

# IIS Update

March 2005

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The Institute of Ismaili Studies



*Detail from a manuscript of the Akhlaq-i Nasiri (Nasirrean Ethics) of Nasir al-Din Tusi*

## Message from the Director



Dear Donors and Friends of The Institute of Ismaili Studies,

In a year particularly marked by continuing human conflict, an unimaginable natural disaster and the persistent threat of disease and famine, it is tempting to think that we are merely contingent beings in an equally contingent cosmos. The jarring ambiguity and uncertainty caused by such events raises important moral issues and questions.

One example of the Institute's role in serving as a forum for ethical discussions is the publication of some recent books: Aryn Sajoo's *Muslim Ethics: Emerging Vistas*; *Paradise of Submission*, written in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by Nasir al-Din Tusi and translated by Dr Jalal Badakhchani; and *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an*, edited by Dr Suha Taji-Farouki. The Institute also continues its important work as an academic and educational resource by engaging with the *Jamat* and the academic world

at large. The activities and presence of our scholars at events this year have been truly global, from Australia to Zanzibar.

Among the highlights of our outreach programmes this year were the Summer Programme on Islam held at Cambridge and two Leadership Orientation Programmes, one for the leadership of the *Jamats* of Syria and the UAE, and the other for the *Jamati* leadership of Pakistan. The programmes have generated tremendous interest and have created an excellent opportunity for interaction among academics, leaders and other professionals. We remain committed to continuing these programmes in the future.

It is a privilege to work with our many supporters, and to build relationships that allow us to contribute to deepen understanding of shared issues in a sometimes troubled world.

*Azmi Mansur*

As the translation phase of the primary level Ta'lim curriculum draws to a close, the Institute has embarked on its next major endeavour of developing an international secondary education curriculum for Ismaili students. Much has been learned from the primary level project, from its initial conception to its final implementation in religious education centres located in some twenty countries across the world, and this experience is proving to be of considerable value in informing the secondary education programme. Yet, although there are necessary continuities between the two levels, the Secondary Curriculum has raised intellectual and pedagogic challenges of its own which pertain to the teaching of Islam at a higher and more sophisticated level.

The foremost, and in some respects the most difficult, of these challenges has to do with the very conception of the curriculum itself, which seeks to break new ground in the way that Islam is presented to youngsters today. The overarching ideal of the curriculum is to explore Islam from both a civilisational and faith perspective, so that there is a creative referencing between the



*A group of 12-13 year students in North London discussing the notion of the plurality of interpretations in Islam*

extremes of dogmatic or eclectic models of instruction, influential in Muslim societies and the West respectively, which have come under justifiable criticism.

In contrast to the prevailing polarised readings of Islam, the secondary level curriculum being conceived at the Institute

drive in the curriculum to strike a balance between the normative and the broader pluralistic content incorporates elements that will appeal to both community-based and mainstream educators. Through this formulation, the Shi'a Ismaili reading of Islam, as an example of a specific interpretive tradition within the Muslim world, is contextualised historically and doctrinally in relation to the diversity of other traditions in Muslim societies. Islam is not discussed and understood exclusively in theological terms, but approached through an exploration of the multiple facets of human endeavour that have characterised Muslim civilisations. From a pedagogic perspective, students are invited to exercise their intellect and imagination through enquiry, discussion and debate, as well as through creative work and class presentations.

These are principles that can be profitably redeployed, in both Muslim and other educational contexts, in presenting a more

*The overarching ideal of the curriculum is to explore Islam from both a civilisational and faith perspective, so that there is a creative referencing between the contextual and the normative.*

contextual and the normative. This relationship mirrors the historical and present-day reality of the Shi'a Ismaili tradition in being located within the wider Islamic milieu, and at the same time bearing its own distinctive identity and diversity within the plurality of the *Ummah*. In doing so, the curriculum opens up an approach to an education in Islam that offers an alternative to the

aims to furnish an example of teaching Islam that moves beyond divisive practices by engaging with assumptions around conventionally accepted conceptual and curricular boundaries. While intended in the first instance for the global Ismaili community, it is underpinned by philosophical and pedagogical principles that can, with due adaptation, be applied in other contexts. Thus, the concerted



## Summer Youth Camps in Russia & Tajikistan - 2004

engaged and informed approach to Islam in the school curriculum. In this regard, the Institute's programme on secondary education, with its humanistic and value-based orientation, stands to complement parallel endeavours of curriculum development in the Aga Khan Development Network, such as the Islamic Cultural Studies project being undertaken by the International Academic Partnership (IAP), with its affiliations to Harvard University and Phillips Academy, Andover. As these programmes evolve and mature, it is hoped that the total complement of curricular materials being developed by the AKDN and IIS will service the ITREB religious education centres, the AKES schools and the emerging network of Aga Khan Academies, while also finding usage in educational contexts globally. In attaining this goal, the *Imamat* institutions will be addressing the dire need that currently exists in schools all over the world for sound educational resources on Islam.

The aim of the Institute's curriculum on secondary education, ultimately, is to educate students in the spiritual, ethical and intellectual ideals that the Islamic vision inspires. By helping young people to gain a broad sense of Islam as a civilisational impulse that has given birth to a rich diversity of traditions over time, and by assisting them to grasp, within that historical panorama, the specific location and significance of the Shi'a Ismaili understanding of Islam, it is hoped that the youths will acquire a perspective on the Ismaili *tariqah* which is grounded in a genuine understanding and intellectual appreciation of their own faith, as well as that of others, and which equips them to assume their proper place in the emerging civil and global societies of the twenty-first century.

Over the last decade, one of the most prominent activities of Project Tajikistan of the IIS, in collaboration with the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Committee for Tajikistan, has been its Summer Youth Camps throughout Gorno Badakhshan, catering to over 1500 Ismaili youth each year.

In 2004, two new pilot Summer Youth Camps were launched for participants aged 12 to 17 years in Dushanbe and Moscow. The camp for participants from Dushanbe was held in a valley approximately one hour from the capital where some 60 youngsters participated in a two-week programme of cultural, educational and entertaining sessions. In Russia, we conducted two pilot sessions of a fortnight duration in Tver, approximately an hour-and-a-half north of Moscow. About 30 youngsters aged 12-14 years and another 30 youth aged 15-17 years took part in these two sessions.

The camp participants go through two weeks of various activities including lectures, shows, excursions, sports, art activities such as wood carving, music lessons, dance lessons, knitting and painting, to name a few.

Through daily morning lectures, participants are exposed to such concepts as the sense of community belonging, change and continuity in modern society, diversity and pluralism, healthy society (including avoidance of undesired habits), exposure to the work and ethics of the AKDN, introductory orientation into preparing a business plan and so on. A number of these topics are extracted from concepts in the Ta'lim curriculum, taught in a more open and interactive forum, giving opportunities to participants from remote villages and centres to share their experiences with others, in a relaxed and informative context.

In both cases, counsellor training programmes were conducted prior to the actual camps. Colleagues from Badakhshan travelled to Dushanbe and Moscow to assist with the orientation and training of facilitators and served as group leaders to support the day-to-day running of these camps for the first few days of the programme.

Project Tajikistan is planning to continue this endeavour in 2005 to meet the demand in regions outside Gorno Badakhshan and in Russia.

*Participants and facilitators from the Summer Youth Camp held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan*



***Your early background is in Economics. How and why did you get involved with Ismaili studies?***

I did my graduate studies in the 1960s in Economics at the University of California at Berkeley. I was always interested in Islamic history, especially the history of various religious communities within Islam. In that context I began to study Shi'ism and looked at the writings of Wladimir Ivanow and other modern pioneers of Ismaili history and realised that there were only a handful of scholars producing serious academic work in the field of Ismaili studies. Once I began to delve into the field of Shi'i and, more specifically, Ismaili studies, I realised that there were many obscure issues that required clarification. I came to learn that this would be a rewarding field of research and exploration. This is how I was drawn to Ismaili studies and, what started as a hobby, over the course of some 10 years, replaced the original field in which I was trained. Meanwhile, I studied Arabic that, in combination with Persian, made it possible for me to study the Ismaili source materials. Initially, I concentrated on producing a comprehensive history of the Ismailis which resulted, after some two decades, in *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*, published in 1990 by Cambridge University Press. This book has gone through several reprints and its Persian translation has won the best book of the year award in Iran.

***The field of Ismaili studies has changed over the course of the last century. In the early 19th century, the study of the Ismailis was carried out by Orientalists using manuscripts which were written mainly by their detractors. How has the work of the Institute helped to change the way in which Ismaili history is studied today?***

Until the 1930s/40s, the Ismailis were exclusively and erroneously depicted on the basis of evidence collected or fabricated by their detractors. Let's go back to the 9th century when the Ismailis had organised their *da'wa* through a network of *da'is* in the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and other regions of the Islamic world. In 909, this resulted in the establishment of the Fatimids in North Africa who now had their own caliphate in rivalry with the Abbasids, who represented the Sunni interpretation of Islam. From then, there appeared an officially sponsored, literary, anti-Ismaili campaign which was funded and supported by the Abbasid caliph. The resulting fictional accounts of the teachings and practices of Ismailis were, in due course, accepted as accurate descriptions of Ismaili teachings and became source materials for historians, theologians and all others who wanted to study Ismailism. In sum, fiction became accepted as fact in the light of the anti-Ismaili black legend, which largely also targeted the general Shi'i community.

In the 19th century, we see the beginning of scientific orientalism based on the study of Muslim manuscripts. For the first time, Ismailis were now correctly identified as a Shi'a Muslim community. However there were still only two categories of sources from which the orientalist could draw their information: (a) Islamic manuscripts then available in Europe and written mostly by hostile Sunni authors who were affected by the black legends; and (b) the assassin legends of the medieval European Crusaders and Western historians.

These sources were rooted either in hostility or imaginative ignorance. The orientalist therefore lent their own seal of approval to the misrepresentations of the Ismailis without personally being against them. This revived the anti-Ismaili tradition.

This deplorable state of affairs began to change in the middle of the 20th century when genuine Ismaili sources that had been preserved in private collections (in Yemen, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and South Asia) were made available on a relatively large scale. Consequently, we began to see the production of critical editions based on these manuscripts and slowly a new picture of Ismaili history emerged. This new picture gradually replaced the fictitious accounts of medieval Sunni writers and the Crusaders.

In 1933, Ivanow published *A Guide to Ismaili Literature* that listed all the then known Ismaili works and their authors. This was the first time that a document like that had ever been prepared and it, in fact, marks the beginning of modern progress in Ismaili studies. This catalogue provided a scientific frame for further research in the field. In 1946, under the patronage of Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, The Ismaili Society was founded in Bombay to study the heritage of the Ismailis and progress in the field was furthered through the work of that institution and of a number of Ismaili scholars who had access to their own family collections of Ismaili manuscripts.

The recovery and study of Ismaili sources has continued unabated, and more critical editions and studies of Ismaili texts have appeared. As a result, we now have a much better understanding of Ismaili theology and other intellectual traditions as well as the important Ismaili contributions made to Islamic thought and culture.

The Institute has played a key role in furthering modern progress in Ismaili studies through its research and publications programmes, especially *The Ismaili Heritage Series* and *The Ismaili Texts and Translations Series*. The IIS with its unique collection of Ismaili manuscripts, resources and scholarship, carries out the task of



making available to scholars at large critical editions of texts with translations and analyses which are foundational elements for future progress in the field.

Another endeavour of IIS is related to our Encyclopaedia Project. The Institute has contributed many Ismaili-related articles to major encyclopaedias in Europe and in several Muslim countries. These encyclopaedias are normally the first points of reference for students, scholars or lay-persons who want to learn something about Ismailism. Through our contributions to such encyclopaedias, we are effectively able to correct the widespread misrepresentations of the Ismailis and dispel the legends about them.

In the last 10 years, the IIS has produced some fifty publications related to Ismailism and has been recognised as the foremost centre of Ismaili studies by the academic community, as attested to by nearly 300 positive reviews of our books, an increasing number of its publications cited in bibliographies of other books and encyclopaedias, and its publications used selectively as textbooks in renowned academic institutions such as Harvard University, the University of Chicago, UCLA and several universities in Canada.

***What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of correcting historical misperceptions of Ismailism?***

Fictions seem to acquire a life of their own, especially when rooted in romantic tales that have captured the imagination of generations of readers. These fictions refuse to die even when confronted with scientific evidence. Myth, by its very nature, is often more attractive than fact. When a myth has been repeated widely enough and long enough and has captured the imagination of generations of readers, it has a life of its own and it becomes very difficult to dispel.

Some legends are very colourful with elements like secret gardens, daggers, *houris* and wine - the stuff Hollywood stories are made of.

Let's take the example of Hasan-i Sabbah and his alleged 'garden of paradise'. Hasan-i Sabbah was an austere and pious Muslim. When the Ismailis were incessantly attacked by the Saljuq forces, Hasan sent his wife and daughters to another fortress where they were independent and earned a simple living. It is not logical that he would construct a secret garden of paradise with honey, *houris* and wine for any section of his community. Even the historian Juwayni, extremely hostile to the Ismailis, who was with the Mongols when they converged on Alamut and inspected that old fortress before the place was destroyed, says nothing about finding a 'secret garden' there, but recounts his impressive discoveries in Alamut's library founded some 166 years earlier by Hasan-i Sabbah himself. This is just one example of the type of fascinating legend that has captured the imagination of countless generations, especially in Europe.

We have managed to deconstruct legends and have produced equally fascinating factual accounts that can be substituted for these legends. We have placed these accounts in respected academic venues. The successful replacement of fiction by fact, however, remains to be seen and, at any event, it requires time. Legends fabricated and circulated for a millennium cannot be entirely dispelled in the course of one or two decades.

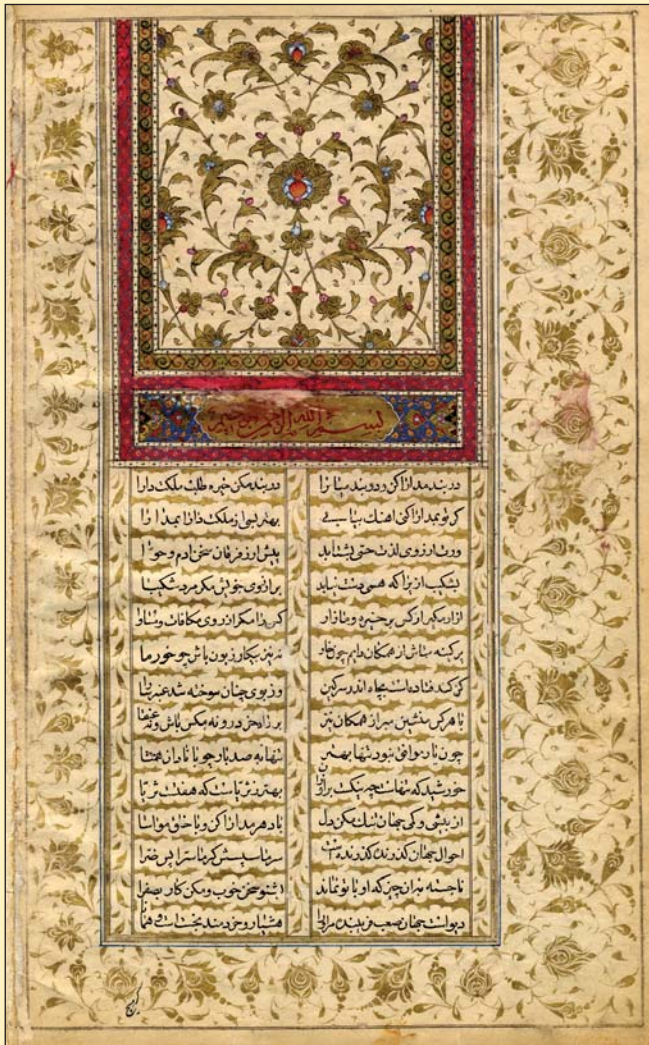
***What can members of the Jamat look forward to in terms of research and publications emanating from the Institute?***

Our research and publications are not limited to the area of Ismaili studies, although this will continue to represent the focus of our work. Now that a solid academic foundation has been established, we will gradually and



*Dr Farhad Daftary*

selectively become more involved in other areas of research, especially three particular fields: first, Islamic studies, with special reference to the modern period, and also looking at issues of modernity which have a direct bearing on certain problems faced by Muslims today. In this regard, we have already published six books: *Civil Society in the Muslim World*; *Muslim Ethics-Emerging Vistas*; *Beauty and Islam*; *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*; *Islamic Thought in the 20th Century*; and *Crossing the Threshold*. Secondly, Shi'i studies, with special reference to Shi'i spirituality in general and intellectual areas common to different Shi'i traditions, in particular those elaborated by the Ithna-Asharis and the Ismailis, as they both share the same earlier Imami Shi'i heritage. Third, Qur'anic studies, where our aim is to make accessible the entire spectrum of approaches, historical and contemporary, to understand and interpret the Qur'an. The first publication in this series, *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an*, was published in 2004 and several other works are in the pipeline. In all these areas our overall aim is to emphasize pluralism and the diversity of expressions and interpretations in Islam, as well as its spirit of tolerance.



19th century manuscript of the *Diwan* of Nasir-i Khusraw

*Reflecting the contributions of Persian scholars to various strands of Ismaili thought from the 8th to the 18th centuries, this exhibition brought together 25 manuscripts, many of which had never been displayed before to the public.*

The Library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies has one of the most outstanding collections of Ismaili materials in the Western world. Drawing upon the Library's collections, *Wellsprings of Wisdom* was the title of an exhibition held at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, and The Ismaili Centre, Burnaby, in November 2004. Reflecting the contributions of Persian scholars to various strands of Ismaili thought from the 8th to the 18th centuries, this exhibition brought together 25 manuscripts, many of which had never been displayed before to the public.

### *The Umm al-kitab*

The exhibition began with the enigmatic *Umm al-kitab*, an 8th-century Persian text preserved by the Ismailis of Central Asia, which reports the discourses of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir in response to questions posed by a group of his disciples.

### *The Fatimid period*

The foundation of the Fatimid state in 909 in North Africa marks the beginning of not only a glorious age in Ismaili history, but also one of the greatest eras in Egyptian and Islamic histories. Following the conquest of Egypt in 969, Cairo – the new capital city of the Fatimids – became a flourishing centre of scholarship, art and culture, in addition to serving as the headquarters of the Ismaili *da'wa*, which achieved particular success outside the domains of the Fatimid state.

During the Fatimid period, Ismaili *da'is* composed texts that were to become not only important contributions to Ismaili thought and literature, but which also left an indelible mark on the Islamic philosophical tradition. The *da'is* created an intellectual tradition that synthesized Muslim ideas with strands from the classical Greek, Persian and other philosophical sources. Numerous treatises expressing the complex metaphysical systems of thought developed by scholars, such as Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani, Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani, and al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi, were included in the exhibition.

### *The Writings of Nasir-i Khusraw*

While the three scholars mentioned above wrote entirely in Arabic, the cultivation of the Persian language as a medium for philosophical discourse is epitomised in the writings of Nasir-i Khusraw, who was also among the greatest of the Persian poets. Nasir-i Khusraw played an important part in preaching Ismaili Islam in Central Asia, and extended the *da'wa* throughout Badakhshan. In Yumgan, the permanent abode of his exile for more than fifteen years before his death in the 1080s, Nasir produced the bulk of his poetry as well as his theological-philosophical writings. Among the manuscripts on display were his *Diwan*, comprising more than 10,000 verses, and the *Wajh-i din* (The Countenance of Religions), a masterpiece on *ta'wil*, or esoteric interpretations.



## The Alamut period

The final decades of the 11th century coincide with another phase of Ismaili history when scholars produced works of significance in a completely different setting – the mountainous regions of northern Persia. Associated with the name of Hasan-i Sabbah, who was himself a learned scholar, the Nizari Ismaili state, centred on the fortress of Alamut, maintained a sophisticated outlook and placed a high value on intellectual activities. With the establishment of the Nizari state in 1090, the Ismailis created impressive libraries, containing not only important collections of religious and philosophical texts, but also scientific treatises and instruments.

Among eminent scholars who availed themselves of the patronage of the Ismaili rulers was Nasir al-Din Tusi, who spent almost three decades composing treatises on philosophy, theology, and astronomy, including his great work on ethics, the *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* (Nasirrean Ethics), as well as the *Rawda-yi taslim*, a comprehensive work on Ismaili teachings of the Alamut period (now published by

the IIS in a new translation by Jalal Badakhchani as *Paradise of Submission*). The onslaught of the Mongols in the mid-13th century brought about the destruction of the Nizari state, an eyewitness account of which is included in the *Ta'rikh-i jahan-gusha* (History of the World - Conqueror) of the historian 'Ata-Malik Juwayni who, after examining and removing a number of important texts from the library at Alamut, consigned it to flames.

## The Post-Alamut period and the Anjudan revival

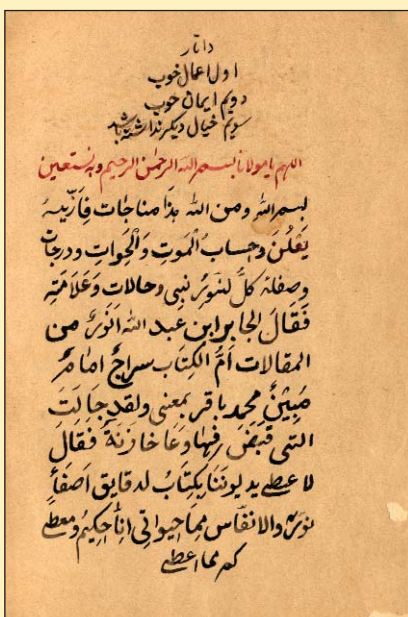
Having survived the destruction of their state at the hands of the Mongols in 1256, the Ismailis observed *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation) and, at times,

sought refuge under the mantle of Sufism. In this context, the 14th-century poet Nizari Quhistani was probably the earliest post-Alamut Ismaili author to express his religious ideas in the guise of Sufi terminology. This model was adopted in Persia over the next three centuries by other Ismaili authors, including Abu Ishaq Quhistani, Khayrkhwah-i Harati and Khaki Khurasani. A number of manuscripts by these authors were included in the exhibition.

The Library hopes to share these treasures, which are also among outstanding contributions in the long tradition of Islamic theological and philosophical thought, with audiences in other parts of the world through touring exhibitions.

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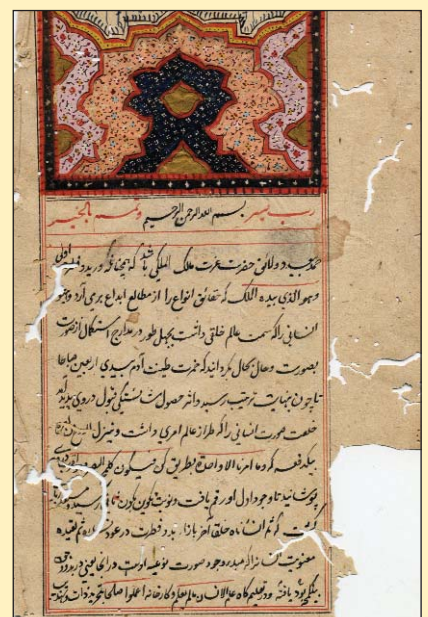
19th century manuscript of the Umm al-kitab



19th century manuscript of Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani's Rahat al-aql



The Akhlaq-i Nasiri of Nasir al-Din Tusi





At the end of their second year of the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH), students embark on a field-based research project. The intention is to offer the students direct experience of the lived context of the theories they are exposed to during the Graduate Programme. Students are encouraged to make connections between historical and contemporary issues during this time, and to understand the social context of knowledge. It is also an opportunity for hands-on experience in designing and developing a research project.

As part of the preparation, the Graduate Programme offers the students a field-based research design course. During these sessions, the students are exposed to the various paradigms and

theoretical perspectives of qualitative research. A practical approach is also adopted for the course and students are led through the processes of designing an actual research project. At the end of the course, the students are expected to have a viable field research proposal. Students can choose to work singly, in pairs or in groups. Our current third year students carried out their field projects last summer in different parts of the world and covered a wide spectrum of topics.

An area of enquiry that generated some interest was development issues in AKDN projects. A pair of students made an attempt at understanding community participation through a case study of a water supply project in the Northern Areas, Pakistan. A second pair looked at

*Pupils at the Kiti Madrasa Nursery School in Katwe District, Kampala, Uganda*







*The myth of women in isolation in rural Tajikistan; women in charge of public transportation*

AKTC projects in Masyaf, Syria, and explored how culture formed a catalyst for social and economic development.

Marriage and related issues was also an interesting theme. A pair explored the tradition of arranged marriages within the Afghan community in Quebec, Canada. They aimed to discover how different generations of the Afghan Ismaili community in Canada perceived arranged marriages and how these views diverged from past practices in Afghanistan. At the other end of the world, a student decided to explore the dynamics of marriages between people from different Muslim communities in Badakhshan, Tajikistan and how this interplayed with the theme of religious identity.

Issues relating to identity were of interest to our students and three more decided to investigate different aspects of identity in their field projects. One student looked at how ethnic identity changes over geographical distances; his research participants came from a remote community in Tajikistan. Another study looked at how British Muslim youth in Cardiff, of South Asian origin, express their identity. A third project attempted to explore the

role of the internet in defining and expressing identity issues for the youth in Iran.

One student explored urban planning and social cohesion in downtown Beirut, Lebanon. Space and its use shaped another study, the aim of which was to understand how culture and religion impact gender relations. The focus of the study was an Ismaili community in Syria.

Deciding to tackle an educational issue, one student looked at classroom pedagogy in the Madrasa Pre-school Programme in Kampala, Uganda, and investigated how modern concepts have been adapted to make them contextually relevant. An interest in health issues prompted one student to explore social changes and practices in birth control patterns amongst Ismaili women in Iran over three generations.

The role of different figures in relation to communities around them was also an issue explored as part of two field projects. The first study explored the role of the *khalifa* in a Charagh Rawshan (a ceremony that is part of burial rituals) in Tajikistan. Another study looked at *domullahs* (religion teachers) of Tajikistan. The study attempted to understand why

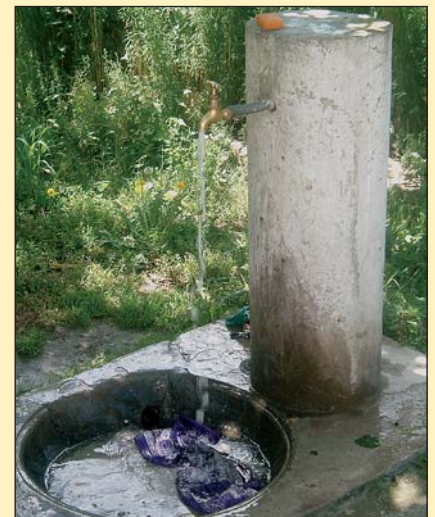


*Afghan Ismaili refugees studying in Rawalpindi, Pakistan*

individuals chose to take up the profession of a *domullah* in the present context.

Regardless of the focus of the field project or the country in which it was carried out, the students found the field project experience to be extremely motivating. Most of our students expressed that this was a powerful experience and one which continues to influence their studies, especially as they are about to write their dissertations in their Masters programmes at their respective universities.

*A tap stand just outside the residence of one Mayun villager*



The Institute of Ismaili Studies has, over the past two decades, been involved in educating and preparing individuals as a global resource in a variety of fields. To date, the Institute has over 200 alumni. Many amongst them have continued their research



*Zahira Virani*

Zahira Virani enrolled in the first Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities class of 1997 and graduated with an MSc in Urban Planning from the London School of Economics. After completing her Masters, Zahira found herself drawn towards a career in International Development and joined the Aga Khan Foundation as Country Manager for Uganda. She credits her

supervisor and colleagues for teaching her the true meaning of leadership, integrity in the workplace and commitment to development.

After leaving AKF-Uganda, Zahira worked mainly with NGOs, including a stint as a writer for *Ashoka: Innovators for the Public* and as head of the Programme Support Unit for the Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR), a Toronto based NGO with projects in Africa.

In 2002, after undergoing a rigorous recruitment process, Zahira was one of 16 individuals selected from more than 2,000 applicants by the United Nations Development Programme's prestigious Leadership Development Programme (LEAD: <http://www.undp.org/ohr/lead/>). She was assigned as Disaster Programme Specialist for Latin America and the Caribbean, where she helped coordinate disaster risk management programmes for the region.

Last April, after completing only one of the required two assignments in LEAD, Zahira was 'graduated' early from the training programme and re-assigned as Assistant Country Director for UNDP-Afghanistan. With a total budget of nearly US\$1 billion, Afghanistan represents UNDP's largest programme commitment in the world. Zahira is head of the External Relations unit which includes communications, donor relations, partnerships and resource mobilization. She is also currently the ad-interim Disaster Management Advisor for the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Zahira recently celebrated her eighth wedding anniversary with fellow IIS classmate, Hanif Datoo.

and studies in their respective fields, while others have pursued professional careers in various institutions and organisations, within and beyond the *Jamat*. Below are the profiles of a few graduates who are making their mark in their chosen fields of study.



*Karim-Aly Kassam*

Karim-Aly Kassam is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Communications and Culture, University of Calgary, Canada, and a PhD student at Cornell University, USA, studying Natural Resource Policy and Management. His academic career, research and work are peppered with various achievements and honours. After receiving his BA in economics from the University of Calgary, Karim-Aly

studied at the IIS, as part of the Waezeen and Teacher Education Programme (WTEP), and in 1993 was awarded his MSc in Social Policy and Planning in Developing Countries by the London School of Economics.

He developed and established the Theme School in Northern Planning and Development (NPDS) in 1994 and is currently its Director. This is an interdisciplinary minor taught through the Faculty of Communications and Culture. From 1998-2001, Karim-Aly was the first to hold the prestigious Murray Fraser Chair of Community Economic Development at the University of Calgary, and in 2003, *Alberta Venture Magazine* named Karim-Aly among the 50 most influential people in the Province of Alberta. He was also the first Canadian to receive the Fulbright Ecology Fellowship in 2003-2005.

Karim-Aly's international projects range from human ecology and the impact of chemical pollutants, to ethnographic knowledge of climate change to empowerment of indigenous women. His publications demonstrate an interdisciplinary range that reflects the diversity of his intellectual interests. He has carried out research in the Canadian, American and Russian Arctic and sub-Arctic, as well as the Himalayas, the rainforest in the south of India and the Middle East. He gets deep personal satisfaction from teaching students and serving communities through his work.





*Marodsilton Muborakshoeva*

Marodsilton Muborakshoeva has travelled far from home on her path to further education and development. The road to Oxford, where Marod is currently pursuing her D Phil in Educational Studies, has been paved with many new and challenging experiences. Originally from Shughnan District, Tajikistan,

Marod received her diploma in Tajik Language and Literature in the Department of

Philology at Tajik State University in 1989. Upon graduation, she began teaching at secondary schools in the Shughnan District where she remained for eight years. During that time, she was editor of the school newspaper, head of the Young Poets Club, and was awarded the distinction of first category teacher for her efforts. Marod also served as Religious Education Officer at ITREC, Khorog and was involved with the Oral Tradition Project in Badakhshan.

Upon completion of the Khorog English Programme in 2000, Marod left her home for England to embark on the next stage in her life. She completed the Institute's Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities, where she was valedictorian of her class, and went on to read for her MSc in Comparative and International Education at Oxford University, which she completed in 2003. Her thesis was on Islamic Institutions of Higher Learning (9th-15th centuries), which she is now extending for her PhD thesis entitled *The Idea of a Muslim University*.

In her valedictory speech, Marod described the programme at the IIS as enabling "students with different backgrounds to come under one intellectual environment where they share their knowledge and skills." She has been involved with *Jamati* work ever since her arrival in England as a member of the European Education Committee. Marod has been determined in her goal to educate herself and aspires to make a difference with the opportunities she has been given.



*Anil Khamis*

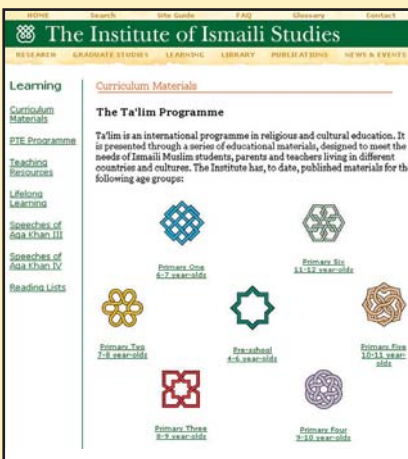
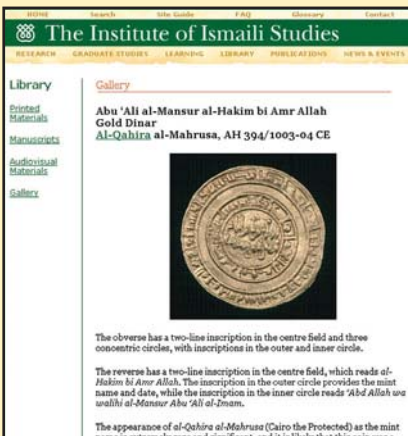
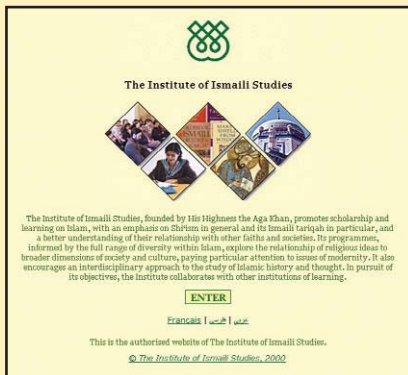
Dr Anil Khamis is a Lecturer and MA Course Leader in Education and International Development, at the Institute of Education, University of London. Originally from Uganda, Anil completed his BA at the University of Toronto and joined the Institute's Waezeen and Teacher Education Programme (WTEP) in 1989. He went on to read for an MA in Islamic Cultures and Societies at the School of Oriental

and African Studies in 1992, and an MED in Teacher Education and Philosophy of Education from the Institute of Education in 1993. Subsequently, he completed his PhD in Education and Development in 2000 from the University of London. His thesis was entitled *The Various Impacts of the Institute for Educational Development in its Co-operating Schools in Pakistan*.

Prior to the completion of his PhD, Anil worked in India, Pakistan and Tanzania for several years. From 1995-2001, Anil was Assistant Professor at the Aga Khan University's Institute for Educational Development in Karachi, Pakistan. He took on the role of Acting Executive Officer of Focus Humanitarian Assistance, Pakistan, and was also a consultant on country strategy to the Aga Khan Development Network during his time in Pakistan.

Anil has published on teacher education, school improvement and educational development. He has been a consultant with various national and international organisations such as Save the Children UK (evaluator of their Sialkot Basic Education Programme in the Pakistani province of Punjab) and the World Bank (teacher education and higher education development advisor on meeting Afghanistan's teacher education needs).

His knowledge and expertise informs his *Jamati* work and involvement. He has assisted a range of *Jamati* institutions on a number of projects and is presently undertaking curriculum development for the Ismaili Volunteer Corps. Anil also teaches and tutors at his local *Bayt al-Ilm*, where his son has just begun attending.



Pages from the Institute's website

The IIS Website is nearing its fifth year in operation and continues to highlight and make accessible many of the engaging and innovative areas of research and publications the Institute and its scholars have produced in recent years. You can access the site at [www.iis.ac.uk](http://www.iis.ac.uk) through your web-browser.

### Information at your Fingertips

The website [Home Page](#) presents the most current activities and events related to the Institute and enables web browsers to keep abreast of recent developments. It also features links to important sections of the site which provide background information on [His Highness the Aga Khan](#) as well as the [Ismaili Community](#) and the focus areas of the Institute's [research](#), [publications](#) and academic endeavours.

Users of the IIS website can find information in different ways: by clicking on the various headings at the top of the page; menus and sub-menus that bring the user to a specific department or programmatic endeavours of the Institute; or simply by using the [Site Guide](#) at the top of the webpage to find a detailed breakdown of the site's domains and themes.

### Education for a Changing World

One of the goals of the Institute's website is to facilitate access to secondary literature on Islam and related fields for the benefit, especially, of a non-specialist readership. This may include students in general fields or individuals whose personal or professional interests incline them to a study of selected features of Muslim societies and cultures. The [Lifelong Learning](#) domain of the Institute's website carries a number of articles by the Institute's academic staff that are suited to the needs and interests of

a non-academic readership.

Another very informative and useful section of the site is the [Reading List](#), a segment that is intended as a preliminary suggestion of books in English for self-motivated students or individuals without academic training or knowledge of languages of the Muslim world, but with some elementary acquaintance with Islam. The works referred to in the reading lists differ in their approaches, sometimes evincing contrasting perspectives and conclusions on the same topics. They are intended as the basis for a discerning and critical self-study by the reader and are updated periodically to reflect current scholarship and publications.

### Reaching out Across the Globe

The website plays a critical role in furthering the Institute's mandate and vision to promote scholarship and learning on Islam, with an emphasis on Shi'ism in general and its Ismaili *tariqah* in particular. Every day, thousands of users across the world are provided immediate access to information about the work of the IIS, its interdisciplinary research contributions in the study of Islamic history, philosophy, theology, literature, and its collaboration with other institutions of learning.

The design of the website attempts to take account of varying accessibility to technology across the world through judicious use of graphics, carefully selected fonts and easy-to-use navigational tools. Wherever possible, the website allows materials to be printed in easily accessible formats for off-line reading.

### Galleries of Knowledge

A special area of the website for visitors is the electronic [Gallery](#), a section for virtual exhibitions of selected items from the [Library's](#)



collection, as well as presentations on particular themes. Through these gallery exhibitions, visitors are able to view stunning images and descriptions, and read a textual commentary on the selected items within a broader historical framework and context. The virtual exhibitions are designed and written for a general audience, and cover many interesting themes in Muslim art, culture, literature, architecture and history.

### ***A Commitment to Learning***

Users may see familiar faces from their country when they visit the [Graduate Studies](#) section of the website, which focuses on people who have been engaged in learning at the Institute. Since 1983, the Institute has offered a number of human resource development programmes, graduating over 200 professionals from around the world, making up the Institute's [Alumni](#) body. A directory of profiles of IIS alumni is available and includes information about their academic qualifications and current activities.

Visitors may also learn about [Current Students](#) enrolled in the Institute's [Graduate Program in Islamic Studies and Humanities](#) and follow the different classes of students as they move through the three year program into Master's Programmes at different universities throughout the United Kingdom.

### ***Looking Ahead***

From its modest beginnings in 2000, the website will continue to expand and evolve into an internationally recognized repository for information about the Ismaili community as well as the Institute's research endeavours and programmes.

Your visits and support make it all possible. **Keep on surfing!**



*Raising a question during a session*

Huddled around a dark wooden table on the lush, verdant grounds of Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge, a small group of students murmurs excitedly about the task it has been set – to pore over recent English-language newspaper clippings from around the world and highlight the various ways in which Islam and Muslims are portrayed. These participants of the Institute's Summer Programme on Islam 2004, then return to the lecture room, still jotting down their observations. Another group is debating its position and two others are already nominating their spokespersons in readiness for a highly interactive session which runs the gamut of the subject entitled *Muslims and the Media*. Facilitated by Dr Karim H Karim, that morning's presentations, like many of those earlier in the week, enabled participants to think about, articulate and respond to the challenges they face as Muslims today.

Participants of the Summer Programme on Islam 2004 were required to be post-graduate students, or professionals and business people within the *Jamat* who had at minimum a first degree or equivalent. Command of English was also essential. Held for an academically intense nine days in August 2004, the Summer Programme attracted close to 150 applications, out of which 28 were accepted. Evenly split between men and women, participants were diverse in almost every sense of the

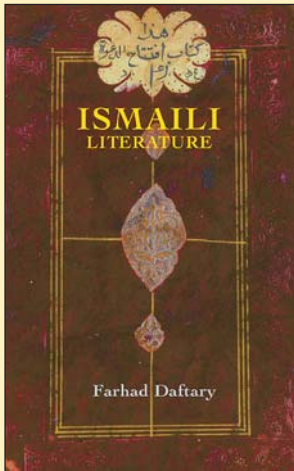


*Interactive discussion session*

word – from post-graduate students to senior executives, coming from eight countries and ranging in age from their early-20s to late-50s. All, however, had a common goal – the desire to gain a broader understanding and insight into Islam and its Ismaili *Tariqah*.

And they were not disappointed – the programme revolved around three main themes: a social, cultural and civilisational introduction to Islam; the Ismaili *tariqah* within the larger context of the intellectual and historical development of Islam; and an examination of important contemporary issues in Islam. Presented through a combination of lectures, films, discussions and role-plays, each of these themes found expression in topics such as *What is Islam? Who is a Muslim?* (Professor Ali Asani), *Art and Architecture* (Professor Gulzar Haider), *An Introduction to the Holy Qur'an* (Professor Hanna Kassis), *The 'Alid Tradition* (Dr Reza Shah-Kazemi and Professor Azim Nanji), and *Women in Islam* (Dr Kecia Ali). Other faculty included Professor Mohammed Arkoun, Dr Farhad Daftary, Dr Aziz Esmail, Professor Abdou Filali-Ansary, Karim Jiwani, Farouk Mitha, Dr Sarfaroz Niyozov, Nacim Pak and Professor Frej Stambouli.

A complete syllabus of the Summer Programme on Islam 2004 may be found on the IIS website at [http://www.iis.ac.uk/summer\\_prog](http://www.iis.ac.uk/summer_prog). For details on the Summer Programme on Islam 2005, please email [outreach@iis.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@iis.ac.uk).



***Ismaili Literature:  
A Bibliography of Sources  
and Studies***

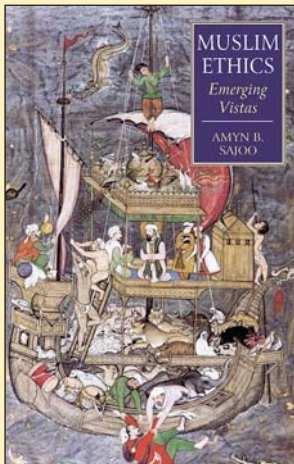
**By Farhad Daftary**

In this work, Dr Daftary takes stock of the progress in Ismaili studies from pre-modern and early modern times until today. After a general survey of Ismaili history and the relevant primary sources for its different periods, and an overview of Ismaili studies, Dr Daftary presents an annotated listing of all published primary sources produced in medieval and early modern times, by Ismaili authors as well as other Muslims,

on Ismaili history and doctrines.

The book also contains a comprehensive bibliography of secondary studies, covering all aspects of Ismaili history and thought, Fatimid political history and institutions, as well as art and archaeology. A selection of Ismaili-related theses and lists of Ismaili *Imams* and *da'is* have also been included.

The result of more than three decades of research, this work will be an invaluable reference and an essential tool of research for scholars and students of general Islamic and Ismaili studies.



***Muslim Ethics:  
Emerging Vistas***

**By Ameen B Saïoo**

In the opening section, the author considers an array of social settings in which Muslim conceptions of the good have developed and are today unfolding, including biomedicine and ecology. Asking how and why those conceptions are to be taken seriously is the underlying thread that connects the settings, yielding continuities and reinventions of tradition and reason. Next, the work focuses successively on three distinct yet overlapping domains - of 'civility', 'humanism' and 'governance' - that compel our

attention in normative and empirical terms alike. They engage such basic contemporary notions as human rights, the rule of law and civic culture in which conceptions of the good, whether as ethos or specific moral judgments, are vitally entwined. Engaging with those notions, as indeed with the history of ethics generally, also requires acknowledging the continual entwining of 'Islamic' perspectives with those of other traditions, confessional and secular - which is rendered all the more necessary today amid globalisation and the enormous diasporic presence of Muslims across civilisations.

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The Institute continues to promote original, informative and mature thought, scholarship and analysis of relevant issues through its publications.

The following publications are anticipated in the near future:

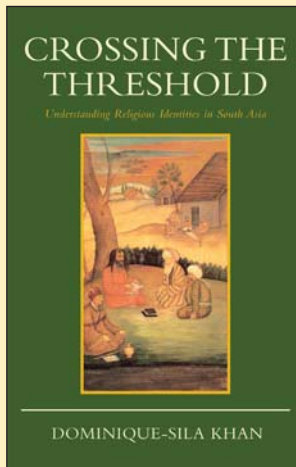
- ***Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought***

Edited by Todd Lawson

- ***Between Revolution and State: The Path to Fatimid Statehood***

By Sumaiya A Hamdani



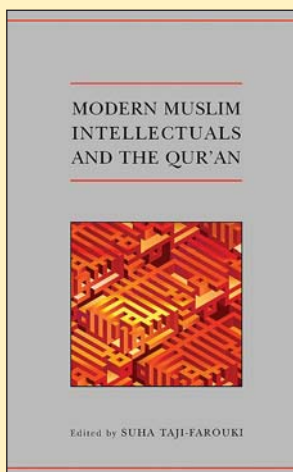


## ***Crossing the Threshold: Understanding Religious Identities in South Asia***

By **Dominique-Sila Khan**

By analysing documents as well as original field data, the shaping of religious identities in South Asia, and more particularly in North India, is examined in this publication. The author argues that the perception of Islam and Hinduism as two monolithic and perpetually antagonistic faiths, co-existing uneasily in South Asia, has become so deeply ingrained that the complexity of the historical fabric is often overlooked or ignored. The emergence of clear-

cut categories is demonstrated to be a comparatively recent phenomenon, while the past is shown to have been characterised by a remarkable fluidity and diversity in the social and religious milieus. The author explores the historical mechanisms that have led to the emergence and crystallisation of religious identities, giving rise to an increasing number of conflicts which threaten the harmonious co-existence of South-Asian communities today. The author also considers the role played by Ismaili Islam in the intricate interface between South Asian religious communities, which has to this day remained largely unexplored.



## ***Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an***

Edited by **Suha Taji-Farouki**

A collection of critical essays by eminent international scholars assessing the work of ten Muslim intellectuals from around the world, this book is an important source for anyone interested in the place of the Qur'an in a changing world.

Most of the intellectuals represented in the book are professional academics, but the list also includes an engineer and a public activist. Their work is focussed on the Qur'an and its

meanings for contemporary Muslim life. Being exposed to Western intellectual culture, their approach to the sacred text is informed by contemporary trends and critical methods. They see it as a source of general ethical guidelines and principles, rather than the immediate answer to all human questions. While most participate in the creative encounter between Islam and modernity, some challenge centuries-old Muslim consensus.

The voices of these intellectuals, taken together, represent an emerging trend in recent decades, competing for a place with long-established approaches to Islam. This trend is the primary subject of this publication.

## ***Forthcoming Publications***

- ***Justice and Remembrance:  
Introducing the Spirituality  
of Imam 'Ali***

By Reza Shah-Kazemi

- ***Eagle's Nest:  
Ismaili Castles  
in Iran and Syria***

By Peter Willey

- ***Approaches to the  
Qur'an in Contemporary  
Indonesia***

By Abdullah Saeed

*Further information and synopses of these publications will be posted on the Institute's website closer to the publication date.*

**Dr Omar Ali de Unzaga**  
*Research Associate/Academic Coordinator,  
Qur'anic Studies Project*

**George Anderson**  
*Administrator, Department of Graduate Studies*

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Research and Publications*



**D**r Alnoor Dhanani obtained his Doctorate of Philosophy in the History of Science from Harvard University in 1991. He is a specialist in Islamic intellectual history and has taught at both Harvard University and Tufts University. He is the author of *The Physical Theory of Kalam: Atoms, Space, and Void in Basrian Mu'tazili Cosmology* and has contributed to encyclopaedias, academic journals and conference proceedings.

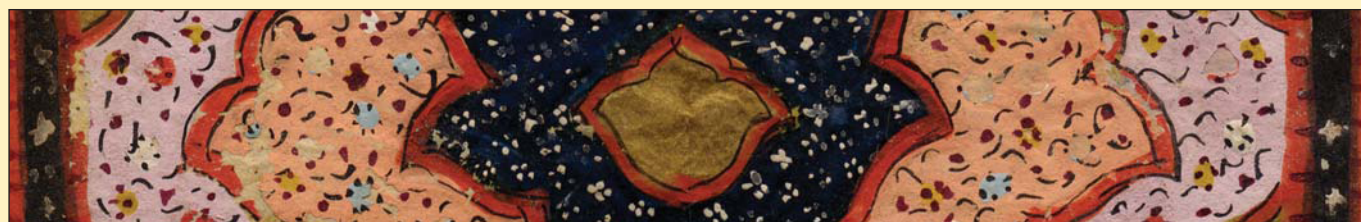
Dr Dhanani has been actively involved with the Jamat in the USA, serving as a Board Member on ITREB and as a member on the Aga Khan Foundation National Committee for the USA. Dr Dhanani was appointed Head of the Graduate Studies Department in July 2004 and is also currently teaching two courses entitled *Encountering Islam* and *Themes in Islamic Intellectual History: Falsafa and Kalam* in the Institute's Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities.



**M**s Sheila Alibay-Djiva obtained her MBA in International Studies from Schiller International University, Paris, France. Originally from Antananarivo, Madagascar, Sheila is bi-lingual, fluent in both English and French. She left Madagascar at the age of 16 to pursue her studies in France, where she completed both her Bachelors and Masters in Business Administration.

Sheila has over 15 years of experience working in Human Resources, and has worked in wide-ranging organisations including Marks & Spencer, Wyeth Ayerst, General Electric Medical Systems and NBA Europe. For the past two years, she was Director of Human Resources with International SOS, Paris. In her capacity as Head of the Department of Human Resource Services at the IIS, Sheila will work towards implementing a human resources strategy for the Institute to encourage greater synergy internally amongst the Institute's departments and externally with the AKDN and Jamati Institutions.

The Institute would like to thank the numerous volunteers who help with our various projects throughout the year.



If you have feedback or would like to update your contact details, please email us on [rdc@iis.ac.uk](mailto:rdc@iis.ac.uk).

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