explores the extent to which the compositions of this great Muslim sage fall within the broader characteristics of scholasticism and how his scholasticism is understood, employed and practiced among the people of Badakhshan, Tajikistan. To achieve these aims, this paper argues that the definition of scholasticism, as understood in its Latin or European context, is not very accommodating when reading Nasir Khusraw’s works. The definitions with limited applications and understandings have been challenged by scholars such as Cabezon (1994, 1998), Madegan (1998), Strauss (2013), etc., which gives us confidence to examine Nasir Khusraw’s work in light of new developments in the field. Leo Strauss’ assertion with regard to Islamic and Jewish philosophy perhaps should be a starting point to explore Islamic scholasticism with its various versions in its own right. Strauss argues that medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophy should not be seen as ‘counterparts of Christian scholasticism’ (in Parens, 2012). Since Christian scholasticism was extensively studied, it became tempting for modern scholars of Islamic and Jewish thought ‘to draw paradigms and methods of interpretations from Christian scholarship on scholasticism’ (Parens, 2012: 204). The exploration of Buddhist scholasticism, for instance, led Jose Ignacio Cabezon (1998) to be critical of the narrow definition of scholasticism and propose that scholasticism needs to be seen as a comparative and analytical category. I argued elsewhere that the narrow definitions limit the conceptual applicability of scholasticism in different traditions as well as within one tradition, for instance in Islam, scholasticism should be explored in its various forms (Muborakshoeva, 2013b).

If one of very basic definitions of scholasticism is ‘a medieval philosophy, or more accurately, a method of learning taught by academics of medieval universities’ (http://www.philosophybasics.com/movements_scholasticism), then we have to agree that methods of teaching and learning in medieval cultures and civilisations shared some similarities and had differences. Methods of learning for some of these cultures may have taken some roots from the ancient Greeks and for some of them it may not have been the case. Makdisi claims that Muslim scholastics were predecessors to the Latin ones. In Islamic cultures, a Muslim layman would put a question (*mustafti*) to a jurist consult (*mufti*) asking for a response or legal opinion (*fatwa*) and then the jurist had to research the answer using *ijtihad* (using one’s efforts to its limit). The Muslim scholars therefore perfected the art of teaching and learning and developed institutions such as *madrasahs* and other establishments for higher learning. Later on we see the equivalents of *faqih*, *mufti*, and *mudarris*, appearing in the Christian West as *magister*, *professor* and *doctor* for each title respectively (Makdisi, 1989). Thus the Christian West not only borrowed methodological and pedagogical tools from Muslims but also structures of higher educational institutions such as colleges (Makdisi, 1991), which they elaborated on further and developed these establishments into universities (Muborakshoeva, 2013a). Muslims, on the other hand did not develop colleges into universities and places for higher learning remained diverse and methods of teaching and learning continued to be largely flexible and adaptable to the needs of different groups and learners (*ibid*). Therefore, it makes sense not only to explore the affinity between the Muslim and Christian scholastics, but also to examine how each tradition then developed scholarship in its own unique ways. Exploring the works of Nasir Khusraw, these similarities and uniqueness could be demonstrated rather comfortably.

Works composed by Nasir Khusraw not only fall within the definition of Islamic scholasticism proposed by Madegan (1998) and almost perfectly match the broader characteristics of scholasticism identified by Cabezon (1998), but also have breadth and depth that enrich the

notion and understanding of scholasticism further. Analysing some selected works of Nasir Khusraw, this research will shed light on the methods he employed, which put him at par with other scholastics, but also will highlight the uniqueness of his approach. What is more, Nasir Khusraw's work and heritage is still alive among the people of Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Northern Areas of Pakistan and Eastern China, especially among the Ismaili Muslims of these areas. The empirical part of this paper, therefore, draws on the analyses of data collected via qualitative interviews and explores the extent to which Nasir Khusraw's scholasticism is understood, employed and practiced among the Ismaili Muslims to this day. I will closely examine the case of Ismaili Muslims in Badakhshan, Tajikistan. It is hoped that this paper will bring to light the usefulness of scholasticism as an analytical category in academia and in non-academic settings. It is the various educational tools employed since the medieval ages (such as questioning, commenting on and writing responses to the questions, debates, disputations, poetry, literature, art and calligraphy, music and dance) that made the highly sophisticated philosophies and scholarships accessible to and understood by the ordinary people (Muborakshoeva, 2013a).

Panel - 19th & 20th Century Ismaili History in Africa

Judy Aldrick (Independent Scholar), "The Sultan's Spymaster: Peera Dewjee of Zanzibar."

The following paper is about a Khoja Ismaili merchant called Peera Dewjee, who lived in Zanzibar and was born in 1841 and died in 1904. Not many of you will have heard of him, though he was once an influential and powerful official in the era of the Sultans. My project sought to rehabilitate him and while doing so throw more light on the early history of Ismaili settlement in Zanzibar and their contribution to the region.

The book I eventually wrote about Peera Dewjee of Zanzibar was done at the request of descendants now living in UK. For a number of years they had been researching the life of their ancestor and had come across snippets of tantalising information and were looking for someone to put together what they had discovered and write his life story. Out of the blue, I received a message with their intriguing request. It was a challenge I could not resist. With my interest in the South Asian communities of East Africa, inspired by the pioneering work of my late friend and colleague Cynthia Salvadori, and my familiarity with Zanzibar, it seem a project tailor made. As there would be no payment, I agreed to do it on condition that I should be allowed to write the story exactly as I wished. There would be no glossing over facts, but Peera Dewjee and the Zanzibar he knew, would be portrayed warts and all.

It turned out to be a very challenging project indeed. There were large gaps in Peera's life, which needed to be filled in and explained. A great deal more research was needed. And this was not easy as there are few direct references in the history books or archives of the period – and when a name is given it is often difficult to interpret due to the confused spelling. Nowadays he would be called Pira Devji (as written in Gujarati) but in the 19th century he was known as Peera Dewjee. When he wrote his name in English this was how it appeared and his descendants in England still use this spelling and pronunciation. Nevertheless more and more information came to light. Hitherto unknown letters turned up and newspapers proved to be a rich source of information particularly the Zanzibar Gazette and Illustrated London News.

Peera Dewjee's father Dewjee Parpia came from Kera in Cutch, which was a centre for Ismailism. He settled in Zanzibar with his family in the early 1850's when Peera was a boy of 10 or 11.

The earliest Ismaili settlers started coming to Zanzibar from c.1830, when the Sultan of Oman moved his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar. The Omani Sultan recognised Indian abilities as wealth creators and encouraged traders to join him and help make Zanzibar a successful commercial centre. Unlike Hindus who tended not to bring their families with them at this early date, the Ismaili merchant traders brought their wives and family members with them to help run their businesses.

Another wave of Ismaili settlers arrived in the 1850's. This was due to a series of famines in Cutch and decline in profits from cotton production and manufacture, which was the main industry of the region. The decline was partly caused by competition from America but also by the protectionist policies of the British who were promoting cottons made in the Mills of Northern England. Yet more Ismaili settlers came in the 1860's when there was a financial depression in Bombay. By 1870 several thousand Ismailis were resident in Zanzibar and the Coastal districts and they had become the largest settler group in the region. Many prospered and moved on from humble beginnings to run businesses with branches throughout East Africa.

When Peera was aged about fifteen he joined the service of Barghash the younger brother of the reigning Sultan Majid. To begin with he was employed as a lamp cleaner and messenger in the palace household but his abilities shone through and he was soon promoted to Barghash's personal valet. In this position he was involved in secret undertakings and became the prince's most trusted servant and confidential agent. When Barghash succeeded as Sultan of Zanzibar in 1870, Peera's star ascended further. He travelled to Europe with the Sultan in 1875 as his personal attendant and on his return became a yet more indispensable fixture in the Sultan's household. He became the Sultan's favourite official, minister for foreign affairs, minister of information and his chief steward. An idea of his importance in Zanzibar can be gained from a contemporary account written by the French colonel, Chaille-Long who described Peera Dewjee at this time as Barghash's 'alter ego' - 'a well instructed man who unites in the portfolio of prime minister the several departments of State. In a word he is the State.' This snippet came to light after my book was finished, it was further proof of how influential Peera was at the period before the British and Germans took control. Research is always an on-going process and no doubt more information about Peera will come to light.

After the death of Sultan Barghash in 1888 his successor, Sultan Khalifa relied on Peera more and more as the political situation disintegrated and war broke out on the German Coast, now Tanzania. Peera became embroiled in international politics as the rivalries between Germany and England escalated,

In 1889 the British deported him to Bombay. He had become too powerful. His influence over the Sultan was proving an obstacle to their plans to take over Zanzibar. But after six months he returned and was employed by a British company helping to reorganise the Port and put in a western style administrative framework. His inside knowledge was most valuable but working as an employee did not suit Peera, he quickly fell out with his British bosses and returned to the palace and his old position close to the Sultan. But things were not as they had been. Zanzibar became a British Protectorate in 1890 and senior government posts were now in the hands of Englishmen. Instead Peera's managerial skills were put to use in arranging enormous state ceremonies and banquets as the Sultans compensated for their loss of power with increasingly elaborate outward show.

During the years 1875-1888 Peera was one of the most influential men in Zanzibar. At that time Zanzibar was ruled without government offices or a bureaucracy, everything was done by word of mouth at the personal order of the Sultan. Peera's close relationship with the Sultan gave him enormous power. His naturally outgoing and gregarious nature stood him in good stead as he entertained official visitors on behalf of the Sultan and showed himself an able politician and skilful diplomat. He mixed with foreign ambassadors, missionaries, travellers and naval commanders and all who met with him were impressed by his abilities. He could read and write English and speak several European languages as well as Swahili, Arabic and his own vernacular language at a time when Ismailis were rarely educated.

He managed the Sultan's ships and business interests as well as running his own trading business importing decorative plates and manufactured cloth from the factories of Manchester and Europe. Later in life he set up a separate company and commission agency for his sons.

He was also sincerely devout. He entertained HH Aga Khan III Sir Sultan Mohammed Shah on his first visit to Zanzibar in 1899 when he pulled his rickshaw through the narrow streets of the town and subsequently gave a feast every year to commemorate the visit. He met his Highness again in 1902 when he attended the coronation of Edward VII in London, and brought the Ismaili tribute from Zanzibar. He died in 1904 of a sudden heart attack collapsing in the street on the way home from his office.

A great deal of painstaking research went into the production of my book. I am not an Ismaili nor of Asian heritage so my interpretation of the life of Peera Dewjee may not sit comfortably with all readers. Some may not like to hear that Ismailis were involved in the slave trade or that they were complicit in the colonisation of East Africa or were violent or even dishonest at times. To them I say that it is important not to impose 21st century standards on the past or expect to hear only pleasant things from history. My intention was not to judge but to describe as accurately as possible events as they occurred, so as to add to a greater understanding of East Africa, its people and fascinating history.

The life of Peera Dewjee covers the period when the Indian Merchants of East Africa were at their most powerful. They controlled the wealth and trade. The Sultan in Zanzibar could not rule without their support. The closure of the slave markets, a significant step in the ending of slavery, was achieved because the merchants of Zanzibar, headed by the Khoja Ismaili Tharia Topan, persuaded the Sultan to sign the treaty with the British. Britain's eventual dominance in the region would not have been possible without the help of the settlers from the Indian sub-continent. The Ismaili as the largest and most influential group played a major role in the transformation of the region.

Alia Paroo (Texas A&M International University), "Resistance as an Expression of Loyalty: The Ismaili Muslims in Colonial Tanzania, 1920-1960."

As part of a larger process of migration, many Ismailis migrated from India to British colonial Tanzania (Tanganyika) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Tanganyika, Ismailis were politically grouped with other immigrants from India, despite their vast religious differences. Largely in response to changing colonial power dynamics and political developments throughout East Africa and the Indian subcontinent, the Aga Khan and his representative leaders worked to create a separate identity for Ismailis in East Africa, in turn distancing the community from other immigrants from India. In so doing, Ismaili representatives in colonial Tanzania attempted to express their loyalty to British authority by "resisting" or

contesting the established colonial structure. This negotiation of power and privilege helped fashion Ismaili individual and collective identities. This paper thus seeks to explore how the practical authority of the Ismaili Imam and his representatives was leveraged in an attempt to contest the assigned positioning of the Ismailis within the Tanzanian imperial structure. Ultimately, this paper argues that these acts of “resistance” were expressions of communal loyalty to the British Crown.

***Mala Pandurang* (Dr. BMN College, India), “The Ismaili Khoja East African Asian Diasporicity: Exploring Pluralist Spaces in the Narratives of Sultan Somjee.”**

My paper is derived from a larger project funded by the University Grants Commission of India entitled ‘Wives, Mothers and Others.’ - A socio-literary exploration of the experience of Indian women migrants in East Africa. The main thrust of the project is to reconstruct gendered accounts of migration at the interstices of colonial and post-colonial histories of East Africa and the Indian subcontinent. Unlike in the case of indentured labour to South Africa and Mauritius, Asian women arrived in East Africa mainly as wives of male migrants. Their histories have been subsumed within the larger collective history of their husbands or fathers and there are very few documented records to capture the finer nuances of gendered individual and collective mobility.

It was in the course of my socio-literary excavations to reconstruct subaltern experiences that I first came across the work of Kenyan born ethnographer Sultan Somjee and his commendable attempt to curate an exhibition on the Asian African Heritage in 2000, at the National Museums of Kenya. Subsequent to this effort, Somjee has published an engaging handbook *Stories from Things* (2011) and two absorbing ethnographic – historical creative narratives *Bead Bai* (2012) and *Home Between Crossings* (2016) which offer a rare gendered perspective into the multi-generational and transnational life histories of Ismaili Khoja women in colonial and post-colonial Kenya. Somjee weaves together minute details of their daily domestic lives that with poignant poetic lyricism. At the same time, his narratives reminds us that the composition of the community of women was by no means homogenous, but demarcated by a number of internal and external boundaries.

The temporal span of the narratives under study extends from the early years of settlement from the turn of 20th century, leading up to the 1930s and 1940s which Gisbert Oonk describes as ‘golden age’ for the community (2013). With the 1950s comes the Mau Mau rebellion, the rise of African nationalism, independence and growing anti-Asian sentiments. *Home between Crossings* ends with the traumatic dislocation of his protagonist Sakina/Moti Bai, and her re-location to Canada.

As the title of his first novel suggests, Somjee reconstructs the life narratives of a fascinating group of women who enabled the flow of beads between the ‘dukawallahs’ and the ethnic tribes in the early days of trade. He dedicates the book to the elderly bead bails of the community, the majority of whom have migrated to Canada, and whose stories remain largely unheard to the world outside the Satpanth community. His protagonist Sakina is born on 15th March 1922 in Nairobi. Her grandfather Dadabapa’s recollections of his survival on a dhow to Africa in 1903 and the subsequent settlement of the family offers a vivid perspective on the intersection of the colonial destinies of the Khojas, white settlers and indigenous peoples. The nostalgic pull of the ‘desh’ on her grandfather’s sentiments impacts upon Sakina’s diasporic sense of identity as belonging, and yet not belonging with ‘old’ country India. Equally fascinating is the account of Sakina’s step-mother Gor-Bai, a single woman who has also travelled from Bombay, to Zanzibar in search of a missing husband. Particularly crucial to my project to reconstruct stories of the ‘other’, is the inclusion by Somjee of the hitherto unheard voices of women who set out for

East Africa as social outcasts, widows, midwives and even prostitutes from the Kothas in Mumbai and Lucknow.

Sakina's family lives in the shantytown bazaar of what is already a racially compartmentalized Nairobi. As a child, she assists her step mother who is also known as 'Mama Ushanga', or the 'Bead Woman', stringing beads and working on the display on the panels of the shops folding doors in order to attract the Kikuyu and Maasai (*Bead Bai* 127). At sixteen, she is married to Haiderali Devji Momna and relocates to live with her in-laws at rural outpost of Nairovia. The marriage is oppressive, particularly because of her dominating mother-in-law who imposes one domestic chore after the other. The only comfort she can find is in the two hours every afternoon that she spends on the veranda of the family store, where she learns how to work with beads from the Maasai elder Ole Lekakeny. Lekakeny inspires her: "You will learn how to bead the bead in your fingers and let the colours sing to your eyes. You will know the Maasai art when you start beading the sky" (*Bead Bai* 293). It is through Lekakeny that Sakina is initiated into the mythology and legends of the Maasai. He tutors her on the intricate bead patterns of the *emankeeki*. As the magic of the colours and patterns of beads take over, Sakina begins to evolve her personal language by blending both Khoja and Maasai aesthetics and the private means of expressing her feminine inner being. Somjee draws from his expertise on Maasai aesthetics to create an interstitial space at an emotional, aesthetic and intellectual level hitherto unexplored in creative writing from the diaspora.

An important strategy that Somjee uses to explore cross-cultural pluralist exchanges are objects from the 'personalized world of material culture' (*Story from Things* 31) which have the power to stimulate imagination using visual memory (*Story from Things* 31). For instance, another important trope to explore 'the meeting of the cultures of land and oceanic migrations' is the *kanga*, - 'the cloth speaks wisdom' (*Home Between Crossings* 335). The *kanga* is evocatively described as a fabric "whose threads knit the genealogies of women of the Indian ocean" (*Home Between Crossings* 342).

It is the mid-20th century in the opening chapter of *Home Between Crossings* (2016) and 'the winds of change' are blowing through British East Africa. 28 year old Sakina is now referred to as 'Moti Bai'. This suggests her identification with the beads as an integral part of her life, while simultaneously suggesting an effacing of her girlhood identity. Somjee's concerns move from the personal expression of female aspirations and desires, to a more politically oriented project to recreate the community's pluralist history while simultaneously posing questions for self-reflection. As in *Bead Bai*, Moti Bai's ability to assert agency is limited by multiple factors. But this does not stop her from self-questioning norms of fundamentally patriarchal social-cultural system as well as problematic issues of the community's stance on questions of race and integration. Dan Owang points out that "the domestic realm is one of the most fraught themes in narratives of the "contact zones" between Indian and black East Africans (2013, 204) and Somjee does not shy away from exploring contentious issues of Asian racism and what he refers to as instances of two facedness. There are multiple dynamics of inter-racial contact such as Moti Bai's mistress-servant relationship with her servant Frieda and a sharp moment of the awareness of the male physicality of their domestic help Kamau. An important interjection is the section narrated by Swahili woman Riziki, her brother Shamsu's second wife and mother to his son Issa. Riziki is considered as Shamsu's *rakhel*, kept woman and not his wife. Children of brown-black relations are described as "the intersections of societies where the rich and poor, black and white, Sunni and Shia, Asians and Africans cross paths" (*Home Between Crossings* 342). Despite her desire to reach out to Riziki, Moti Bai admits that Riziki's presence at the Khoja Flats in Mombasa would be a 'blemish' to 'my family's honour, if not the caste name. She is black. We are not" (*Home Between Crossings* 371).

The communal jamat khana is the “ fulcrum’ of the social life of women’ and a mechanism for internal cohesion. It is also projected as a space where women interact and debate on inevitable change. From living in a cloistered community with its insistence of the *pachedi* and *bandhani*, and restrictions on clothing associated with issues of family honour and shame, Moti Bai is in a dilemma about Saheb’s call for the community to modernize - to ‘unlearn language, dress, worship practices and evolve a new identity’. Satpanth women are called to take up the ‘colonial dress’ and learn English as a means of looking forward - which meant giving up Gujarati and the link to the past. Dress has hitherto served as a class and religious marker and the imposition of a new dress code will result in a re-figuration of the self and an ensuing sense of ambivalence. Moti Bai is conflicted by the loss of a sense of security that comes from the presence of familiar social linkages, and the call to look forward that comes from a highly loved and respected leader of the community called Saheb in the story. Other schisms explored include partition of India which causes a rift within the community; scorn directed towards her son Diamond who is taunted by the refrain: ‘Khoja Khoja centi moja’ (reduced to being one cent’s worth) because the Ismaili Khoja were deemed as belonging to neither India nor Pakistan (*Home Between Crossings* 268); and mockery from Shamsu’s Ithna Asheri friend and milk-brother, Razak, who calls the Ismailis “Gheta Khoja, meaning Sheep Headed Khoja because he says we are dumb following Sahib like sheep” (*Home Between Crossings* 359 - 360).

With independence in the 60s, comes an escalation of anti-Asian tirade. A despairing Moti Bai poses several questions: What does a loyal Satpanth do? Does one opt to integrate or to retain one’s culture and religion which migration to multicultural Canada would permit, or does one follow the Saheb’s urging to be loyal to the country of one’s birth and take up citizenship? Where is the morality of one’s religion if bribery or chai money becomes a means of protecting one’s business? Moti Bai’s husband dies a broken man after the loss of his business to the local MP. Diamond her son opts to emigrate to Canada and Moti Bai feels the compulsion to relocate to be with her children because that is the norm. The final section of the book evocatively captures her spiritual agony at being uprooted from the songs that have anchored her to the land. She is aware that the movement to the West is bound to force social semiosis at a faster rate. It is here that the grammars of multiple cultures will again mix and clash compelling the subject to construct a new language to interpret the new world around her.

As an outsider keen on understanding the world of this community better, Somjee’s work is an invaluable handbook - it is almost encyclopedic in its detailing. On the one hand, he presents an honest acceptance of the existence of racial, gender and religious tensions within the community. And yet at the same time there is an emphasis on the fundamental notion of pluralism as engrained in the Khoja consciousness with its emphasis on humanistic values and a culture that has richly integrated dimensions of Indian, African and Western societies. With the severing of the umbilical cord in the second leg of migration, come questions of survival of the inherent characteristics of the community. There is, in Somjee’s narratives an underlying urgency to preserve, and yet to critique, memories of the past which is a fundamental characteristic of the diasporic narrative.

Theme: Rethinking Heritage

Panel - Sacred and Secular Spaces

Rizwan Mawani (Independent Scholar), “The Jamatkhana: Exploring Its Prehistories and Hegemony in the 20th Century.”

The *jamatkhana* has become the *de facto* space for Nizari Ismaili communities to gather worldwide. Even in cultural traditions and geographic landscapes outside the Indian Subcontinent, where its origins are traced, as well as amidst its diaspora, the *jamatkhana* has taken on a globalizing character in the 20th century. Over the last century, *jamatkhanas* have increasingly become symbols of confluence, of community and have taken a more central place in showcasing the diversity of Muslim space and architecture alongside the *masjid*, *khanaqa*, *ribat* and *cemevi*. They continue to act as testaments to the various articulations of Muslimness and belonging amongst the various communities that comprise the *ummah*.

Despite their increasing numbers, global reach and transformation, very little is known about the *jamatkhana*, its origins or development. While Khoja Ismaili communal memory associates the introduction of the *jamatkhana* with the efforts of several Pirs, architectural or linguistic evidence to corroborate this hypothesis is lacking. Linguistic evidence in the form of the *ginans*, whose dating and authorship have been subjects of debate, refer to spaces where Khojas meet with nomenclatures such as *gat* and *khana* while referencing the worship spaces of broader Muslim and Hindu communities as contrast to their own religious worldview most commonly referred to in the sources as Satpanth or “*the true path*.”

Ethnographic and archival research has also referenced other nomenclatures in use by 19th century Khoja communities to refer to their religious spaces. While some of these spaces may have preceded the *jamatkhana*, others seem to have been used in tandem with them. These include the *bhandal*, *imambara*, *chabil khana*, *landhi* and *kotho* as well as terms such as *dargah* to refer to sites of pilgrimage and practice. Furthermore, the term *jamatkhana* seems to have been in also used by a range of other communities for a diverse set of spaces. The British colonial newspapers refer to the spaces of a range of Memon communities, Bohras, Sidis and even Chinese groups in late 19th century Bombay as *jamatkhanas*.

The Ismaili architectural and archaeological record can be traced to the early 19th century during the time of British and Omani colonial rule in the Subcontinent and along the East African coast. The earliest artifacts and remnants of space that survive in the literary sources or in the form of brick and mortar can be found in the cosmopolitan coastal sites of Zanzibar, Gwadar, Mombasa, Bombay and Muscat. Slightly later buildings, traced to the early 20th century, are found further inland or as communities settled in these areas following their urban development in sites as diverse as Kotda Sangani and Nairobi.

As communities of diverse backgrounds (Sindhi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Kutchi) moved into urban centres and across oceans, their spaces moved with them. Some buildings were replicated and transmuted into new environments while others borrowed from colonial building templates. As communal wealth and social prominence increased, the spaces became more grand and required a broader complement of skills to construct.

With this architectural blossoming, also came the complement of ritual practices that were associated with and took place within these spaces. To truly understand the ways in which the buildings facilitated communal gatherings and practices – beyond simply their nomenclatures and architecture, one must also take into consideration the various strata and sediments of ritual

practice of the Khojas – who, at this time, were going through a period of significant change. While religious practice and change of this sort is not always easy to unearth or document, there are a number of documents produced by the community or their colonial overseers which provide some insight into the nature of Khoja ritual practices at a time of fluctuation and unsettling of religious space. Together they allow us to see the interplay between two elements that have to a large extent been divorced in Ismaili Studies to date.

Increasingly, as the diversity of castes and cultural groups that were associated with Ismailism that gave their allegiance to the Ismaili Imam began to mingle and find confluence in larger urban centres, their overlapping but variegated practices often came under pressure from affluent elements of the community who ultimately acceded to manage the administration, building processes and take on leadership positions of the *jamat*. The latter half of this process also dovetailed with the rising influence of the 48th Ismaili Imam, Sultan Mahomed Shah, who was able to re-connect with Ismailis in different parts of the globe which included the building and commissioning of *jamatkhana*s in what are now Syria, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Northern Pakistan.

While there have been some attempts in the pre-modern period to find intersections between the various trajectories of Ismaili histories across geographies and cultures, it is through the histories of the Imams and the various hierarchies of the community structures (*da'wa*, *piratan*, council leadership) that history has been given voice and a narrative that eventually seeps into the community's understanding and memory of the past. The *jamatkhana* offers an opportunity to tell a counter-story of the development of an institution and to trace its development from a series of unconnected individual structures in the hands of Khoja communities to one that became an expression of the Imamate itself, both in its design and hand in defining the religious experience for Ismailism's adherents.

Just as a process of erosion took place in the Subcontinent and diaspora, a similar process also began to take place in the late 1930s when a missionary by the name of Ramazanali Sabzali began to introduce the *jamatkhana* and its practices from his own cultural background and tradition. While this worked to create a standard and unifying community-of-practice amongst Ismaili communities, regardless of where they lived, it also began to slowly erase the tessellations and genealogies of religious space that preceded the *jamatkhana* in these regions.

This paper explores the presentation and early history of the development of the urban *jamatkhana* in the various regions in which 19th and early 20th centuries Khojas called home. It explores the ways in which the process of *jamatkhana*-building both standardized Ismaili space while at the same time pushed aside the variety of indigenous spaces and practices that were germane to Ismaili groups in the Subcontinent and elsewhere.

This is done by exploring several case studies that shed light on the less than neat narrative of the emergence of the consolidation of Ismaili space in the 19th and 20th century.

Aynur Kadir (Simon Fraser University), “Mapping the Sacred Landscape: An Ethnography of Mazar Shrine Pilgrimage among Tajiks in Xinjiang, China”

This paper examines a rich collection of ethnographic data on Tajik Mazar pilgrimages, in an attempt to contextualize related religious belief systems and folklore. The documentation of the Tajik Mazars is stored in a database, which has been categorized to ease access. Mazar culture among Tajiks reflects sacred concepts from various religions and philosophies and is influenced in varying degrees by each of them.

Background

The Tajik are an Indo-Iranian ethnic group who inhabit a part of Central Asia through which the famous Silk Road used to pass. While the majority of them (seven million) live in Tajikistan, there are more than 50,000 Tajik people living in China, the majority of them live in the Tashkurgan area in the far west of China's north west province of Xinjiang which borders on the nation of Tajikistan. Although it is very isolated, Tashkurgan is also an important way-station on the Karakoram highway linking the vibrant ancient city of Kashgar in Xinjiang with northern Pakistan via a pass in the eastern Pamir mountain range, an area often known as “the roof of the world”. The Tajik community in China universally regards the 11th century philosopher and poet, Naser Khosrow, as the founding figure of Ismaili doctrine in the Pamir region. The religious life of the Tajiks in Xinjiang is unique and colourful, mazar (shrine) devotion is considered an important Ismaili duty (Qurban, 2010). Mazar pilgrimage refers to the practice of making journeys to the tombs of Muslim saints. These are believed to have the power to cure infertility and diseases and avert natural and other disasters (Dawut 2009). Mazar is pronounced “mazaur” in Tajik and are believed to have the power to cure infertility and diseases and avert natural and other disasters. Mazar worship - saint veneration and shrine visitation - occupies an important place in the religious and cultural life of the Tajik people, and it considered as important Ismaili duty. There are an estimated 100 Mazar shrines in the Tajik region of Xinjiang. During my fieldwork in 2009 and 2010 in and around Tashkurgan, I have visited nearly 40 shrines and documented their related legends and rituals.

Tajik mazar culture

Tajik Mazar culture has clear differences with the mazar cultures of other Muslim ethnic groups in Xinjiang. There is currently very little available on any of these topics, so this research, with its detailed ethnographic fieldwork represents both a valuable addition to Tajik cultural knowledge but also has significant implications for the study of mazar cultures of other Muslim groups, both within China and beyond its borders. Mazar shrine pilgrimages are not just an opportunity for simple religious activity but also cultural gatherings where folk literature, philosophy, entertainment and sports all find expression. This research is based on a large amount of first-hand fieldwork material on the legends, rituals and forms of Tajik mazars. It describes their historical background and explores the relationship between Ismailism as well as Zoroastrian origins. The social function of Mazars in Tajik daily life is attempt to investigated based on participant observation and interview data.

This paper examines a rich collection of ethnographic data on Tajik Mazar pilgrimages, in an attempt to contextualize related religious belief systems and folklore. Extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Tashkorgan photographed and documented more than 40 Mazars. Community elders were interviewed and a large number of oral testimonies were digitally preserved. During the fieldwork more than 2000 photos, 50 hours of audio, 3 hours of video and some scanned manuscripts are collected.

Individuals, families or small community units may visit a shrine with specific requests for happiness, fertility, and freedom from disasters. There are many shrines on the roadside, by rivers and at crossroads. When people pass by these shrines they stop to show their respect (deryup). Both hands are used to touch the shrine or sacred objects and then the chin and forehead, three times. They leave some sacrificial things such as food or money, and often kiss the shrine wall or tree. They recite a shrine prayer, which is, based on oral history, attributed to Naser Khusraw:

This shrine, sacred shrine, shrine light, bless us with a home, give us happiness and peace, in this shrine lie martyrs, our fierce sword, with their God, protect us, may the Imam fulfill our desires, amen!

These ethnographic data are classified as four big categories: Mazar characteristics, Mazar legends, Mazar Offerings and Mazar rituals. The unique aspects of Tajik Mazars are systematically classified as: (1) Mazars related to Ismaili saints (awliya), (2) Mazars related to the life of Aga Khan (Agakhan qadamga), (3) sacred landscapes. I will present few picture for each categories and justify why I have tagged them as this order. The various legends related to Mazars are classified as (1) legends about the origin of Mazar (2) Oral stories about the super natural power of the Mazar. I will restate some of the legends from religious figures, community elders as well as other public. Mazar offerings are sorted as (1) trees (2) horns (3) stones (4) money and everyday objects. This is a vage classficiation that applied for facilitate the access, further research on these offerings are needed based on their meaning and implication. Last but not least rituals are categorized as (1) Everyday Mazar devotion (2) Mazar rituals during festivals (3) Large-scale Mazar pilgrimage. Extensive materials on Pilik Eid (festival of light) and Zohur Eid (festival to bring water) documented as I was lucky to attend them in 2009 and 2010.

Tajiks hold two big rituals during the Pilik Eid at home and Mazar before and after the Bara'at Night, held 14th, 15th days of Sha'ban month in the Islamic calendar. Soundscapes of quranic chants, names of 49 Imams, weeping and chatting will make alive of these mazar, which usually silent. Bringing foods as an offering to the Mazar get blessing and dividing them equally among community who gathered there are common practice during the Mazar festivals. I collected materials about large scale mazar activities based on the oral history of elders. Depending on the memories of elders, these two mazars located Yarkand River big fellow, "Bamafidil Wali Maziri " and "Bamafidil Mujaret Maziri" are regarded as their most sacred places full of holy objects. The two most important holy objects in these mazars are sacred flags (tuğ) of Ali and a a lamp-stand (chiraghdan) of Naser Khosrow. Two mazar Sheikhs and their followers take turns each year and travel to visit all the mazars in Tashkorgan. For example, if this year "Bamafidil Wali Maziri " sheyhs bring holy objects and visit all the villages and mazars, next year "Bamafidil Mujaret Maziri" sheyh will organize and fullfill this activity. People can be more or less depending on situation, there will be a maximum of 15 to 30 people, they will pick a time that is not too busy for agricultural activity.

The rituals and festival activities taking place at Mazars illustrate that Tajik Mazar shrine pilgrimages are not just an opportunity for religious activity, but are also cultural gatherings where folk literature, philosophy, entertainment and sports all find expression. The documentation of the Tajik Mazars is stored in a database, which has been categorized to ease access. The cultural implications of Mazar offerings are analyzed from an anthropological and a religious perspective. Mazar culture among Tajiks reflects sacred concepts from various religions and philosophies and is influenced in varying degrees by each of them. Despite the increasing vicissitudes of modern life, along with development of Tajik society and religious life, Mazar worship retains much of its original cultural significance.

These claasficiation these extensive audio visual material mostly based on ethnography and local Tajik scholars suggesstion. However, boraoder community based classification and analyze would be conducted in future research.

Next Steps

Tashkorgan is not only a vital place along the Silk Road, but also a unique intersection of various cultures. The combination of Ismaili, Sufism, ancestor worship and fire worship are well

contacted and reflected in the landscape, soundscapes and rituals that related to Tajik Mazars. These are the results of my ethnographic fieldwork and limited macro analysis. I would like to learn more of the Tajik and Farisi languages and collaborate with other scholars to deepen my analysis in the future.

There are few things that I would like to engage in near future:

1. Conduct next phase of fieldwork to see the transformation of architecture and rituals and see how they changed over the years. As elders quite often mention that Mazars changing a lot recently, especially after Cultural Revolution and recent modernization, it will be interesting to see document the current situation and compare it with what I have 8 years ago.
2. I would like to visit some other Mazars that I could not visit last time, as I stated earlier, there are around 100 Mazars according to elders. I have visited and documented around 40 of them, due to time and financial restriction, I was not able to visit other half, in future I would like to pay visit to more of them.
3. Re-categorization, metadata construction, classification with community based approach. Past three years of studying in Canada was transformative to me, I have learned a lot about community based, collaborative and participatory research methodologies. When I go back to the field next time, I will apply these methods and classify these traditional knowledge based on honouring cultural protocols and community wish.
4. Organize the documentation and donate the repository to a library or archive organization to make it accessible to community as well as general public.

Vineet Gupta (University of Heidelberg, Germany), “Shrines and Identity: A Case Study of the Dargah of Pir Fakhruddin, Galiyakot.”

The Ismailis have remained a much neglected field of research, not to speak of the Bohra-Ismailis. This is partly due to the fact that the Manuscript sources are hardly accessible because the Bohras suffer from a long-standing collective post-persecution trauma and are therefore extremely secretive. Printed sources exist from the nineteenth-century. Written in English and Indian languages, these texts are heavily biased in reflecting the struggle for communal identity triggered largely by colonial intervention of India. Secondary literature reiterates the *dawa* narratives and is based around *da'is* and their contribution to the *dawa*, the persecution of the Bohras at the hands of the Sunni rulers, and schisms within the community. In these 'histories' there's no space given to the places which are at the heart of the community and faith, i.e., the shrines. The neglect towards Bohra shrines is particularly perceptible in what can be described as 'dargah studies' which largely focus on Sufi shrines in South Asia. This presentation sought to extend the spectrum of interest shown hitherto towards Sufi shrines, by foregrounding the enigmatic importance of a non-Sufi place of worship in South Asia's complex history of inter-communal interactions and, through this, it also highlights the nature and the expansion of the Tayyibi *dawa* in hinterlands.

A dargah or a sacred space can be conceptualised as a space which is 'fluid, open, unfixed, inclusive and diverse,' a threshold between the mortal self and the immortal divine, between temporality and spirituality, and between the sacred and profane. It is a space where although momentarily, people transcend the communal, sectarian, regional, linguistic, gender boundaries. At the same time, however, it can also serve as the site of violence, where "pure" and "impure" are highlighted, leading to the construction of 'firmly drawn boundaries which presuppose various cultures or religions to be internally coherent, discreet, theologically incommensurable and antagonistic to each other.' Thus, this space is not free of tensions and struggle. For studies like this, archival records provide critical, albeit limited clues. Therefore, I have relied upon

anthropological research methods in the context of historical evidence. Direct observation of the shrine and rituals, analysis of the legends and *marsiya*, and the official 'history'. I have supplemented them by structured and unstructured interviews of various participants conducted at the dargah and outside. This is further substantiated by participant observation during the *urs* and by visual material.

Circumscribed in terms of space, this case study is based on the dargah of Pir Fakhruddin of Galiyakot in the Dungarpur district of Rajasthan. Believed to be 'thousand(s) of years old', the shrine is one of the major centres of pilgrimage and healing in the constellation of Bohra shrines spread out across western and central India. (There are two major Bohra shrines in Vagar — The Dargah of Pir Fakhruddin Shaheed in Galiyakot and the Dargah of Abdul Rasul in Banswara. In this presentation, I have only dealt with Pir Fakhruddin and his shrine.)

Besides this, it also serves as the location of an important annual fair organized on the death-anniversary (*urs*) of the saint on the 27th of Muharram. A close observation of the site reveals that the tomb shrine is not just a locale of pilgrimage and rituals, it is also a platform where social and religious identities are constructed, contested, and negotiated. The Daudi-Bohras, the largest of the Tayyibi *jamaats*, administer the shrine and prevent Bhils' access to the sanctum-sanctorum. However, this does not negate the scope of negotiation.

Located in a historical-political buffer zone between the former principalities of Mewar, Malwa and the Sultanate of Gujarat, the geographical setting of Dungarpur has an important role to play. As the region lies on the major historical commercial traffic route from Arabia over Gujarat to North India and beyond, it has facilitated the movement of traders, merchants, pastoralists to make their way through it over centuries. Their activities were further supported by the organization of the periodical markets, or *melas* where the various merchant groups could meet and exchange their commodities, which would generate a considerable amount of revenue for the state.

In this milieu, the shrine itself symbolizes geographically the stake that merchants would have in the region, and it emerges as the centre of productive social and economic exchange, especially in relation to a mercantile community like the Bohras.

The shrine complex at Galiyakot covers a fairly large area, which I have divided into two parts, this worldly and the other-worldly. While the former includes the administrative office, a hostel for madrasa students, kitchen and halls for communal luncheon, living quarters for the staff, guest houses which are only available to the 'believers', and big gardens, the latter includes the tomb, a mosque, a madrasa, a splendid bungalow for the visitors of the "royal" family and a few graves in the courtyard. Recently, a wooden plank from the tomb shrine of Imam Husain has been installed.

The Dargah and the Khanqah

Apart from the main complex, there is a *khanqah* (the hospice) of the saint located about five-hundred meters north to the dargah in the desolated town of old Galiyakot.

The Pir: Fakhruddin

The main source of information about the life of Pir Fakhruddin are the nineteenth-century *dawa* sources wherein Fakhruddin is the son of Tarmal, one of the two viziers of Siddharaja Jayasimha (1094-1142) CE, the famous Rajput ruler of Gujarat, who was believed to have been

converted by the first Mustalian-Fatimid *dai* to India. Fakhruddin and his father had received their spiritual training under the *dai* himself. After which he was sent to propagate the 'true' faith. Fakhruddin reached Galiyakot, where he established his *khanqah*. Once, while returning back after fulfilling his missionary duties, he, along with his entourage, was attacked by the Bhil decoits and while fighting them, he achieved martyrdom. His followers buried his mortal remains and constructed a tomb over the grave. The Bohra *riwayat*s hold Fakhruddin to be the first Ismaili martyr in India.

It is also important to note that the current line of the *da'is*, the 'Aurangabadi-Rajputs' trace their genealogy from Tarmal through Pir Fakhruddin himself. Therefore the shrine has received a great impetus nineteenth-century onwards, especially after the accession of the fifty-first *dai al-mutlaq* Sayedna Taher Saif al-Din (1915-1965).

Each sub-branch of the Bohras, i.e., Daudis, Sulaymanis, and Alawis, believes in the legacy of Pir Fakhruddin and have a similar version of the story to share. Hence, the shrine provides the Bohras a sense of history and a sense of a collective identity.

The Bhils who constitute the second largest group at the dargah refer to the saint as 'Pir Baosi' or 'Baap ji Maula', literally translates to 'Father-lord' or 'God-father' in Vagari, a language spoken in the region. For the Bhils, the saint is an adjudicator of justice and a healer, who cures their most malignant illnesses, which are generally interpreted as a result of supernatural intervention or *bhoot-badha*, for which a divine aide is mandatory. Who was he? Where did he come from? They do not have answers to these questions.

In collective memory of the Bohras and the Bhils, the saint is primarily known for performing miracles, healing, and dispensing justice. One of the most appealing and oft-repeated of his miracles is the "breaking of the shackles." To which I shall come back in a while.

There's a third party - the Sunnis - who also stake a strong claim in the dargah and believe the saint to be a true Musalman with an ascetic temperament. Then, how come the shrine is administered by the Daudi-Bohras? In answer to this the Sunnis believe that the Bohras, being a rich community, were given a privilege to serve the shrine and, gradually came to control it. The shrine is, then, a contested space, claimed by three different parties.

Identity

However, sharing of sacred sites was a common feature in South Asia. Religious identities in precolonial South Asia were neither fixed nor sharply defined. The identity of an individual or a group was based upon linguistic, regional, occupational caste and sectarian basis. The changes triggered by the colonial intervention of India marked the beginning of certain processes which caused deep impact on the Indian society. The process of crystallisation of religious boundaries acquired a definite momentum esp. after the first census enumeration in 1871 on the communal lines which led to the stiffening of two clear-cut antagonistic religious taxonomies: 'Hindu' and 'Muslim'. Simultaneously, towards the end of the nineteenth-century, a concrete thrust was exerted on the purification of 'Muslim' or 'Hindu' identity by the reformists and revivalists within both blocs. The Bohras, like many other communities, were to articulate a new uniform socio-religious identity based on a separate language, dress code and special symbols. This also facilitated a smooth implementation of the policy of centralization. As one of the first measures, a new language, *Lisan al-dawat* or *Dawat ni zabaan* was introduced in the late nineteenth-century. Another apparent feature is the adoption of a particular attire.

Shrines have become the flashpoint where these changes are the most conspicuous. For instance, the wall inscription inside of the dargah of Pir Fakhruddin has been levelled and the wall frames inside of the *khanqah* which tell about the 'history' and the *muajizas* of the saint are

written in *Lisan al-dawat* rather than previously favoured Gujarati. At this shrine the Bohras invest in sumptuous architecture, and here they flaunt their increasingly Fatimid Shia self-perception.

The Bohra at the Dargah and the Bhils

The dazzling splendour of the modern buildings and their Fatimid allure is in stark contrast with the fact that the Bohras share the shrine with the Bhils. It's also worth mentioning here that in the colonial narratives, the Bhils were presented as a 'dirty race'. They were characterised by their 'animal-like' traits, undomesticated habits, rudimentary and predatory forms of subsistence, pre-religious amoralities, superstition and a complete lack of learning. Thus, clearing the sacred space of an impure 'other' and inscribing its identity in clear terms is thus an effective mechanism to inscribe the self.

Urs

However, notwithstanding this arduous struggle to craft a new identity, the boundary separating the 'self' and the 'other' seems non-functional especially on the day of *urs*. This reminds me of what ethnologist Max Gluckman calls a 'safety-valve', an event when otherwise strictly controlled boundaries are temporarily suspended to vent out the social tension and frustration so that the hierarchies can be reinforced even stronger.

There arise a few questions: what are the vested interests of the Bohras which made them to share a part in 'the-other-worldly' zone of the dargah with those who have killed the saint? And, why do Bohras celebrate the *maujiza* of the breaking of the shackles, which is associated with a ritual performed by the Bhils?

Identity

Here, we should not underestimate the *longue-durée* and take into account the wider regional historical configurations and the process of the articulation of authority in the region, which will enable us to understand this process of negotiation.

The region of Dungarpur was a territory controlled by the Bhils, which was wrenched from them by the 'Rajput' rulers in the fourteenth-century. However, the regions like Dungarpur having two spheres: the agrarian zone, controlled by the rulers and the jungle periphery where the Bhil chieftains were still predominant; the prosperity of the agrarian zone was dependent upon the safe passage for the traders, merchants, pastoralists through the peripheral zones which were still controlled by the Bhils. This grappled with the problem of integrating these superseded groups, who were now degraded to the status of "tribes", within the statecraft and of buttressing their own legitimization and regnal power by tapping the ritual power of those groups. This was achieved through various mechanisms such as through the rituals of taking the blood *rajtilaka* from the Bhil chieftain by the 'Rajput' lords, or by building a temple for a Bhil Sati-goddess on the fringes of the royal residence. In fact, Dungarpur, the very name of which seems to have been chosen to reconcile the Bhils, who pride themselves of a hero figure named Dungaria. Similarly, for all the practical purposes although the Bhils have been pushed to the margins of the Shrine's premises where they perform healing rituals of possession, this does not apply the Bhils' function at the heart of the shrine. Here, I would like to bring back the miracle of "breaking of the shackles" under discussion.

Healing insignias and the ritual of possession

The belief of seeking the divine intervention of the saint to redress spiritual and physical grievances is being shared by the Bohras and the Bhils. The methods of the Bhils are explicit in nature, i.e., through performing rituals like inflicting pain or punishing oneself by locking an iron chain around their waists or around their necks, or through corporeal performances during the trance. The shrine's authorities admonish the Bohras to desist from possession rituals as they are conducted by the Bhils which goes to say that they must be restrained from such unorthodox inclinations. Thus, they offer small metallic insignias — a symbolic form of *arzis* to the grave of the saint.

Although the Bohras view the painful process of exorcism experienced by the Bhils as a sign of repentance for the sin they committed by killing the saint, nevertheless they enthusiastically acclaim the result of “breaking of the shackles” as a magic performed by the saint. The Bohras claim that those who come to the *dargah/khanqah* of the Pir with true dedication, their shackles break down...and exemplify that despite killing the saint, the Bhils come to the *dargah* and get healed, their shackles break down. This compels us to think that was / is there any Bhil agency in the healing rituals performed by the Bohras at the tomb of Pir Fakhruddin? To find this out is a matter of bigger research. Thus, I would like to wrap-up my argument in the following sentences.

At the *dargah* of Pir Fakhruddin, through a display of a long history, magnificent architecture, rituals and festivities the Bohras convey a strong sense of a distinct identity. To consolidate this further, they marginalize the ‘others’—the Bhils, who celebrate Fakhruddin as their patron-saint. Following the regional structures and norms, the articulation of a grand ‘Rajput’ genealogy and the myth of the conversion of Siddharaja Jayasimha played a crucial role in legitimizing the *dawa* amongst the groups lower in the social and economic hierarchy, but at the same time, a close analysis of the rituals at the shrine indicates towards the strategies of power negotiation which also exhibit the traits pervasive the region. The *dargah* of Pir Fakhruddin, therefore, illustrates a laboratory of the negotiation of power through religious rituals. This also leads us to believe that it is through several ways of negotiation, the Tayyibi *dawa* proliferated in the areas far from its headquarters which were generally based in the urban centres of Gujarat.

Panel - Digitizing Resources

Karim Tharani (University of Saskatchewan), “Sound Approach: Digital Curation of Oral Traditions for Access and Preservation.”

Traditionally the role of academic libraries has been to collect, describe, and disseminate knowledge for students and scholars. Since the best practices of research and education in western academia are predominantly text-based, academic libraries also remain biased toward tangible and textual knowledge sources such as books and serials. However, unique and creative ways of leveraging information technology in emerging disciplines such as digital humanities continue to challenge academia to embrace non-textual knowledge sources. This has prompted many academic libraries to partner with local indigenous and ethnocultural communities to share and showcase their non-textual knowledge sources, including oral traditions. Thus the traditional role of academic libraries is evolving from *service centers* for campus communities to *partners* in the wider (non-campus) communities. These community-based partnerships could be for provision of technical expertise by libraries, stewardship and curation of unique community materials, creation of digital repositories, and more recently as partners in civil society. In this changing academic landscape, university libraries continue to articulate their role by creating and implementing digital resources and tools to extend the

traditional functions of libraries for knowledge creation, dissemination, and use. In this context, digital curation can be perceived as an extension of traditional library services to embrace non-textual knowledge sources such as oral traditions.

Digital Curation and Academic Libraries

In essence, digital curation can be defined as *the planning and management of digital assets over their full lifetime, from conceptualization through active use and presentation, to long-term preservation in a repository for future use*. More specifically, digital curation in academic libraries involves *digitization, description, display, discovery, access and preservation* of resources for research and education using digital and multimedia technologies. In practice, digital curation in libraries translates to several key functional areas, such as: digitization and remediation; digital repository and preservation; description and discovery (or search); user interface and access points; and data integration and analysis. The University of Saskatchewan Library, for instance, has developed the *Collections Digitization Framework* to optimize its operations and services to support community-based digitization projects. One such community-based research initiative currently underway at the University of Saskatchewan Library is *Ginan Central*.

Ginan Central – Purpose, Principles and Projects

Ginan Central is a confluence of several community and university-based partnership projects to identify and implement best practices of digital curation to *facilitate research, learning, preservation and access of ginans (gnostic and devotional hymns)* in respectful and responsible manner. The projects undertaken and shared by Ginan Central are guided by a set of guiding principles to foster collaboration, respect, and trust among its partners, patrons, and stakeholders.

Guiding Principle One: Community-Based Engagement

The Community Engagement Model (see Figure 1) developed at the University of Saskatchewan Library ensures that contributions and comfort levels of collaborating partners are respected and valued. This is why partnering with Ginan Central does not require community partners to forgo their ownership and control over their collections. The goal of Ginan Central is not to appropriate collections but to appreciate their existence and make them available for research and learning of ginans as well as to ensure their long-term preservation and access. The Ginan Central project team is very mindful of respecting the sanctity of this sacred tradition while providing the necessary access to encourage and facilitate scholarship on ginans.

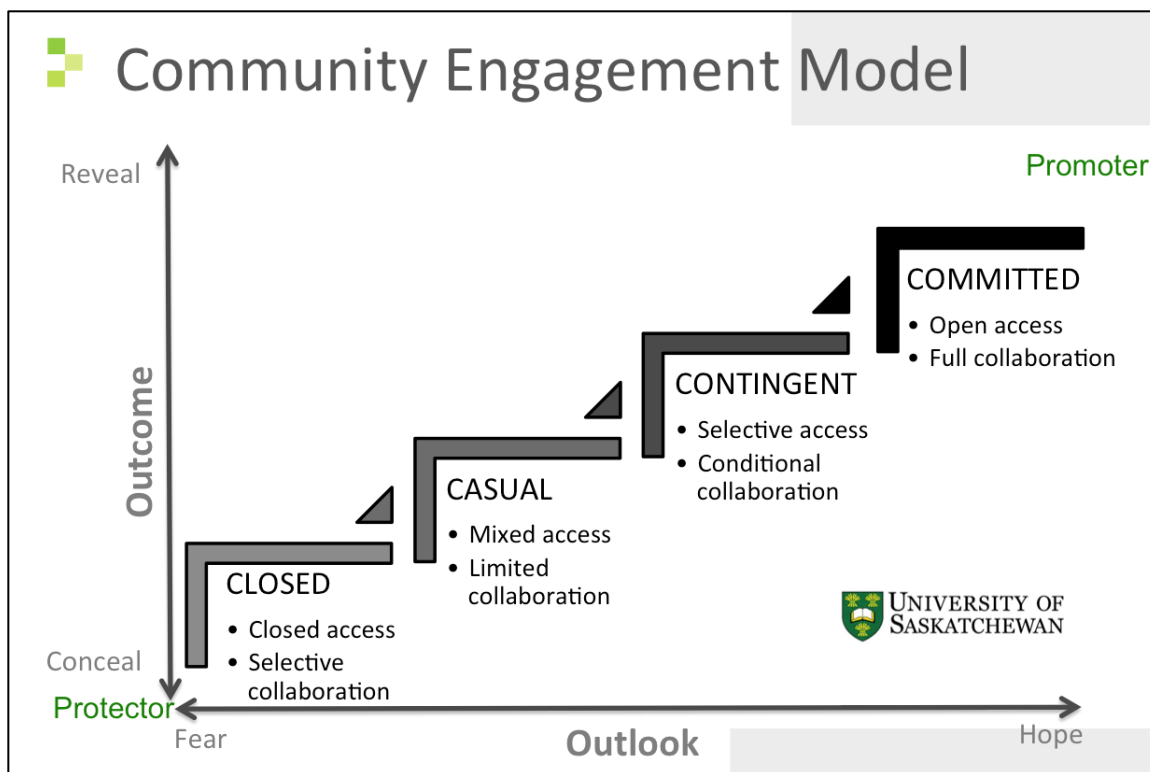


Figure 1 – Community Engagement Model - The University of Saskatchewan Library

Guiding Principle Two: Content-Based Resource Description and Access

Library cataloguing practices are based on well-established international standards. While historically these standards and practices have favoured textual resources such as books and serials, proliferation of electronic books and journals has propelled libraries to develop content-based cataloguing. In the context of Ginan Central, content-based cataloguing implies that ginans are catalogued individually and independently of manuscripts, books, or CDs that contain them. This entails *de-duplicating* multiple occurrences of ginans and enumerating unique ginans across all available sources. This is an essential exercise in ascertaining the true extent of ginanic works and also in developing strategies, standards and systems to facilitate research, learning, and preservation of ginans.

Guiding Principle Three: Evidence-Based Research and Practice

Much like medicine, nursing, teaching and other practice-based professions, librarianship also adheres to evidence-based approach to inform its research and practice. One unique manifestation of this principle in the context of Ginan Central is the inclusion of oral sources as evidence for ginans. Ginan Central has partnered with community experts and elders to share their renditions of ginans as oral evidence. These renditions are also extremely essential in preserving aural attributes of ginans that cannot be captured in text-based sources.

Guiding Principle Four: Knowledge-Based Decision Making

Subscribing to knowledge-based decision-making helps Ginan Central remain relevant and responsive to the needs of its stakeholders. Individuals relate to ginans differently depending on their background, education, skills, experiences, motivations and interests. This is why at Ginan

Central operational decisions are informed by knowledge gathered through appreciative inquiry. This approach is effective in revealing unmet needs and underlying sensitivities that may exist among various stakeholder groups.

Guiding Principle Five: Projects-Based Integrative Architecture

Over the past several years Ginan Central has worked on various well-defined ginan projects (see Figure 2), which are functionally independent, yet technically integrated in order to provide seamless navigation and access to diverse ginanic sources and resources over the web. These projects include: *Ginan Recitals* for digital audio files to preserve tunes of ginans; *Ginan Archive* for providing digital access to primary sources of ginans, *Ginan Canon* to document and preserve outcomes of community's canonization efforts; and *Ginan Studies* for a bibliography of research publications and outcomes pertaining to ginans. A key enabler of this projects-based architecture is the *Ginan Master Index* or *GMI* that provides ginan-centric access to all available evidence, collections, and resources. With GMI, users are able to select ginans from an alphabetical list in order to access relevant excerpts of manuscripts, published books and audio renditions.



Figure 2 – Ginan Central at the University of Saskatchewan

Community-University Partnership to Safeguard Ginans

How does a community like the Ismailis living in the West go about safeguarding its oral traditions? This is the fundamental question that underpins Ginan Central. An essential prerequisite for a community to transmit its oral traditions is the willful acceptance and learning of these traditions by successive generations, in particular by the community youth and young adults. This requires developing effective learning strategies and tools that take the intellectual, emotional, and situational needs of learners into account. For instance, children born and raised in today's technological age are often called *digital natives*, and there is a fundamental difference between the current and previous generations of young people, in terms of learning styles and how they access information. With technology becoming an essential expectation and motivator for young learners in the West today, scholars as well as community leaders and elders must come together to find ways to leverage digital and multimedia technologies for the community youth and young adults to appreciate and learn ginans. Thus we need to find more and more opportunities to bring the community and the academy together to discuss and devise strategies for safeguarding ginans. Gathering such as the Ismaili Studies Conference is an

excellent opportunity for academic and community stakeholders to have genuine and meaningful dialogue to share their perspectives and aspirations with each other.

Iqbal I. Dewji (Independent Scholar), “Khojawiki.org: A Transnational Oral History Documentation Project.”

KhojaWiki was set up in April 2015 as a not-for-profit organisation to record and digitize oral family histories of the Khoja. Since then there have been 371,000 visits to the site. There have been 15,838 entries in the family trees and over 200 followers have provided individual histories, while 50 topical essays have been posted by a range of community contributors.

The reason for the KhojaWiki initiative was to capture what is still possible and left of the personal histories of the Khoja and their social and cultural traditions. There is a rapid loss of the community’s sense of its origins due to urbanisation, migrations, aging and an absence of an active archive that keeps the secular, visual and cultural material, and a dossier of the transformative events in their centuries of history. The result is a vacuum, among all Khojas, but particularly the Ismaili Khoja, about the awareness of their ethnic identity that is superseded by the religious identity as Ismaili Muslims.

This presentation will address how KhojaWiki started; how it strives to address the historical amnesia by providing a space for subaltern civic voices, particularly of women and the unrecognized community builders. It will discuss how we enlist a varied range of grassroots and independent volunteers; its achievements so far. It will explore the KhojaWiki vision for the future and explain the challenges we face while creating a collection of personal stories and a civil society history of the Khoja in the digital age.

Aslisho Qurboniev (University of Cambridge), “Project Identity: The Discursive Formation of Pamiri-Isma’ili Identity on the Internet.”

The fall of the Soviet Union was one of the most momentous events of the last century, which not only led to the emergence of many new states on the map, but also gave rise to new identities. For the Soviet people it opened up the opportunity to rebuild their national and religious identities that had been controlled and oppressed for decades. For Isma’ili Muslims of Tajikistan, i.e. the Pamiris (who were disconnected from their spiritual leader and central religious authority since the Soviet Union blocked border crossing between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in late 1930s), this change provided the opportunity to resume their devotional and institutional relations with the *Imamate* (the Shi’a Isma’ili leadership). The visits of the Aga Khan, the activities of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and other Isma’ili institutions and the curriculum prepared by the Institute of Ismaili Studies played a crucial role in promoting the Isma’ili identity. The members of the community have also been increasingly and actively reformulating their identity through various means and the Internet provides a fascinating insight into these new developments.

Thus, this research focuses on the interrelation between the realities of Pamiri community life in Tajikistan and the expression of Pamiri Isma’ili identity on the Internet, specifically on the three most popular SNW (social networking websites) among Tajik users. Due to methodological and practical considerations, the initial observations and most of the interviews with social network users are limited to Dushanbe, the main site of the research. Thus, the findings and conclusions are most influenced by and pertinent to the context of Dushanbe, yet they are relevant to other places. In a broader context, the findings of this study are pertinent to the formation and transformation of new identities in Central Asia and across the world.

Background and Context

For the purpose of this research, I refer to the Isma'ilis of Tajikistan as Pamiri Isma'ilis. Isma'ilis are the second largest branch of the Shi'i Muslim community and are divided into Tayyibi and Nizari branches. The latter are estimated at around 15 million and live in South and Central Asia, Russia, Iran, Syria, East Africa, North America and Western Europe (Daftary, 1990). Nizari Isma'ili have lived in the mountainous areas of Central Asia for more than one thousand years and were always subject to the suppression of Sunni rulers (Abaeva, 1987, Semenov, 1916). Therefore, as in many other places, practicing *taqiyya* (dissimulation) was perceived as one of the important aspects of their faith. For instance, Bobrinskoy, a Russian official, who visited the Pamirs at the start of the 20th century, observed that ordinary Isma'ilis were reluctant to discuss their faith with outsiders (Bobrinskoy, 1902). The fieldwork carried out for this project also confirmed that the majority of Pamiri- Isma'ilis in Tajikistan consider religious belief a matter that should not be shared outside the community. However, the online observations suggest that there is a tendency to communicate religious identity to the outside world, which was also confirmed by the interviews.

In the Soviet Union religious identity was marginalized and removed from social and political domains until the *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies of M. S. Gorbachev stimulated the return of religion to the public domain (Elnazarov & Aksakolov, 2011). During the Soviet rule, Pamiri Isma'ilis expressed their distinctiveness from the rest of the population of Tajikistan by referring to themselves as Pamiris (referring to their region of origin – the Pamir Mountains) (Davlatshoev, 2006). Although a geographical region cannot comprise identity by itself, it is the amalgamation of other distinguishing characteristics, which become apparent after encountering outsiders (Collins, 2004). The gradual emergence of the Badakhshani diaspora outside Gorno-Badakhshan region, most importantly in Dushanbe, thus, played an important role in Pamiri ethnic self-consciousness (Davlatshoev, 2006). Only after coming into contact with the Isma'ili communities outside Tajikistan and with the Isma'ili institutions did the Pamiris start to identify themselves as Isma'ilis. During the course of two decades, after the fall of Soviet Union in 1991, the individual and communal Isma'ili identity has been shaped through participation in communal religious life, especially religious festivals and rituals. The Pamiri regional and ethno-cultural identity continues to be one of the main sources of meaning and self-awareness for the Isma'ilis from Tajik Gorno-Badakhshan region, containing rich cultural, religious and linguistic symbolism.

With the growth of the Internet and new technology, an increasing number of people joined SNW as an effective and entertaining way of connecting with friends, as well as making new connections worldwide. The influence of social media on our lives and our perception of reality and of ourselves can hardly be overestimated anymore. In particular, the construction and expression of individual and collective identities will largely depend on social media. Therefore, the impact of social media on a society, given its great mobilizing power, is certainly worth serious consideration.

The case of Pamiri Isma'ilis and their use of social media is analyzed in light of other studies done in the field, and the findings and conclusions could be applied to other similar cases worldwide. The findings suggest that individuals and communities formulate *project identities* independent of the formal institutions and structures of power on the basis of materials available to them. *Project identities* are described as the most important driving force of the modern age (Castell, 2010). Therefore, analyses of the findings not only provide ground for further research in the field, but also could inform the policies and decision-making of community leaders

regarding sensitive issues related to the politicization of the Pamiri Isma'ilis as a transnational minority group in Tajikistan.

Overview of the online activities of cyber-Pamiri-Isma'ilis

Observations of the online activities of Pamiri participants on the dominant SNWs (namely, Facebook, *Moy Mir* and *Odnoklassniki*) showed that there is a tendency, among the Isma'ilis from Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan, to emphasize their Pamiri and Isma'ili identity. There are an increasing number of profiles, avatars and groups whose creators and members are exclusively of Badakhshani origin and who persistently emphasize their Pamiri identity. For instance, when searched on Odnoklassniki, 1280 profiles were found with the word *памирец* (masculine for Pamiri in Russian), and 1699 profiles with the word *памирка* (feminine for Pamiri, Russian). It must be noted that these are only two variations of the Russian word for Pamiri; but there are many other words and references used in Tajik, Russian English and Pamiri languages on each of the websites (and with various spellings) that can be entered separately into the search tools to find more profiles. Examples include: Pamir (Pomir, Pomer), GBAO, 04-Region, *Горец* (Mountain man); in addition, there are also profile names derived from the faith and history like Isma'ili and even Assassin. These words and their combinations explicitly or implicitly refer to Pamir as the backbone of their identity. The Isma'ili faith and religious traditions are represented as one of the attributes of Pamiri culture and heritage; religious symbolism and iconography is incorporated into the geographical and cultural attributes and displayed on the profiles. It is noteworthy that although these symbolisms are widely represented on the profiles, they only complement the Pamiri identity, which boldly appears in the title.

“The more the world becomes global, the more people feel local”, observes Manuel Castells (2010: xxiii), analyzing the global trends in the past few decades. This observation reflects and explains the behaviour of thousands of people who live elsewhere but still identify themselves with their locality (which, in the case of this research is the Pamir and its people). However, this should not be equated with mere localism as locality cannot shape identity as such without incorporating other elements (Collins, 2004). There are obviously more important elements involved in identity formation than the geographic location. It is also evident that the more the users are disconnected and deprived from the culture they feel connected to in their real life, the more they take refuge in the virtual communities on the SNW. In this sense, some authors have referred to symbolic materials used in media “as substitutes of tradition” (Tubella, 2006, p. 258).

The symbolic material that is observed as instrumental in identifying oneself with the Pamiri community includes, but is not limited to: *Isma'ili belief and heritage, religious iconography ranging from the Imams' photos to the Isma'ili flag, the figure of the Isma'ili Imam, important Isma'ili monuments including Isma'ili Centres, prominent Isma'ili figures, religious ceremonies and festivals, important historical events in the life of community, literature and poetry, maddoh and qaseeda (genres of devotional poetry), Pamiri languages, history, culture, music, geography, nature and even climate*. These materials truly substituted tradition in imagining the boundaries of the community and formulating a coherent communal identity through the use of the social media, most enhanced by the interactive nature of SNW. As the findings suggest, there is an overlap between the materials and sources of meaning used to construct the ethno-cultural (Pamiri) and religious (Isma'ili) identities. The most evident example that embodies this conflation is the image of the map of GBAO covered by the Isma'ili flag. Although often perceived as a sign of separatism, this image represents the multiplicity of the sources of meaning that nurture the reconstruction of Pamiri-Isma'ili identity.

As the observation of the SNW show, there is a deliberate attempt to synthesize various sources of meaning including religious, cultural, territorial and ethnic symbolism and values. The elaborated cover photo of the *Pamir in Pictures* group on Facebook illustrates the responses that often came up in interviews. The cover photo includes the picture of the spiritual leader of Isma'ilis – the Aga Khan, a quote from his *Farmans* (the guidance of the Imam), the Isma'ili flag, people in traditional dress and the nature of Pamir, as well as *maddoh* and dance performances. In this case, the Isma'ili element seems to be incorporated into a specific context, the Pamir region and its respective cultural and geographical boundaries. It is interesting to observe that even a rather unruly online group “Для нас нет закона – мы с 04 региона” (There is no law above us, we are from region 04, i.e. GBAO), has chosen the Isma'ili flag and the *Imamate* crown photo as its avatar. Although both of the above examples are individual cases, they clearly demonstrate the way these individuals connect their religious identity with other elements of their identity and culture.

The main question that this paper has sought to answer is about the nature of the factors that contribute to the construction of Pamiri-Isma'ili identity on social networking websites. The findings demonstrated that there are many factors contributing to the consolidation of Pamiri identity, which equally contribute to the construction of Isma'ili identity. The findings also indicate that the Isma'ili faith, history and institutions have not only become an important part of the Pamiri ethnic and cultural identity, but also seem to have induced the construction of a new type of identity, which is not based on resistance but on coexistence with outsiders.

The consolidation of the Pamiri identity and its representation in social media and real life fits into the theory of *resistance identity*. It emphasizes the distinctiveness of the Pamiri community, culture and religion vis-à-vis the outside world, and strives to preserve the communal cultural boundaries, e.g. languages, traditions, religion and perceived values. On the other hand, a new type of identity which is ready to compromise some of the contrasting edges with the larger community outside, is being constructed by active members of the Pamiri community in their online and offline lives. This new type of identity is dissimilar to the legitimizing identity and goes beyond hiding in the trenches of resistance, thus identifiable as a type of *project identity*, because of its discursive nature, which is the main contention of this paper.

The findings demonstrated that *resistance* and *project identities* are affirmed and communicated through transferring history, heritage, religion and traditions into the virtual space to express individual and group identity, sometimes redrawing the boundaries. As identity is a fluid concept, individuals can be observed moving in and out of the “trench of resistance.” There are also significant differences between different contexts and generations; however, the findings demonstrated in this paper reflect the most general trends in the construction of Pamiri- Isma'ili identity, which is the transition from *resistance* to *project identity*. Thus, it is possible that many of the elements that emphasize the differences with outsiders will be sacrificed for the success of the individual and communal identity projects.

Many of my personal observations, casual interviews and online observations confirmed that the sense of insecurity and instability contributes to the consolidation of *resistance identity*. For instance, the armed conflict in Khorog and the episodes of violence with the involvement of the army and police forces contributed to the anxiety of the Pamiris around the world. Many comments on SNWs condemned the military action as directed against the Pamiri people, even as genocide. In general, the events of Khorog added more material to the memory of people, conducive to the persistence of *resistance identity*.

Nawazali A. Jiwa (Independent Scholar), “Towards an Online Searchable Database for Ismaili Studies.”

The amount of research conducted in Ismaili Studies has increased exponentially during the last decades. This is attested to by the number of works cited by the existing bibliographies in the field. However, all of these bibliographies are print based which by their nature lack, *inter alia*, the searchability and currency offered by online databases. This paper will explore and make a case for why it is crucial to build an online database dedicated exclusively to Ismaili Studies. It will consider the database's (II) Purpose and Scope, (III) Data Extraction, (IV) Search Features, (V) Metadata, (VI) Exclusivity and, (VII) Resources.

Moreover, this paper will concentrate on secondary sources in Ismaili Studies though most of the discussion also has wider application to primary sources. The first major bibliography of secondary sources was Nagib Tajdin's *A Bibliography of Ismailism* published in 1985. This was followed by Farhad Daftary's *Ismā'īlī Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies* published in 2004. In 2013, the present author compiled a bibliography of sources omitted by Tajdin and Daftary within certain limits (hereafter referred to as *Addenda*).

All of these bibliographies are print based which in and of itself is already problematic. As Carol Hetherington explains:

Print bibliographies are inevitably imprisoned within limits of space, time and format. They are 'finished' products that must be replaced with a new, updated finished product whenever additions or corrections need to be made. (2003, 199)

She continues convincingly that:

[E]lectronic bibliographies ... overcome restrictions of time, space and format, thus allowing continual and progressive updating, correction and revision, multiple access points to data — searching by author, subject, title, and year — and ease of linkage and cross referencing. (2003, 200)

Purpose and scope

The benefits of a database dedicated to Ismaili Studies are painfully apparent. Its purpose is twofold. First, to create an organized central resource of all available bibliographic data in Ismailism. Second, to facilitate ease, accuracy and speed of search and retrieval of that data (or its searchability). The database's scope will be wide-ranging and will encompass all aspects of the field. The intended audience will include students, scholars, and specialists, along with research librarians.

Types of bibliographical material included will be books, book chapters, book reviews, scholarly journal and periodical articles, articles in encyclopedias and other works of reference, theses, dissertations, and Internet Sources. Date coverage will include all secondary sources published to the present day. In addition, it will cover materials in all languages especially South Asian languages which have been neglected in the previously mentioned bibliographies.

Data extraction

The data contained in these print bibliographies will form one part of the content of such a database. The other part of the content will require an update of the literature from 2004-present. The *Addenda* identifies three broad methods to gather bibliographic data (Jiwa 2013, 23-26). These are:

(1) A systematic and thorough search of Online Public Access Catalogs (OPACs), academic and specialized databases, digital libraries and repositories, and the Internet.

(2) Citation Chaining (backwards and forwards).

(3) Requesting select members of the “invisible college” to share their bibliographic data.

The first method is accompanied by a table (23-24) showing some of the different types of resources searched which will be valuable in updating the data.

Search features

The following section identifies the features that the ideal database will have in order to enhance its searchability. These features include but are not limited to: Boolean Operators, Field, Phrase and Proximity Searching, Truncation, Wildcards, Keyword and Subject Heading Searching, the last two being of immediate interest.

Keyword search (free-text search)

A keyword search looks for the specified word or words anywhere in the record. This can be an advantage and a drawback, depending on the purpose of the user. For example, a keyword search on the term ‘Assassins’ will retrieve a copious amount of results whereas a search on the term ‘*Guptis*’ will retrieve only a handful of results as there is not much written on the topic. The former search may very well be what is required, for instance, in conducting a systematic review.

Subject heading search

Even a cursory look at the bibliographic data in the field will reveal that many of the titles contain the terms ‘Fatimids’ or ‘Ismailis’ with their language variants. A keyword search on one of these terms will retrieve all of the items that contain that term without taking into account the rest of the subject matter. A search can be made more focused by the addition of subject headings to each record. A subject heading is:

The most specific word or phrase that describes the subject, or one of the subjects, of a work, selected from a list of preferred terms (controlled vocabulary) and assigned as an added entry in the bibliographic record to serve as an access point in the ... [database]. (Reitz 2017)

Subject headings can be general - for example, ‘castles’ and ‘coinage’ or subject specific - such as *Imamate* and *tawil*. A subject search on the term *tawil* will retrieve all of the items that have been assigned that heading. A record may contain more than one subject heading to fully describe the content of an item.

Metadata

Metadata literally translates to “data about data” and consists of elements that facilitate resource description and discovery. The following basic citation illustrates how metadata works.

Velji, Jamel A. 2016. *An Apocalyptic History of the Early Fatimid Empire*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

It has the author, title, publisher, publisher place, and date which Renée Register describes as “accurate bibliographic metadata ... [which] ensures that users can find the item” (2013, 30).

Here is the same resource with additional metadata. The record now includes an ISBN, OCLC Number, and Series Title. It also includes subject headings, a summary, and table of contents

which Register calls “rich descriptive information ... [which] ... drives content discovery” (2013, 30). For instance, suppose that a researcher is interested in finding studies on the *Haft Bab* (Seven Chapters) which is a text from the Alamut period. Chances are the researcher would not think that Velji’s book is of relevance based on the title. It is on the Fatimids and more so, the early Fatimids. However, reproducing the table of contents indicates to the researcher that the book includes a chapter on the *Haft Bab*. A keyword search on the *Haft Bab* would retrieve this record and this is an instance of metadata driving content discovery.

Exclusivity

The categories of resources of the first search method identified in the *Addenda* resembles the description of resources harvested by Discovery Services including OPACs, databases and digital libraries. The question then arises: why create an Ismaili Studies database when a Discovery Service performs the same task?

As mentioned earlier, the *Addenda* supplied a representative list of general and subject specific resources consulted. Part of the answer to that question is that Discovery Services, though quite thorough, do not index (or rather pre-index) all of these resources. Many of the resources inevitably retrieved duplicates, but also unique and ‘undiscovered’ bibliographic data. *Google Scholar*, which has been used as a substitute for Discovery Services (De Keyser 2016), must also be used in conjunction with other resources.

In addition, the size of the data contained in Discovery Services and *Scholar* is colossal and continues to expand at an unprecedented rate. The other part of the answer is that research indicates “that, unfortunately, the larger a database is the harder it is to locate information in it, no matter how good the search engine or how expert the searcher” (O’ Malley 2008, 54). For example, a keyword search on the term *tawil* in these resources is bound to retrieve irrelevant results on the Andersen-Tawil Syndrome (ATS). By searching in a subject specific database, the user is guaranteed to retrieve results on the ‘right kind’ of *tawil*.

Resources

The creation of the database can be divided into three main phases: (1) Secure Funding (2) Database Design (3) Content Management.

Phase 1:

Ultimately, the creation and maintenance of the database needs sufficient and continued financial support from individuals and institutions, at both private and public levels.

Phase 2:

Engage a Database Designer to build the database according to the desired specifications.

Phase 3:

List of tasks that must be performed by professionally trained staff while allowing for some degree of overlap.

- Data Rekeying
- Bibliographic Verification
- Addition of Subject Headings
- Addition of Metadata
- Updating and Editing

Panel - Reimagining Ismaili Ta'wil

Khalil Andani (Harvard University), "Reading Text through Pre-Text: Redefining Ismaili Ta'wil."

Ismaili *ta'wil* is a marginalized genre in Islamic studies scholarship. Pejoratively termed as "bāṭinī" by Sunni Muslim heresiographers and branded as "esoteric" and "sectarian" in academic literature, Ismaili *ta'wil* is yet to be analyzed as discourse of Islamic hermeneutics. There have, to date, only been three attempts to provide an analytical framework for Ismaili *ta'wil*. Henry Corbin situated *ta'wil* within his framework of his phenomenology – which he defines as "saving the appearance" by "unveiling the hidden." While Corbin's approach, both sympathetic and penetrating, certainly has its merits, it still imposes the hermeneutics of both Suhrawardi and Heidegger upon Ismaili *ta'wil* in an ahistorical manner. Meir Bar Asher defines Ismaili *ta'wil* as sectarian and allegorical, while implicitly invoking the structure of Sunni *tafsīr* as the background against which Ismaili *ta'wil* must be defined. However, branding Ismaili *ta'wil* as sectarian accomplishes very little: not only does the label sectarian marginalize Ismaili hermeneutics as a deviation from the so-called Sunni orthodox mainstream, but even Sunni *tafsīr* could be legitimately called sectarian in the sense of advancing a specific set of theological positions as studies by Walid Saleh and Ahmed al-Shamsy show. The most recent study of Hollenberg argues that Ismaili *ta'wil* was used to instill "new habits of mind" or cognitive processes in the Ismaili initiates and thus served to strengthen the Ismaili community's sense of sectarian and ideological identity in relation to other Muslim groups. While this study certainly sheds new light on the effects of Ismaili *ta'wil*, it still operates within the sectarian frame and runs the danger of reducing *ta'wil* to a vehicle of sectarian identity politics while diminishing its hermeneutical value. My paper focuses on Ismaili *ta'wil* as a genre of Islamic hermeneutics as informed by the late Shahab Ahmad's conceptualization of Islam as hermeneutical engagement with the Revelation to Muhammad – in which Revelation itself exists at three levels: Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text. I define Ismaili *ta'wil* as the hermeneutical act of engaging with the Text of Revelation (the Cosmos, the Qur'an and other scriptures, the religious law) *by means of or through* the Pre-Text of Revelation and expressed in terms of the Con-Text of Revelation.

Hollenberg quite successfully argued that Ismaili *ta'wil* is very different from *tafsīr*. Despite the fact that the word *ta'wil* in Sunni discourses denotes form of Qur'an commentary, *ta'wil* as used by the Ismailis becomes a very different kind of hermeneutics than the Sunni Qur'an commentary. Ismaili *ta'wil* also surpasses the type of Sunni *ta'wil* practiced by the likes of the Mu'tazilīs, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Rushd, as well as the Sufi *ta'wil* of Sahl al-Tustarī and Abū'l-Al-Qushayrī. I would like to briefly state some of the salient features of Ismaili *ta'wil*. The basic structure of Ismaili *ta'wil* presupposes three epistemic-ontological levels – *zāhir*, *bāṭin*, and *bāṭin al-bāṭin*, where it conceives a specific object at the *zāhir* level as the icon, likeness, or representative-symbol (*mathal*) of a symbolized object or meaning (*mamthūl*) at the *bāṭin* level. Thus, *ta'wil* as a discourse, a mode of explanation, serves to *reveal* the *bāṭin* behind a particular *zāhir*. Ismaili *ta'wil* from normative perspective is not merely a form of interpretation, but rather, claims to be an unveiling or *revelation* of the *bāṭin*. *Ta'wil* claims equal if not greater theological status than the *tanzīl*, the latter being the *zāhir* discourse of the Qur'ān or scripture in general. *Ta'wil* is rooted in the authority of the Imam – Ismaili texts regularly argue that the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* possess the knowledge and authority to do *ta'wil*; but the actual composers of *ta'wil* in Ismaili history were high-ranking Ismaili *dā'īs* called *ḥujjahs* (proofs) of the Imam and they claimed to recipients of *ta'yīd*, a form of divine support or celestial inspiration, by which the knowledge of the Imam reached them. Rarely does one see an Ismaili Imam composing Ismaili *ta'wil*, despite the fact that the Imam is the locus of the authority to do *ta'wil*. Furthermore, the Ismailis always did the *ta'wil* of the Qur'an in a piecemeal fashion; it has never been done (to

our knowledge), as Sunni *tafsīr* proceeds in verse by verse order, from the first chapter of the Qur'an and to the last; the objects of *ta'wīl* go beyond the Qur'an and include other scriptures such as the Bible, objects in macrocosm of nature and the microcosm of the human body and soul, *sharī'ah* rituals of worship and transactions, and even doctrinal symbols in other religions, etc. Ismaili *ta'wīl* discourse often repeats the same symbolic patterns where different objects often symbolize the same meanings: for example, the Sun and Moon, the Day and Night, the Heaven and Earth, the Male and the Female all have the same *ta'wīl* – they symbolize the Speaker-Prophet and his Legatee known as the *nāṭiq* and *asās*. Similar patterns are found for numbers like 4, 7, and 12. At the same time, different Ismaili exegetes gave differing *ta'wīls* for the same object: for example, one can find at least two or three different *ta'wīls* among Fatimid Ismaili *dā'īs* for the five prayers or the Verse of Light (*āyat al-nūr*). Ismaili *ta'wīl* both evokes and presupposes a cosmological framework of parallel worlds higher than the physical world, but the cosmological framework evoked in different Ismaili *ta'wīl* discourses shifts from period to period: it has included an early Shi'i "light" cosmologies, a gnostic pleroma consisting of Kunī, Qadar, and angelic beings, a Neoplatonic Universal Intellect-Soul cosmology, the Ten-Intellect cosmology of al-Farābī, Ginanic Indic cosmology featuring Nīrinjan, Vishnu, and Brahma, or Sufi concepts of *Waḥdat al-wujūd*. *Ta'wīl* delivered as *da'wa* instruction is a process of intellectual and spiritual rearing (*tarbiyya*) for the initiate, who is the spiritual child of the Ismaili Imam and the particular *ḥujjahs* or *dā'īs* responsible for his instruction.

How is one to understand, frame, and coherently conceive Ismaili *ta'wīl* in light of all these features? In his groundbreaking 2015 book, Shahab Ahmed offered a new conceptualization of *Islam*, while showing the inadequacy of all major frameworks used to define Islam in Islamic studies to date: Islam as law, Islam as scripture, Islam as culture, Islam as civilization, Islam as discursive tradition, Islam as faith and cumulative tradition, Islam as a myriad of *islams*. In their place, Ahmad proposes that *Islam* as a historical phenomenon spanning a diversity of interpretations across time and space is best conceived as *an act of hermeneutics or meaning-making in which an agent engages the Muhammadan Revelation in one or more of its forms as Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text and thus constructs "islam" for himself or herself*. Ahmed situates the different discourses of Islamic thought – such as *kalām*, *falsafa*, Sufi metaphysics, Sufi paths of *ishq*, and even modern literalist forms of Islam – within the conceptual map of Revelation in terms of Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text, while also acknowledging the normativity of the concepts of *zāhir-bāṭin* and knowledge hierarchy to Islam. First, I will map Shahab Ahmed's concepts of Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text to Ismaili Muslim concepts of Revelation. Then, I will explain how Ismaili *ta'wīl* – both as a form of hermeneutics and as a form of discourse – is best situated and accounted for using the parameters of this framework. The Text of Revelation here refers to the Qur'an – first and foremost as a living dynamic oral discourse uttered by Prophet Muhammad over his 23 year mission in a myriad of situations and moments, and secondly to the *mushaf* or Qur'an-as-Book, which became the Muslim community's official record of the Text. But Ahmed rightly points out that:

The Text of the Revelation requires as its premise an Unseen Reality or Truth that lies beyond and behind the Text of the Revelation- in- the- Seen and upon which the act, Text and truth of Revelation are contingent...The act and text of the Muhammadan Revelation together represent a single historical instance and enactment of this larger and prior dimension of the reality of Revelation—which I will here term the Pre- text of Revelation.

Thus, Pre-Text is the transcendent *source* of the process of Revelation while the product of Revelation is the Text. The Pre-Text is also *symbolized by* and *expressed in* the Text, as Ahmed notes: "The Truth of the Text of the Revelation is only the Revelatory Product: as such, it

is but an expression in the here- and- now of this world of the Truth of the Pre- Text of the Revelation.” The major debates among different Muslim schools of interpretation concern firstly, *how* to conceive the Pre-Text of Revelation and secondly, *how* human beings access this Pre-Text – whether the Pre-Text can be found only *in* the Text, *through* the Text, or by modes of knowing parallel to and/or independent of the Text. One finds that the various Islamic discourses - *kalām*, *falsafah*, theosophical Sufism, *ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, *fiqh*, etc. – have their own answers to these questions. The Ismailis in the pre-Fatimid era, the Fatimid era, and the post-Fatimid eras certainly affirmed the Pre-Text of Revelation and conceived it through a multiplicity of doctrinal frameworks: this Pre-Text has been described as the *bāṭin al-bāṭin* and an angelic Pleroma by the early Ismailis, as the Universal Intellect and Universal Soul by the Fatimid and post-Fatimid Ismaili Neoplatonists, as a realm of Ten Intellects by other Fatimid thinkers, and as the *Nur* or Light of Imamāt in later pre-modern and modern Ismaili discourse. For the Ismailis, the Ismaili Imamāt and the *da’wa* hierarchy in an idealized form is also part of the Pre-Text and serves as a secondary level of Pre-Text; the *da’wa* hierarchy consisting of a number of ranks such as the Speaker-Prophet (*nāṭiq*), the Legatee (*waṣī*), the Imam, the *bāb*, the *ḥujjah*, the *dā’ī*, the *mu’allim*, the *ma’dhūn*, and the *mukasīr*. Thus, for the Ismailis, the Pre-Text of Revelation consists of a celestial spiritual realm and an idealized archetypal *da’wa* hierarchy, which some Ismaili *dā’īs* call “the World of Religion” or “the World of Command.”

Having established the concept of Pre-Text in Ismaili thought, it is equally important to distinguish the distinctive Ismaili understanding of revelation from the majority Sunni and Twelver Shi’a views. In the majority Sunni viewpoint, the Arabic Qur’an is first dictated and inscribed by God in the pre-existent Guarded Tablet, then sent down to the lowest heaven on the Night of Power, and then verbally dictated over twenty years by God through Gabriel to Muhammad, whose role is to merely repeat and transmit this Arabic Qur’an verbatim. In Ismaili doctrine, the descent of revelation from the Pre-Text consisting of via *waḥy* and *tanzīl* is actually mediated and performed by the Prophet. As described by various Ismaili thinkers including the Imam al-Mu’izz, Abū Ya’qūb al-Sijistānī, and Nāṣir-i Khusraw, the Prophet Muhammad through divine support (*ta’yīd*) and inspiration (*waḥy*) has direct access to the Pre-Text of Revelation, which he first “reads”, and then composes (*ta’līf*) the Arabic “recitation” (*qur’ān*) as a verbal symbolic “rendering” (*tanzīl*, *‘ibārah*) of the Pre-Text in order to communicate the Truth of the Pre-Text to his audience. The Arabic Qur’an, for Ismailis, is the divinely-inspired creation of the Prophet Muhammad. For Ismailis, the process of *tanzīl* and its product, the Arabic Qur’ān, is not the total revelation of the Pre-Text; it must be completed by the process of *ta’wīl*, which is actually a form of revelation or revelatory hermeneutics. Here are some typical examples of *ta’wīl* from pre-Fatimid, Fatimid, and post-Fatimid Ismaili thinkers where an object at the level of Text is shown to correspond to a real-truth (*ḥaqīqah*) in the Pre-Text:

- The *ta’wīl* of the four letters of the name *Allāh* – Alif, Lām, Lām, Hā’ – is the Universal Intellect, Universal Soul, *nāṭiq*, and *asās*.
- The *ta’wīl* of the Sun and Moon and Stars in the world of religion is the Imam, his highest *bāb*, and the other *ḥujjahs* and *dā’īs*.
- The *ta’wīl* of the formula, *‘Aliyyul-‘Azīm*, is the Universal Intellect and Universal Soul.
- The *ta’wīl* of the Sunrise Prayer is the Universal Intellect and the *ta’wīl* of the Sunset prayer is the Universal Soul.
- The *ta’wīl* of Noah’s Ark is his Legatee (*waṣī*), Imam Shem, and the *ta’wīl* of the Ka’bah is the Imam in every time.
- The *ta’wīl* of Gold and Silver, and of Ruby and Emerald, are the *nāṭiq* and *asās* in every age.

- The *ta'wīl* of the 7 letters of the Bismillah is the 7 *Nāṭiqs* and 7 Imams and the *ta'wīl* of the 12 letters of *al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* is the 12 *ḥujjahs* of the Imam.
- The *ta'wīl* of “men” and “women” in the verse 4:34, “Men are the maintainers of women due to what God gave one over the other” refers, respectively, to the Imams and their disciples in the *da'wa*.

On first look, these examples of *ta'wīl* simply look like a case of using specific Qur'anic verses or examples from nature to justify and prove Ismaili doctrines. This is perhaps why both Bar Asher and Hollenberg term this kind of interpretation as “sectarian” and “selective.” However, there is another way to conceive of Ismaili *ta'wīl*. Consider the above examples from two outlooks – from the viewpoint of the Ismaili *dā'ī* who composed these *ta'wīls*, and from the viewpoint of the Ismaili initiate who is learning these *ta'wīls*. The Ismaili *dā'ī* who composes these *ta'wīls* has already recognized the Pre-Text of Revelation and has conceived this Pre-Text through some theological framework (like Neoplatonic hypostases or Light cosmology) and the *da'wa* ranks of his time-period. The Ismaili *dā'ī* has come to recognize the real-truths (*ḥaqā'iq*) of the Pre-Text through at least three ways: philosophical arguments, instruction (*ta'lim*) received from his own teachers, and *ta'yīd* – a divine inspiration or support that illumines his soul from the Imam's soul. Thus, reason, instruction, and inspiration all allow the Ismaili exegete to “read the Pre-Text” and see things as they are. The Ismaili *dā'ī's* purpose in composing this *ta'wīl* is to demonstrate to his audience, the Ismaili initiates, how the symbolic truth-content within the Text (scripture, law, ritual, nature) points toward the truth-content of the Pre-Text. Thus, when the Ismaili *dā'ī* composes a *ta'wīl*, he does not approach the Text with an empty mind or a clean slate so he may “search” any possible meanings from all the intellectual resources available to him (like what we see in *tafsīr*); but rather, he approaches the Text of Revelation with the Pre-Text of Revelation already conceived in his mind with the express intention of *linking* the content of the Pre-Text to the contents of the Text; to compose an actual *ta'wīl*, the Ismaili exegete *reads the Text through or by means of the Pre-Text*.

For the Ismaili initiate who is learning this *ta'wīl*, in the very moment he understands how the Text symbolizes and indicates the truth-content of the Pre-Text, the truth-value of the Text becomes *more* established for him as the truth-contents of the Text become *transparent* to the Pre-Text. As Hollenberg aptly notes in his book, this unveiling brought by *ta'wīl* is meant to have transformative effect upon the Ismaili initiate. Receiving instruction in *ta'wīl* gradually transforms the cognitive and intellectual capacity of the initiate, allowing him to eventually “read” the Pre-Text himself and perceive the Truth of the Pre-Text through any Text just as the Ismaili *dā'īs* are able to do. One of the themes of Ismaili *da'wa* literature is the gradual ascent of the believer through the ranks of the *da'wa* and the ranks of the celestial spiritual world. In other words, the goal of the *da'wa* on earth is to facilitate the believer's union with the Pre-Text of Revelation. *Ta'wīl* is what guides the Ismaili initiate toward this union precisely because *ta'wīl* is a form of revelatory hermeneutics that reveals or discloses the certainty of the Pre-Text through the Text; this is in contrast to *tafsīr* which is a search for truth-content within the Text using the tools of grammar, philology, occasions of revelation, and *ḥadīth* literature.

When the Ismaili exegete *reads the Text through or by of the Pre-Text* – a Pre-Text whose contents the exegete has already conceived in his mind - does this mean that the entire process of *ta'wīl* is pre-determined and bound to simply reproducing older discourses taught by Ismaili authorities? Not exactly. The hermeneutical technique of Ismaili *ta'wīl* has creative and open dimension as well. What lends it an open dimension is the Ismaili exegetes' creative engagement with what Shahab Ahmed calls “Con-Text.” “Con-Text” – not to be confused with context – means, in Ahmed's words, “that whole field or complex or vocabulary of meanings of Revelation that have been produced in the course of the human and historical hermeneutical

engagement with Revelation, and which are thus already present as Islam.” Con-Text includes “the full encyclopaedia of epistemologies, interpretations, identities, persons and places, structures of authority, textualities and intertextualities, motifs, symbols, values, meaningful questions and meaningful answers other truth-claims and components of existential exploration and meaning.” Ismaili Muslim thinkers throughout history have conceived and described the Pre-Text of Revelation through a multiplicity of frameworks – Qur’anic, Gnostic, Neoplatonic, Sufi, Indic or a combination of all of these – because every Ismaili thinker in his own time has drawn different material from the “Con-Text” of Revelation as it existed in his own time-period. Since the Con-Text of Revelation refers to the pool of what past hermeneutical engagements with Revelation have produced, it is always changing and offering new symbols, frameworks, and epistemologies to Muslims. When an Ismaili exegete performs *ta’wīl* and reads the Text of Revelation by means of his knowledge of the Pre-Text, he expresses this *ta’wīl* in the vocabulary of Con-Text. This is why, for example, the *ta’wīl* produced by Pre-Fatimid Ismaili exegetes – which is letter-centric, kabbalistic, and gnostic – differs from the *ta’wīl* produced by Fatimid Ismailis – which was more Neoplatonic; this is why the Ismaili *gināns*, which are a form of narrative *ta’wīl*, differ in their form and their Indic, Vaishnavi, Sufi and Sant symbolism from the Fatimid Neoplatonic *ta’wīl*. The differences in Con-Text also explain why Ismaili exegetes in the same period – Sijistānī, Ja’far b. Maṣūūr, Kirmānī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā – can each have a different *ta’wīl* of the symbols of the Qur’anic Verse of Light (*ayat al-nūr*). The differences exist because each thinker conceives the Pre-Text of Revelation in a unique way drawing creatively from the Con-Text of Islam and then linking the same Text of Revelation to the Pre-Text of Revelation as conceived and understood by him in terms of the Con-Text he decided to draw upon. Drawing on different truths from the Con-Text of Revelation also explains why Kirmānī’s Fatimid cosmology has Ten Intellects while Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s and Sijistānī’s only has one Intellect and one Soul. Kirmānī’s Con-Text included the hermeneutical engagement of al-Farābī and Avicenna – who subscribed to Ten Intellect cosmologies – whereas Sijistānī’s Con-Text included the Arabic Plotinus cosmology.

Paul Anderson (Harvard University), “Primeval: The Uses of Ta’wīl to Mythologize and De-Mythologize in Ismā’īlī Genesis Narratives.”

The concept of *ta’wīl*, roughly understandable as “allegorical interpretation,” has been a subject of much controversy throughout Islamic intellectual history. For Ismā’īlīs of all traditions, *ta’wīl* occupies a central position as an essential tool for understanding divine revelation (*tanzīl*). Indeed, *tanzīl* and *ta’wīl* are integrally correlated in much the same way as the *ẓāhir* (exoteric) and *bāṭin* (esoteric) of religious tradition. In his short 1938 article “An Ismaili Interpretation of the Fall of Adam,” Lewis writes, “The manner in which the questions are put, and the customary Muslim answers dismissed, is thoroughly reminiscent of the method of ‘instilling doubt and leaving in suspense’ attributed by various Sunni writers to the Ismaili da’is.” The perspective cited by Lewis is of course a simplification of the pedagogical as well as ritual purpose of *ta’wīl* as part of the critical apparatus of Ismā’īlī belief, rather than simply being a tool to attract new postulants. As such, the manner in which this interpretation is elaborated and presented is similarly a crucial part of constructing this apparatus.

Creation accounts reveal specific interests of those who transmit them. They are by their very nature intended to highlight basic assumptions of a particular *weltanschauung*. Specifically, these accounts reveal, whether clearly or sub-textually, what kinds of principles – philosophical, theological, or moral – are considered important by the narrator and their audience. But what happens when the creation narrative as it exists in a given foundational text is reinterpreted in a new dynamic manner? What does this reveal about the changing needs of the narrator and

audience? How could an interpretation of a creation account serve to distinguish the practical political realities of the audience from their rivals?

In this paper, I propose to look at the interpretations of certain aspects of the Islamic creation account, in particular the genesis of Adam, as treated by different Ismāʿīlī theologians. Therein, I will show that while these treatments elaborate the Qurʾānic account according to the contextual paradigm of Ismāʿīlī theological principles, they serve multivalent purposes. Here, I am less concerned with the content of the Qurʾānic narrative on its own as opposed to its value as a source of theological content. The *taʿwīl* of Genesis accounts facilitate a creative process of legitimizing Ismāʿīlī doctrine, and thus the religious hierarchy. The particular *taʿwīl* presentations of clerics such as al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān (d. 974), al-Sijistānī (d. 971), al-Hāmidī (d. 1162), Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn (d. 1468) and others demonstrates what issues they believed were important to the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwah* in their given time and place.

Faraz Alidina (Harvard University), “Aims and Applications of Taʿwīl in Alamut Ismailism.”

A theologian, ethicist and astronomer, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī’s (d. 1274) thirty years at the Ismāʿīlī court prior to the Mongol invasions represents one of the most creative and productive periods of his life. During this time, he wrote his *Akhlāq-i Naṣīrī* (Nasirean Ethics) and first presented many of the theories that would appear in his later *Hall-i mushkilāt-i Muʿīniyya* (Solutions of the Difficulties in the *Muʿīniyya*). However, little attention has been given to his contributions to Ismāʿīlī thought. This paper seeks to address this lacuna through an exposition of Ṭūsī’s perspective on *taʿwīl* as described in the *Rawḍa-yi taslīm* (Paradise of Submission), *Maṭlūb al-muʾminīn* (The Goal of the Faithful) and *Āghāz wa anjām* (Origin and Destination).

The method of *taʿwīl* has been understood primarily through the paradigms of allegory, where a *mathal* (sign) is imbued with its *mamthūl* (the signified), representing a movement from the exoteric to the esoteric, or the paradigm of typology, where contemporary events are interpreted as analogues for hiero-historical events (Hollenberg, 2014; Bar-Asher, 2008). Both of these paradigms, however, are predicated upon the assumption that *taʿwīl* is merely a method of movement between scripture and interpretation analogous to the genre of *tafsīr*. This paper argues that *taʿwīl* is best understood not as a movement from scripture to interpretation, but as an *embedding* of scripture within a broader topos that includes philosophical theories, astrological speculations and theological claims. Furthermore, this embedding differs from what has been called Qurʾānicity: littering philosophical tracts with Qurʾānic verses as a means of establishing religious legitimacy (Leaman, 2016). This paper’s close reading of Ṭūsī’s *taʿwīl* on the story of Adam and Iblīs, and the seven pillars of Islam reveals how his realm of *taʿwīl* extends beyond Qurʾānic exegesis while still being informed by it.

Aaron Viengkhou (Harvard University), “A New Model of Conversion: Esoteric Hermeneutics and Sapiential Narrative in the Ismāʿīlī Gināns.”

This paper attempts to reimagine *taʿwīl* in a sort of round-about way by reading it alongside the corpus of vernacular devotional hymns known as the *gināns*. Towards this end, this paper first seeks to challenge prevailing narratives that present the *gināns* as a genre of conversion literature. Building on this, this paper proceeds to interrogate the classical Ismāʿīlī conception of *taʿwīl* as a lens through which to view the *gināns*. This re-envisioning of the *gināns* indicates the need for a revision to the conversion narrative, while also opening up new possibilities for thinking about the practice of *taʿwīl* in later Ismāʿīlī tradition.

The composition of the *gināns* is traditionally ascribed to the Ismāʿīlī pīrs who acted as the emissaries of the imāms in the spread of post-Alamūt Nizārī Ismāʿīlism throughout the Indian subcontinent. The *gināns* have therefore often been read as a genre of conversion literature. According to this reading, the *gināns* are conceived of as a kind of literary propaganda; the conversion model is also supposed to account for the apparent syncretism of the tradition. Indeed, the *gināns* do make extensive use of symbols and themes that obviously derive from distinctively South Asian literary and religious contexts, and, as such, many of the themes and images one encounters in the *gināns* are not specific to Ismāʿīlī thought. According to the conversion model, these supposedly non-Ismāʿīlī characteristics were introduced by the pīrs in order to effectively propagate the Ismāʿīlī message amongst local peoples. However, the conversion model fails to account for the dynamic historical and sociological processes involved in the development of the *ginān* tradition. The conceptualization of conversion in relation to the *gināns* is thus deeply problematic and needs to be revised.

Towards this end, this paper borrows some ideas developed by Carl Ernst while he was discussing the relationship between South Asian Śūfism and Yoga. Ernst is critical of scholarly discourses that rely on reductionist analytic categories. He argues that these discourses falsify the historical and sociological phenomena they purport to study by inappropriately positing essentialist categories of religious difference. Categories like “Islam” and “Hinduism,” or “Śūfism” and “Yoga,” are in an important sense artificial constructs that tend to distort the complexity of the religious landscape. In response to these concerns, Ernst advances what he calls a “polythetic” approach to the study of religious identity. By this he means that “multiple various and even conflicting authoritative positions can be included under the rubric of a single religious category.” He also suggests that the most appropriate way of approaching the polythetic analysis of religion is by “striking a practical balance between similarity and difference.”

As such, although a particular set of characteristics may be shared among traditions, and although it may be evident which tradition is responsible for the historical origination of this set of characteristics, priority can not necessarily be ascribed to one tradition above another because each tradition will appropriate and interpret this set of characteristics in unique ways. In other words, similarity may be observed even while difference is nevertheless maintained. The reason for this is that a common set of beliefs and practices will be endowed with distinct hermeneutic value in different confessional settings. Thus, in order to fully appreciate a tradition’s beliefs and practices it is most important to consider the ways in which beliefs and practices are interpreted, experienced and performed within that particular community.

Of course, the *gināns* are both similar to and different from other contemporaneous literatures. But it is precisely this tension of similarity and difference that has been essential to the construction of the *ginān* corpus as a coherent whole. In other words, the integrity of the *gināns* is characterized precisely by the assimilation of originally non-Ismāʿīlī themes and motifs such that these could be transposed into a new hermeneutic environment and thus differentiated and reconstructed as a unique body of literature.

Unsurprisingly, the *gināns* themselves don’t actually refer to the religion of the pīrs as “Ismāʿīlism.” Instead, they most often use the generic expression *dharma* or *sat dharma*, “the true religion.” As is to be expected, the semantic range of *dharma* is extremely vast. In its most basic sense, it simply means “religion.” But in a more robust definition the concept of *dharma* is remarkably similar to the Ismāʿīlī conception of *ḥaqīqa*, the esoteric reality or truth that underlies all existence. The *sat dharma* proclaimed in the *gināns*, then, refers to what can be termed an esoteric religion insofar as it is concerned above all with the *ḥaqīqa*.

The *gināns* are the expression of *sat dharma*, the esoteric religion preached by the *pīrs*. And this is where essentializing analyses of conversion start to break down. The *gināns* do not adopt Indic forms, terms, and themes as a simple gesture of condescension to potential converts, thereby compromising their originality. Rather, the *gināns* assimilate, re-configure, and re-interpret these forms, terms, and themes in order to construct a new discourse. Concerned essentially with the esoteric and hence ineffable *ḥaqīqa*, this new discourse is articulated in terms of local networks of reference as the most expedient means of conveying otherwise ineffable truths.

In order to better understand some of these questions of conversion, it is useful to turn to a cycle of *gināns* known as the *Das Avatāra* (“the Ten Manifestations”). This cycle of *gināns* became rather famous when at the end of the 19th century the *Das Avatāra* was cited as legal evidence that the Khojas were *Ismāʿīlī* Muslims under the religious authority of the Aga Khan. Interestingly, the judge presiding over the case determined that the *Das Avatāra* “is precisely such a book as a Dai or missionary of the Ismailis would compose or adapt if he wished to convert a body of not very learned Hindus to the Ismaili faith.”

The *Das Avatāra* is essentially concerned with the theme of *imāmology*, though its characterization of the *imāmate* is articulated in a very specifically South Asian referential context. Drawing on an obviously *Vaiṣṇavite* Hindu mythos, the *Das Avatāra* narrates the *hierohistory* of ten successive manifestations, or *avatārs*, of *Viṣṇu*. The standard *Vaiṣṇavite* narrative culminates with the manifestation *Kalki* in the period known as the *Kali Yuga*. The *gināns* reproduce an identical list of ten *avatārs*, except that *Kalki* is omitted. In his place, different versions of the *Das Avatāra* substitute different references to the *imām*, such as, for example, *Islām Shāh* or *ʿAlī*. But although the different *gināns* identify different *imāms*, it is really the *imāmate* as such that appears as the tenth *avatār*. The entire *ecclesia* of the *imāmate*, then, is collectively regarded as the divine manifestation, the *avatār*, for the *Kali Yuga*, which is characterized by an absence of *dharma*. It is the function of the *imāmate* to restore *dharma* and summon the elect to salvation. The *Das Avatāra*, then, traces a narrative of decline and restoration.

The relationship of the *Das Avatāra gināns* to *Vaiṣṇavite* Hinduism is obvious. But what is most interesting for the purposes of this paper is the relationship between the *gināns* and doctrinal themes articulated in classical *Ismāʿīlism*, specifically the concept of *taʿwīl*. In fact, the classical formulation of *taʿwīl* presupposes a hermeneutic narrative structure wherein outward-exoteric (*zāhir*) forms are traced back to their inward-esoteric (*bāṭin*) meaning. In this regard, *Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī* (d. 1274) describes *taʿwīl* in terms of “the cycle of perfection, encompassing both the origin and the perfect fulfillment,” with the *imām* serving as the mediator of the hermeneutic narrative.

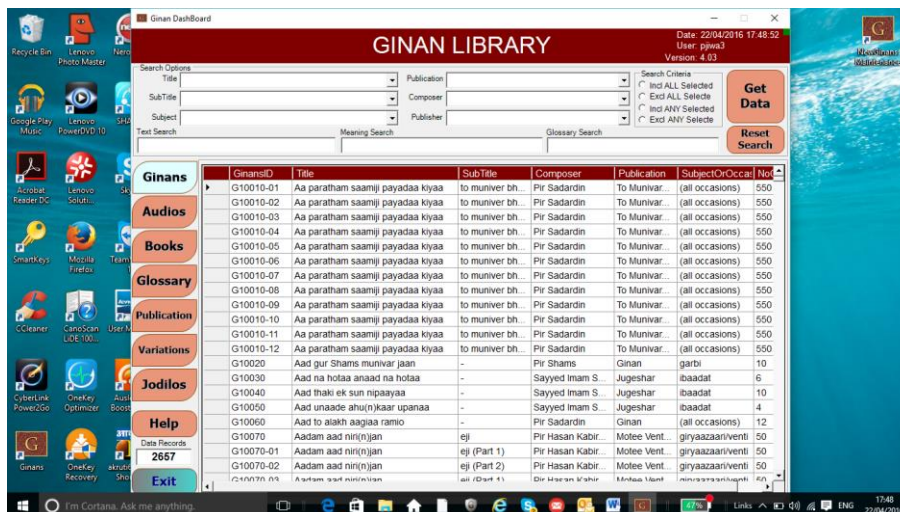
The *Das Avatāra* presents a narrative of decline and restoration that is perfectly consistent with *Ṭūsī*’s conception of *taʿwīl*. It is possible, then, to think of the *gināns* as narratives of *taʿwīl*. That is to say, the *gināns* can be thought of as reproducing the hermeneutic of *taʿwīl* in a narrative framework that is essentially aesthetic, experiential, and performative. On this basis, it is also possible to attempt a re-imagining of the conversion model when talking about the *gināns*. References to supposedly discrete categories such as “*Ismāʿīlism*” and “*Hinduism*” break down because the supposed “*Ismāʿīlī*” and “*Hindu*” elements of the *gināns* mutually integrate, interact, and interpret with each other. The *gināns* are at once narratives of salvation embedded in South Asian religious and literary traditions; and the *gināns* are also at the same time the ritualized performance of classical *Ismāʿīlī* conceptions of *taʿwīl*. Out of this dialectic of similarity and difference, the *gināns* emerge as an integral body of literature that is unique to its own religious, literary, historical, and cultural situation. The *gināns* can thus be regarded as conversion literature only if this is understood as a hermeneutic conversion that re-interprets ostensibly

non-Ismā`īlī symbols in an Ismā`īlī light, while at the same time re-interpreting classical Ismā`īlī themes in a South Asian idiom.

Panel - Ginans

Pyarali Jiwa (Independent Scholar), “The Electronic Ginan Library.”

At the forthcoming conference on Ismaili studies, I will be very pleased to present on the comprehensive electronic Ginan Library which I have developed over the past 18 years. The Library consists of over 1900 titles of Ginans and Granths in Khojki, Gujarati, Urdu and English transliteration. It also includes over 500 compact discs of audio recordings of Ginans and Granths. As I will demonstrate during the session, the library has multiple search functions to locate the Ginans and Granths by: titles and sub titles; subjects; composers; publications; and publishers. The database also allows for the viewing and printing of texts, and includes a Dictionary of Ginans. During the presentation, I will also speak about the first Khojki Fonts (Khojki Jiwa) which I developed with help from my grandson, Faisal, for The Institute of Ismaili Studies in 2008.



Shaheryar Liaquat Ali (Independent Scholar), “Unpublished Ginans.”

It seems that the Ismaili Pirs and Sayyids have composed over 1000 Ginans, but only 600 are found in Six Volumes of Mukhi Lalji Devraj's publications and some are found in Allauddin Ghulam Husain's publications. Ginans were lost because of various attacks by Ismailis' enemies; some were damaged, burnt, lost for other number of reasons. Work on Ginans declined after Mukhi Lalji Devraj (1842-1930), due to which only hundreds of Ginans are found. I will safely term the Ginans hereinafter, which were unearthed after Mukhi Lalji as the “Unpublished Ginans.” These Ginans can be found in manuscripts dating over hundreds of years. The main problem that arises during field work is that these Ginans contain poor scribing, ink-spread, torn pages, damage by termites etc. These defects caused illegibility to its extreme. Hitherto, what has been explored is very difficult and expensive in our age to preserve. There has been minor examination in this field. Certain institutions, mainly Harvard, the Institute of Ismaili Studies and India Office Library, have taken measures to protect the old manuscripts of the Ginans.

Sources of manuscripts

Form different areas and institutions these manuscripts can be found such as Gujarat, Kutchh, Punjab, Sindh, Rural, Karachi, Institute of Ismaili Studies, Tariqa Boards, Association for the Study of Ginans, Harvard Library, Saskatchewan Library, different Alwaez and also some aged people who have written and preserved these Ginans in their diaries. The Institute of Ismaili Studies is playing a key role in order to preserve these manuscripts. The Imam Shahi in India, have number of Ginans of Syed Imam Shah and Pir Shams.

Problems associated with manuscripts

The main problems arising during the finding of unpublished Ginans are

1. The wordings of Ginans found in manuscripts
2. Poor writing
3. Ink spread on the manuscripts
4. Pages are torn
5. Pages are damaged by termites
6. The manuscripts are difficult to read
7. The protection of the damaged manuscript is also very difficult and expensive

Before Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj

Imam Aga Ali Shah is said to have commissioned Mukhi Lalji Devraj to examine rare and old manuscripts of the Ginans. Hence, he launched a campaign in Sind, Kathiawar, Gujrat and Kutchh and collected a bulk of manuscripts. It seems that he didn't visit Punjab during his campaign.

Most Ismailis willingly handed over him their collections, some sold them to him, and others gave him on the condition that he would return them. For about six months, he employed few scribes to make copies of the Ginans in Khojki, then distributed them among the Ismailis. He mainly got the copies transcribed through the persons whose handwritings were handsome, notably Bhagat Karimbhai Mohan Vertej, who was given three annas for writing 1000 words in Gujrati and four annas for 1000 words in Khojki. When the demand increased, he started to litho

print to supply more copies. To meet the increasing demand, he visited Germany in 1903 to make the Khojki type for the first time. He returned and established the Khojha Sindhi Printing Press on June 27, 1903 at Palkhi Mola, Bombay. The Satveni was the first publication of his press. This press was a boon and a basic brick of the Ismaili literature. On the other side, the Khoja Ghulam Hussain Press operated by Allaudin Ghulam Hussain (1858-1914) and his son Hussain since 1880, published the Ginan into litho print. These books were so costly that most Ismailis could not afford them.

The Indian Ismailis are indebted to him to publish the Ginans before they decayed, but we must have to admit that he did not indicate the criteria he followed in the publication of the Ginans. Before Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj, there were no proper publications of Ginans. People used to preserve them by scribing the Ginans in their own handwritings and this culture is still in operation today in some rural areas of the sub-continent. Therefore, these manuscripts contain those Ginans which were not published during the life of Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj, and then ignored by future generations. After the Pirs died, the Ismailis preserved these Ginans in different manuscripts, which continued for many years till Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj.

Shortfalls in Mukhi Lalji Devraj's publications

Mukhi Lalji Devraj had brought forth invaluable contribution in the field of Ginans. There are however many errors in his noble work. I will explain two major errors:

- 1) Mukhi Lalji Devraj collected and printed without verification. This raised no question from the Ismaili community in his time due to lack of education. Take an example of the Ginan *Pachham'thi Shah'na Dar Awash'e, an'e Jampu Deep minjaria'ji*. This Ginan is still recited in the Jamatkhana. It appears that it belongs to the Imam Shahi sect. It is told in this Ginan that Pir Sadaruddin had come, then will come Pir Hasan Kabiruddin, who will be followed by Sayyid Imam Shah. It clearly means that Pir Sadruddin had come in subcontinent for the Ismaili mission. He was followed by his son Pir Hasan Kabiruddin. Then came Pir Tajdin according to the belief of the Ismailis. But in this Ginan mentions the name of Sayyid Imam Shah, not Pir Tajdin. Secondly, it is mentioned in this Ginan that Pir Sadruddin would be on horse and Sayyid Imam Shah on the elephant, making the dignity of Sayyid Imam Shah more than Pir Sadruddin. This Ginan therefore relates to the Imam Shahis.
- 2) Take another example, there is one Ginan being recited as yet in the Jamatkhana. This is *Pa'r karo bera Gurji*. The name of the composer is given Pir Adam Shah. However, his identity is not known among the many scholars whom I have consulted. I was informed that it was composed by Sayyid Mushaq Ali, the father of Sayyid Didar Ali, but it could not be substantiated. In Bombay, there is an Ismaili Graveyard between Khadak Jamatkhana and Kandi Mola Jamatkhana in Dongri. On its main gate, there was a barber called Sayyid Hussaini, who had great leaning towards the Ismaili faith. He had composed this Ginan by giving the name of a certain Pir Adam Shah. The Ismailis welcomed it and inserted in the text of the Ginan.

There are so many such Ginans on which much work has to be done.

After Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj

After Mukhi Lalji Devraj, people started to work on only those Ginans which were published by Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj in Khojki and Gujrati during his lifetime. No new work was done after the

death of Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj. Some people thought that these published Ginans are enough, and there is no need to publish more Ginans. Subsequent publications on Ginans include only those Ginans which are published by Mukhi Lalji Devraj. This has hampered efforts to retrieve part of our lost heritage.

It is said that Mukhi Lalji Devraj had collected over 1700 old manuscripts. Where are these manuscripts? Instead of preservation, the bulk of manuscripts according to W.Ivanow, Azim Nanji and Poonawala was destroyed, burned or buried. In 1908, Juma Bhagat (1868-1935) had surprised the court by producing an old manuscript of the Ginans of some 343 years old on August 5, 1908 in the Haji Bibi Case. He also produced one another piece dating 1576 C.E. There is not a single clue of the existence of these valuable manuscripts.

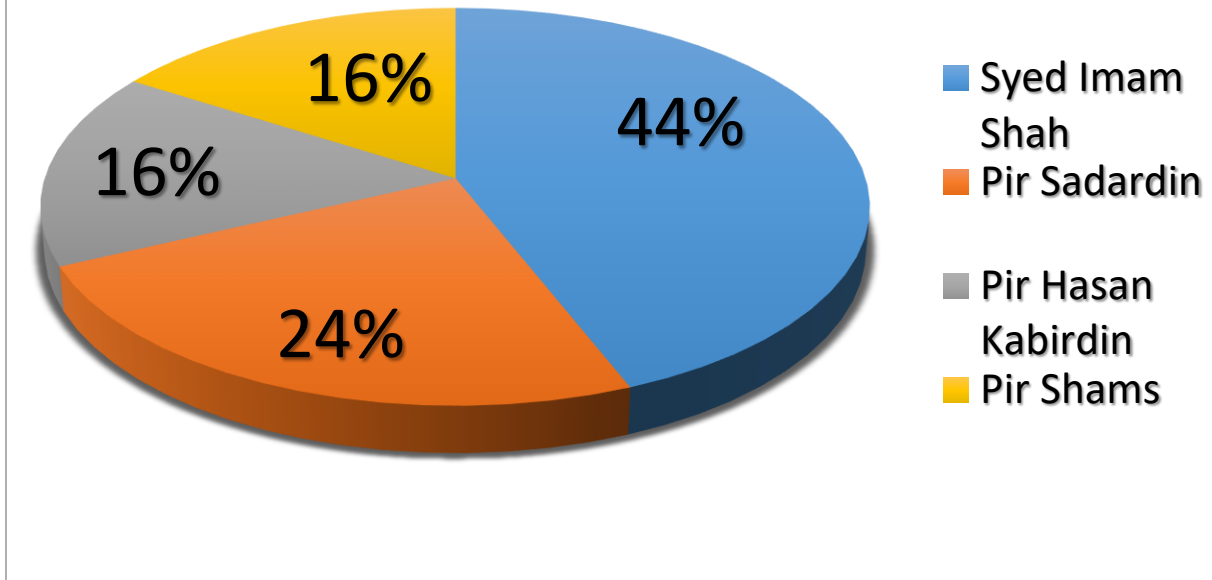
Unpublished Ginans

The list of Unpublished Ginans which I will present are as follows:

1. AJAB GAZAB TAME SUNO MUNIVAR BHAI
2. EK DIN EVO AVASE-RE HOYESE HAL-HALKAR
3. GAI-RE GAI TERI UMAR PRANI
4. GUR DIVA GUR CHA(N)DRUNA
5. HAM DIL KHALAQ YA ALI
6. JAG BA(N)DA TU(N) JAG-RE
7. KAR-LIYO BA(N)DE JIVA(N)TA MEDA
8. ME(N) VARI VARI
9. MORA SAHEB SUBHAN
10. NATRIYE(N) KHEL JUG-MA RACHAVIYO
11. PEH(N)-JO SAHEB-NA SAMARIYE(N) BANA
12. SATGUR AVIYA KAYE(N) APANE DUVAR
13. TUJ VINA AME EKLA
14. GUR-MAT GAM MAHE(N) PIR-JI AYA
15. AMRA-PURI-NA GURE MOHOL BANAYA
16. CHANOTAR GAM-MA RAMO BABO CHHE MUKHI
17. CHA(N)DRA-BHAN SUR-BHAN DADA-NA CHELA
18. KHETO MUKHI SHAHA DARAGE CHALEA
19. MUKHI-KU(N) PIRE BULA-KAR KAHIYA
20. BA(N)GALA DESE GURE KAREA PIYAN
21. DHAN DHAN AJ-NU DHAN RIKHISAR AMAR LIYO
22. DHOL MANGAVO JUGE CHAR-NA
23. EK SHABD GUR MUKHE SUNEEO
24. KUCHH KAR-LO BHAIYA
25. PREM-JI PUCHHE APANA JIVU(N)-NA PIR

The above 25 Unpublished Ginans contain following weightage according to Pirs and Sayyids.

Pirs and Sayyids



Man Samjaani Motti

This is one of the most popular Giranths, but unfortunately only 401 verses can be found of this Giranth out of 500. I found one manuscript containing all 500 verses, but that manuscript was completely destroyed.

Unpublished Ginans

Mukhi Lalji Devraj did not visit Punjab to unearth the Ginanic manuscripts. In 1951, Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbouy, the founder President of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan received a Ginan from Multan, which was not in the previous old publications. He verified and then included it in the text of the Ginans and then other Associations also followed it. This Ginan was *Satgur Padharia A'apann'e Duar, a'apann'e kem kar'ne paiy'en lagiye'n*. This indicates that unpublished Ginans that do not appear in the publications of Mukhi Lalji Devraj are checked and verified and then included by the authorized Institutions like the Tariqah Board.

Ali Jan Damani (Independent Scholar), "Nakhlanki Gita."

I wish to present a paper, which I have extracted from my understanding of the giranth "Naklanki Gita", on the misapprehension of two commonly found words in the ginans that is "Khand" and "Deep". I have divided my presentation into five parts. In the first part, I will give a brief introduction of Syed Imam Shah, to whom this granth is attributed. The second part will deal with the introduction and previous works on the granth. The third and the main part of this paper would focus on the difference between "Khand" and "Deep". In the fourth part, I will present some reasons for the mistranslation of these two words and their usage as synonymous. The

fifth and the final part will highlight the rich dimensions that this granth provides, followed by my concluding remarks.

The Composer of the Giranth

The composition of the giranth “Naklanki Gita” is attributed to Syed Imam Shah. His name was Imamuddin, surnamed Abdur Rahim. He was born in Uchh most probably in 1430. He was the youngest of the eighteen children of Pir Hassan Kabirdin (d. 1470). He did not receive Piratan (office of the Pir) during his lifetime and also was never designated as an official Pir by Imam of the time.

He however, preached the Ismaili faith in different parts of the subcontinent. The centre of his mission was Gujarat and Kathiawar. Tradition relates that, he also visited Multan to revise the old rituals that were implemented by Pir Shams (d. 1356). He composed multifarious ginans and giranths, which reflect his piety and devotion towards Ismailism. Compositions that are attributed to Syed Imam Shah are a mixture of various Indic languages and themes, ranging from the ground of spirituality to modern cosmology.

Ismailism owes a great debt to Syed Imam Shah for his valuable services which he rendered. Tradition has it that he died in 1513. He is buried in Pirana, Ahmadabad, India. One must note the fact that these traditional dates of his life span vary in different sources from about one year to nearly a decade.

Previous works on the Giranth

Naklanki Gita is a mystical composition, and a very important part of the vast treasure of the Satpanth literature of South Asian Regions. The term *Naklank* is a combination of two words, *Na*, which means no, and *kalank*, which means spot. Hence, Naklank means spotless or stainless. The term Naklank refers to the name of the tenth Avatara of Vishnu in his form as the Shia Imam. The word *Gita* has been derived from the Hindu mythology and it literally means Sacred Divine Song. Thus, I will translate Naklanki Gita as Psalm of Naklank.

The subject matter covered in Naklanki Gita is so vast that it forces the scholars to write that, “An entire science text book could be constructed from it. Its language is a mixture of prose and poetry, its rhythm is similar to the *shloks* of the Hindu Puranas and other ancient Hindu scriptures. Despite the fact that its vocabulary is rustic, the scientific ideas it presents and the examples and comparisons it provides to explain most advance theories are simple, elegant and within common everyday experiences. Its traditional tune (*ra'g*) is not accessible. Most of the manuscripts which contain this giranth fail to identify its *ra'g*. (See figure 1.)

There have been a number of attempts to interpret it. I would like to highlight a few of them here. Mr. Shiraz Pradhan wrote an article on “Naklanki Gita” nearly in 25 pages. His write-up serves as an academic tool to interpret it. It mainly focused on its scientific notion. However, his article failed to identify the difference between *Khand* and *Deep*. Mr. Pyarali Jiwa, the Chair person of the Association for the Study of Ginans, is the only person to have made its English transliteration.

“Khand” and “Deep” are two of the most common words found in ginans. According to my study, there is no other ginan or Giranth, giving a detailed comment regarding the difference between these two words except Naklanki Gita.

The meaning of Deep

The term *deep* or *mahadeep* is a Sanskrit word, which literally means continent. The continent refers to the continuous and mass expanse of land. The world is divided into 7 continents. Most of the historic geographical sources also claim the division of earth into seven continents. Few Khojki manuscripts also support it. In addition, the Naklanki Gita also states the similar thing in the following wordings:

Prathamī mahe'n sa't deep chh'e
"There are seven continents on earth".

The Naklanki Gita repeats the word *Deep* approximately 35 times. This word has been used in two major contexts. One is that to express the love towards the Imam by declaring that he is the sole person who could create, sustain and destroy his creation. The other is to explain the geographical structure of the earth. This is related to a scientific notion in the Ginans. An example of usage of this word in the Ginans is mentioned below in a verse taken from a Ginan attributed to Pir Sadardin.

Sami Raja Jampudeep'e umayo, Vela te karjo Prabhu a'avana
"O'Lord! In the sub-continent (*jampudeep*), you have been supplicated. O'Master! Make your arrival soon."

The meaning of Khand

The term *khand* is derived from the Sanskrit word *khaadee*, which means a bay. Apart from the discussion of origin of the word; let us now try to interpret it. A bay is a broad inlet of the sea where the land curves inwards. A larger bay is called a gulf. (See figure 2.)

The word *khand* occurs 31 times in the Naklanki Gita, twice in two major contexts. One is that to express the love towards the Imam by declaring that he is the sole person who could create, sustain and destroy his creation. Other is to explain geographically the structure of the earth. This is related to a scientific notion in the Ginans. An interesting fact to note is that one would always find the word *khand* with the number nine in the Ginans. For example, the first verse of the Ginan of Pir Shams "*Eji Sami tamari vadi mahe'n Gur Bhirma*", reads:

Eji Sami tamari vadi mahe'n, Gur Bhirma Sinchann'ha'r,
Nav'e khand'ma sincha ropia, Sami sinch'e anant apar.

"O' Lord! In your garden, the Guide (Prophet Muhammad) is the Gardener. He has watered and planted in the nine bays, while the Lord showers his mercy beyond limit.

We have briefly discussed above the interpretation of the word *khand*. Some writers have translated it as the *continent*. For instance, in the printed book of Anant Akhado, the word *khand* is translated as the *continent* which seems incorrect. Thus, we observe that both *Khand* and *Deep* are translated in the meaning of the continent by some scholars. We shall now analyze a few major reasons for the mistranslation of these two terms and their usage as synonymous.

Lack of command over Indic languages

Ginans are the mystical compositions of the Ismaili Pirs. Ginans were brought forth in different parts of the subcontinent, in which multiple words of different languages are found. Tradition

relates that ginans were composed in more than 40 languages and 36 melodies. Despite of the fact that tradition mentions the usage of more than 40 languages, no more than 15 to 17 languages are found in the ginans, which is even less than the half of the number found in oral and written traditions. It implies that a lot of the literature has been lost over time and scholars have identified different reasons for this loss.

The point to note here is that ginans are a mixture of various languages whether we find 40 languages or just 15. Therefore, before studying ginans one must have knowledge of different languages, notably those prevalent the South Asian regions. Not only this but without a command on South Asian languages, such as Sanskrit, Prakrit, Gujarati, Sindhi, Marathi, Urdu, Punjabi etc., one cannot work on the ginans from an academic point of view.

Lack of criticism over the texts of Ginans

Ginans are an integral part of different rituals of worship and they are devotionally recited in the Jamatkhana. Beyond their role in worship, the ginans permeate in many ways communal and individual life. At a communal level, the commencement of any function or gathering; be it religious or secular, is marked by a short Koranic recitation followed by one from the ginans. During sermons, religious discussions and in religious education materials, ginanic stanzas are often cited as proof-texts. At a personal and family level too, ginans are used in many different contexts: individual verses can be quoted as proverbs and even verses can be cited in homes to bring blessings.

Recitation of ginans has always been emphasized more than the meaning and criticism on the text. It is almost of no importance for the reciters to which language the text which is being recited by them belongs and what meaning a single piece of text brings when interpreted using a diversified set of languages. For example: a single word, might have a different meanings in Gujarati than in Punjabi. Perhaps the greatest obstacle for further studies on the ginanic literature is a general absence of textual criticism on the literature.

Difficulties in reading accessible manuscripts

The beginning of the 20th century brought a revolution in the field of ginanic study. Up till then, lithographed books were the common feature. Founded in 1903 by Mukhi Lalji Devraj, the Sindhi Printing Press became the house of official publication for the Indian Ismaili literature. Although the publication of ginans inaugurated by Mukhi Lalji Devraj unified the text of the ginans, it lacked proper editing, verification and translation.

Following the publications of Lalji Devraj, the tradition of manuscripts began to disappear slowly and gradually. Even in modern times most of the scholars refer to the publications of Lalji Devraj because of the fact that its text is more reliable than any other publication. However, one must not ignore the fact that the publication of Lalji Devraj contains only text whereas the scribes used to mention different things related to Ginans in their manuscripts. For example, sometimes the reader may find maps, mysterious numbers, numerical boxes and other different drawings and traditional designs inside the manuscripts. Unfortunately, this element is only found in manuscripts and very few scholars who can analyze the text of manuscripts, which has made limitations in their understanding in modern times.

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Handwritten text in a script, likely Urdu or Persian, consisting of approximately 15 lines of text. The text is written in black ink on aged, slightly yellowed paper. The script is dense and appears to be a form of calligraphy or a specific dialect. The lines are roughly horizontal and fill most of the page area below the header.

Figure 1.



Figure 2.

Panel - Art and Music

Ambreen Shehzad Hussaini (University of Victoria), “Choreography of Islamic Calligraphy: A Labour of Love? A Case Study of Pakistani Artist Mohammad Ismaili Gulgee.”

In 1982, a late dark night, three soldiers knocked on the door of a big house at Karachi Pakistan. A gentleman opened the door and one among them asked “Are you the great Gulgee?” He replied, “I am Gulgee, whether great or not it’s for the world to decide”. This short essay is about this humble artist who was “a man larger than life”. Before introducing Gulgee and describing about his life, I will first briefly outline the context of Pakistan, keeping in consideration the impact of contemporary Western art on Middle Eastern and Islamic art.

Pakistan is an Urdu-speaking Muslim state that draws its cultural heritage from both pan-Islamic and Indian traditions. Before its creation in 1947, the people of Pakistan have been exposed to colonization, civil and international conflict and socio-political upheavals. Wijdan Ali has argued that these political ruptures have badly affected the visual artistic culture of Pakistan and traumatized its cultural identity. According to her, the handful of artists who tried to revive the arts in Pakistan failed to influence younger generations of artists. In my opinion, however, her conclusions remain a matter of debate. In her survey of the development of modern and contemporary Middle Eastern and Islamic art, Wijdan Ali has argued that by the turn of the

twentieth century, Western art forms such as easel painting and sculpture had replaced the traditional arts in Muslim contexts. She says, “As economic, political and military ties with the West were strengthened, the resulting physical and cultural foreign domination led to a loss of confidence in the artists’ own heritage, and to an inferiority complex towards the past”. However, the situation shifted by the middle of the twentieth century when new art movements began to take shape in which these same artists, having mastered Western artistic theories and styles, began to incorporate in their new works, “the only original art form to survive the atrophy of the rest of the tradition” – classical calligraphy. I would argue that, though once could notice overriding influence of the West, contemporary Muslim artists, however, utilize their imaginative and creative skills to bring excitement and diversity in Islamic art. Modern calligraphy seem more expressive and embrace different genres (e.g. graffiti, and gestural calligraphy) without subjugating the tradition. This situation is also reflected in the contemporary art scene in Pakistan. The renowned painter and calligrapher, Sadequain (1923-1987), was deeply affected by the inequalities and injustices he saw in society and expressed his strong views on his colorful painted canvases. He also spent some time in Paris developing his oeuvre. However, he is best known for leading a renaissance of Islamic calligraphy in Pakistan, fusing this classical Islamic art form with an expressionist painting style. Many of Sadequain’s works incorporate Qur’anic verses and his pieces based on Qur’an 55:18 (Sūrat al-Raḥmān) are particularly famous. Another Pakistani artist who was creative and inventive in his artworks, and has also gained international success is Gulgee to which I shall turn my attention now.

Gulgee: Early life and education

Abdul Mohammad Gulgee Ismaili (1926-2007), popularly known by his nickname, Gulgee (meaning “the revered flower” in Urdu), is one of Pakistan’s most eminent artists who brought vibrancy, grace, and sophistication to the tradition of Islamic art. Gulgee was in direct line of succession of the master craftsmen who inlaid the Taj Mahal and Itmad-ud-Doulah’s mausoleum with precious metals and rare stones. Despite the fact that he was trained as an engineer, since his childhood, he wanted to become an artist. However, his family’s economic conditions did not allow him and he had to rely on scholarships for his career choices. He completed his B.Sc. (Hons.) in Engineering, with top marking, from Aligarh University; later moved to Columbia for a Master’s degree in Hydraulics and then to Harvard University for Masters of Science in Soil Mechanics. Before going aboard for his postgraduate studies, he was the youngest lecturer of engineering at Aligarh that the university had ever appointed. Considering he was never trained as an artist, I assume he never dishonors his inner call to be an artist; and must be practicing art all his life.

An inner call

In 1950, Gulgee requested for an appointment with the Aga Khan III to share his passion towards art. In that meeting, the Aga Khan III impelled him that the newly born independent country Pakistan requires engineers. By this time, Gulgee had already revealed his artistic work in a solo exhibition at Stockholm. Few writers claim that “Prince’s advice fell on deaf ears”; he defied it. I would argue it is indeed not true. Gulgee was working as a Design Engineer at Stockholm at that time. He was later appointed as an Executive Engineer, United Nations Economic Development Team, Baluchistan, Pakistan from 1951 to 1953. He then worked as a Deputy Director, Central Engineering Authority, Government of Pakistan, Karachi till 1955 until he became a Liaison Officer at the High Commission of Pakistan in Ottawa. In addition to this evidence, recently, I asked one of his friends regarding Gulgee’s transition from an engineer to an artist. He said Gulgee told him that the Aga Khan III advised him not to do art for a certain period of time (i.e. three years or so) and Gulgee did not pick up a brush during this time. In 1954, Gulgee re-appear as a competent Pakistani artist when he donated a portrait of the Aga

Khan III to Karachi Arts Council which was later auctioned at the highest price. I certainly envisage that Gulgee managed to efficiently balance his both roles (i.e. an engineer and an artist) for a long time because his contribution in two important dams of Pakistan, named Mangla (completed in 1967) and Warsak (completed in 1981), cannot be ignored. On the other hand, his artistic representation of Pakistani culture is also very rich as he sketched and/or painted not only state/royal elites but also local people, festivals, and landscapes.

Stone portraits – A re-invented technique

After 1954, he was more active in his artistic endeavors as he was also experimenting multiple mediums and diversified techniques. In 1957, with a reputation as Pakistan's most talented young artist, Gulgee visited Kabul fulfilling a royal invitation by Afghanistan's King Zahir Shah. During this visit, he toured a marble factory and was mesmerized by the magnificent diversity of colors and shades of onyx. He expressed his desire to make King's portrait using onyx pieces and eventually the stone portrait appeared as an extraordinary work. His technique of stone portrait is astonishing in which precious stones were cut into little pieces in order to form a mosaic portrait of lapis lazuli. Regarding Gulgee's crafted stone portraits, an art critic in *Asian Post London*, wrote in 1983:

He has singlehandedly resuscitated the Byzantine art of mosaic portraiture and has taken the idiom many steps further; he has humanized the faces and invested them with 20th century sensibility and consciousness.

Gestural Qur'anic Calligraphy

From the 1960s, he began incorporating Qur'anic and other Arabic calligraphy into his works. Annemarie Schimmel observes "a strong mystical feeling" especially in his calligraphic pieces on al-asmā' al-Ḥusnā (the most beautiful names of God) and his abstract work on the *nuqta* series. It is also evident from the literature that he works like a barefoot panther with a high energy and enthusiasm. In an interview, Gulgee mentions the religious or spiritual aspects of his work,

For a calligraphic piece I might write an Āyāt [i.e. verse of the Qur'an] 50 times but whatever I do have nothing to do with the ultimate result... there is a certain organisation that is derived at the intuitive level. No, not with the mind or with the faculties of reasoning, but in a state when I become a part of the Universe, an order which exists in everything – in the atom, in the tiger, in the trees, everything in life, and in the movement of the heavenly bodies. In everything, there is a certain unity... You're a part of God and you are a part of the Universe... You know that you're in that state of ecstasy, in that state of mind, when you work.

Qur'anic Sculptures

In addition to his sketches, photography, oil portraits, stone portraits, calligraphic paintings; his three-dimensional Qur'anic calligraphic metal scriptures are incredible. He can proficiently mold "a metal sculpture with every corner and every face inscribed with Korani Āyāt in all the different calligraphic style". His epigraphic miḥrāb at King Faisal Mosque Islamabad holds a chapter from the Qur'an (Sūrat al-Raḥmān) in Eastern Kufic Script.

Regardless of the fact that Pakistani society/government did not provide enough resources for art education and that Gulgee was never formally trained as an artist, he was indeed a polyvalent artist who was able to use multiple mediums (that includes pencil, crayons, brush,

ink, oil, copper, bronze, onyx, lapis lazuli, gold, silver, diamond, and rubies etc.) without subjugating the tonalities of his subject. Nevertheless, gestural calligraphic paintings were more close to his heart. Due to his inventive nature and his passion in art, Gulgee formulated new artistic vocabulary of: a) gestural calligraphy; b) lapis-lazuli stone-portrait; and c) unusual Qur'an-shaped mihrāb. Certainly, it is difficult to find someone with such great artistic skills not only in Pakistan but also elsewhere. His work is internationally recognized. Also, the government of Pakistan awarded him with several awards including *Hilal-e-Imtiaz* (Government's highest civilian award) in 1994. His work and life seem very colorful, vibrant and adventurous; contrarily his death is as tragic and perplexing. He was brutally murdered along with his wife and a maid in his house at Karachi in 2007. He left behind his artist son Amin Gulgee who is a sculptor and jewelry designer.

Karim Gillani (ITREB Kenya), "Rethinking Ginans: Sound, Recitation and Migration."

For several centuries ginans have played an integral part of the Khoja Ismaili tradition. Community members learn, memorize, and sing ginans as part of their daily lives. Thus far, ginans have been studied mostly from textual and historical perspectives, however, it is through hearing, reciting and performing that one connects with spiritual and cultural origins. This research is based extensively on dialogical and ethnomusicological approaches i.e. oral sources, participative observations, performances and interviews. Through musical structure and poetic meter the research shows the close cultural proximity of ginans with other known musical genres like kafi, wai, bait and dhal traditions of Sind, Punjab and Gujarat. Moreover, this presentation will highlight the musical journey of individuals and the community, simultaneously examining tradition, transmission and transformation. Challenges and opportunities arise as a result of migration, in this case into Canada. Traditional and innovative approaches of individuals are highlighted. Tensions between new and old become apparent in the re-creation, re-shaping and re-identification of one's own meaning to the performance.

Chorshanbe Goibnazarov (University of Central Asia), "Musical Instruments and Construction of Identities: The *Rubab* as an Expression of Religious, Cultural and National Identities."

This paper introduces the *Pāmīrī rubob* a musical instrument that plays a significant role in ceremonies and ritual practices among the Pāmīrī Ismā'īlī Muslims in Tajikistan, and it serves as an emblem and marker of ethnic, religious, cultural and national identities. I argue that these identities are interconnected and are expressed through the music, the instruments, and craftsmanship with which the instruments are manufactured. Added to this are the anecdotes and memories associated with the instruments, which give further meaning and context to the local musical expression.

The musical culture of the Pāmīrī Ismā'īlīs is rich and diverse. Music and musical performances play a significant role in the life of the people of the Gorno-Badakhshan-Autonomous Oblast (hereinafter GBAO). Most of the meetings and gatherings in the Pamirs are accompanied by music; it is very rare that music is not played at such events. Almost every household has at least one musical instrument. The most common instruments of the Pamirs and are the pāmīrī *rubob* and the *daf*. Almost all men, starting at ten or twelve years of age, can play the *rubob*. *Daf* is also played by almost all men in GBAO, and in some parts of the Pamirs, it is also played by women to mark special occasions, in Shughnon, Rushon and Vanj districts, for example.

Pāmīrī Ismāʿīlī identities

As is in the nature of identities, social identities in the GBAO are fluid and subject to change. People in the GBAO utilize various means of identifying themselves on the bases of geographic, political, cultural, or ethnic characteristics, as well as religious ones. These factors lead to the emergence of multiple identities, which are constructed, ascribed, and acquired through political, social, religious, and cultural forces and circumstances. These identities, in turn, are projected through various expressive art forms, such as music.

The Pāmīrī Ismāʿīlī communities consist of a diverse group of people who speak several different languages that are today identified with the common ethnonym “pāmīrī” by those within and outside the communities. This is a recent political phenomenon that has emerged from the process of assimilation into the larger so-called “title nations” and the use of terms such as “pamirskiye tadjiki” or “tojikon-i pomīr” by Russian and Tajik scholars to refer to the people of the Pamirs. These hegemonic forces compelled the once disparate communities of the GBAO to unite into a new ethnic identity – to become pāmīrī. This socio-geographic category has acquired ethnic dimensions, “whereas in the past, it denoted nothing more than the place where a person lived”. Thus the Pāmīrī are now officially considered to be Tajiks regardless of the language they speak and other ethnic characteristics. The nationality of all the people in the GBAO is seen to be Tajik, and, “. . . all people declared themselves as belonging to one . . . and identity became univocal . . .” Thus, the interactions of different forces, such as politics, culture, religion, and geography have played a significant role in shaping the identity of the community. Culturally, ethnically, and geographically they considered themselves “pāmīrī,” and politically and officially they were seen as Tajiks, with their nationality being registered as Tajik on their passports. Music serves as a site where these different national and ethnic identities continue to be articulated and negotiated.

The Soviet regime and local cultures

The Soviet state policy was not particularly detrimental to local cultures, and actually contributed to the development of differentiated ethnic categories. It also led to the organization, promotion, codification, and popularity of various traditional cultures. Tishkov notes, “despite many crimes committed by the Soviet government against ethnic groups . . . no ethnic groups disappeared from the map of the Soviet Union during the 20th century.” In fact, cultural traditions were documented, academically described, and staged in numerous theatres, operas, and museums, and folk music and dance groups were established. During the Soviet period, all forms of artistic expression were heavily edited and curated, so as to conform to the ideological mandate of the Soviet state policy. This, however, ended up nurturing local cultures, especially musical cultures, which later served as a basis for nation building in the nascent Tajik nation state.

Once independence was thrust upon the Central Asian States, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, cultural and religious expression was fostered in order to advance nation building and (religious) identity-formation. The different States targeted traditional musical genres, appropriating and absorbing them into their new State-based national cultures, with modifications to accommodate nationalist goals and objectives. Thus, in post-Soviet Central Asia, artistic expression, and especially musical performances, became central to the expression and development of identities at the national and sub-national levels.

The music and musical Instruments

Music and musical instruments have been specifically adopted for religious and spiritual purposes. Spirituality has often been expressed through various forms of artistic activity in the Muslim world. Islamic spirituality is delineated in architecture, paintings and music. In fact, it is very much a part of the tradition of Islam to “consider beauty to be a Divine quality and one of God’s name is *al-Jamil* (the beautiful) and [it] teaches that God loves beauty.” Through these artistic activities, culture and faith are closely intertwined, and it is here that Muslim identities are powerfully imagined and expressed in all their local and global diversity. Art is a part of what makes a heritage and culture alive, and not merely a show piece but as an integral part of the everyday life of the community.

The Pāmīrī rubob

Musical instruments, apart from being recognized and attractive to individuals because of their sound, shape, and aura, have become symbols of tradition and identity for nations, sub-national regions, and ethnic groups. They have specific cultural meanings and these meanings are related “to a web of local cultural relations which position them in local musical tradition.” They are not only commodities, but are meaningful by virtue of the cultural value they assume at a given moment in history. As Appadurai argues in another context, “we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things.”

The Pāmīrī *rubob*, or *rubobcha*, plays a significant role in the religious and cultural lives of the Pāmīrī Ismā’īlī Muslims in the GBAO. The Pāmīrī *rubob* is a wooden, short-necked lute with six gut or nylon strings. It is similar to the Tibetan and Nepalese lutes and belongs to a series of high-mountain lute types from a special musical region in mountainous regions. The instrument comes in various sizes and shapes, but normally it is about two and a half feet long and is made from the wood of an apricot, mulberry, or walnut tree. Its circular soundboard, called the “head,” is covered with thick leather fastened with iron nails. Several ornamental holes are drilled into the sound chamber to facilitate sound production. The *rubob* is played with a wedge-shaped wooden plectrum (*zakhmak*), tied to the instrument with a string. A piece of wood located on the instrument’s head, called the *kharak* (little donkey), acts as a bridge, and is used for tuning the instrument, along with six pegs (*gushak*). The sixth peg is placed in the middle of the instrument’s neck.

When is the rubob played?

The *rubob* is played at various occasions by the Pāmīrī Ismā’īlī Muslims, but mostly during the performance of *qasīda-khonī*. During the Soviet regime in the GBAO, the *rubob* and its performance underwent a profound change and decline. At that time, anything that was closely associated with religion was banned and suppressed. Since the instrument was part of a religious ceremony, the *rubob* never entered the musical schools, college, or institutes. It was a musical instrument played only secretly within the family circle. In the middle of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the *rubob* began to be played outside ritual contexts and was included in official cultural events as part of the orchestra of folk instruments (show the photograph.) After the breakdown of the Soviet system, the *rubob* re-emerged, and modified versions of the instrument were produced. Though still fashioned in the old form and retaining

aspects of the old playing techniques, the instrument makers now utilize different religious and nationalist decorative patterns on the instruments.

In its basic form, each part of the instrument is ascribed a sacred meaning metaphorically assigned to the physical and spiritual worlds, thus acquiring special status in the cultural and national schemes. The instrument, through its function in the music culture, as well as its place in the social and cultural life of the Pāmīrī Ismā'īlīs, expresses various identities of and to the people.

Panel - Religious Education

Aleem Karmali (ITREB Canada), “Are the “Seven Pillars” Still Relevant in Contemporary Nizārī Thought? The Presentation of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān in 21st Century Nizārī Religious Education.”

Most Wikipedia pages related to Ismā'īlism have a sidebar menu with links to related topics, among which the second section listed is “Seven pillars” that links to an article called “Seven pillars of Ismailism.” I cite Wikipedia here for its near ubiquity as a popular source of online general knowledge and that it takes as fact that all branches of Ismā'īlīs adhere to this doctrinal formulation. In comparison, the Nizārī Ismā'īlī secondary religious education curriculum, developed by the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), discusses al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's contributions to the Fāṭimids, including his legal work, the *Da'ā'im al-Islām*. However, the curriculum does not mention the “seven pillars” framework elaborated in that work.

Assuming this is a deliberate omission, what does this say about the relevance of the “seven pillars” as a doctrinal formulation for Nizārīs today? I will explore this through an historiographical lens, arguing that the modern curriculum endeavors to present essential principles for Nizārī students to learn and its omission suggests it is no longer an important formulation, based on the views of the current imamate.

An historiographical lens

In this paper, I am attempting to read the IIS' Secondary Curriculum historiographically to glean from the text how it has been shaped by the historical context in which it has been produced. As Aziz Esmail, a Governor and former Dean of the IIS, has written,

...if an essential aspect of history consists of interpretation, it is bound to be influenced by the prevailing circumstances of the period in which the historian himself happens to be living. The historian is but a product of his times; his judgements are as much influenced by the social circumstances, intellectual assumptions and moral quests of his age, as are anybody else's.

Thus, the curriculum is not telling history objectively. As an educational document, it can be assumed that it is constructed as an attempt to teach Nizārī students what the imamate institutions consider important and relevant for students to learn today.

Contemporary approaches to Nizārī Ismā'īlī religious education

There are two official mechanisms for Nizārī religious education by the institutions of Aga Khan IV, the present Nizārī imam. The first is the imam's direct guidance, particularly *farmans*

delivered to closed Nizārī congregations, read daily in *jamatkhanas*. Second, religious education is conducted in various countries through the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Boards (ITREBs), using global curricula for Pre-School, Primary and Secondary students, produced by the IIS in London.⁵ Connected to this, the IIS runs a Masters-level program called the Secondary Teacher Education Programme whose graduates teach the Secondary Curriculum as full-time ITREB employees. The IIS, established by Aga Khan IV in 1977 CE, is under his leadership as Chairman of the Board of Governors. Thus, while these materials may not necessarily be directly developed or reviewed by the imam, they are created through his patronage and shaped by his direct guidance.

The Secondary Curriculum, still under development, describes itself as being “civilizational, humanistic and normative” in its approach. It endeavors to present a diversity of Muslim interpretations on various questions and issues, exploring the complexity of Muslim civilizations, while also presenting normative Nizārī beliefs and values. Aga Khan IV explained this approach as taking “a holistic, civilizational approach to Islamic studies, rather than emphasizing the more narrow domain of theological dialectic. What some describe as a clash of civilizations in our modern world is, in my view, a clash of ignorances. This is why education about religious and cultural heritage is so critically important...”

Ismā’īlī jurisprudence in its historical context

During the early development of Islamic jurisprudence, the Ismā’īlīs were in a period of concealment (*dawr al-satr*). On establishing the Fāṭimid caliphate in 909 CE, ruled by the Ismā’īlī imam-caliphs, they governed diverse peoples with a majority Sunnī population, thus requiring an Ismā’īlī system of law. Al-Qāḍī al-Nu’mān served the first four Fāṭimid imam-caliphs, ultimately becoming chief judge of the Fāṭimid state. Under the close supervision of the imams, he wrote a number of works on law, *ḥadīth*, history, and Ismā’īlī esoteric interpretations. He is known for elaborating Fāṭimid Ismā’īlī law, culminating in the *Da’ā’im al-Islām*, which was endorsed by Imam al-Mu’izz as the official code of the Fāṭimid state. According to Poonawala, “Isma’īli jurisprudence began with Qāzi No’mān and ended with him. Before him, there was no distinct Isma’īli jurisprudence, and after him there was no significant development except glosses, repetition, and restatement.”

Volume one of the *Da’ā’im* deals with acts of worship, articulating a “seven pillar” framework, based on the authority of Imam Ja’far al-Ṣādiq. The pillars from the *Da’ā’im* are: *walāya* (obedience or devotion to the Imams), *ṭahāra* (ritual purity), *ṣalāt* (prayer), *zakāt* (alms), *ṣawm* (fasting), *ḥajj* (pilgrimage), and *jihād* (holy war). *Walāya* embodies the doctrine of imamate and was considered the preeminent pillar. The *Da’ā’im* is the first work of Islamic law to give *walāya* legal status.

Historically, the Musta’lī-Ṭayyibī Ismā’īlīs of Yemen and India preserved much of the extant Fāṭimid literature and still consider the *Da’ā’im* their most important legal work. Conversely, the Nizārīs largely lost touch with Fāṭimid literature, and a diverse array of religious and literary traditions developed independently in South Asia, Central Asia, Persia, and Syria.

Al-Qāḍī al-Nu’mān in the IIS secondary curriculum

The IIS’ *Muslim Societies and Civilisations vol. 2* student reader has one unit on Fāṭimid history. It devotes four pages to al-Qāḍī al-Nu’mān, describing his teaching and learning sessions in Cairo, a brief biography, a quote from al-Mu’izz to al-Nu’mān explaining the sources he should consult, his written works including those on law, the *majālis al-ḥikma* (sessions of wisdom),

and a quote about *'ilm al-bāṭin*, or esoteric knowledge.

The most relevant quote for the present discussion is: “It was largely due to the efforts of al-Qadi al-Nu‘man, under the guidance of Imam al-Mu‘izz, that a system of Fatimid law was developed. He presented this system in his great work *Da‘a‘im al-Islam* (‘Pillars of Islam’).” While it does mention the *Da‘a‘im*, there is no mention of the “seven pillars,” and the *Da‘a‘im* is described as “Fāṭimid law” not “Ismā‘īlī law.” Much more is written about the *majālis al-ḥikma*, including a three-paragraph quote from al-Nu‘mān emphasizing the concept of esoteric knowledge and that each person’s capacity to acquire knowledge varies, while leaving open-ended what actually constitutes esoteric knowledge. The only other mentions of al-Nu‘mān in the various Secondary Curriculum books is quoting him as a source of Shī‘ī *ḥadīths*.

Relevant perspectives of the contemporary Nizārī imamate

To understand the omission of the “seven pillars” from the IIS curriculum, it is important to examine some perspectives from Aga Khan IV’s imamate. One relevant quote is from his letter to the *Amman Message* conference: “Our historic adherence is to the Jafari Madhhab and other Madhahib of close affinity, and it continues, under the leadership of the hereditary Ismaili Imam of the time.” While placing the Ismā‘īlīs within the broader Ja‘farī *madhhab*, this statement also emphasizes that for Nizārīs, the ultimate authority on *sharī‘a* matters is the present imam, who is considered “the authority who makes the shariah relevant according to the needs of time.” At the same time, this conference sought to identify which *madhhabs* were historically legitimate, thus Aga Khan IV’s articulation in these terms. For the most part, the imamate frames the community as a *ṭarīqa*, emphasizing the importance of personal spiritual and intellectual search over legal and ritual formalism.

A second relevant quote is from Aga Khan IV’s speech at the IIS’ 25th anniversary graduation: “Traditions evolve in a context, and the context always changes, thus demanding a new understanding of essential principles.”¹⁷ Taken together, these two quotes suggest that the IIS, under the umbrella of the imam’s guidance, should work to ensure the truly essential principles of the Nizārī faith would be taught and that formulations from past contexts would either be omitted or contextualized. If a doctrinal formulation, such as the “seven pillars,” were still relevant to Nizārīs today, one would assume that it would be emphasized by the curriculum. Given that the Nizārīs had lost contact with Fāṭimid thought for centuries, there is no reason to believe this formulation should be considered an essential principle.

The Preamble of the global Nizārī Constitution, ordained in 1986, also provides insight, stating that “the Imams of the Ismaili Muslims have ruled over territories and peoples in various areas of the world at different periods of history and, in accordance with the needs of the time, have given rules of conduct and constitutions in conformity with the Islamic concepts of unity, brotherhood, justice, tolerance and goodwill.”¹⁸ In this view, the *Da‘a‘im* can be understood as meeting the specific needs of the Fāṭimids as a political entity ruled by the imams, catering to their need for a distinctly Ismā‘īlī legal articulation. It is, therefore, conceived of as a time-bound, contextual expression serving the needs of the imamate of that time.

The role of the Nizārī imamate is to guide the community through continuously changing historical contexts. If read historiographically, the IIS’ Secondary Curriculum is not simply telling Fāṭimid history, but is rather an expression of what is of contemporary relevance to the imamate today. This is not to say that the individual concepts contained within the “seven pillars” are necessarily irrelevant to Nizārīs today. But, the relative emphasis the curriculum gives to al-Qaḍī al-Nu‘mān’s role in the *majālis al-ḥikma* as compared to his role in developing

law suggests that the IIS views the principles of teaching and learning, and the esoteric aspects of faith, as more relevant for Nizārī Ismā‘īlī students in the 21st century than a focus on legal and ritual formalism, or on articulating a systematized doctrinal formulation based on a set number of “pillars.”

Daryoush Mohammad Poor (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “Problematising Pluralism among Ismailis: An Intellectual and Pedagogical Perspective.”

The concept of pluralism, its language and rhetoric have become part of the consciousness of Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims during the imamate of Aga Khan IV. Along with the pervasive use of the term and its exposition by the Imam, it has also been accompanied with a normative element which has had the effect of making it distinct from relativism. Thus, the concept of pluralism widely used in the speeches of the Imam and in his instructions (*farmans*) to his community have also found its way in the Secondary Curriculum developed by the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

At a descriptive level, pluralism seems to have been successfully deployed. However, at a more analytical, critical and normative level, the rhetoric around ‘pluralism’ does not seem yet to have been matched with an active intellectual, critical, and practical pedagogic engagement with it.

Focusing on selected aspects of the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) run by the Department of Graduate Studies at the IIS, in particular the field trip to Andalusia. This annual trip takes place in the Cathedral Mosque of Cordoba, the ruins and modern museum of Madinat Al-Zahra, the Alhambra palace of Granada, and contemporary museums and contemporary cultural productions.

However, the authors perceived a need to go beyond an essentialist ‘heritage’ approach to how the trip framed pluralism. This paper will present the steps made by the authors to develop among STEP students a more analytical, critical, informed and nuanced approach to pluralism. It will discuss the effectiveness of these steps in terms of STEP students’ development of critical and self-reflexive approaches to pluralism, both as an abstract intellectual concept and as a performance of pedagogic practice.

The paper will explore the ways in which current academic debates around Orientalism, pluralistic notions of identity, and cosmopolitanism, as well as historical constructions and critiques of ‘convivencia’ might be brought into creative conversation with the trip to Spain and with the wider STEP programme.

In particular, the authors are concerned about the students ability to develop an understanding of the factors that brought about the historical ‘convivencia’ of Medieval Spain, and the factors that caused it to catastrophically to collapse. Likewise, the authors are concerned about the need for a more dynamic understanding of pluralism.

In the case of Spain this might encompass the significance of the reassessment of Andalusia’s Muslim and Sephardic heritages in the construction of ‘new’ Spanish and Andalusian identities after the death of Franco in 1975, after forty years of fascist dictatorship that followed the 1936-9 Spanish Civil War (a conflict bloodier than Syria).

It is hoped that this more critical and contextualised approach to pluralism might significantly enhance graduate STEP teachers’ ability to engage their students in the philosophical and

pedagogic underpinnings of the IIS Secondary Curriculum, to promote strong pluralistic understandings and practices, in particular for STEP students from country-contexts that have undergone or are undergoing civil war, civil unrest, or sectarian strife.

Finally, this paper sets out to interrogate pluralism as a practice among a segment of the Ismaili community to assess the degree of their self-reflexive approach to the idea. The initial finding is that as much as there is extensive exhortation in defence and promotion of pluralism, it has not been matched by a theoretical and practical engagement in a critical and rational manner. The focus here would be to look at circumstances under which pluralism could fail, thus trying to eliminate errors and learning by experience.

Shelina Adatia (University of Ottawa), “‘Unwrapping’ Rahim’s Story: Giftedness and Ismaili Religious Education.”

The purpose of my study is to understand how to engage gifted students in Ismaili RE. My hypothesis is that engaging this student necessitates a profound understanding of student engagement; hence, my research explores the following question: *How can I, as a teacher, engage a secondary-level gifted student in Ismaili RE?* Below are my subsidiary questions:

- How does this student express engagement?
- What strategies can be implemented to engage this student?
- What is my role as a teacher in engaging this student?

Context

This study took place in Ottawa, Canada within the Ismaili community. Recently, the Ismaili secondary RE system has shifted from volunteers to professionals. The Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) facilitates this transition; thus, my research was conducted within this context. Canadian STEP classes, established in 2009, are managed by the Ismaili *Tariqah* and Religious Education Board (ITREB). Students aged eleven to sixteen voluntarily attend weekly classes; however, ages can vary depending on the local context.

Framing the Story: Literature Review

Student Engagement (SE)

This study assumes that all aspects of SE contribute to meaningful learning; yet, deep engagement or individual meaning-making is reflected through emotional and cognitive behaviours. Overall, the layers of perspective, classification, and hierarchy all add to the complexity of defining SE.

Giftedness

This study, mindful of the Canadian context, adopts the following definition: “An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001, p. A20).

How does this student express engagement?

The notion of engagement can be expressed in several forms. According to the Association for Bright Children of Ontario (ABC) (2012), examples of behavioural engagement may include talking extensively and asking numerous questions. Another form is emotional which may be communicated through such attributes as heightened sensitivity (see p. 39) and moral judgement (ABC, 2012). Lastly, cognitive engagement may involve such examples as the identification of unique relationships (see pp. 35, 39) and accelerated thought processes (ABC, 2012).

What strategies can be implemented to engage this student?

According to Kaplan (2003), “gifted students have innate strategies that facilitate their learning” (p. 165). However, Kaplan (2003) clarifies that while certain strategies are appropriate for the gifted, they were not designed specifically for this group thereby highlighting the potential for a direct or indirect application with non-gifted students.

One such strategy is an understanding of strengths and weaknesses (see pp. 32-35). This approach, described by Bauer (2012) in Ontario’s *Professionally Speaking*, is commonly known as compacting. Teachers pre-assess students to determine subject knowledge, and develop further strategies based on these results.

Afterwards, teachers may group students according to ability, providing the challenge they so deeply desire (ABC, 2012). Yet, I believe that this practice prevents students from benefitting from each other’s knowledge. Therefore, enrichment strategies wherein knowledge can be shared may be more suitable. These strategies, such as reading and presenting a complex article, provide opportunities for delving deeper into the curriculum as they allow students to engage with its complexities (Bauer, 2012). Moreover, they allow for meaningful interaction with the curriculum by connecting with students’ personal interests and urging them to think beyond (Little, 2012). Nevertheless, Stanley (1979) prefers acceleration claiming that enrichment does not meet the needs of gifted students (see p. 15).

A final strategy is withdrawal or congregated classes wherein gifted students are partially or fully pulled out of regular classes (Bauer, 2012). According to Delisle (1999), segregation of gifted from non-gifted fully addresses the needs of gifted students. However, Dar and Resh (1986) explain that while gifted students benefit, the non-gifted lose significantly more. They further add that with integration, the non-gifted students’ gain is far greater than the gifted students’ loss. In summary, I propose that enrichment strategies benefitting both the gifted and non-gifted student are most appropriate for engagement.

What is my role as a teacher in engaging this student?

According to Little (2012), the teacher must facilitate learning by providing opportunities for challenge. Understanding the curriculum is another key aspect of the teacher’s role as it is crucial for appropriate modification (VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh, 2005) (see pp. 37-39). Through this awareness, teachers can bring meaning to the curriculum (Little, 2012), and, as mentioned above, guide students beyond the prescribed content. Whilst any teacher plays a complex role in engagement, the task is even further complicated for the teacher of the gifted.

Connecting to Ismaili RE

Whilst the Canadian ITREB trains teachers in inclusion, I recall little instruction specific to giftedness. Furthermore, given that RE focuses on various domains such as social, moral, and intellectual growth, I suggest that acceleration of learning is not the answer. As mentioned on p. 14, enrichment strategies benefitting both the gifted and non-gifted seem most appropriate.

After all, the RE curricula aim to challenge all students by encouraging them to question assumptions and claims of religious truth (Simpson, 2012).

Tracing the Outline: Methodology and Methods

Design

This study adopts a qualitative design. It aims for depth – reflecting the benefit and importance of a qualitative versus quantitative approach (Blaxter *et al.*, 2010). Specifically, it strives for a meaningful understanding of engaging a gifted student thereby impacting my practice.

Strategy

I decided on action research in the form of a case study – specifically, the exploratory case study – to gain insight into engaging a gifted student (McNabb, 2009). Furthermore, I adopted a narrative approach. Like Clandinin (2007), I believe that the story is the most significant account of human experience. Consequently, it was most appropriate for sharing my participant's account.

Participants

- Rahim
- Teacher-Researcher
- Parents
- Teachers
- 'Experts'

Data Collection

- Interviews
- Reflective Journals
- Teaching Sessions

Data Analysis

- Framework Analysis

'Unwrapping' the Story: Findings and Analysis

Initially, Rahim had stopped attending RE classes because he felt disengaged. Now, Rahim (15.04.2012) admits that he *definitely felt engaged throughout* although *the debate was obviously the most engaging* (see p. 32). Rahim also appreciated the contemporary references and linking them back to the text (see p. 33). Only one question remained: Would he re-enter the RE system?

Rahim (15.04.2012) explained that he would *definitely be interested in classes at home so you can just focus on the material*. Time-permitting, he may be willing to join the external STEP classes, but would certainly continue his independent studies. Hence, Rahim's views on RE had shifted to a certain extent. Clearly, before a complete shift, Rahim would have to experience the value of the social world that is the RE classroom.

Looking Ahead

Successes and Learnings

Combining theoretical and practical perspectives has led me to realize that engaging a secondary-level gifted student in Ismaili RE requires a meaningful understanding of SE – particularly, regarding expression, strategies, and the role of the teacher. Furthermore, while this understanding is essential for effectively teaching all students, it is increasingly necessary when teaching the gifted. Although these conclusions are limited to my context, certain “fuzzy” generalizations can be made: i) gifted students tend to express their engagement more intensely; ii) they seem to benefit from enrichment strategies which are aligned with their strengths and weaknesses; and, iii) they appear to hold their teachers to a remarkably complex role involving unique opportunities for challenge as well as a superior understanding of the curriculum. Consequently, I now understand the difference between basic and deep engagement, the significance of enrichment strategies, and the essence of the good teacher – one who pushes themselves and their students towards deep engagement. In effect, I am more attuned to my students’ engagement, and have become a partner in their meaning-making thus allowing me to strengthen my practice of engagement and to enhance the learning experience of my students. In addition to influencing myself and my students, the PBE has enabled me to support the development of my fellow STEP teachers, ITREB Canada, and the IIS. In summary, ‘unwrapping’ Rahim’s story has contributed towards addressing a significant gap in STEP literature and in the wider context of RE and giftedness.

Recommendations and future research

In order to develop a profound understanding of SE, it is recommended that teachers engage in meaningful, individual work with gifted students. While this may initially include private RE sessions, teachers could also conduct individual student conferences within the inclusive classroom. After all, the gifted student forms part of a pluralistic community of learners. Further studies would allow teachers to better understand the nuances of engaging a gifted student. For instance, a similar study could be done with a gifted student possessing dual or multiple exceptionalities – how would this affect their engagement? Furthermore, there is currently a significant gap in Canadian STEP literature within the domain of SE and giftedness (see p. 7). I would therefore argue that there is a need to better understand the difference between the engagement of a gifted versus non-gifted student. Thus, a similar comparative study could also be conducted.

Theme: Communities, Borders, Identities

Panel - Khoja and Other Shia Studies

Iqbal Akhtar (Florida International University), “The Khoja Chronicle of Light.”

The *Nūrināmā* (“The Chronicle of Light”) was originally written in 18th century Sindh by Abdul Rahman and is a cosmological account of the creation of the world through the body of Muhammad, whose substance is Divine Light (*nūr*). This allegorical text reinforces the importance of Muhammad as primordial and sharing the Divine essence drawing on Sufi themes. The first Gujarati version in the Khōjkī appears in an 1857 manuscript sent to Zanzibar. It was copied in various manuscripts and then printed in the Gujarati character. The *Chronicle of Light* was printed until the 20th century and very popular throughout the Indus valley as seen from the various translations into Gujarati, Urdu, Punjabi, and Siraiki among other vernaculars. This Sufi text was interpreted locally as Sunni and Shia by the communities that adopted it. The modern rise in orthodox Islam as authorized by Iran and Saudi Arabia has led to the virtual loss of the text throughout South Asia except in Sindh, where it still is forms part of the core of Quranic learning for children.

Ali Ahmad Rasekh (Independent Scholar), “Reconsidering Weber’s Theory of Authority through a Re-reading of the Charisma of the Ismaili Imams.”

Ismaili history is a collection of exceptionality. The image of the Ismaili imam that was defined by its ontology, theology, and philosophy would be the most exalted example of the exceptionality or charisma, in the Weberian terminology. The Ismaili imam is the leader who receives his legitimacy from Shiism, but with more qualities and attributions, he becomes more charismatic like the Prophet or even more. Here, I make my efforts to demonstrate how in Ismaili theosophy, the derivative charisma regains its pure form.

In Shiism, overall, history, which is always sacred in its hidden dimension, is framed regarding the charismatic and supernatural figures of the Prophet and Imams. Prophetic charisma is routinized in the office of the Imamate, just as it was routinized in the office of the caliphate in Sunnism. With this perspective, Weberian notions of charismatic authority can explain the first step of routinization of charisma from a pure type or event, represented by the Prophet, Muḥammad to Ali and his descendants, the Imams. However, it is less able to account for developments occurring in the period of the Imams because their charisma continued to be redefined. I propose that charisma can be revitalized even as it is routinized; the goal is to refine Weber's theory through a re-reading of the charisma of the Ismaili Imams.

As in Shiism, the Ismaili imam’s charisma springs from the office of the imamate and from his personal qualities. Whilst the office provides an identical charisma, an imam’s personal qualities make one different from another. Charisma is based on the imam’s supernaturality and exceptionality. While the office of charisma derives from followers’ views towards their imams’ status, the personal charisma comes mostly from the imams’ actions. In early Ismailism and during the Fatimids, the office of the imam was eminent while in the Alamut period, the exceptional action occurred.

Here, I point to the philosophy of declaration of the Resurrection by the Ismaili imam as the most exalted instance of being exceptional and superhuman. Before going further, I want to emphasize that the charisma-building process, institutional or personal, is founded by the

following, promoted, and obeyed. Based on the constructed intellectual and ideological framework, a charismatic figure emerges and his authority develops so that the charisma-maker followers shift to the pure, passive obeyers.

The Ismaili charisma-building process had roots in the general Shite context, but its theosophy and theology accelerated and deepened it. In the Shiite terminology, the exaggeration was employed. It was used for charisma-building purposes though the level of usage was not always the same. Whenever there was a stable political leadership with a dominant jurisprudential thinking, the employment of exaggeration was reduced, but when theology became dominant, its usage rose. Let me refer to Qāḍī Nu'mān who stated that in the periods of al-Manṣūr and al-Mu'iz, the dā'īs generally did not know the shari'ah, that is, the outward aspect of God's religion, but they despised to admit their ignorance. When people were asking them about shari'ah, they were angered and encouraged them to leave shari'ah and to follow the inward aspect of the religion (al-majālis, 499). In addition, al-Mu'iz rejected exaggeration and denied the Imam's knowledge of the unseen and receiving revelation (al-majālis, 523).

In spite of Qāḍī Nu'mān's consideration, the inner interpretation continued to its influence and became superior in Alamut.

Exaggeration has usually been employed as a term of disapproval, but as Henry Corbin found it significant philosophically and mystically, I use it here in a value-free sociological method. The exaggeration, which took strength during the Umayyad period, has ties with the Shiites' political deprivation and leadership crisis.

Early Shiite sources provide very precise and precious information showing how exaggeration emerged and developed among the followers of the imams. In early Shiite experience, the role of the followers was very important. They contributed to the building of their imams' charisma when they felt it was necessary to do so. Though the root of exaggeration goes back to Sabā'iyya, according to al-Nawbakhtī, Corbin focuses on the period of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and his son, Ismail.

To clarify the discussion, let me refer to Weber's definition of charisma. The basic elements of the Weberian definition of the term are qualities such as being extraordinary, exceptional, and supernatural in view of the followers or disciples of the charisma holder. In Shiite terminology, it is exaggeration—a charisma builder process. In the Weberian theory of authority, the point of emphasis is the first individual having charisma. Imāmī Shiism considers the Imam supernatural, infallible, and knowing of the seen and the unseen. This is the image of an exceptional, charismatic figure.

For Weber, the pure charisma of its bearer comes to an end by his death, so it is not repeatable or transferable; it is unique.

To rebuild a pure form of charisma, Ismaili tradition introduces three main theological and philosophical shifts: Prophetology, Imamology, and the sacred text (al-Sajistānī, al-Kirmānī, Naṣir Khusraw, and Tusī).

Like Twelver Shiism, in Ismailism, Prophetology has an exoteric and an esoteric aspect, and the imamate or wilāyat forms the esoteric dimension of prophecy. In Fatimid Ismailism, like Twelverism, the Prophet is the figure in whom the balance between inward and outward exists, while in the Alamut period, the inner aspect was superior.

The sacred text of Ismaili is not a new book, but it is interpreted differently. It has outward and inward meaning. Here too, it is the Imam who has the authority to reveal the inner aspect of the text or give permission to other qualified figures to do so.

In Ismaili Imamology, the Imam, walī, is the holder of wilayah or God's friend. Wilayah is the inner reality of the prophecy. Since the wilayah is superior to the prophecy, it implies that walī, or the Imam, is superior to the Prophet. The Imam is the most exalted example of a charisma bearer, so he acts exceptionally. The most outstanding, exceptional action has been the declaration of the Resurrection by the Imam, Ḥasan al-Thānī, in 561/1166. Based on this spiritual resurrection, shari'ah, or external Islam, gave its place to the inner interpretation of Islam while the Prophet could not or did not want to make it possible.

Scholars of the Fāṭimid period have talked about it but with respecting a semi-balance between inward and outward of religion. Al- Sajistānī (331/971) uses the term Resurrector (Qā'im al-Qiyāmat) or the Mahdī to call the Imam declaring the Resurrection. For him, the prophets guide the people though their knowledge is behind the veil, while the Mahdī, appearing in the correct time, removes the veils, reveals the secrets, and explains the wisdom of all shari'ahs. The Resurrector's authority and eminence equal those of all the Lords of the periods of concealments. He is the Lord of period of unveiling and vision (Kashf al-maḥjūb, 81-82). For al-Sajistānī, the riser [Qā'im] is the accomplisher or finalizer of law-announcing prophets [al-nuṭaqā']. When he manifests, the signs [āyāt] appear, the veils are unveiled, and the faithful breaks their fast. The riser puts together the different, opposing religions by unveiling their truths and forms a single nation having one shari'ah (Ithbāt al-nubuwwāt, 167, 197). The author considers shari'ah as a burden, and shackles need to be relieved by the riser as the Prophet liberated the previous nations from their own shari'ah.

Naṣir Khusraw (481/1088) argues for the abrogation of shari'ah using the expression of the Lord of Resurrection instead of calling the Imam the Resurrector. Like al-Sajistānī, Naṣir Khusraw considers shari'ah as shackles fastened on the hands and feet of the believers, which were in their benefit before the period of the Lord of Resurrection but lost their necessity when he came among the people. He emphasizes that nobody has the right or the authority to remove shari'ah except the Lord of Resurrection ('alā dhikrihi al-salam) or the Lord of reward and punishment (Khawān al-khawān, 239–245).

Naṣir al-Dīn Tūsī (672/1274), a prominent scholar of the Alamut period, provides a pure esoteric interpretation of the Imam. For him, the Imam is the Resurrector who completes the tradition and makes its hidden truth visible. The Prophet was the last of those who established a shari'ah. A new cycle starts with the Imam, as the caller to the Resurrection in which he brings changes in the prophetic shari'ah to lead the community to reach the destination, pass from the name to the notion, from similarity to separation, from attributions to truth, and from shari'ah to Qiyāmat (Ṭūsī, 132).

In Alamut, a radical, exceptional action happened. If the Prophet had abrogated his shari'ah, it would have been considered a denial of his mission.

To conclude, I should say the Ismaili Imamology and theology gives more power and charisma to the Imams. In the mentioned changing steps, the Imam is first ascended from the common level to the Prophet by saying that they are both created from the same illumination or they existed before Adam came on earth. The goal is to make the Imam an exceptional figure, though the Prophetic charisma springs from his relation to heaven. In the second steps, the Imam is made superior to the Prophet and Messenger of God, justifying that he is God's friend

and Walī. To introduce the Imam more charismatic, this transcendence is necessary; otherwise, his charisma remains derivative. The Ismaili conception of the Imam provides a great point, which helps us to reconsider the Weberian theory of charisma. Accordingly, revitalization of pure charisma limits the applicability of Weber's theory to Ismaili case, because, based on Weber's approach, the charismatic authority must be changed to legal or traditional authority or a combination of them, but the Imam's authority remained and continued to be charismatic even in its pure form. In the meantime, the Ismaili Imamology makes it clear as to how the prophetic charisma is routinized in the office of the imamate, particularly the Alamut Ismailism.

Michel Boivin (Le Centre national de la recherche scientifique, France), “Authority and Bureaucratization: Discussing Anthropological Categories According to the Khoja Case Study.”

The Khojas are mostly Ismaili and Isna ashari Shia Muslims. While they are now following different spiritual authorities, they both went through process of centralization mostly during the 20th Century. The presentation wishes to address the issue of how bureaucratization has shaped a new leadership, and also it will evaluate the role played by emotion in the exercise of the leadership. In other words, is emotion a necessary condition for the exercise of religious authority? And what is left of this construction when the authority is under a process of bureaucratization? The presentation will mainly draw on a comparative approach including the Ismaili and the Isna Ashari Khojas to analyze how they have reacted to the process. Finally, it will explore the dynamics of centralization in both the communities, and will propose some tracks regarding the impact on the exercise of authority, and the community-wise reception.

Panel - Ugandan Asian Expulsion

Shezan Muhammedi (University of Western Ontario), “‘Gifts from Amin’: Exploring the Resettlement of Ugandan Asian Refugees in Canada and the Partnership between the Aga Khan and Pierre Elliot Trudeau.”

In August of 1972, President and Major General of Uganda, Idi Amin, expelled over 80,000 Ugandans of South Asian descent. Under accusations of economic sabotage and a failure to integrate socially with local Ugandans, President Amin revoked the citizenship of every single Ugandan Asian. Since many Shia Ismaili Muslims had acquired Ugandan citizenship during the 1962 independence movement based on guidance from the Aga Khan, many Ismailis were effectively rendered stateless. Given these circumstances, a partnership was created between the Aga Khan and Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau to facilitate the resettlement of approximately 8,000 Ugandan Asian refugees in Canada between 1972 and 1974. This paper explores the geo-political and historical context of the expulsion decree and the subsequent resettlement of Ugandan Asians in Canada. It showcases how the Aga Khan's negotiations with the Prime Minister coincided with the Canadian government's motivations to admit refugees from Uganda. Although private negotiations between the prime minister and the Aga Khan played a role in Canada's decision to admit Ugandan Asians; it was not the primary motive. The decision to admit Ugandan Asian expellees was also based on Canada's commitment to a humanitarian effort both nationally and internationally, pacified Britain's request to aid in the resettlement, and enabled the arrival of a highly skilled group of individuals who could easily integrate into Canada both socially and economically. This marked Canada's first major resettlement of non-European and non-Christian refugees setting a precedent for future refugee policy to be legislated in 1976. Ultimately, the paper uncovers the multifaceted elements behind Canada's involvement within the resettlement initiative.

Canada's response

The first indication of Canada's decision to respond to the expulsion decree came on August 9th, 1972. External Affairs Minister for Canada, Mitchell Sharp, outlined that Canada "would consider taking 'positive action'" regarding Amin's expulsion decree. Within four days of Amin's announcement of the expulsion decree, the Canadian government expressed their intent to provide some form of assistance to the Ugandan Asian community. An important caveat to this decision was that Canada would cooperate in resettling Ugandan Asians only "if Britain made a formal request." Although there were other significant factors behind Canada's decision to get involved, the government framed part of their response on adhering to a sense of brotherhood amongst Commonwealth countries. Furthermore, based on Minister Sharp's interview, Canada was reluctant to immediately state their official stance. He noted that "We [the Canadian government] are hoping, indeed, that the government of Uganda will have second thoughts about this kind of operation. So this is one of the reasons why I don't think we should do anything until we are absolutely sure that the Government of Uganda is serious in wanting to throw out of their country people who have lived there for such a long time."

Before the public announcement was made several memorandums and reports to the Prime Minister's office specifically articulated the benefits of responding to the expulsion decree. The August 22nd, 1972 memorandum to cabinet clearly stated that the main objective of the document was to gain approval from the Prime Minister for the immigration of Ugandan Asians in order to:

demonstrate Canada's humanitarian concern for the expellees; provide orderly and timely processing and evacuation of those expelled; demonstrate to other countries, especially Britain, Canada's concern and sympathy for the very difficult position in which they have been placed by the Ugandan decision and to the degree possible within humanitarian requirements ensure that those expelled Asians who might best contribute positively to the Canadian economy and culture are admitted to Canada.

Based on the cabinet document there were several motivations for Canada's involvement with the expulsion decree. The wording within the memorandum specifically highlights the importance of humanitarian concerns as well as aiding the Commonwealth. However, the final motive delineated the preference for those who would successfully integrate in Canada both economically and socially.

Moreover, an additional memorandum to the Prime Minister's office from the Deputy Minister for Manpower and Immigration, J.M. Desroches, also submitted on August 22nd, 1972 outlined that the Canadian government should get involved because it would "satisfy Canadian public interest without going so far as to invite a backlash because of employment problems, race relations, etc.," and to "capitalize on [the] supply of entrepreneurs and professionals." The cabinet, as well as other government officials, were well aware that the Ugandan Asian expellees were predominately well educated, highly skilled, and savvy businesspersons. Desroches' report articulated this awareness and detailed that "less than one percent of Uganda's population is comprised of Asians, but this small proportion virtually controls finance, commerce and the professions in the country." Another report was submitted to the Canadian government that revealed pertinent statistics about the high levels of education amongst Ugandan Asians as well as their concentration in the fields of commerce, manufacturing, education, and medicine. According to the report, fifty percent of the Asian population was enrolled in primary and

secondary school in 1967. Furthermore, 20,000 to 25,000 Asians were employed in Uganda by 1970 with 27.6 percent of the working population in manufacturing; 27.5 percent in commerce; and 16.5 percent in educational and medical services. The report argued that the “high occupational and skill composition of Asians is reflected in their wages” since they earned an average wage of £EA 925 (East African shilling) in the private sector and £EA 1093 in the public sector compared to the Ugandan Africans who earned on average £EA 152 and £EA 199 respectively.”

The Aga Khan – Trudeau Connection

While vacationing on the Aga Khan’s private island, Costa Smeralda off the coast of Sardinia, Trudeau and the Aga Khan discussed the Imam’s anxiety regarding the future of his community in East Africa. The Canadian government had previously accepted almost 1,500 Ismaili immigrants during the major nationalization programs that took place in both Kenya and Tanzania in 1969 and 1967 respectively. Under these circumstances, the Prime Minister and the Aga Khan worked closely to ensure their successful establishment in Canada. Furthermore, a background paper on Ismaili migration to Canada speculated that Ismaili Ugandan Asians would be readily accepted “into the mainstream of Canadian life” and a “large number of them are professionals and entrepreneurs with available, often substantial, amounts of capital.” This coincided with the importance of adaptability to the Canadian labour market and Canada’s preference for highly skilled migrants under the points system. The paper also outlined that the past success of the Tanzanian Ismailis was due to the personal ingenuity of the community who coordinated their migration by collaborating with the Canadian government. The background paper was circulated amongst high ranking government officials on September 25th, 1972.

In a secret meeting between the Aga Khan, his representative in Uganda and President of the Ismaili Council for East Africa, Sir Eboo Pirbhai, and various Canadian government officials on September 28th, 1972, attendees discussed the plight of the Ismaili Ugandan Asian community. The main issue at hand for the Aga Khan was what would happen to the Ismaili community after the November expulsion deadline. According to the meeting minutes, the Aga Khan stressed that after the deadline “no government would be responsible; Britain will not recognize them and will instead be concerned with her own nationals. There will be no shield to provide some security.” To assist the Canadian government in addressing the resettlement of Ismailis, the Aga Khan offered to provide significant resources. He even offered to provide funding to support their flights to Canada and guaranteed that they “would not take advantage of the situation.” In order to provide a more relaxed selection criterion, the Aga Khan reminded the attendees that “in practice, Uganda does not recognize them [Ugandan Asian Ismailis] and, as a result, they are *de facto* refugees.” The majority of the meeting members agreed, however, James Cross replied, “that once out of the country, the stateless people definitely would be classified as such, but there is also a flexible policy for oppressed minorities which could be applied.”

To prevent any further potential backlash from the Canadian public or any other international body and to avoid allegations of favouritism, officials proposed that they “instruct our team in Kampala to give priority in processing to all applicants who are stateless.” The term ‘stateless’ served as a panacea for the Canadian government’s resettlement initiative. Using the specific terminology of stateless enabled Canada to: appease the public and demonstrate their international standing by showcasing their humanitarian efforts in regards to the plight of Ugandan Asians, answer Britain’s call to the Commonwealth to respond to the situation, avoid using an overtly relaxed selection criteria if they were labeled as refugees, honour the secret agreement with the Aga Khan and admit a large number of Ismaili Muslims, and dismiss

allegations that the Canadian government was “skimming the cream off the total Ugandan movement.”

Canada’s priority to accept those who were stateless reduced pressure being placed on Britain to accept the estimated 50,000 Ugandan Asians and reaffirmed Britain’s necessary commitments to their own citizens. Furthermore, prioritizing stateless refugees gave the alleged impression that there was a preference to the Ismaili Muslims community due to their leader’s request. The majority of Ugandan Asians that arrived in Canada by the end of the expulsion decree were Ismailis, however, they represented just under seventy percent of the overall Ugandan Asian refugee population. Most importantly, drawing any strong conclusions on the religious affiliations of the entire group of 7,550 refugees remains unattainable. The Canadian government was aware of the high qualifications of Ugandan Asians before they formally announced their intentions to admit expellees to Canada. However, they did not purposefully select the ‘cream of the crop’. The large proportion of professionals and managers within the stateless category was due to their requirement of holding Ugandan citizenship as a means of continuing to conduct business during the push towards Africanization within Uganda after independence. Additionally, anyone who worked for the Ugandan civil service was required to hold citizenship in order to retain their positions. This led to a large number of Goan Christians also being rendered stateless. Evaluations, reports, and academic studies of the Ugandan Asian resettlement clearly demonstrated the qualifications of Ugandan Asian refugees but also confirmed Canada’s application of universal immigration policy.

Patti Harper (Carleton University), “Memory Creation: The Archival Perspective.”

Building academic archives requires focus on the process of memory creation, capture and preservation. Initially the archives brought relevant holdings to large crowds across the country. This increased participation from the Ismaili community and gave the program experience to reach out to other groups impacted by this historic event. Outreach directed at a specific community can assist in acquiring materials for an archival collection but also encourages resource generation. Patti Harper will discuss the rationale and importance of capturing the history of diaspora groups demonstrating evidence from our holdings. She will demonstrate and detail this process, the lessons learned and results of such efforts.

Heather LeRoux (Carleton University), “Many Voices, One Story: The Ugandan Asian Archive Oral History Project.”

This presentation will discuss the use of oral histories at Archives and Research Collections (ARC) to enhance archival collections. Using the example of the Ugandan Asian Archive, this presentation will look at the ways in which archival documents in combination with recorded audio and written transcripts illustrate a more dynamic look at the history of the Ugandan Asian resettlement in Canada.

The oral history as a method of recording individual stories provides a level of detail and perspective that can help to shape the overall historical narrative. Oral histories are a valuable way of recording the histories of immigrants and new Canadians, and university archives such as Archives and Research Collections can be a useful repository for preserving these stories and making them accessible to communities and future researchers. This presentation will look at the ways in which ARC collects and preserves oral histories, and continues to engage with the communities that they come from, including Ismaili, Goan, and others.

Panel: Ismailis and Others

Michael Ebsstein (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), “The Circular Vision of Existence in Classical Islamic Mysticism: From Ismā‘īlī Writings to the Works of Ibn al-‘Arabī.”

The circle is a most powerful and intriguing symbol in human cultures. Whether visually expressed in art and architecture or intellectually reflected in religious, philosophical, and historical conceptions, this symbol has had an enduring presence worldwide, from ancient to modern times. The form of the circle is flawless: it has neither edges nor angles, neither a beginning nor an end, and comprises within it other shapes (the point and curve) – hence its association with beauty and perfection, wholeness and unity, timelessness and infinity. Cyclical changes in nature as well as astronomical phenomena and astrological theories have likewise contributed to the symbolic appeal of the circle.

As in other traditions, in Islam too the circle plays a significant role, particularly in Islamic mysticism. In what follows I shall attempt to elucidate some aspects of this role by referring to two main corpora: classical Ismā‘īlī writings, composed in the 4th/10th-6th/12th centuries, and the works of *al-Shaykh al-akbar* (“the greatest Shaykh”), the famous mystic Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (560/1165-638/1240). The symbol of the circle and various cyclical conceptions are typical of both Ismā‘īlī and Akbarian thought. Moreover, as I hope to demonstrate in more detail in a forthcoming article, Ismā‘īlī teachings are important for understanding the background against which Ibn al-‘Arabī developed his distinctive “circular” vision of existence. Naturally, due to lack of time, the following discussion will be of a very brief and general nature.

Circular and cyclical conceptions in Ismā‘īlī writings and in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s oeuvre are evident in three main areas: cosmology, sacred human history, and eschatology. With Ibn al-‘Arabī we may add another area or aspect that is presumably unique to him, namely, the intimate and reciprocal relationship between the Creator and the created, a relationship that is portrayed in circular terms. Yet even this fourth aspect, in my opinion, ultimately derives from the Neoplatonic tradition, which medieval Ismā‘īlīs were instrumental in developing and transmitting to the medieval world of Islam. We may note in particular al-Andalus or Muslim Spain, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s homeland; this region was very much influenced by Neoplatonism, especially as it was formulated in the famous *Rasā‘il ikhwān al-ṣafā’*, “The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren”. The core of these Epistles was composed in the early 10th century by an unknown group of intellectuals who were linked in one way or another with the Shī‘ī-Ismā‘īlī world.

In the few minutes that I have in my disposal I will discuss the first two areas mentioned above, namely, cosmology and sacred human history, and will leave aside the other two aspects, that is, eschatology and Ibn al-‘Arabī’s “circular” vision of the human-Divine relationship. These aspects I hope to discuss, *inshallah*, in my forthcoming article.

Let me begin then with cosmology. At first glance, circular cosmological conceptions seem to be unique neither to the Ismā‘īlīs nor to Ibn al-‘Arabī; most cultures and scientific theories in the past and present have conceived of celestial bodies as roundly shaped and as moving in circular or elliptic orbits. Astrology too has served to reinforce this circular view of the universe. Still, Ismā‘īlī writings and Ibn al-‘Arabī’s works stand out in their “obsession” with circular cosmological schemes. To begin with, medieval Ismā‘īlī writers and Ibn al-‘Arabī portray the universe in accordance with Neoplatonic cosmology; in addition to the basic nine or so spheres and planets known from other cosmological systems, the Ismā‘īlīs and Ibn al-‘Arabī place at the top of their universe God’s command (*amr*), the universal intellect, and the universal soul. The

Ikhwān al-ṣafā' define these cosmological strata as *dawā'ir*, circles enveloping each other. This distinctive cosmological scheme has its roots in the thought of Plotinus, the 3rd century Greek philosopher and progenitor of Neoplatonism, and it is likewise found in the corpus attributed to Jābir b. Ḥayyān (8), the alleged disciple of the famous Shī'ī *imām* Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (died in 148/765). The Jābirian writings, the bulk of which was composed during the second half of the ninth century and the first half of the 10th, deal with alchemy and other occult matters, and they seem to have originated in the same or in a very similar milieu to that of *Rasā'il ikhwān al-ṣafā'*; like the *Rasā'il*, the Jābirian corpus contains both Neoplatonic and Shī'ī elements, some of which are Ismā'īlī or proto-Ismā'īlī. Furthermore, the Ikhwān depict all levels of the universe, spiritual and physical alike, as circles encompassing one another. The Ikhwānian cosmos is therefore both harmonious and hierarchal; every circle is superior to that which is situated below or within it, and, at the same time, it is inferior to that located above or around it. The prophets and their heirs – the legatees and *imāms* – also form their own circle to which we, the rest of mankind, are subordinate. This circular-hierarchal portrayal of the universe is also found in *al-Shaykh al-akbar's* oeuvre, where, however, the highest rung among human beings is occupied not by the Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī *imāms* but by the *awliyā'* ("God's friends"), the Sunnī mystics. Thus, both Ismā'īlīs and Ibn al-'Arabī employ circular cosmology in order to anchor and legitimize the high status of the Prophet's heirs – either the *imāms* in the Ismā'īlī tradition or the mystics in Ibn al-'Arabī's thought.

Interestingly, the circular vision of the cosmos developed by Ikhwān al-ṣafā' is reflected in the thought of yet another Andalusī writer, Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī (died 521/1127). Al-Baṭalyawsī's main work, *Kitāb al-dawā'ir al-wahmiyya* ("The Book of Imaginary Circles"), known as *Kitāb al-ḥadā'iq* ("The Book of Gardens"), influenced in turn not only Muslim authors in al-Andalus (including Ibn al-'Arabī) but also many Jewish authors, Kabbalists and philosophers. Some of these authors served as a channel through which Neoplatonic ideas, ultimately of an Ikhwānian origin, reached Italian Renaissance thinkers. One may mention in this context the 15th century Italian Jewish intellectual Yohanan Alemanno and his famous student, Pico della Mirandola.

Circular conceptions are most prominent in the Ismā'īlī perception of sacred human history. Broadly speaking, according to classical Ismā'īlī thought, history comprises seven grand cycles in which humanity is spiritually led by seven speaker-prophets and their heirs, the legatees and *imāms*. Ibn al-'Arabī too envisions history in a circular manner, though he does not share with the Ismā'īlīs their sevenfold division of it. I cannot delve deeply here into Ibn al-'Arabī's circular view of history, but I will mention in this context his theory regarding "the seal of God's friends" or "the seal of friendship with God" (*khatm al-awliyā' / walāya*) and *al-Shaykh al-akbar's* famous work, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* ("The Ring-Gems of the Wisdoms"). In this latter work, sacred history is divided into twenty-seven parts, while each part is headed by a prophet – the first one being Adam and the last one Muḥammad. The spiritual uniqueness and heritage of every prophet are defined as a *kalima*, that is, as a particular embodiment of God's word, in the same way that the prophets and their heirs are perceived in the Ismā'īlī tradition as representing and deriving from the Divine word and will. As is clear from the title of Ibn al-'Arabī's work, the prophets are perceived as precious gems set on a ring or a signet whose shape is naturally round. These precious gems are the Divine words embodied in the twenty-seven prophets and their wisdoms. The number twenty-seven is of course quite meaningful: the Arabic alphabet includes twenty-eight letters, and similar speculations linking together God's word, the letters, and mankind's spiritual leaders are found in Ismā'īlī writings, for instance, in those composed by the Neoplatonist Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 361/971). Yet who, according to *al-Shaykh al-akbar*, embodies the twenty-eighth letter, the last gem in the circular ring of sacred history? It is conceivable that Ibn al-'Arabī viewed himself – "the seal of the Muḥammadan friendship with God" (*khatm al-walāya l-muḥammadiyya*) – as the messianic figure, or as one of the messianic

figures who are meant to complete this ring, thereby bringing history back to its point of origin. Again we see that in both Ismāʿīlī and Akbarian thought, circular conceptions serve to explain and legitimize the high status of the *imāms* in the Ismāʿīlī tradition or the Sunnī mystics in Akbarian teachings. By breaking historical linearity, which, in the “orthodox” view, culminates in the figure of the Prophet Muḥammad, and by introducing cyclical processes into history and into the Islamic era itself, medieval Ismāʿīlīs and Ibn al-ʿArabī were able to carve out for themselves a crucial role within history and, consequently, establish their own high religious, social, and political status within the Islamic community.

One may finally note the recent study by Ehud Krinis on the links and affinities between Ikhwānīan cyclical time and similar conceptions of history in 13th and 14th century Kabbala.

Circular historical conceptions such as those found in Ismāʿīlī and Akbarian writings are rather exceptional in the landscape of medieval Islam or of Abrahamic religions as a whole. Certainly, no tradition has a purely “linear” or purely “circular” view of history; circular historical conceptions will often contain some linear elements and vice versa. Thus, in both Ismāʿīlī and Akbarian teachings, history, though of a cyclical nature, ultimately leads up spirally to its climactic, eschatological-messianic end. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, at least as they developed from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages to modern times, by and large have favored a linear vision of history. In secular Western-modern thought, which stems from the Enlightenment, science has replaced religion as the main engine of linear progression. On this background we may better appreciate Ismāʿīlī and Akbarian notions of cyclical history and of circular existence at large; these notions can be understood as a successful attempt to break with traditional Abrahamic linearity and dichotomous thinking.

Li-wei Chen (Aga Khan University), “The Mountain without the Old Man: *Xishiji* on Ismailis.”

The founder of the Nizari Ismailis in Persia, Hasan Sabah, was well-known to many as the Old Man of the Mountain. According to Marco Polo’s Travelogue, the Old Man was a charlatan. He devised plots to convert young men into his heretical sect. He built a lavishly decorated garden for them to enjoy all kinds of sensual pleasure. Those gullible young men started to believe what the Old Man taught them about the Heaven. They became assassins willing to die for their faith without regret.

A similar story was written in a Chinese travelogue, *Xishiji*. A contemporary of Marco Polo’s Travelogue, *Xishiji* has remained unknown to a wider audience. The text of *Xishiji* was once translated and compiled by E. Bretschneider in *Medieval Research from Eastern Asiatic Sources*. According to E. Bretschneider, the text of *Xishiji* was ‘vague in meaning and ambiguous in expression’. I think his comment is only partially true. This paper is a response to E. Bretschneider’s comment on *Xishiji*. I use Ismailis in *Xishiji* as a case study to demonstrate that the text may not be vague or ambiguous as he claimed.

Why is it important to address *Xishiji*’s ‘vagueness’ or ‘ambiguity’? There are four main reasons. First, *Xishiji* contains historically valuable information that would enrich our understanding of Ismaili history. Second, this 1263 text was the earliest Chinese text mentioning about Ismailis. *Yuan-shi*, the Chinese of Yuan, wrote about Ismailis in a century later. Third, it provides a 13th century Chinese perspective on the Western Asia and Ismailis in particular. Fourth, it gives us a snap-shot of historical and geographical circumstances by the year of 1260. From 1260 onwards, political landscape started to change traumatically across the Eurasia: Kubilai became the *de facto* Qaghan based in China and Hulegu the ruler of Iran.

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, I present who were the traveller and the author of *Xishiji*. I will then give an overview of what the content of this travelogue is about. Third, I will provide my own translation of it for readers. And finally, I discuss the historical values of *Xishiji* in understanding the history of Ismailis in Persia.

My understanding of *Xishiji* is far from complete. However, I feel it necessary to introduce this largely unknown historical source of great significance to a wider audience. I believe that scholars more capable than I am to tackle rare sources like the present one will push further the boundaries of our knowledge of Islamic world in the past and Ismaili history in particular.

Background of two Chinese officials

Lui-yu, a contemporary of Marco Polo, was the author of *Xishiji*. Most of his life served at the post of investigating censor at Xin-he city (新河縣) in Yin District. It was during this post that he completed the present travelogue in 1263. Lui-yu was famous for his skills in composition and perhaps because of this he was requested to write down Chang-de's travel experience.

Chang-de was the traveller. It was based on his travel experience that *Xishiji* was composed. He was a local official in charge of the tax managing department in Zhang-de Prefecture. It was during this post that in 1259 he embarked on an official journey to the Western Region. We know from the beginning of *Xishiji* that the purpose of this journey was to have audience with Hulegu.

An overview of Xishiji text

Xishiji was completed in 1263. It was first published as part of *Qiu-jian Xian Sheng Da Wen Quan* (秋澗先生大文全集), a collection of literary work compiled by Wang-yun (1227-1304) in 1272. The version of *Xishiji* which I have access to is in *Yuan Lui-yu Xishiji Kao Zheng* (劉郁西使記地理考証), a textual criticism of *Xishiji* by Ding-qian (1843-1919), in National Taiwan University, Taipei.

As for content, a large part of *Xishiji* contains Chang-de's outbound journey itinerary. The journey started from Karakorum and ended in Mazandaran. The text says nothing about his meeting with Hulegu in Western Iran. However, *Xishiji* includes itinerary details such as dates, distances, speeds, passages, directions, topographies, etc. It shows that Chang-de had intentionally noted down valuable information for a traveller. It is reasonable to suspect that he may also be involved in gathering information for intelligence.

On the 24th of February [we] passed by I-du (亦堵, Balasaghun) there were a large population on a flat terrain between two mountains. The water ways in the fields reflected the surrounding views. Ruined camps and walls abounded. One asked about this, and the local replied that here used to be Khitan's former residence. This location is fifteen thousand li to He-lin (和林, Karakorum)...on the 28th [we] passed by Da-la-si (塔刺寺, Talas).

Xishiji includes what Chang-de witnessed along his journey as well. In many occasions, *Xishiji* gives thick descriptions of people and cities in the Western Region. It also contains comments comparing these descriptions with the circumstances in the Central Kingdom. It provides valuable accounts of how a Chinese local official in the mid-13th century perceived the environment which was quite unfamiliar to him. Take the description of Semizkand, for example:

the city is huge and populous. [When the delegation arrived] it was the season when flowers were blossoming...the rose is similar to that in Chin and their kinds are too various to be named. At the western corner of the city, plants are grapes and rice...Various kinds of medicine unavailable in Chin are produced everywhere in this place. They are very effective for curing diseases.

A large part of information in *Xishiji* was given orally. Traces of foreign languages transcribed in Chinese are present in *Xishiji*. Translators' presence mediated the transcription. For example, that a vowel is added to nouns in some occasions (Oo-lin = Rum, Wu-lu-wu-nai = Rukn) shows Mongolian language influence. Mu-xi (Molahed) as well as Dan-han (Damghan), Qi-dou-bu (Kirdkuh), suan-tan (sultan) shows direct transcription from Persian or Arabic into Chinese with the middle consonant dropped.

On the other hand, Chang-de's journey was relatively short by the standard of that time (fourteen months). It is unlikely that Chang-de had visited anywhere but north and west-north of Iran. *Xishiji*'s account of those regions across the Afro-Eurasian continent must have come from local informants' mouth. It is through his interaction with locals that news and anecdotes were incorporated in the text. *Xishiji* tells us that 'the king's army conquered thirty kingdoms in the Western Regions', 'the king's army took over the kingdom of Baghdad', 'the king of Shiraz is named Ao-si-a-ta-bei (奧思阿塔卑, Abish Atabeg)', 'A-zao-ding (阿早丁, Izz al-Din) of the kingdom of Oo-lin (兀林, Rum) came to capitulate', 'Qarakhitai kingdom named Chi-li-wan (乞里灣, Kirman) whose king named Hu-zhiao-ma-ding (忽教馬丁, Qutb al-Din)'.

Some of the remarks *Xishiji* makes might seem bizarre to modern readers. They seemingly contradict many historical facts we know today. However, we should not dismiss their historical values. They leave room for investigating mid-13 century Chinese narrative representations about the Western Region. Take the case of 'the kingdom of Baghdad', for example. '[Their] consorts and concubines were all Han people'. In Mecca, 'Tianfan (天房, Kaaba) is where their ancestors were buried. Their master was called pi-yen-ba-er (癖顏八兒, prophet)...Texts were numerous and all composed by pi-yen-ba-er'. In 'the kingdom of fa-lan-guo (富浪國, Frank), female dressed like a living Buddha and male like a *hu-ren* (people from the Western Region)...they, both male and female, did not take off their cloths while sleeping.'

Lui-yu was selective about what facts to report in *Xishiji*. As one could notice from the above examples, it seems that the latest political circumstances in the Western Region by 1259 were his main concerns. As Lui-yu's concluding remark goes:

[China's] openness towards the Western Region began with Zhang-chieng (張騫). Their topographical features remained the same. However, generations in the past gradually become remote [and different] from the present. The titles of their kingdoms have been changed constantly. Circumstances were too complicated to be documented.

Xishiji on Ismailis

(The following section presents parts of the original text and my translation. It will be followed by a section of discussion.)

近西南六七里，新得国，曰穆锡，其牛皆驼峯，黑色。

Six or seven li to the south west, a newly founded kingdom called Mu-xi (molahed). Its cows had camel-humps, black colour.

地无水，土人隔山岭凿井，相沿数十里，下通流，以溉田。

The land was deprived of water. Tu-ren (locals) dug wells along the mountain ridges which extended to around 10-ish li. [They] let the water flow [from the well] down the mountains for irrigation.

所属山城，三百五十，已而皆下，惟檐寒西一山城，名奇塔卜，孤峯峻绝，不能矢石。

The mountainous cities belonging to them numbered three hundred fifty. They were all captured soon after [the conquest] except a mountainous city to the west of Yan-han (Damghan) named Qi-dou-bu (Kirdkuh). [Its] peak was isolated and towering. One is unable to catapult stone [to conquer it].

丙辰年，王师至城下，城绝高险，仰视之帽为坠，诸道竝进，敌大惊，令相和卓纳色尔来纳款，已而，乌尔古纳苏勒坦出降。

In the year of bing-chen (1256) king's army arrived and sieged it. The city lay at an extreme height and the routes to it were rugged. Anyone who lifted up one's head, his hat would fall. [The army] advanced through different routes. Enemies were shocked. Official huo-zhe (khoja) Na-shi-er (Nasir al-Din Tusi) came to surrender. Soon, Wu-lu-wu-nai (Rukn)suan-tan (sultan) capitulated.

苏勒坦，犹国王也。Suan-tan means king. 其

父领兵，别据山城，令其子取之，七日而陷。

His father (Ala al-Din) led the army to occupy another mountainous city. His son was sent [from the side of Mongol army] to take over and the city fell in seven days.

金玉宝物甚多，一帶有直銀千笏者。

Precious treasuries abounded. One dai could be worth a thousand hu.

其国，兵皆刺客。俗见男子勇壮者，以利诱之，令手刃父兄，然后充兵，醉酒，扶入窟室，娱以音乐美女，纵其欲，数日复置故处，既醒，问其所见，教之能为刺客死，则享福如此，因授以经呪，日诵，盖使蛊其心志，死无悔也。

Its kingdom's soldiers were all assassins. It used to be that as [they] spotted any strong man, they lured him with material goods. They ordered him to kill his father and brother(s) and recruited him. They intoxicated him, escorted him to a (chamber) basement and entertained him with music and beauty. They let him indulge in sensual pleasure. Several days afterwards, they placed him back to where he came from. At the time he woke up, they asked them what he saw. They taught him that if he could die as an assassin, he would live in joy and comfort like that. As a result, they taught him classic texts and mantras for him to recite daily. Therefore his mind was blinded (convinced or seduced?) and he was willing to die without regret.

令潜使未服之国，必刺其主而后已。虽妇人亦然。

They ordered to send assassins to hide in those kingdoms which did not surrender. They stabbed their lords, and women as well, and they died.

其穆锡国，在西域中最为凶悍，威胁邻国，霸四十馀年。

The Mu-xi kingdom had been the most ferocious in the Western Region. They were threatening their neighbouring kingdoms and claiming hegemony for forty years.

王师既克诛之，无遗类

The king's army exhilarated them without any descendant left.

Discussion

The account of Ismailis that *Xishiji* provides is a mixture of observation and memory. As Chang-de passed by via today's northern Iran, he witnessed from distance some of mountainous cities where Ismailis used to dwell in. He gave a vivid account of livestock, irrigation system and towering cliffs. Chang-de especially mentioned Kidkuh's impenetrableness. He witnessed the only city that remained intact from Mongol's attack during 1250s. When the Mongol army sieged Maymundiz, *Xishiji* said, 'anyone who lifted up one's head, his hat would fall'.

The timeline of events that is given in *Xishiji* is slightly different from Juvayni's chronicle. It is said in *Xishiji* that when Rukn al-Din went out to capitulate, his father lead the army to another mountainous city to resist the Mongol army. According to Juvayni, Rukn al-Din's father, Ala al-Din, died in 1255. One could read this contradiction in many ways.

Here, I assume that on the way to meet Hulegu in Iran Chang-de's companions fed him with what befall on Ismailis in 1250s is true. Therefore, either Chang-de due to language barrier mistakenly regarded other Ismaili resistant forces as led by Ala al-Din. Or that Ala al-Din was alive in 1256 was considered a historical fact in public discourse when Chang-de visited Iran in 1259.

The forty year period (1220-1260) that *Xishiji* mentions is intriguing. Chang-de noted that the Kingdom of Molahed assumed political hegemony in the Western Region for forty years. This period straddled the last two Imams' reigning, Ala al-Din and Rukn al- Din. If we trace this hegemony forty years back, it is located around 1220. This year approximately coincides with the first Mongol invasion and Ala al-Din ascending to political leader of Nizari Ismailis in Persia. Lui-yu may imply that the first Mongol invasion in 1220 destroyed those political entities threatening to Ismailis. Ismailis benefited from this invasion for forty years as the reign of Ala al-Din was notable for burgeoning intellectual activities. Lui-yu noted:

The Mu-xi kingdom had been the fiercest in the western region. They were threatening their neighbouring kingdoms and claiming hegemony for forty years.

In the following section I compare myth of Ismaili recruitment strategy in *Xishiji* with the one in Marco Polo's account. This comparison indicates that both shared many overlapping themes. The accounts of the sequence of the recruitment strategy are similar to each other. However, details to write a same 'mytheme' are different. The purpose here is to show that the content of a myth is malleable and mediated by cultures and contexts.

Why do I use Marco Polo to inform our understanding of *Xishiji*? He was a contemporary of Lui-yu and Chang-de. They shared many things in common. They all served as officials in Yuan court in China. Their travel experiences were written by the end of 13th century. Marco Polo and Chang-de both travelled back and forth via northern Iran. They may have been exposed to a similar milieu in which the myths about Ismailis were circulating. Furthermore, it has been argued that 'assassin legends' circulating in Europe reached its peak in Marco Polo's work.

	Xishiji	Marco Polo's Travelogue
Work completed in	1263 (published in 1272)	1299
Length	120 (characters)	Several paragraphs

In *Xishiji*, the myth of Ismailis' recruitment strategy is relatively short in length and simple in idea. It is consisted of around 120 Chinese characters. It is deprived of lexicons influenced by monotheistic religion. Unlike in Marco Polo's travelogue, which includes reference to words such as heaven, paradise, Mohammad and prophet into narratives, no ink was spent on them in *Xishiji*. Furthermore, *Xishiji* does not explicitly indicate the agents. I infer from the text that it

was team work that carried out the recruitment missions. Marco Polo's text, on the contrary, embellished the story by giving all the credits to the Old Man in the Mountain, which is not mentioned in *Xishiji*.

	Myth in <i>Xishiji</i>	Myth in Marco Polo's Travelogue
Word choice	Chamber	Garden
	X	Heaven
	X	Mohammad
	X	Prophet
	Unknown subjects	The Old Man
	Strong men	Young men
	X	paradise

Xishiji includes certain details into the narrative differently from those in Marco Polo's Travelogue. Take wine/opium and texts/mantras, for example. In *Xishiji*, the recruitment team drugged those strong men with wine rather than opium. It is likely that binge drinking of wine had a more negative connotation than consuming opium in 13th century China. However, wrongdoers were more likely to be associated with overdosing hashish in the Islamic world. Similarly, texts and mantras (經咒) connote negatively in a native Chinese speaker's ear. It shows that Chinese culture in the second half of 13th century, as well as the expectant audience that Lui-yu intended to address, mediated the content of Ismaili recruitment myth.

	Myth in <i>Xishiji</i>	Myth in Marco Polo's Travelogue
Material used to intoxicate the youth	wine	opium
Material used to teach the youth	texts and mantras	repeating lectures

The information regarding the fall of Ismailis in Persia and Ismaili recruitment myth that I discussed above leads me to conclude that *Xishiji* provides a different perspective on Nizari Ismailis in Persia. It not only provides an alternative account of events concerning Ismailis, but it also records a very simple version of the myth surrounding Ismailis at the time. One could argue that what E. Bretschneider accused *Xishiji* for vagueness and ambiguity, seen from the present case study, is rather pointing out a Chinese official lacking in monotheistic conception of the world in the mid-13th century. I argue that Bretschneider ignored the fact that *Xishiji* is a travelogue. Chang-de/ Lui-yu's unfamiliarity to the world they observed in the 13th century should be studied on its own term.

One way of furthering inquiry in this direction, as I tried to briefly present above, is to investigate the textual relationships between *Xishiji* and Marco Polo's travelogue. What I derived from the comparative exercise on the two travelogues regarding the myth of Ismaili recruitment strategy in both travelogues is that Marco Polo may have developed his text based

on *Xishiji*'s. Marco Polo may have had reference to *Xishiji* in the Yuan court in China. However, this hypothesis requires further investigation.

Alnoor Dhanani (Independent Scholar), “Contextualizing the construct of Ismā‘īliyya as the “other” in late Ash‘arī kalām texts.”

Fiqh and *kalām* engage with demarcation of normativity, *fiqh* laying down parameters for orthopraxy and *kalām* for orthodoxy. Groups falling outside these parameters become “the other.” The *kalām* genres of *maqālāt* engages with Muslim diversity on the topics treated by *kalām*, such as epistemology, cosmology, anthropology, and of course theology while the *firaq* genre treats doctrinal divisions that lead to sectarian formation. These discourses show “the Muslim other” not as a monolith but as a spectrum, ranging from tolerable deviations from the norm to departures deemed beyond norms and therefore classified as heresies or apostasies.

Accounts of the Ismā‘īliyya, under this and other appellations, are a fixture in these textual genres. The particular focus of this paper examines such accounts in late Ash‘arī *kalām* texts contextualizing them within the discourse of earlier texts. However, some remarks on constructions of such narratives are in order before engagement with specific texts. To state the obvious, authors are participants in discursive traditions, with their own intertextual histories, topoi, critiques, and modes of presentation. Authors exercise agency over their constructs. They make choices on their relation with inherited tradition, whether to add or subtract to it either to update received narratives to account for new events or to critique received narratives, and they make choices on narrative purpose be it for polemic engagement, or for *madrassa* instruction.

Participants in a long discursive tradition, late Ash‘arī authors were cognizant of earlier accounts on the Ismā‘īliyya. These include the accounts in al-Ash‘arī’s *Maqālāt al-islamiyyīn*, the longer account in al-Baghdādī’s *Farq bayna al-firaq*, al-Ghazālī’s *al-Faḍā‘ih al-Bāṭiniyya* which is almost entirely devoted to their refutations, and the relatively neutral portrayal in al-Shahrastānī’s *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*.

Al-Ash‘arī ‘s (d. 324/935) brief account of the Ismā‘īliyya in the Rāfiḍa section of his *Maqālāt al-islamiyyīn* focuses on different positions on imamate after Ja‘far and is relatively free of the polemic and charges of unbelief that characterize later accounts.

On the other hand, al-Baghdādī’s (d. 429/1037) account in *Farq bayna l-firaq* draws on Ibn Rizām’s “black legend,” relying perhaps on Akhū Muḥsin’s anti-Ismā‘īlī tract (ca. 372/982). While his account of the Ismā‘īliyya is similar to al-Ash‘arī’s, al-Baghdādī adds that the Ismā‘īliyya incline to the Bāṭiniyya who fall under the Ghulāt.

In the long account on the Bāṭiniyya, al-Baghdādī accuses them of crypto-Magianism. Its founders, Maymūn ibn Dayṣān, known as al-Qaddāh, and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, known as Dandān, are descendants of Magians. Other founders are Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ and ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl ibn Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 322/934), whose “descendants rule the affairs of Egypt today.” Like Dualists who believe Light and Darkness are the makers of the world, the Bāṭiniyya hold that the First, also called Intellect, created the Soul which is the Second. They govern the world through the seven planets and first natures. The Bāṭiniyya interpret principles of faith (*uṣūl al-dīn*) to permit marriage with daughters and sisters, leading to abandoning *sharī‘a*. The Qarmaṭians of Bahrayn, are homosexuals and pederasts, killers of pilgrims and pillagers of Mecca. They have torched Qur’ans and mosques, overrun its capital Hajr overrun, killed its men killed and enslaved women and children. A purported letter by ‘Ubayd Allāh to Sulaymān ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Sa‘īd al-Jannābī (d. 332/944), shows how the Bāṭiniyya ensnare weak-minds through twelve tiers of progressive ruses (*hiyal*).

Al-Baghdādī's polemic reflects his temporal context. The Fāṭimids were challenging Abbasid legitimacy. Saljuqs were sweeping from the East, gaining control of Baghdad, proclaiming themselves champions of Sunnīsm and protectors of the Abbasids. Yet, al-Basasiri seized Baghdad and had the Friday prayer recited in the name of the Fāṭimid caliph. The Ismā'īlī *da'wa* was gaining, culminating in Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ's (d. 518/1124) capture of Alamūt. In his *Siyāsat-nāma*, Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092) appended a critique of the Bāṭiniyya, adding Ta'limiyya, to their appellations. As Daftary notes, the doctrine of *ta'lim*, the authoritative teaching of the *imām*, was best formulated by Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ, but he may not have been its founder. Three years after the *Siyāsat-nāma*, the Abbasid caliph al-Mustazhir (d. 512/1118) asked Niẓām's protégé, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) to undertake a refutation of the Bāṭiniyya.

Al-Ghazālī's *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya wa faḍā'il al-mustazhiriyya* (*The Abominations of the Bāṭiniyya and the Virtues of the Mustazhiriyya*) belongs to the *radd* (refutation) genre. Its claims that the Bāṭiniyya fall outside Islam, their fundamental principles are Magian, and progression through tiers clearly derives from earlier accounts. However, the focus on the Ta'limiyya is new; indicative of the recognition of their threat. Al-Ghazālī insists that his aim is refuting their doctrine of authoritative instruction by the infallible *imām* (*ta'lim*) and rejection of personal reflection. He takes this up in an extensive argument, following it with a *fatwā* charging the Bāṭiniyya with disbelief (*takfir*), and legitimizing the shedding of their blood.

Taking advantage of civil war amongst the Saljuqs, the Persian Nizārī Ismā'īlīs, seized further castles and territory. This is the context in which Muḥammad al-Shahrastānī's (d. 548/1153) wrote his *al-Milal wa al-niḥal* (*Religious Communities and Sects*). Questions on al-Shahrastānī's commitment, whether as Sunnī Ash'arī or Nizārī Ismā'īlī, already raised by his contemporaries, have resurfaced among modern scholars. However, al-Shahrastānī studied Ash'arī *kalām* in Nishapur with teachers, some of them students of the famous Ash'arī scholar al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) who had also taught al-Ghazālī. As such, al-Shahrastānī was well-versed in not only Ash'arī doctrine but also their views on the Ismā'īliyya and Bāṭiniyya. Indeed, late Ash'arī *kalām* authors consider him as one of their own.

Al-Shahrastānī's account of the Ismā'īliyya and the Bāṭiniyya appears in his section on the Shi'a (not Rāfiḍa!). He too discusses the question of imamate after Ja'far, adding that the Bāṭiniyya believe imamate continued amongst the descendants of Ismā'īl, who were first hidden, then became manifest and were designated as *al-qā'imūn*. Notably, al-Shahrastānī's account is free of the black legend present in al-Baghdādī and al-Ghazālī.

He discusses the doctrines of the Bāṭiniyya in detail, first those of the earlier Bāṭiniyya, and then newly formulated doctrines (*maqāla jadīda*). He asserts that the doctrines of the early Bāṭiniyya are an admixture with *falsafa* doctrines. These include apophatic Neoplatonism and correspondence between the celestial and terrestrial realms.

Al-Shahrastānī's discussion of the reformulated doctrines of the Bāṭiniyya is entirely novel and derives from detailed knowledge of the contemporary Nizārī Ismā'īlī *da'wa* centered at Alamūt. It had been four years since Ḥasan-i Sabbāḥ's death when al-Shahrastānī wrote his account in 521/1127. Alamūt was now under the leadership of Kiyā Buzurg Ummid (d. 532/1138). Al-Shahrastānī remarks that the reformulators turned away from the earlier doctrines of the Bāṭiniyya's when Ḥasan-i Sabbāḥ and his *da'wa*, appeared in Alamūt.

Al-Shahrastānī asserts his account of the reformulated doctrines of the Bāṭiniyya derives from Ḥasan's Persian book that he, namely al-Shahrastānī, has translated into Arabic. Its first chapter (*fuṣūl*) had argued that knowledge of God can only be obtained through the authoritative instruction (*ta'lim*) of a teacher, not through intellect and reflection alone. Al-Shahrastānī notes that this premise is directed against partisans of reflection and intellect. The

second chapter had argued that such a teacher can only be a trustworthy teacher. Al-Shahrastānī notes this is directed against partisans of *ḥadīth*. The third chapter had argued that the trustworthy teacher must be a specific teacher, Al-Shahrastānī notes this premise is directed against the Shī'a. The fourth chapter concluded that the party of the holders of truth (*muḥaqqiqīn*) is one accepting the need for specific, truthful teacher providing authoritative instruction. The remaining chapters support this argument and refute objections.

On the basis of Ibn Khaldūn's periodization of *kalām*, both al-Ghazālī and al-Shahrastānī belong to late *kalām* as their works exhibit admixture with Ibn Sīnā's *falsafa* concepts. However, from the viewpoint of Ismā'īlī studies, the accounts of the Ismā'īliyya in the *Fadā'ih* and *al-Milal*, are well known, but accounts of the Ismā'īliyya and the Bāṭiniyya in later *kalām* texts, such as Sayf al-dīn al-Āmidī's (d. 631/1233) *Abkār al-afkār fī uṣūl al-dīn*, and 'Aḍud al-dīn al-Ījī's (d. 756/1356) *Al-mawāqif fī 'ilm al-kalām* and its commentaries remain unexplored.

Al-Āmidī's *Abkār* was written towards the end of the sixth/twelfth and early decades of the seventh/thirteenth century. His account of the Ismā'īliyya occurs in the course of the discussion of the divisions of the Shī'a. Al-Āmidī repeats al-Baghdādī's claims of the Magian origins of the Ismā'īliyya, that its founders were 'Abd Allāh ibn Maymūn al-Qaddāḥ or Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ, that its aims to the abolish *sharī'a* and religious laws, and that this is through progressing through levels of ruses. Drawing from al-Shahrastānī, al-Āmidī asserts that the Ismā'īliyya admix their doctrines with those of the philosophers. These doctrines were held by the earlier Ismā'īliyya. However, when Ḥasan-i Sabbāḥ appeared—"he had returned and he summoned people to first follow the *imām* who is present at every age and that he (Ḥasan) was the *ḥujja* of the *imām* in his age." Al-Āmidī then presents "a summary of his (Ḥasan's) doctrine," which is an abbreviated version of al-Shahrastānī's premises of the *ta'lim* doctrine.

Quoting al-Shahrastānī, al-Āmidī states, "He prohibited the common people from engaging deeply with the [religious] sciences" but then adds

and the elite from examining the books of earlier scholars ... so that they remained ignorant of religious laws and divinely ordained commands. They became secure in their castles and clung to their refuge. Evil rulers raised fear amongst them, giving rise to wickedness. They divulged things that ought to be hidden, as a result of the elimination of divine obligation (?*taklīf*), and permitting of what is forbidden. They became like animals and beasts, like one restrained neither by religion nor by divine command. We seek refuge in God from Satan and the favor of the Judge [of the Day of Judgment]!

Does this addition point to al-Āmidī's critique of the *qiyāma* proclaimed by Ḥasan II in Ramaḍān 559/1164, a few decades earlier, or is it an update to the antinomianism of earlier anti-Ismā'īlī polemic? Having made this claim, al-Āmidī is compelled "to refute their confounding doctrines" (*lā budda min al-tanbīh 'alā ibṭāl makhāriqihim*). He argues against their doctrines associated with the number seven, such as seven speaking prophets, seven *imāms*, seven celestial heavens and earths, etc.; against their assertion of the presence of contradictions in the apparent *sharī'a* and therefore the need of *ta'wīl* of such statements; against the view that one cannot rely on intellect and reflection but requires the instruction of the authoritative infallible *imām*, and against the apophatic statement that God is neither existent nor non-existent etc. These arguments are original.

The detail of al-Āmidī's *Abkār* makes it too verbose to be a suitable *madrassa* text. 'This niche was filled by Aḍud al-dīn al-Ījī's *al-Mawāqif fī 'ilm al-kalām* written around 730/1330, one of whose major sources is al-Āmidī's *Abkār*. However, while the brevity of al-Ījī's prose and his systematic presentation make *al-Mawāqif* a suitable *madrassa* text, it requires study with

instructors able to elucidate its terseness and clarify its abstruse arguments. As a result, *al-Mawāqif* elicited several commentaries, the most well-known and complete of them being al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's *Sharh al-Mawāqif* completed in 807/1404. With its commentaries, the *Mawāqif* became the mainstay of the Ottoman and South Asian Dars-i Niẓāmī *madrassa* curriculum. It is quite likely that knowledge of the Ismā'īliyya in these settings, and therefore amongst Sunni '*ulamā*' during the fourteenth and later centuries was primarily drawn from these works.

Al-Ījī's account of the Ismā'īliyya is found in his discussion of the divisions amongst Muslims, appended as an addendum (*dhayl*) to the text. The account of the Ismā'īliyya, appearing in the section on the divisions of the Shī'a, is a much abbreviated version of that in al-Āmidī's *Abkār*. It adds no new material. It treats the appellations of the Ismā'īliyya, the allegation of its antinomianism and linkage with Magianism through its founders Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ and 'Abd Allāh ibn Maymūn al-Qaddāh, and the progression through the *da'wa*. There is a brief mention of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāh, at the end of the account: "When al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣabbāh appeared, he renewed the *da'wa* by way of saying that he was the *ḥujja*." There is nothing new in al-Jurjānī commentary either. His elucidation of al-Ījī's terse is primarily through selective re-insertion of the detailed prose in al-Āmidī's *Abkār*!

The context of *al-Mawāqif* and its commentaries explains both the brevity of their accounts, as well as the lack of novel features. The Ismā'īliyya were no longer a challenge nor prominent.

As a conclusion, a comparison between the accounts of the Fāṭimids by historians such as Ibn Khaldūn and al-Maqrīzī with the accounts of the Ismā'īliyya in Ash'arī *kalām* texts is revealing. Ibn Khaldūn dismiss the black legend as propaganda, and his portrayal, like that of his student al-Maqrīzī is positive. Why? I would suggest that *kalām* authors view "the Muslim other" in theological categories. However, historians, evaluate the Fāṭimids as historical actors, not theological "others." It would seem that in this case the historians lens is much clearer than that of his theologian counterpart.

Mir Baiz Khan (ITREB Canada), "Chitrali Ismailis: Their Relations with Other Communities"

Chitral, a district of Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, is a mountainous terrain on the south side of the Hindu Kush mountain range. The name Chitral represents a geographical area with politically defined boundaries which is used by local population for the central town and the administrative Headquarters of the district. It shares a common border with Afghanistan's three eastern provinces, namely Kunar and Nuristan in the southwest and Badakhshan in the northeast. This long strip of rough terrain makes Chitral the biggest district of the province geographically, but demographically sparse. Along with other communities, Ismailis have lived in Chitral for centuries and have a long history and deep roots in the land. Yet the community, relatively speaking, is unknown and its history and traditions are unexplored.

Chitral is unique both in terms of its topography and culture. Historically, it has been isolated due to the fortification of high mountains surrounding it without an easily accessible road. The mountain passes would remain closed for six months a year, which is one of the main causes for its economic backwardness and persistently lingering poverty of its population. However, isolation also provided benefits in terms of preserving its cultural identity.

Despite the pressure on its population from outsiders with puritanical aspirations, Chitralis have preserved their pluralistic cultural and religious traditions. In religious terms, three communities have lived side by side for centuries, in most part peacefully. These communities are the Sunni

and Ismaili Muslim communities and the ancient indigenous non-Muslim Kalash community. Each community has its own particularities and yet they all share a common Chitrali identity.

The focus of my research for this paper is the Ismaili Community and its relations with other communities. I will draw upon the historical sources which are available and on my own research which I have conducted in the Ismaili communities in Chitral's neighboring regions of Badakhshan of Afghanistan. Historically, these Ismaili communities on both sides of the border, have been well-knit in terms of religious traditions and common historical memory.

Chitral's ancient history is largely unknown; however, whatever meager information is available indicates that it has been a place for many different communities. Apart from the ancient Kalash community, the tribal identity referred to as 'Qawmiyat' points to the fact that historically the inhabitants have migrated from various regions of Central Asia. This is also supported by the languages which are spoken in various valleys and their historical linkages with Central Asian communities whether ethnic, religious or linguistic. With the spread of Islam in the region, the demography of Chitral appears to have shifted with an increasing number of Muslim settlers and their religious propagandists coming from various centers of religious establishments. The initial impact of this seems to be on the Kalash community whose members were numerous in Lower Chitral. In fact certain historical relics and narratives indicate that they were the rulers of lower regions of Chitral. Over the course of history, the immigrant Muslim communities first settled in the upper parts of Chitral, and gradually became majority of the population. There are also indications that the first Muslim community to emerge in the upper valleys of Chitral was the Ismaili community and remained as the majority of the Chitral population until the end of the nineteenth century. Today, the majority of Chitral's population follow the Sunni interpretation of Islam.

In 1895, Chitral came under the suzerainty of the British Indian Empire. It is during this period research began to emerge in the form of reports by western intelligence personnel, explorers and ethnographers. This was an important contribution to the recording of historical narratives of the region, but the reports mostly focused on the politics and military operations of the time. There is very little reliable literature which records the history of the people, their cultures and religious traditions. Anything written about the communities indicate one sided whimsical narratives concocted and presented to the military intelligence personnel or explorers. The lack of context and familiarity with the history and cultures of the region resulted in these reports being interpreted at face value. While contemporary non-local scholars have provided valuable clues to explore the history and traditions of the Chitrali communities, the local researchers tend to recycle the same material without subjecting it to a critical scrutiny using modern scientific research methodologies.

Historically, there are no written texts or oral narratives available indicating that there had been any major inter-communal and inter-tribal conflict in Chitral. Communities belonging to different clans, languages and religious traditions have, for centuries, lived in peace and harmony with intertwined relationships through inter-marriages and foster families. Foster parenthood involving the breastfeeding of newly born children of the aristocracy (the ruling family in particular) by lactating mothers belonging to common but respected families, was a means to creating tighter bonds among people.

Since the opening of the Chitral-Peshawar road over the Lawary Pass by the British early in the 20th century, this harmonious inter-communal relationship has come under constant pressure. Increasing connections with the southern cities of Pakistan and a new generation of Chitrali religious scholars graduating from the South Asian seminaries with a hardline evangelical

religio-political outlook have at times contributed to souring inter-communal relations. However, with wide spread education and modern technology, the young generation of Chitralis of all stripes is emerging with a social consciousness that peace and harmony is a sine qua none for the prosperity and wellbeing of all.

This paper will expand on the points raised in this brief framework as well as explore the challenges and opportunities involved with sustaining the historical legacy of communal diversity and promoting peace, harmony and development, which is an aspiration for a pluralistic Chitrali society.

Panel - Migration, Borders, Politics

Sadiq Habib (Independent Scholar), “How Shall We Sing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land? On the Intergenerational Reproduction of Ismā’īlism in Post-Migratory Contexts.”

The present paper deals with issues of intergenerational transmission of religious identity among Ismaili communities today, with a focus on the post-migratory contexts of Europe and North America. Employing a comparative perspective, it begins by clarifying the units being subjected to comparison, and proposing an analytical framework taking into consideration both the historical nature of the processes and the complex interplay of multiple levels of analysis, from individual subjects to the geopolitics of the world-system. Contesting perspectives taking it to be a general and global problem, the paper proposes an analytical reterritorialisation, highlighting the importance of taking phenomena in their contexts. Following findings from fieldwork research developed for GPISH (the three-year long Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities offered by the IIS to students coming from within the community) in Calgary, Alberta, in the summer of 2014, and subsequent extensive bibliographic research, the paper argues that concerns raised by members of this community about a global problem of 'occidentalisation of values', must themselves be seen as problematic. The paper argues that these concerns must be seen symptomatically, as an external manifestation of anxiety by sections of a particular community, in a particular place and at a particular time, when faced with a set of widespread and historically generated processes and dynamics, namely globalization, the engineering of a new pan-Ismaili identity discourse and global migratory movements. After making this point, the paper then proceeds to develop a strategic review of literature highlighting the issues as they emerge from a comparative analysis. It then finishes by summarising the main points resulting out of this research, identifying areas for further applied and strategic research, and finally proposing some possible policies that can be implemented to address the identified problems.

Alnoor Gova (Independent Scholar), “‘Unpacking AntiTerrorism’ and its A/Effects on Muslims in Canada.”

(This presentation did not occur at the conference as the presenter was unable to attend or submit his paper.)

Panel - Identity, Practice and Participation in Canada

Alyshea Cummins (University of Ottawa), “Redefining Islam in Canada: An Ismaili Muslim Movement.”

Anti-Muslim discourse is becoming increasingly commonplace. The nurturing of fear and distrust foster environments of discrimination and exclusion, and normalizes hostile anti-Muslim sentiment. This often results in harmful consequences for Muslims both nationally and transnationally. Further, evidence for manifestations of Islamophobia can be seen worldwide: the banning of religious symbols in workplaces and public spaces (Europe); Immigration/Refugee policies (Europe and North America); and President Trump’s proposed Muslim Ban and Muslim Registry (US).

Many Muslim communities have mobilized to “correct” these misunderstandings about Muslims and Islam in an effort to curb the harmful consequences of this “othering”. While there might be good intentions behind these efforts, in actuality what these individuals, communities, and institutions are doing is creating a figurative box of what being “Muslim” entails, excluding and “othering” tens of thousands of other Muslims in the process. This solution can have harmful local and transnational effects, and glosses over histories of intolerance and hostility towards Muslim diversity within the *umma*.

This paper examines the Shi’i Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslim community (henceforth, Ismaili) in Canada and how they are attempting to alleviate both Islamophobia and internal *umma* dissonance. The research suggests that the Aga Khan alongside the Ismaili community are actively challenging Islamophobic discourses by crystallizing and presenting Ismaili Muslim identity as an example of the diversity that exists within Islam. More importantly, through this identity effort, Ismailis are not only creating space for Ismaili Muslim narratives and other minority Muslim narratives, but are simultaneously promoting and institutionalizing religious literacy about the diversity that exists within Islam. They are doing this through various formal and informal individual and institutional efforts.

This Ismaili Muslim movement, as it is occurring in Canada, can be seen as a historical attempt to change the way Canadians understand Muslims both in historical and in contemporary contexts. Interestingly, this community is not only a minority within Canadian society, but within the greater *umma* as well. Although they are small in numbers, this community is highly resourceful and organized in their efforts to bring about mutual respect and understanding for Muslims inside and outside of the community.

Transnationally, Ismaili Muslims have been – and continue to be – persecuted by other Muslims in countries such as Pakistan and Syria for their traditional beliefs and practices. In the west, and in Canada specifically, they are at risk of suffering the consequences of anti-Muslim narratives, such as the institutional discriminatory policies previously mentioned. These harsh realities have yielded the members of the Ismaili community to mobilize and challenge these divisive narratives for a more inclusive one.

This paper is part of a larger doctoral thesis project and highlights preliminary research findings. The research presented here is informed by original online survey data and one-on-one in-depth interviews with members of the Canadian Ismaili community and Ismaili leadership. These instruments were designed to investigate Canadian Ismaili identity, participation, and the crystallization of their efforts in Canadian public space.

The data suggests that Ismailis are mobilizing at both institutional and grassroots levels to nuance how Islam and Muslims are viewed both internally, within the *umma*, and externally, by the wider-Canadian audience.

The Crystallization of Ismaili Identity

Ismaili identity is an important contributor to this greater movement as it functions to challenge mass generalizations about Muslims and Islam. Further, Muslim minority representation in the public sphere creates space for other minority Muslim narratives, which, in-turn, creates space for religious literacy more generally.

The discussion of Ismaili identity is two-fold: first we must examine how it is constructed, internally, inside the community, and second, how it is projected, externally, outside of the community; thus, influencing community perception by the outsider.

Internal Efforts

Strengthening and enhancing Ismaili Muslim identity creates confident ambassadors of the Ismaili faith for or both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences. Further, this confident sense of identity better equips the individual to challenge and discredit anti-Muslim or anti-Ismaili discourses with well-informed counter-narratives.

Internal community efforts are important in shaping Ismaili identity since they are highly structured and organized due to having a national governing body. Further, the dissemination of religious/spiritual information through Ismaili institutions has the potential of being highly influential in informing on Ismaili identity. To elaborate, 84% of my survey participants advised that they have learned about their faith through religious institutions, thus it makes sense that investment is made in ensuring the community is equipped with the knowledge necessary to be good ambassadors.

The Ismaili Jamatkhana is an important component of the Ismaili *tariqa* tradition as this is not only where rites and rituals take place, but also where Ismailis are able to receive their Imam's guidance through *farmans*. Over half of survey participants informed that they have come to know about their religion through the guidance of the Imamate.

Farman content is highly influential in shaping Ismaili belief and participation. Although I am unable to conduct research on *farman* content due to the private nature of the community, I was able to see the same language of *farmans* reiterated by Ismaili participants in both qualitative survey entries and interview transcriptions. Examples of this become more evident in the discussion of Ismaili ambassadors below.

Ismaili Muslims are unique in that they not only have religious education for primary school children, *Bayt ul Ilm*, but also secondary school children, *al-Azhar*. These formal means of education not only help construct Ismaili Muslim identity, belief, and practice, but also inform on religious literacy about Muslims in past and present contexts. Thus, this religious literacy project begins within the Ismaili community itself, in hopes that this education will permeate outwards to the greater Canadian society, influencing external perception.

External Efforts

The external perception of Ismaili Muslims has the potential to directly challenge pre-conceived notions about Muslims, and Islam more generally, as Ismaili identity is quite different than the mainstream narrative of Muslims as depicted by the media. Thus, awareness of Ismaili Muslim identity and civic participation nuances monolithic narratives of Muslims being violent and extreme in nature. These external efforts are both institutional and grassroots in nature.

Institutional Initiatives

There are various ways that Ismailis are attempting to shape outsider perception. The ways in which this happens can be categorized under institutional initiatives and individual initiatives. By institutional initiatives I mean any effort made by the institutions themselves, for example, outreach programs such as Rays of Light, World Partnership Walk/Golf, Milad an-Nabi, Mayor's Breakfast, and Stampede. These efforts are designed to engage the Ismaili community with the non-Ismaili community.

There are also centres designed to represent Ismaili ethics and values, they are the two Ismaili Centres in Canada, in Burnaby and Toronto. These permanent structures serve as symbolic markers for Ismaili presence in Canada and ambassadorial hubs for Ismaili identity and participation.

Finally, the Global Centre for Pluralism and the Delegation of Ismaili Imamate, and the programming therein, are meant to be a direct reflection of Ismaili ethics and values. All these initiatives are designed to influence the way Ismaili Muslims, and Muslims more generally, are perceived in Canadian society. Although influential in their very presence, these centres would have little impact if Ismailis themselves promoted an alternative public image, however, my survey results suggest that Ismaili Muslims are mindful in promoting a positive public image and usually draw upon the philanthropy of their Imam in arguing that their Islam is one of service and care for all human and natural life.

Individual and Grassroots Initiatives

The most influential person in this movement is the Aga Khan himself. Head of the Aga Khan Development Network, the Aga Khan has made numerous public appearances to speak about Ismaili ethics and values, and Muslim ethics and values more generally. He has also used these opportunities to inform on Muslim diversity and the importance of understanding contexts that have influenced extremist manifestations of Islam. These public events not only influence outsider perception but internal community perception as well since Ismailis see these appearances as educational opportunities to learn from their Imam. Further, the Ismailis interviewed claim that their participation inside and outside of the community is inspired by the Imam's guidance. An example of this is why so many Ismaili Muslims consider themselves as ambassadors of their faith – this is something that the Imam has directly requested in his *farmans* to the Ismaili community in Canada.

Around 70% of survey participants consider themselves to be ambassadors of their faith. While the survey data provided informal examples of how Ismailis actively try to challenge generalizations about Muslims in everyday interactions, interviews with Ismaili members informed on more formal and organized examples.

Ismailis in more privileged public positions, such as in media or in academia, are actively mobilizing to challenge anti-Muslim narratives by either speaking about Ismaili Islam as a counter-example to extremist Muslim discourses or through more structured religious literacy efforts. This includes conferences, workshops, and classes designed to inform on Islam through a religious literacy framework.

Religious literacy as an approach to combat Islamophobia

Islamophobia and exclusive Muslim narratives create hostile environments, normalizing the institutional discrimination and dehumanization of Muslim communities, both inside and outside the *umma*. Religious literacy is an important means to combat Islamophobia and exclusive Muslim narratives as it challenges individuals to rethink preconceived ideas by providing counter-examples to monolithic narratives. Further, the religious literacy framework is non-exclusive in that it does not present one narrative over another, but rather, informs on multiple Muslim narratives in their contexts.

Internal efforts

I have already discussed two internal efforts to promote religious literacy within the community: through formal religious education and through *farmans* and speeches by the Aga Khan. These examples reveal an intricate and long-term commitment to alleviate intolerance both within and outside of the *umma*. Further, this commitment suggests that it is important for Ismaili community members to be informed about religious literacy, perhaps because they too act as ambassadors not only for the Ismaili community, but as members of the global *umma* as well.

External efforts

There have been various efforts by both Ismaili institutions and Ismaili individuals to promote religious literacy about Muslims and Islam. External efforts are important because, if successful, this could counteract anti-Muslim narratives and lead to more tolerance and acceptance of Muslims and Muslim diversity. High profile examples for spaces devoted to religious literacy efforts are the Aga Khan Museum and Park (AKM) (Wynford Drive, Toronto) and the Aga Khan Garden (AKG) (University of Alberta, Devonian Gardens).

Institutional Initiatives

The Aga Khan Museum is the first museum devoted to Islamic art, culture, and heritage in North America – this is history in and of itself. Further, what makes the AKM and AKG so influential within the *umma* is that they work with non-Ismaili Muslim communities to promote awareness and understanding of Muslim art, heritage, and culture. These public spaces, then, are not only promoting religious literacy about Muslims to non-Muslims, but it is intended that Muslims engage with them as well.

Further, the programming at the AKM has been strategic in ensuring that content is relevant to current contexts. For example, they held an exhibit on Syrian art and culture at a time when Syrian refugees were entering Canada in large numbers. This was a direct attempt to humanize and inform on a population of people that were subject to dehumanization by the media.

The Aga Khan Garden is currently in development stages but it has a social mandate to be used for “cultural dialogue” uniting “diverse publics now and into the future through the shared experience of nature at its most graceful.” Although in its infancy stages, this garden will have

programming designed to bring communities together through the shared appreciation of the natural arts. Further, in its architecture, the garden has been designed to represent Islamic gardens from around the Muslim world, thus representing the diverse histories and cultures of the *umma*.

It is apparent that the Aga Khan and his institutions are invested in promoting dialogue and religious literacy about Muslims and Islam. What is even more fascinating is how members of the Ismaili community are taking it upon themselves to assist in their own unique ways.

Individual and Grassroots Initiatives

Members of the Ismaili intelligentsia are committed to promoting religious literacy about Muslims and Islam. As discussed above, many academics use their privilege to nuance generalizations about Muslims and Islam, both inside and outside of the classrooms. Those whom I have interviewed have done this out of their own accord; they were not approached by Ismaili Institutional leadership but instead see this as their responsibility as learned *murīds*.

In Canada, there is even Ismaili representation in the government, Mayor Naheed Nenshi (Calgary) and Senator Mobina Jaffer (BC), and in media, Kamil Karmaili (CTV), Faizal Khamisa (Sportsnet), and Nabil Karim (SportsCentre) to name a few. These individuals have on occasion used their privilege to speak out against anti-Muslim discourses and discriminatory policies that primarily affect Muslims.

The Aga Khan alongside his Ismaili community are quite active in their attempt to crystalize religious literacy about Muslims and Islam in Canada. These institutional and individual efforts are both informal and formal in nature. My data reveals various degrees of activity ranging from informal “watercooler” discussions at one’s place of employment, to high profile permanent public structures like the Aga Khan Museum. As presented, the research reveals that this movement is both top-down and grassroots in nature. Finally, this movement is the first example of a Muslim community standardizing religious literacy as the primary means of combating Islamophobia. Time will determine whether or not this is a successful approach to combating the current islamophobic climate in Canada.

Rubina Ramji (Cape Breton University), “Second Generation Ismaili Muslims in Canada: What Does it Mean to be Muslim?”

This paper examines the religious expression and involvement of second generation Ismaili Muslims growing up in Canada. The research participants were aged 18-27 and were either born in Canada of immigrant parents or were less than 10 years old upon arrival. This ethnographic research paper reports the results of in-depth face-to-face interviews. Of ninety-two interviews with second generation Muslims, ten identified as Ismaili: they include both religiously involved and uninvolved, Francophones and Anglophones, as well as those who have maintained their parental religious identity and those who have converted to another faith. Patterns and tendencies regarding religious attitudes and identity will be discussed within a framework of quantitative analysis that looks for continuities and discontinuities in religious orientation and involvement in comparison with the larger Muslim cohort. In order to better understand the creation of religious identity within the Canadian context, it is necessary to examine the integration and acculturation experiences of the second generation, those who have grown up in Canada.

The issues of religious belief, practice and identity in Canada are complex. As “old-stock Canadians” are becoming less religious, immigration is strengthening cultural and religious pluralism (Lefebvre 2005). Canadian society has become increasingly religiously diverse in the past thirty years due to immigration patterns. Also, Canada’s approach to diversity is to foster a culture of inclusion through its core values of equality, accommodation and acceptance (Biles and Ibrahim 2005). Although Canada remains predominantly Christian, between 1991 and 2001 the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist communities in Canada have nearly, if not already, doubled in size (Bramadat 2005). Within this Canadian context, religion has remained important in relation to the creation of identities, boundaries and group solidarities. In fact, research in Canada has shown that recent immigrant children and youth are twice more likely to attend religious services in comparison to their Canadian-born complement (Biles and Ibrahim 2005).

The Muslim community began to grow rapidly after the 1970s, building mosques and establishing trans-ethnic communities across Canada (McDonough and Hoodfar 2005). Canadian immigration policies have allowed Muslims from almost every part of the Muslim world to migrate to Canada, and many tend to be from middle and upper middle class families. In fact, the number of Muslim immigrants to Canada has doubled each decade since 1981 and Pakistan, India and Iran have been amongst the top ten source countries for immigration (Statistics Canada 2003). Thus the foreign-born Muslim population in Canada is diverse, multi-ethnic and multilingual. Given the fact that many Muslims have lived in Canada for a few decades, the population of Canadian born Muslim youth has substantially grown. These younger Muslims, known as the second generation, have no direct ethnic identity to build upon, and therefore have to define Islam and its practices for themselves, in juxtaposition to the ethnic cultural values they have received from their parents. The question of migration and its transformative consequences has become highly complex, because it is not uniform around the world: it varies according to place and the particular circumstances of different migrants, their personal characteristics, and social location. The Muslim women and men and/or their families interviewed in this study had their origins in a wide variety of countries around the world. The vast majority came from Muslim majority countries, especially the countries of North Africa & the Middle East, or Pakistan & Bangladesh. While the clear majority of Muslim participants were Sunni or from Sunni families, a significant portion was also one variety or another of Shi’a (8 women and 2 men were Ismailis – the final presentation will focus specifically on the way these 10 Ismailis maintained their religious identity growing up in Canada).

It is by now almost a truism in the study of religion, and so in the study of the religion of migrant populations, that gender makes a significant difference: the religious orientations, lives, and profiles of men and women diverge. So much so is this the case, that the current research project was structured in anticipation that gender would be a primary variable. It is therefore just a little bit surprising, perhaps, that this was the case only in a very muted sense for the Muslim portion of our research participants. More specifically, the ways in which men and women from Muslim families related to the religion of their heritage, the way that they were going about relating to and reconstructing Islam for themselves was, in most senses, very similar, including as concerns the role of gender and sexuality in that religion. Where there were differences, these will also be highlighted and discussed.

The focal point of this research was to find out how this generation was or was not reconstructing their overall and specifically religious worldviews, practices, and identities. The second generation Muslims focused upon in this study are not being confronted by a new culture, but rather have been raised within, and feel completely at ease in, Canadian culture. They have been raised to contend with a variety of identity dimensions in their lives, those of their Islamic faith, their parents’ ethnic cultural heritage and their exposure to the values and

practices of Canadian culture through school, politics and the media. The approach to these individuals in the study had to take into account the culture of both the parents and the youth in order to better understand the diverse conflicts and tensions faced by these second generation Muslims as they develop their religious identities in a Canadian society.

This research project examined the involvement of second generation immigrant Muslim youth, aged 18-27, who had at least one immigrant parent and were either born in Canada or who arrived in Canada before the age of 10 years. These participants came from Muslim backgrounds, and were currently living or studying in the urban areas of Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. The interviews were conducted over a two year period beginning in September 2004 and concluding in April 2006.

The purpose of the research was to investigate the participants' involvement in religion and attitudes towards religion. The question of religious identity or lack thereof was central to the investigation. Interviewees were asked about their upbringing within their inherited religious identity, their own involvement in that religion if any, the adoption of any religious practices and unconventional practices they may have acquired. They discussed how their own views and practices differed from the parental generation (the first generation of immigrants), and how they situated themselves within Canada and the wider world.

Classifying the Muslim participants:

The function of using a classification scheme is a heuristic device which gives points of reference for comparing the different individuals to one another. The various classifications within them are also not ideal types in a Weberian sense, but rather descriptive labels of convenience whose sole purpose is to assist in the comparison. In the case of the Muslims, the 10-point classification scheme running from non-believers/express atheists to the most sectarian and highly practicing should, on the one hand, be seen as a kind of continuum of involvement from low to high and, on the other, as a rough grouping into the non-involved, the somewhat to moderately involved, and the highly involved, with gradients according to certain criteria within each of these broader categories. The ten-point gradient also allows different ways of dividing the group into low, medium, and high. In addition, the classification scheme is not theoretically derived, but rather emerged from the analysis of the data of the interviews. Others doing the analysis may well have come up with a different and potentially just as valid scheme. Its justification is in how and what it helps us see, not because there would have been no other way of seeing.

Overall conclusions

Two final conclusions are worth noting specifically. Among the interviewees there was a strong correlation between religious socialization as a child and current levels of religious engagement. In particular, people who did not grow up in a religious household in which parents deemed it important that their children carry on the traditions were very unlikely to be religious adults. Our sample contained no one who was self-professedly religious but grew up in a non-religious household. On the other hand, while a good many of those who grew up in religious households were themselves religious adults, a sizable number were not. Religious socialization, one might say, appeared to be almost a necessary but not sufficient condition for being religious in adulthood.

These major conclusions of our study can thus be summarized as follows:

- Most participants took individual responsibility for building their own, personal relation to religion or their religion.
- Most participants insisted that beliefs and practices had to be defensible and have a reason; few just “followed tradition.”
- Women showed patterns somewhat different from men’s:
 1. women were more likely to be religiously involved;
 2. women were more likely to see the contours of religion primarily in the context of social relations;
 3. men were more likely to see religion as a set of ideals to be pursued, a kind of challenge through which one tested oneself;
 4. few men or women overtly accepted gender inequality or complementarity as an integral aspect of “their” religion.
- Living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) made a difference:
 1. the available resources for enacting one’s religion were greater and more varied;
 2. growing up in the GTA meant being less of a minority within a (white Christian) majority; it was likely that one’s own group constituted the local majority or plurality and that the largest group would itself be a “visible minority”;
 3. in Toronto, it was far less likely that an individual would be seen as the “typical” Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist, because so many others in the same place with the same identity lived and constructed the same religion differently;
- Almost everyone was accepting of religious diversity in their midst, and a great many celebrated it:
 1. the clear majority saw religion as a good thing and the religions as equal and equally good;
 2. religion was for most people a personal affair, very much within the community, but it also was something that one should be able to live visibly and in public without fear of discrimination or admonition.
- The majority of participants were supportive of multiculturalism, although also often critical of its insufficient implementation in Canada. The great majority felt comfortable and accepted in Canadian society.

A great many participants were still in a stage of flux, including as concerned religion; what they were at the time of the interviews was often quite different from what they had been sometimes even only months before, and what the future held for them was often uncertain and malleable. A great many of the interviewees reported change in their orientation toward religion from the time that they were children to the present, a sizable number reporting such change, often dramatic in nature, within the one- or two-year period before their interviews – that is, quite recently. This pattern made it apparent that many of our participants found themselves at a point in their lives when they were in flux; what they were two years previously was in many cases not what they were then, meaning that they could change again in the not too distant future. Their average age was between 21 and 22.

It is entirely possible that, today, a significant number might give somewhat different answers to our central questions. Their generation in the early part of the last decade was on average quite young; it remains to be seen what their final adult stories as a generation will be.

Reeshma Haji (Laurentian University), “Beyond Sectarian Boundaries: Dimensions of Muslim Canadian Religiosity and the Prediction of Sociocultural Attitudes.”

Culturally relevant dimensions of religiosity were assessed in Muslim young adults living in Canada ($N = 189$) in an online study with university students. The dimensions of religiosity included identification with Islam, religious practice, and religious knowledge. These dimensions were used to predict sociocultural attitudes, including support for veiling, child naming intentions, and views on interfaith marriage (between Muslims and non-Muslims) and interdenominational marriage (between Muslims of different denominations). Regression analyses demonstrated that dimensions of religiosity accounted for more variance in sociocultural attitudes than denominational affiliation within Islam (Sunni, Shia, or Just Muslim). Given the variability within denominations and the predictive value of dimensions of religiosity, a case will be made for the value of a psychological (individual differences) approach rather than denominational approach to understanding attitudes and religiosity among Muslims, including Ismailis. Implications will be discussed for the understanding of religiosity and sociocultural attitudes of Ismailis in Western contexts, including possible avenues for future research.

Salima Versi (University of Alberta), “The Evolution of Identity: Khōjā Nizari Ismailism in Canada.”

This project emerged as a result of work done during my Master’s degree, during which I examined the impact of Imam guidance and institutions on the migration and settlement of East African Khoja Nizari Ismailis in Canada. My current work is a continuation and an elaboration of that project, which found that Imam guidance and institutions had a significant impact on the migration and settlement process of the population in question. Based on the results, I was curious about how this same group, as well as their parents, children, and grandchildren, would articulate their identities as Canadian Ismailis.

Much of the existing research focuses on historical, textual work. The few studies that examine contemporary Ismailism tend to focus on the work of the Ismaili Imam and his public speeches. There are very few studies that are concerned with how Ismailis themselves articulate their identity and beliefs, and so this project is to provide an opportunity Ismailis to speak for themselves. To that end, I have been conducting in-depth, semi-structured, qualitative interviews. The results presented here are the result of the first set of interviews, and are therefore very preliminary.

When asked about what being Ismaili means for them, participants initially tended to respond with the ways in which their faith helps to give them ethics and values, and the ways in which those elements play a role in their day-to-day lives. Related to this element, some noted the importance of *seva* (service). When prodded a bit more, participants mentioned the importance of the *jamat*, or community, and the way in which their perceptions of the community, and how they felt they were perceived by the community, shaped their experiences of the *jamatkhana*, the Ismaili prayer space. They also mentioned the importance of ritual practice, though every participant gave different responses about which elements of practice were most important or meaningful for them. A few participants mentioned the role that Imam institutions have had on their lives, whether through schools and hospitals in East Africa, or through councils and boards here in Canada. Interestingly, very few participants mentioned Imam or the Imam unless specifically asked. However, once asked, it became clear that Imam was indeed central to their Ismaili identity. Nearly all of them discussed their allegiance to the Imam, a sense of loyalty and a desire to follow his guidance. Some mentioned the way in which the

Imam was an idealized model for them, an example of how one could best put the ethics and values of the faith into practice. In this context, they also mentioned how the Imam's institutions were an actualization of the vision of (Ismaili) Islam, ethics put into action as it were. And finally, every participant noted, so some degree, their personal relationship with the Imam, their sense of gratitude and love and devotion, but many only disclosed this when asked more directly about their relationship with the Imam.

In terms of their Canadian identity, it was very obvious that the participants considered Canada their home, an unsurprising finding given the important of the Imam's guidance to "make Canada your home" that I noted in my Master's work. Home was not always a defined concept however – many participants still recognized their roots as being somewhere else (usually East Africa, though India was occasionally mentioned), but all were adamant that home meant Canada. To that end, there was also a great deal of pride in being Canadian, a sense that Canada is an ideal place to live. Many of them casually noted experiences of diversity, almost as though diversity was so normative to them that they didn't really notice it, and so it would seem that a sense of lived pluralism is also part of how Canadian identity is understood by this group. There is some sense that the language of multiculturalism, particularly the rhetoric of Canada as a multicultural mosaic, seems to have been ingrained in this group fairly well. Few, if any, participants discussed experiences of discrimination or alienation, though some did note that there has been a shift in those experiences in the past year or so. However, all noted that being Canadian was also about ethics and values and, interestingly, they tended to use very similar words to describe their Canadian values as they had for the Ismaili values.

It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that when asked about Canadian Ismaili identity, participants noted the great overlap between Canadian values and Ismaili values. Canada is seen as a crucible of sorts, an ideal place to be able to put Ismaili values into practice. As a country that allows for the free practice of their faith, participants saw Canada as a safe-haven, a place that welcomed them and allowed them to be fully themselves. There is also a sense that Canada has been a place of importance for the Imam, due to his long-standing relationship with the Canadian government and his decision to build a number of high-profile institutions here, and that too seems to indicate to many participants that there is something special about being a Canadian Ismaili. There is, therefore, a sense of gratitude for having this particular hyphenated identity, and a sense that a different modifier, whether national or religious, would fundamentally change the way in which they are able to express their identity. The Canadian-Ismaili identity, appears to be an especially coherent one for these participants, and they at times seem quite self-satisfied, as though the Canadian Ismaili identity represent an ideal that has been achieved. However, even with this slight smugness that occasionally emerges, there is still a sense that the privilege of having this particular identity bring with it a responsibility to give back, both to Canada and to the Ismaili community, as well as to the world at large. Overall, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that this identity is qualitatively different from that of other Muslim communities, and perhaps even from other Canadian and other Ismaili communities. There is certainly a sense among those interviewed that there is something unique about being a Canadian Ismaili, and that self-articulated distinctiveness bears further study.

Panel - Ismailis of Badakhshan

Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “The Politics of Rule in Badakhshan and the Place of Ismā‘īlīs.”

The daughter of Shāh Sulṭān Muḥammad (d. 1466-67), the last ruler of Badakhshan, is credited by the author of the *Ta‘rīkh-i Rashīdī*, Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dughlāt, with the statement that her ancestors ruled Badakhshan for 3000 years. The *Ta‘rīkh-i Rashīdī* was used by later dynasties to substantiate and legitimise their rule in the mountain region. This longevity of rule was mainly due to the absence of local actors who could claim political rulership in Badakhshan. Such claims by later dynasties pose a question of rulership over the region.

We learn from Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s *Jāmi‘ al-ḥikmatayn* that the ruler of Badakhshan, ‘Alī ibn al-Asad, was an Ismā‘īlī convert or sympathetic to this cause. If ‘Alī ibn al-Asad was an Ismā‘īlī himself, his progeny must have ruled the region after his demise which leads us to raise the question of whether Badakhshan was ruled by an Ismā‘īlī ruling family.

Various sources on the history of Central Asia and Persia provide a wide range of data that can be used to track the origin of the rulers of Badakhshan from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. I juxtapose the information collected from oral tradition with normative or descriptive sources in order to present verifiable data.

In this paper, I argue that Badakhshan was ruled by local ruler of Persian origin who was affiliated to the Ismā‘īlī cause and ruled the region until the 14th century. I also argue that the Ismā‘īlīs of mainland Badakhshan, as a result of Tīmūrid persecution, migrated to the northern mountain principalities of Shughnān and Wakhān. Rulership over the semi-independent principalities of the region was connected with a shared genealogy where the relationship between the *Shāh* of Badakhshan and the regional rulers (*mīrs*) was that of *primus inter pares*. Therefore, I aim to show that Ismā‘īlī rulers controlled the mainland of Badakhshan for over three centuries and its northern mountainous regions until the period of the Great Game.

Hakim Elnazarov (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “The Ismailis of Central Asia during the Colonial Era.”

In the last decade of the 19th century, the Ismailis of Central Asia were caught in the rivalry between the British and Russian imperialists, who encountered the Ismaili Muslims in the mountain terrains of the Pamirs and Hindu Kush. The rivalry of the two powers, known as the Great Game, was characterised by the gathering of intelligence about the mountain region, developing alliances with local rulers, military expeditions, demarcation of borders and spheres of influence. As a result, the Ismailis of Central Asia, residing in the ravines of the Pamirs on the bank of the river Panj, were unwittingly drawn into the British and Russian rivalry, which changed the political landscape of the region. This paper will explore the dynamics and the circumstances in which the Central Asian Ismailis were engaged in the Great Game, their relations with Russian colonialists and the role of their religious authorities in the expansion of colonial rule to the mountain region. The paper will also critically examine some of the myths about the annexation of the western Pamirs to the Russian empire and will emphasise the role of human agency in the formation of the strategies and policies of the Russian authorities in addressing the Pamir issue during the Great Game.

Abdulmamad Iloiev (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “The Ismā‘īlīs of Tajikistan during Soviet Rule: Appropriation to a New Socio-Political Order.”

Exploring a complex period in the modern history of the Tajik Ismā‘īlī community, this paper focuses on the changes and challenges that the community endured during the communist

regime in Tajikistan. Using the Soviet archive materials and local narratives, it demonstrates why the regime pursued different policies towards Islam in general and Ismāʿīlism in particular based on different circumstances in the Soviet history, and how the community managed to appropriate itself to those policies. The discussion is centred on four key themes, which are crucial in addressing the modern Ismāʿīlī history in Tajikistan: (a) intra-faith issues in early Soviet Badakhshan, (b) militant atheism, (c) reconstruction of the Ismāʿīlī institutions and practices, and (e) religious resurgences during Perestroika.

Zamira Dildorbekova (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “The Shaping of ‘Civil Society’ by Tajik Ismailis through Discourses on Faith.”

Approaches to the understanding of ‘civil society’ and its development in independent Central Asian states remain contested among policy-makers, scholars and development practitioners, both inside and outside the region. The ‘mainstream’ or ‘neoliberal’ approach, employed by Western donor agencies who began operating in the region in the early 1990s, in the aftermath of the states’ independence from the Soviet Union, evolves from the modern Western experiences and idea of civil society, and broadly views its role as a counter-agent to the government and key to fostering states’ ‘transition’ to neoliberal democracy and economic development (Putnam 1993). Civil society organisations, according to this conceptual approach, have to be voluntary, autonomous from the state and family, as well as conforming to formal structure and organisation. In the context of Central Asia, this definition led to efforts of creating new, neoliberal, Western-driven civil society forms and initiatives, which otherwise was ruled out as non-existent. The effectiveness of these endeavours, however, came to be gradually questioned from within and outside the region (e.g. Hann and Dunn 1996; Ruffin and Waugh 1999; Anderson 2000; Kandiyoti 2002; Roy 2005; Howell 2005; Paasiaro 2009), giving rise to the ‘alternative’ (Howell and Pearce 2001) or ‘communal’ (Freizer 2004) approach.

The communal approach undermines the neoliberal ‘fit-for-all’ model of civil society, and incorporates the idea that ‘interaction between different actors within civil society, and with the state, can create a space in which citizens are empowered to express their needs and outline their priorities’ (Giffen et al. 2005:8; see also a special edition of *Central Asian Survey* 2005). There is a deeper appreciation within this understanding of ‘mutual support and solidarity and acknowledging power differentials within civil society itself’ that includes traditional or communal actors (Giffen et al. 2005:8). In the context of Tajikistan, as argued by Freizer (2015:277-310), from even before the Soviet inclusion, the communal civil society organised (and continues to organise) itself around kinship (*avlod*), territory-based ties known as *mahallas* (neighbourhoods), or council of elders (*shura aksaka*), in order to provide various services, support, and community infrastructure, particularly at times of weak state provision. Moreover, the historical Islamic institution of *waqf* (charitable endowment) was another prominent type of institution in Muslim, including pre-Soviet Central Asian, societies, dedicated to realising ethical principles of faith through social engagement as well as achieving common good in society. Nonetheless, within both, neoliberal and communal, approaches the role of Islam in the development of contemporary civil society, in a region predominantly Muslim and with an increased presence of Islam, remains under-researched (Hanks 1999; Sajoo 2002; Achilov 2015; Hanks 2015). At the same time, while some authors point to the potent role of religion in civil society development, they admit a general lack of empirical data to support these claims (e.g. Giffen et al. 2005; Zharkevich 2010).

This paper focuses on an independent, voluntary civil society group, formally known as the Association of Community Organisations “Maslihat” (Tajik: ‘discussion’, ‘dialogue’), operating in Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan since 2008, and whose members belong to the Shia Imami Ismaili (hereinafter ‘Ismaili’) following of Islam. Based on the fieldwork conducted in

Gorno-Badakhshan in 2011, it examines how this indigenous or 'home-grown' social organisation articulates its emergence, role and actions as a civil society group, as well as its relationship to the state and other key institutional actors, in relation to interpretations of the Ismaili faith. This is in the light of the historic reunion of the Ismailis in Tajikistan (after seventy years of the imposed Soviet isolation) with their spiritual leader, His Highness the Aga Khan IV, and with the transnational Ismaili communities under his leadership.

This work argues that the notion of civil society, as reflected through the case of the "Maslihat", has been stimulated and informed extensively by the group's interpretation of what being an Ismaili means to them in today's world. This understanding, among other aspects, encapsulates the notions of being a 'good' citizen and working with their government towards a common good, which exhibits not only the role of Islam in developing civil society but of religious identity and faith in (re)shaping their perceptions of the civic and, indeed, (ethno-) national identity. Moreover, their conceptions of civil society build on and reinforce the 'traditional' values and structures of the community, while employing Soviet framework and ways of organisation and administration inherited by the region. As a result, this paper views itself as complementing the limited, albeit gradually growing, body of literature on 'alternative' or 'communal' conceptions of civil society, and posits that one cannot apply the understanding of Western models of civil society to the context of Central Asia, given their historical and contextual differences. Recognising 'communal' civil society as a valid form of civil society in Central Asia, in turn, positions one to better appreciate its role in promoting a positive change and in influencing sustainable development in the region.

So, formed in 2008 by several *mahalla* heads (sing. *rais*) or social organisations (also referred to as *tashkilothoi jam'eat*) in Khorog, "Maslihat" became officially registered with the state in July 2010. Joined by a number of other *tashkilots* in Khorog and villages in Ismaili-populated districts of Gorno-Badakhshan (mainly Rushan, Shugnan, Roshtkala and Ishkashim) the group consisted of roughly 300 members at the time of the interview in August 2011. Unlike studies that suggest that *mahalla* or community organisations generally feature one strong head in the absence of whom decisions could not be made, thus making the whole structure incapable (e.g. Stevens 2005:288), this group overtly went for multiple leadership representation to ensure internal democracy. More than that, according to the group, the diversity of the Jamat, particularly in Khorog which represents a 'melting pot' for Ismailis who arrive and settle there from across Gorno-Badakhshan, requires not a single leader but a 'united body of leadership of exemplary reputation and, most importantly, with no history of involvement in drug trade'. "Maslihat" is, at the same time, also a case where leadership, as observed by Roy in his own research (2005:1007), did not come to be based on pre-existing hierarchy of notables who 'adapt[ed] to the changes' and 'easily bec[a]me the new leaders of an apparent civil society'. To substantiate, as the founding members of the group noted, they as *mahalla* leaders were nominated to the post by the people's popular choice, rather than on the appointment of the local *hukumat* or other external actors.

Moreover, the group leaders explain the emergence of the group in 2008, as being encouraged by their readings of Farmans (the Imam's directives on spiritual and temporal matters) pronounced for the Tajik Jamat in 1995, 1998 and 2008, which featured the need for building a strong 'civil society' as one of the messages in the Aga Khan's guidance. Hence, the group came to perceive itself as a long-awaited civil society agent mediating for the Jamat on social, economic and other matters it faces with. They believe that due to the larger unawareness of the Jamat of the concept of 'civil society' in the past, there was not much action in this direction, and it took some fifteen years for a group such as theirs to evolve and start enacting Farman's messages. By the same token, the name of the group, "Maslihat", is explained in relation to 1995 Farman, which promoted peace for the country, in particular the message that encouraged

replacing violence with dialogue and tolerance, both of which lie at the core of pluralism. Moreover, there is an explicit attempt to bring in democratic values – as a counterweight to widespread corruption and authoritarian practices of the state, which they condemn and attempt to tackle – into principles by which the group operates, including during their group and community meetings. These principles enable a dialogue, shared decision making, and arriving at a consensus, as well as transparency and accountability. Their social reputation and moral standing, including no affiliation with drugs, are seen as essential prerequisites for community acceptance.

Furthermore, apart from basing its rhetoric on the Farmans of the Aga Khan, to legitimise its authority further, the group also draws its legitimacy from its officially registered status with the state, on the one hand, and (as mentioned above) coming from the grassroots level, on the other. So, being official, in technical terms, provided the group with some of the freedoms and constitutional privileges of a private party such as a bank account, able to file a lawsuit (whilst being liable to prosecution itself), etc. Although the group 'neither represents nor is represented by the state' and views the latter as its 'equal partner' (Russian: *ravnopravniy partner*), it works within the state's constitutional framework, as guided by Farmans. Whereas, tangibly, the registered status of the group further aided its legitimisation and mobilisation by way of cooperating with representatives of central religious authority (ITREC and *khalifas*), local *hukumat* and constabularies locally known as *militcia* (e.g. by inviting them to their community talks).

Additionally, the group exhibits a deep understanding of local issues and challenges, and seems to enjoy wider acceptance by the community. By exercising local-level democracy within the community, "Maslihat" equally seeks cooperation with the state – rather than being in confrontation to the regime, as the neoliberal conception of civil society posits – and Aga Khan institutions in order to promote their agenda. Moreover, the group's leaders believe that for quite a long time, for various reasons (including the civil war and so-called post-Soviet transition), the Jamat was not well-positioned to decide and make choices. Whilst there was no civil society mediator representing the voice of the Jamat, these choices instead were attended by the local state structures (*hukumat*) and the Aga Khan institutions. It views itself as having been able to fill this long-emergent vacuum in areas of state social provision, as well as between the state and the community, by voicing and, where possible, tackling 'the pain of the community'. The group perceives the role of civil society as critical in times of economic turmoil, poverty and weak governance. Some focus areas of the group's agenda – some of which they view as providing opportunities, while others of being a concern for the community – include sport, education, culture, and eradication of arms and drug trafficking. Examples of their activities and related narratives will also feature in this work/paper/presentation.

Panel - The Aga Khan: Ideas and Institutions

Otared Haider (University of Oxford), "Syrian Ismailis in the 20th Century: Educational Renaissance and Cultural Revival."

Although they constitute a small minority, Syrian Ismailis are a recognized community in Syria and they are nationally acclaimed as a liberal, secularized, and modernized community. They played increasingly an active role in the Syrian cultural life since the early decades of the twentieth century in which the Syrian Ismailis accomplished an educational renaissance. During that period, the community lived through several historical turns which motivated them to rise and work hard towards modernity and cultural enlightenment. The political changes that swept through Syria at that time made it possible for the Syrian Ismaili community to establish

connections with different institutions and communities. It also made it possible for them to communicate more actively and solidly with the international Ismaili leadership in Europe and its institutions. These new channels helped the Syrian Ismailis to lead a wide movement of reform in their religious institutions and educational system. This educational renaissance brought about a cultural revival that helped the Syrian Ismailis in the following period to open up to the wider Syrian society and to have an active engagement in the national cultural projects and educational institutions on the one hand, and to reinforce their awareness of their cultural identity and their history on the other.

This paper will examine the modern educational practices and institutions of the Syrian Ismailis that brought about their educational renaissance by combining empirical research with data collected from Ismaili written sources, media accounts and oral narratives. It will analyse the findings by drawing on approaches derived from modern socio-cultural theories and historical studies. The discussion will explore the historical context of this renaissance, and the cultural paradigms that contributed to it, and inspired its models. Researching this understudied episode of the Syrian Ismaili history can shed a strong light on the overall history of the community and challenge the misconceptions and stereotypes that perceive it as a strictly-secretive esoteric community. It will also suggest new perspectives to view them as an active contributor to their national culture in the one hand and their international Ismaili community on the other.

Yahia Baiza (Institute of Ismaili Studies), “The Ismaili Imamate’s Development Intervention in Afghanistan, 2002-2017: Moving Beyond Humanitarian and International Aid.”

The post-Taliban era marked a new beginning for Afghanistan. Since December 2001, when the United States removed the Taliban (1996-2001) from power, the country has received unprecedented international aid and attention. The Ismaili imamate and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) have been major contributors to the reconstruction and redevelopment process of war-torn Afghanistan. However, unlike many other international donor and/or non-governmental organisations, the Ismaili imamate and the AKDN have adopted a very different approach to the international aid. Moving beyond conventional humanitarian assistance has been among the key objectives and priorities for Afghanistan of the present Ismaili imam, Prince Karim al-Hussaini, Aga Khan IV.

This paper details this vision by analysing the approach of the Ismaili imamate and the AKDN towards the redevelopment of war-torn and post-conflict countries in general and Afghanistan in particular. Since the AKDN is the Ismaili imamate’s key international development vehicle, this paper focuses particularly on the AKDN’s dual approach of offering a comprehensive development package on the one hand, and helping the government to develop a structured system, and the necessary institutions to carry out the task of development and progress in the future on the other.

This paper argues that while the AKDN’s development contributions have received media and political attention at the local, national and international levels, the AKDN’s work and mission in moving international aid beyond conventional humanitarian assistance has not yet received the academic focus it deserves. This paper also argues that achieving this objective is a daunting task, particularly in the context of Afghanistan, where the political, economic and security situation is in a constant state of flux and oscillates from one extreme to the other. Although the lack of socio-political and economic stability makes it much harder to attain the set objective, this paper analyses and demonstrates how the AKDN attempts to succeed in its mission through long-term commitment.

Al karim Karmali (Athabasca University), “Imamat Leadership and the Transparent Community: The Case of the Enabling Environment.”

Using the case study of the paradigm of the Enabling Environment, this paper argues that the presence of a farman-badari Ismaili Jamat has been a key construct in allowing Ismaili Imams to offer non-normative moral leadership beyond the confines of the Ismaili Community and thus positively touch the lives of non-Ismailis. The concept of the Enabling Environment (EE) was first articulated by HH the Aga Khan at the start of his Silver Jubilee in 1982. Earlier, in the same year, His Highness started a rural support program (AKRSP) – initially - in the poor Ismaili Communities of northern areas of Pakistan which put into practice many of the principles at the heart of the EE construct. Today, the EE philosophy has propagated and influenced development thinking at the highest international levels. This paper argues that an important first step in the diffusion of this revolutionary idea was the farman-badari of the humble farmers of the Northern Areas.

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<https://carleton.ca/islamstudies/cu-events/ismaili-studies-conference-2017/>

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Slideshow

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NT4qEPimZxY>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl6cH4A1N6U>