Introduction

Farhad Daftary

The origins of the Ismaili Muslims may be traced back to the formative period of Islam when different Shiʿi and Sunni communities were elaborating their own distinctive interpretations of the Islamic message. The Imami Shiʿis, who recognized a line of ʿAlid Imams descending from ʿAli b. Abi Talib, the first Shiʿi Imam, and his wife Fatima, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, represented one such major community. The Imami Shiʿis acquired their prominence under Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. It was also in al-Sadiq's time that the central Imami doctrine of the Imamate was formulated. This doctrine, with minor modifications, has served as the central teaching of the later Ismaili and Twelver Shiʿis.

On the death of Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq in 765, his Imami Shiʿi following split into several groups, including two groups identifiable as the earliest Ismailis. By the middle of the 9th century, the Ismailis had organized a revolutionary movement against the Abbasids who, in the eyes of the Shiʿa, had usurped (like the Umayyads before them) the rights of the ʿAlids to the leadership of the Muslim community. The Ismaili movement was now led centrally by a hereditary line of ʿAlids who guarded their true identity in order to escape Abbasid capture. By 899, the unified Ismaili movement, designated by the Ismailis themselves as *al-daʿwa al-hadiya*, 'the rightly guiding mission', or simply as the *daʿwa*, was rent by its first major schism over the question of the leadership or Imamate in the community. The Ismailis now became divided into two rival factions, the loyal Ismailis and the dissident Qarmatis. The loyal Ismailis upheld continuity in the Ismaili Imamate in the progeny of Ismaʿil b. Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, and also recognized the founder of the Fatimid dynasty and his successors as their Imams. The Qarmatis, who founded a powerful state in Bahrayn, acknowledged a line

of seven Imams only, ending in Muhammad b. Isma'il b. Ja'far al-Sadiq. Thus they did not accept the Fatimid caliphs as their Imams.[1]

By the final decades of the 9th century Ismaili *da'i*s, acting as religio-political agents of the *da'wa*, were active in almost every major part of the Islamic world, from North Africa to Yemen, Syria, Persia and Central Asia. The early success of the Ismaili *da'wa* culminated in 909 in the foundation of an Ismaili state or *dawla*, the Fatimid caliphate.[2] The revolutionary activities of the early Ismailis had finally resulted in the establishment of a state in which the Ismaili Imam was installed as Fatimid caliph, representing an effective Shi'i challenge to the religious authority of the Abbasid caliph, who acted as the spokesman of Sunni Islam. The Fatimid period was in a sense the 'golden' age of Ismailism, when the Ismaili Imam ruled over a vast empire and Ismaili contributions to Islamic thought and literature attained their apogee. It was during the Fatimid period that the learned Ismaili *da'i*s, who were at the same time the scholars and authors of their community, produced what were to become the classic texts of Ismaili literature dealing with a multitude of exoteric (*zahiri*) and esoteric (*batini*) subjects. Amongst such personalities, particular mention may be made of Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani (d. after 971), Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani (d. after 1020), al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi (d. 1078) and Nasir-i Khusraw (d. after 1070).[3] Ismaili law, which had not existed during the pre-Fatimid secret phase of Ismailism when the Ismailis observed the law of the land wherever they lived, was also codified during the early Fatimid period.[4] It was indeed during the Fatimid period that the Ismailis made their important contributions to Islamic theology and philosophy in general and to Shi'i thought in particular.[5] Modern recovery of Ismaili literature abundantly attests to the richness and diversity of the literary and intellectual traditions of the Ismailis of Fatimid times.[6]

In line with their universal aspirations, the Fatimids did not abandon their *da'wa* activities on assuming power. Aiming to extend their authority and rule over the entire Muslim *umma*, and other states, they in fact retained a network of *da'i*s, operating on their behalf as religio-political missionaries both within and outside Fatimid dominions. The Fatimids particularly concerned themselves with the affairs of their *da'wa* after transferring in 973 the seat of their state to Egypt, which they had conquered in 969. Cairo, founded as a royal city by the Fatimids, became the headquarters of their complex hierarchical *da'wa* organization. Supreme leadership of the Ismaili *da'wa* and the Fatimid *dawla* were the prerogatives of the Fatimid Imam-Caliph. However, the Ismailis remained a minority community within the Fatimid state where the Sunni Muslims

still predominated. The Ismaili *da'wa* had its greatest lasting successes outside the Fatimid dominions, especially in Yemen, Persia and Central Asia where different Shi'i traditions had long histories.[7] In Egypt, the Fatimids also patronized intellectual activities. They founded major libraries in Cairo, including one at the Dar al-'Ilm (House of Knowledge), founded in 1005, where a variety of religious and non-religious subjects were taught. Soon the Fatimid capital, Cairo, became a flourishing centre of Islamic scholarship, sciences, art and culture, in addition to playing a prominent role in contemporary international trade and commerce.

In 1094, on the death of al-Mustansir, the 8th Fatimid caliph and the 18th Ismaili Imam, the Ismailis became permanently divided into the Nizari and Musta'lian branches, named after al-Mustansir's sons who claimed his heritage. The succession to al-Mustansir was disputed between Nizar (1045–1095), his original heir-designate, and the latter's much younger brother Ahmad (1074–1101), who was actually installed as Fatimid caliph with the title of al-Musta'li bi'llah. Subsequently Nizar rose in revolt to assert his claims, taking the title al-Mustafa li-Din Allah, but he was eventually defeated and killed in 1095. Aiming to retain the reins of power in his own hands, the all-powerful Fatimid vizier al-Afdal had favoured al-Musta'li. Moving swiftly, on the day after al-Mustansir's death, he had placed al-Musta'li on the Fatimid throne. Supported by the Fatimid armies, the vizier quickly obtained for al-Musta'li the allegiance of the Fatimid court and the leaders of the Ismaili *da'wa* in Cairo. The Imamate of al-Musta'li, now firmly installed to the Fatimid throne, came to be recognized by the *da'wa* establishment in Cairo, as well as most Ismailis in Egypt, many in Syria, and by the entire Ismaili community in Yemen and that in Gujarat dependent on it. These Ismailis, who depended on the Fatimid regime and later traced the Imamate in al-Musta'li's progeny, maintained their relations with Cairo, now serving as the headquarters of the Musta'lian Ismaili *da'wa*. On the other hand, the Persian Ismailis, then under the leadership of Hasan-i Sabbah, defended al-Mustansir's original designation and upheld Nizar's right to the Imamate. Hasan, in fact, founded the independent Nizari Ismaili *da'wa*, severing his relations with the Fatimid regime and *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo. In Syria, now beyond Fatimid control, Nizar had followers who soon were organized by emissaries dispatched from Alamut, the headquarters of Hasan-i Sabbah. The Ismailis of Central Asia seem to have remained uninvolved in the Nizari-Musta'li schism for quite some time. It was much later that the Ismailis of Badakhshan and adjacent regions accorded their allegiance to the Nizari line of Imams. The two factions of the Ismaili *da'wa* henceforth

became known as Nizari or Musta'lian, depending on whether they recognized Nizar or al-Musta'li as their rightful Imam after al-Mustansir.

The Musta'lian Ismailis themselves split into the Hafizi and Tayyibi factions soon after the death of al-Musta'li's son and successor on the Fatimid throne, al-Amir, in 1130. The Hafizi Musta'lians, who acknowledged al-Hafiz (d. 1149) and the later Fatimid caliphs as their Imams, disappeared soon after the collapse of the Fatimid dynasty in 1171. The Tayyibi Musta'lians recognized al-Amir's infant son al-Tayyib as their Imam after al-Amir, and then traced the Imamate in al-Tayyib's progeny. However, all Tayyibi Imams after al-Amir have remained in concealment, and in their absence the affairs of the Tayyibi community and *da'wa* have been handled by lines of *da'i*s with supreme authority, known as *da'i mutlaq*.[8] Tayyibi Ismailism initially received the all-important support of the Queen Sayyida Arwa, the effective ruler of Sulayhid Yemen.[9] In fact, Yemen served for several centuries as the permanent stronghold of Tayyibi Ismailism.

By the end of the 16th century, the Tayyibis themselves had become further subdivided into the Da'udi (Dawoodi) and Sulaymani branches over the issue of the rightful succession to the position of their *da'i mutlaq*; and later a third branch appeared under the designation of 'Alavi Bohras. By that time, the Tayyibis of South Asia, known locally as Bohras and belonging mainly to the Da'udi branch, outnumbered their Sulaymani co-religionists centred in Yemen. The Tayyibis in general maintained the intellectual and literary traditions of the Ismailis of the Fatimid period, as well as preserving a good portion of that period's Ismaili Arabic literature.

The Nizari Ismailis, concentrated originally in Persia and Syria, have had a completely different historical evolution. The Nizaris acquired political prominence within the Saljuq dominions, under the initial leadership of Hasan-i Sabbah, who seized the mountain fortress of Alamut in northern Persia in 1090. This signalled the initiation of the Persian Ismailis' open revolt against the alien rule of the Saljuq Turks as well as the foundation of what was to become the Nizari Ismaili state of Persia with a subsidiary in Syria.[10] The Nizari state, centred at Alamut and with territories in different parts of Persia and Syria, lasted for some 166 years until its destruction by the Mongols in 1256. A capable organizer, Hasan-i Sabbah (d. 1124) designed a revolutionary strategy aimed at uprooting the Saljuq Turks, whose rule was detested throughout Persia. He did not achieve his goal, nor did the Saljuqs succeed in dislodging the Nizaris from their mountain strongholds despite their much superior military power. But Hasan did manage to found and consolidate the independent Nizari state and *da'wa*.

The Syrian Nizaris, too, eventually came to possess a network of castles, and pursued complex policies of war and diplomacy towards various Muslim powers as well as the Crusaders in a then politically fragmented Syria. The Syrian Nizaris reached the peak of their power and fame under Rashid al-Din Sinan, who led them as their chief *daʿi* for three decades until his death in 1193. It was also in his time that the Crusaders and other occidental observers began to fabricate and circulate, both in the Levant and Europe, a number of interconnected tales, the so-called Assassin legends, regarding the imagined secret practices of the Nizaris.[11] The Crusaders thus made the Nizaris famous in Europe as the Assassins, a misnomer rooted in a term of abuse.

After Hasan-i Sabbah and his next two successors at Alamut, who ruled as *daʿi*s and *hujja*s, the concealed Nizari Imam's chief representatives, the Imams themselves emerged at Alamut to lead their community, *daʿwa* and state.[12] The circumstances of the Nizaris of the Alamut period were drastically different from those faced by the Ismailis living in the Fatimid state, and the Tayyibi Mustaʿlians of Yemen. From early on, the Nizari Ismailis were preoccupied with a revolutionary campaign and the endeavour to survive in an extremely hostile environment. Accordingly, they produced military commanders and governors of fortress communities rather than many outstanding religious scholars. As a result, the Nizaris of the Alamut period did not produce a substantial body of religious literature. Nevertheless they did maintain a literary tradition and elaborated their teachings in response to the changed circumstances of the Alamut period. Hasan-i Sabbah himself was a learned theologian, and he is credited with establishing an impressive library at Alamut. Later, other major Nizari fortresses in Persia and Syria came to be equipped with significant collections of books, documents and scientific instruments. The Nizaris also extended their patronage of learning to outside scholars, including Sunnis, Twelver Shiʿis and even non-Muslims. Foremost among these mention may be made of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 1274), the renowned Muslim polymath who spent some three decades in the fortress communities of the Nizaris and voluntarily embraced Ismailism.

The Nizari Ismailis survived the Mongol destruction of their fortress communities and state, and this marked the initiation of a new phase in their history. In the unsettled conditions of the post-Alamut period, the Nizari communities of Syria, Persia, Central Asia and South Asia developed independently under their local leadership for some time, also elaborating a diverse range of religious and literary traditions in different languages. Many aspects of Ismaili activities in this long period have

not been sufficiently studied due to a scarcity of reliable primary source materials. More complex research difficulties arise from the widespread practice of *taqiyya*, or precautionary dissimulation of true religious beliefs and identity, by the Nizari communities of different regions during the greater part of this period when they were obliged to dissimulate under a variety of disguises, such as Sufi, Sunni, Twelver Shiʿi and Hindu, against rampant persecution.

In the aftermath of the destruction of their state, the Nizari Imams went into hiding and, for the most part, lost their direct contact with their followers. The scattered Nizari communities now developed independently under their local leaders designated as *pir*s, *mir*s and *shaykh*s. But by the middle of the 15th century, the Nizari Imams had emerged in Anjudan in central Persia, initiating what has been called the Anjudan revival in Nizari *daʿwa* and literary activities.[13] During the Anjudan period, which lasted about two centuries, the Imams reasserted their central authority over the various Nizari communities. The Nizari *daʿwa* activities now proved particularly successful in Badakhshan in Central Asia, and in the Indian subcontinent where large numbers of Hindus were converted and became locally known as Khojas. The Khojas developed a unique literary genre in the form of devotional hymns known as *ginan*s, while the Nizari tradition elaborated there became designated as Satpanth or the 'true path' (to salvation).

The modern period in Nizari history may be dated to the middle of the 19th century when the residence of the Imams was transferred from Persia to India and subsequently to Europe. On the death of the 45th Nizari Imam, Shah Khalil Allah, in 1817, his eldest son Hasan ʿAli Shah (born in 1804) succeeded to the Imamate as the 46th Imam. Fath ʿAli Shah (1797–1834), the then reigning Qajar monarch of Persia, appointed the youthful Imam to the governorship of Qum and gave him one of his daughters, Sarv-i Jahan Khanum, in marriage. In addition, the Persian monarch bestowed upon the Nizari Imam the honorific title (*laqab*) of Agha Khan, meaning lord and master. Henceforth, Hasan ʿAli Shah became known in Persia as Agha Khan Mahallati, because of his royal title and the family's deep roots in the Mahallat area and its environs (Anjudan and Kahak); the title of Agha Khan, later simplified to Aga Khan, has been used on a hereditary basis by Hasan ʿAli Shah's successors to the Nizari Ismaili Imamate.

Aga Khan I lived a quiet life in Persia, honoured and highly respected at the Qajar court for the remainder of Fath ʿAli Shah's reign. The next Qajar monarch, Muhammad Shah (1834–1848), appointed the Imam to

the governorship of the province of Kirman in 1835. This post had been held earlier for almost half a century by the Imam's grandfather who was the 44th Imam, Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali (d. 1792). Subsequently, the Imam faced a series of confrontations with the Qajar court and the enmity of the all-powerful grand vizier. Relations between the Imam himself and the Qajar establishment deteriorated, resulting in a number of military encounters in 1840. The Ismaili forces, led by the Imam and his brothers Sardar Abu'l-Hasan Khan (d. 1880) and Muhammad Baqir Khan (d. 1879), were eventually defeated by the superior Qajar armies.[14] As a result, in 1841 the Imam was obliged to flee to neighbouring Afghanistan, marking the end of the Persian period of the Nizari Ismaili Imamate which had lasted some seven centuries from the start of the Alamut era.

Accompanied by a large retinue as well as his cavalry, the Nizari Imam then advanced to Qandahar, which had been occupied in 1839 by an Anglo-Indian army. Henceforth, a close association developed between the Aga Khan and the British Raj. Subsequently, in 1842, the Imam proceeded to Sind and stayed at Jerruck (now in Pakistan), where his house is still preserved. From the time of his arrival in Sind, Aga Khan I established extensive contacts with his Khoja followers. In 1844 the Imam left Sind and after spending a year in Gujarat among his followers arrived in Bombay in 1846. British interventions for the Imam's return to his Persian ancestral homeland, as was the Imam's personal desire, failed, and, after an interim stay in Calcutta, the Aga Khan settled permanently in Bombay in 1848.

With Aga Khan I's settlement in Bombay there began the modern period in the history of the Nizari Ismailis. The Nizari Imamate was now established in India, with Bombay serving as the seat of the Nizari Imams. Hasan 'Ali Shah, Aga Khan I, was the first Nizari Imam to set foot in India and his presence there was greatly welcomed by the Ismaili Khojas who gathered enthusiastically to pay their homage to him and receive his blessings. The Imam soon established elaborate headquarters and residences in Bombay, Poona and Bangalore. He attended the chief *jama'atkhana* in Bombay on special religious occasions.

Aga Khan I spent the last three decades of his eventful and long Imamate in Bombay. As the spiritual head of a Muslim community, he received the protection of the British establishment in India, which strengthened his position. Nevertheless Aga Khan I encountered some difficulties in establishing his authority over the Khoja community. The South Asian Nizari tradition known as Satpanth had become influenced over time by elements of Hindu practice, while the Khojas had been obliged to dissimulate for long periods as Sunnis or Twelver Shi'is, also having close ties

with certain Sufi orders. In the settlement of their legal affairs, too, the Khojas, like certain other Muslim groups in India, had often resorted to Hindu customs rather than the provisions of Islamic law, especially in matters relating to inheritance. These factors served as sources of ambiguity in terms of the Khojas' religious identity. In fact dissident Khoja groups appeared periodically in the course of the 19th century, claiming Sunni or Twelver Shi'i heritage for themselves. It was under such circumstances that Aga Khan I launched a widespread campaign for defining and delineating the distinctive religious identity of his Khoja following. The Imam also succeeded gradually in exerting control over the Ismaili Khojas through their traditional communal organization. He personally appointed the officers of the major Khoja congregations, including the *mukhi*s who acted as the religious and social heads of every local Khoja group (*jama'at*) and his assistant called *kamadia* (pronounced *kamriya*). Aga Khan I also encouraged a revival of literary activities among the Nizari Ismailis, pioneered by his eldest grandson Shihab al-Din Shah (d. 1884).[15] Aga Khan I died in 1881 and was buried in an impressive mausoleum situated in the Mazagaon area of Bombay.

Aga Khan I was succeeded as Imam by his eldest son Aqa 'Ali Shah, his sole son by his Qajar spouse. The 47th Imam was born in 1830 in Mahallat, where he spent his early years. He eventually arrived in Bombay in 1853 and, as the Imam's designated successor, regularly visited different Khoja communities, especially in Gujarat and Sind. He lived for some time in Karachi where his own Qajar wife, Shams al-Muluk, a granddaughter of Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar, bore him his future successor, Sultan Muhammad (Mahomed) Shah, in 1877. Aqa 'Ali Shah led the Nizari Ismailis for only a brief four-year period, during which time he concerned himself mainly with the educational standards and welfare of the Khojas. He also established contacts with the Nizari communities outside the Indian subcontinent, especially in Central Asia and East Africa. Aga Khan II died in 1885 and was buried in the family mausoleum at Najaf, Iraq, near the shrine of Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib.

The Nizari Khojas, along with the Tayyibi Bohras, were among the earliest Asian communities to settle in East Africa.[16] The settlement of Asians in East Africa was greatly encouraged during the early decades of the 19th century by Sultan Sayyid Sa'id (1806–1856) of the Ibadi Al Bu Sa'id dynasty of 'Uman and Zanzibar. Aiming to develop the commercial basis of his African dominions, Sultan Sa'id encouraged the emigration of Indian traders to Zanzibar, where they enjoyed religious freedom under British protection. The Khojas, coming mainly from Gujarat, represented

the largest group of Asian emigrants in Zanzibar. Asian emigration to East Africa increased significantly after Sultan Sa'id transferred his capital in 1840 from Muscat to Zanzibar. Subsequently, the Asian Ismailis moved from Zanzibar to the growing urban centres of the East African coastline, notably Mombasa, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Tanga. Further penetration of the Asian Ismaili settlers into the interior of East Africa occurred after the establishment of British and German colonial rule in the region. By the early decades of the 20th century, the emigration of the Ismaili Khojas and Bohras to East Africa had practically ended.

Aqa 'Ali Shah was succeeded in the Imamate by his sole surviving son Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, who led the Nizari Ismailis as their 48th Imam for 72 years, longer than any of his predecessors. Aga Khan III's life and achievements are amply documented since he became well known as a Muslim reformer and statesman through his prominent role in Indo-Muslim as well as international affairs.[17] Aga Khan III spent his early years under the close tutelage of his Qajar mother, Shams al-Muluk (d. 1938), receiving a rigorous traditional education in Bombay, including studying Arabic and Persian literature. In 1898 the Ismaili Imam paid his first visit to Europe, where he later established permanent residences. He also maintained close relations with the British establishment throughout his life which brought immense benefits to his followers in South Asia and East Africa where they lived under British rule.

From early on, Aga Khan III made systematic efforts to establish the identity of his followers as distinct from the Twelver Shi'is and Sunnis. Thus his religious policy revolved for quite some time around defining and asserting the distinctive Nizari Ismaili identity of his followers, who were also urged to respect the traditions of other Muslim communities. This identity was articulated in the Ismaili constitutions that Aga Khan III promulgated for his followers in different regions and which served as the personal law of his community. While delineating their distinct Ismaili identity, Aga Khan III worked indefatigably to consolidate and reorganize the Nizaris into a modern Muslim community with high standards of education, health and general well-being. The participation of Ismaili women in communal affairs also received high priority in the Imam's reform programmes. The implementation of his reforms, however, required suitable institutions and administrative organization. The development of a new communal network, in the form of a hierarchy of councils, thus became one of the Imam's major tasks. Aga Khan III became increasingly concerned with reform policies that would benefit not only his own community but non-Ismailis as well. To that end he

founded an extensive network of schools, vocational institutions, libraries, sports clubs, dispensaries and hospitals in East Africa, the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and elsewhere. Aga Khan III remained in close contact with his followers, and guided them through his oral and written directives or *farman*s, which served as another communal mechanism for introducing reforms.[18]

Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, the 48th Imam of the Nizari Ismailis, died in his villa near Geneva in 1957 and was later buried in a permanent mausoleum at Aswan, overlooking the Nile in Egypt. As a spiritual leader and Muslim reformer, Aga Khan III responded to the challenges of a rapidly changing world and made it possible for his followers, scattered in many different countries, to live in the 20th century as a progressive and educated community with a distinct Islamic identity. Aga Khan III was survived by two sons, Prince Aly Khan (1911–1960) and Prince Sadruddin (1933–2003). However, in accordance with his last will and testament, his grandson Prince Karim (Prince Aly Khan's son) succeeded to the Imamate as the 49th and the present Mawlana Hazar Imam of the Nizari Ismailis. He is internationally known as His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV.

Born in 1936 in Geneva, Aga Khan IV attended Le Rosey, the renowned Swiss boarding school, before entering Harvard University, from where he graduated in 1959 with a degree in Islamic history. Aga Khan IV has continued and substantially extended the modernization and communal policies of his grandfather, also developing a multitude of new programmes, initiatives and institutions of his own for the benefit of his community and others. At the same time, he has concerned himself with a variety of social, developmental and cultural issues which are of wider interest to Muslims and the Third World countries. By 2007, when the Ismailis celebrated the 50th anniversary (Golden Jubilee) of his Imamate, Aga Khan IV had established an impressive record of achievement not only as the Ismaili Imam but also as a Muslim leader deeply aware of the challenges and dilemmas of modernity, as well as the conflicting and at times problematic interpretations of Islam. The present Imam of the Nizari Ismailis has indeed dedicated himself to promoting a better understanding of Islamic civilizations and the diversity of interpretations of the Islamic message.

Aga Khan IV closely supervises the spiritual and secular affairs of his community, regularly visiting his followers in different parts of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America. He guides the Nizaris through his own *farman*s. Aga Khan IV has maintained the elaborate

council system of communal administration initiated by his grandfather, also extending it to new territories in recognition of the large-scale emigration of his followers from Asia and East Africa to the West since the 1970s. Aga Khan III had issued separate constitutions for his Khoja followers in East Africa, India and Pakistan. But in 1986 a new chapter was inaugurated in the constitutional history of the Nizari Ismailis, when their Imam promulgated a universal document entitled 'The Constitution of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims' for all his followers throughout the world. The preamble to the 1986 constitution affirms all the fundamental Islamic beliefs and then focuses on the Imam's *taʻlim* or teaching which is required for guiding the community along the path of spiritual enlightenment and improved material life. On the basis of this constitution, amended in 1998, a uniform system of councils with affiliated bodies is now in operation in some 20 regions of the world where the Nizari Ismailis are concentrated, including India, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, France, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. Each of these territories also possesses an Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board (ITREB) for the provision of religious education at all levels of the community and for publication of materials on different aspects of Islam and its Shiʻi Ismaili interpretation.

The present Ismaili Imam has also initiated many new policies, programmes and projects for the educational and socio-economic benefits of his followers as well as the non-Ismaili inhabitants of certain regions in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. To that end, he has created a complex institutional network, generally referred to as the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). Implementing projects related to social, economic and cultural development, the AKDN disburses more than $300 million annually on its non-profitmaking activities. In the area of social development, for instance, the AKDN has been particularly active in East Africa, Central Asia, Pakistan and India in projects for health, education and housing services as well as rural development.

While Aga Khan III pioneered modern educational reforms in his community, the present Imam has extended that central interest of the Ismaili Imamate to higher educational institutions, founding The Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, the Aga Khan University in Karachi, with its Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilizations in London, the University of Central Asia in Tajikistan with branches in other Central Asia republics, and the Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa. Aga Khan IV has additionally launched a number of innovative programmes to promote a

better understanding of Islam as a major world civilization with its plurality of social, intellectual and cultural traditions. The apex institution for the preservation and regeneration of the cultural heritages of Muslim societies is the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), set up for promoting an awareness of the importance of the built environment in both historical and contemporary contexts, and for pursuing excellence in architecture.

The modern progress in Ismaili studies, initiated in the 1940s, has shed valuable light on many aspects of Ismaili history and traditions in the medieval era.[19] As a result, we now possess a much better understanding of the formative and early periods in Ismailism. Ismaili history during the Fatimid period, too, has become amply documented, as the bulk of the Ismaili texts and archival materials produced during that period have been recovered and studied in recent decades, and general and regional Islamic histories have been used more objectively by contemporary scholars. On the other hand, certain aspects of Nizari Ismaili history during the Alamut period remain shrouded in controversy and obscurity, as the bulk of the Persian Nizari texts of the period have not survived directly. Further research difficulties relate to Nizari Ismaili history and traditions in the post-Alamut period when adherents had to observe *taqiyya* in various forms, and the Nizari communities of Syria, Persia, Central Asia and South Asia elaborated different religious and literary traditions in Arabic, Persian and a number of Indian languages. These communities also developed largely independently of one another until modern times.

The studies collected in this volume represent a modest first attempt at piecing together a history of the Ismailis during approximately the last two centuries. In the Nizari Ismaili communities, this period coincided for the most part with the Imamates of three Imams, who during the individually long periods of their leadership, and building on the foundational work of their predecessors, delineated the distinctive Ismaili identity which had earlier been often interfaced or amalgamated with other religious traditions due to the widespread practices of *taqiyya*. In fact, as a result of such dissimulating tactics over extended periods, a number of Nizari groups completely lost their identity, especially in Persia and South Asia where they became duly 'assimilated' or 'acculturated' into the dominant Twelver Shi'i and Hindu communities of their surroundings.[20] It is within such a context that many of the policies of Aga Khan I and his grandson Aga Khan III can be fully understood. A second theme that emerges from the policies of Aga Khan III and his grandson and successor, the present and 49th Nizari Ismaili Imam H.H. Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, revolves

around reform and modernization. The last two Imams responded to the challenges of their times and, as progressive Muslim leaders, introduced a coherent set of policies and institutional structures that ensured high standards of education, health and welfare for their followers. They have also been foremost amongst the modern Muslim leaders of the world in working for the emancipation of women and their participation in communal affairs. As a result of the concerted and progressive leadership of their last two Imams, the Nizari Ismailis have emerged in modern times as an exemplary Shi'i Muslim community with a distinct religious identity, while still enjoying a diversity of cultural and social traditions. The final part of this book has been devoted to the modern history of the Tayyibi Musta'lian Ismailis, dominated by the Da'udi Bohras of South Asian origins.

Notes

1. For further details, see F. Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 2007), pp. 87–126, and his 'A Major Schism in the Early Isma'ili Movement', *Studia Islamica*, 77 (1991), pp. 123–139, reprinted in his *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies* (London, 2005), pp. 45–61.

2. On the Fatimid caliphate, see H. Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids*, tr. M. Bonner (Leiden, 1996); his *Die Kalifen von Kairo. Die Fatimiden in Ägypten 973–1074* (Munich, 2003); M. Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE* (Leiden, 2001); Ayman F. Sayyid, *al-Dawla al-Fatimiyya fi Misr* (2nd ed., Cairo, 2000), and Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, pp. 137–237. The most significant contemporaneous Ismaili accounts of the rise of the Fatimids are contained in al-Qadi al-Nu'man b. Muhammad, *Iftitah al-da'wa*, ed. W. al-Qadi (Beirut, 1970); English trans., *Founding the Fatimid State*, tr. H. Haji (London, 2006), and Ibn al-Haytham, *Kitab al-munazarat*, ed. and tr. W. Madelung and P. E. Walker as *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shi'i Witness* (London, 2000). A thorough analysis of the sources on the Fatimids may be found in Paul E. Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its Sources* (London, 2002).

3. On some recent studies of these *da'i*s and their contributions, see P. E. Walker, *Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary* (London, 1996); his *Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Hakim* (London, 1999); Verena Klemm, *Memoirs of a Mission: The Ismaili Scholar, Statesman and Poet al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi* (London, 2003); Tahera Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi and Fatimid Da'wa Poetry* (Leiden, 2005), and Alice C. Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw, The Ruby of Badakhshan: A Portrait of the*

      Persian Poet, Traveller and Philosopher (London, 2000).

4.   Ismail K. Poonawala, 'Al-Qadi al-Nu'man and Isma'ili Jurisprudence', in F.
      Daftary, ed., *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.
      117–143.

5.   W. Madelung, 'Aspects of Isma'ili Theology: The Prophetic Chain and the
      God Beyond Being', in S. H. Nasr, ed., *Isma'ili Contributions to Islamic
      Culture* (Tehran, 1977), pp. 51–65, reprinted in W. Madelung, *Religious
      Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London, 1985), article XVII; H. Halm,
      The Fatimids and their Traditions of Learning (London, 1997); and P. E.
      Walker, 'Fatimid Institutions of Learning', *Journal of the American Research
      Center in Egypt*, 34 (1997), pp. 179–200, reprinted in his *Fatimid History and
      Ismaili Doctrine* (Aldershot, 2008), article I.

6.   See Ismail K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Isma'ili Literature* (Malibu, CA,
      1977), especially pp. 44–132.

7.   F. Daftary, 'The Ismaili *Da'wa* outside the Fatimid *Dawla*', in M. Barrucand,
      ed., *L'Égypte Fatimide, son art et son histoire* (Paris, 1999), pp. 29–43,
      reprinted in his *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies*, pp. 62–88.

8.   S. M. Stern, 'The Succession to the Fatimid Imam al-Amir, the Claims
      of the later Fatimids to the Imamate, and the Rise of Tayyibi Ismailism',
      Oriens, 4 (1951), pp. 193–255, reprinted in S. M. Stern, *History and Culture
      in the Medieval Muslim World* (London, 1984), article XI; and Daftary, *The
      Isma'ilis*, pp. 241–269.

9.   F. Daftary, 'Sayyida Hurra: The Isma'ili Sulayhid Queen of Yemen', in Gavin
      R. G. Hambly, ed., *Women in the Medieval Islamic World* (New York, 1998),
      pp. 117–130, reprinted in his *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies*, pp.
      89–103; and Delia Cortese and S. Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the
      World of Islam* (Edinburgh, 2006), pp. 129–140.

10.   F. Daftary, 'Hasan-i Sabbah and the Origins of the Nizari Isma'ili Movement',
      in F. Daftary, ed., *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge,
      1996), pp. 181–204, reprinted in his *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies*,
      pp. 124–148; and his 'Hasan Sabbah', *EIR*, vol. 12, pp. 34–37.

11.   These tales are analysed in F. Daftary, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the
      Isma'ilis* (London, 1994), pp. 88–127.

12.   For an excellent brief overview of the Nizari state and *da'wa* during the
      Alamut period, see Marshall G. S. Hodgson, 'The Isma'ili State', in *The
      Cambridge History of Iran*: Volume 5, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed.
      John A. Boyle (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 422–482, and F. Daftary, *A Short
      History of the Ismailis* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 120–158, while more detailed
      surveys are contained in B. Lewis, *The Assassins* (London, 1967), pp. 38–124,
      and Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, especially pp. 310–402, 617–642.

13.   See Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, pp. 422–442.

14.   Aga Khan I's own account of his early life and conflict with the Qajar ruling
      establishment in Persia, which culminated in his permanent settlement in
      British India, is contained in his autobiography entitled *'Ibrat-afza* (lith-

ograph, Bombay, 1278/1862); ed. H. Kuhi Kirmani (Tehran, 1325/1946). See also Naoroji M. Dumasia, *A Brief History of the Aga Khan* (Bombay, 1903), pp. 66–95; his *The Aga Khan and his Ancestors* (Bombay, 1939), pp. 25–59; H. Algar, 'The Revolt of Agha Khan Mahallati and the Transference of the Isma'ili Imamate to India', *Studia Islamica*, 29 (1969), pp. 61–81; his 'Mahallati, Agha Khan', *EI2*, vol. 5, pp. 1221–1222; James C. Masselos, 'The Khojas of Bombay: The Defining of Formal Membership Criteria during the Nineteenth Century', in I. Ahmad, ed., *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India* (New Delhi, 1973), pp. 1–20; and Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, pp. 463–476.

15. See W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliographical Survey* (Tehran, 1963), pp. 149–150; Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Isma'ili Literature*, pp. 283–284; and F. Daftary, 'Shihab al-Din al-Husayni', *EI2*, vol. 9, p. 435.

16. See Hatim M. Amiji, 'The Asian Communities', in J. Kritzeck and W. H. Lewis, ed., *Islam in Africa* (New York, 1969), pp. 141–181; Robert G. Gregory, *India and East Africa* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 17–45; and N. King, 'Toward a History of the Isma'ilis in East Africa', in I. R. al-Faruqi, ed., *Essays in Islamic and Comparative Studies* (Washington DC, 1982), pp. 67–83.

17. Aga Khan III left a valuable account of his life and career in his *The Memoirs of Aga Khan: World Enough and Time* (London, 1954).

18. See *Aga Khan III: Selected Speeches and Writings of Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah*, ed. K. K. Aziz (London, 1997–1998), 2 vols. The modernization policies of Aga Khan III are discussed fully in M. Boivin, 'The Reform of Islam in Ismaili Shi'ism from 1885 to 1957', in Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, ed., *Confluences of Cultures: French Contributions to Indo-Persian Studies* (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 197–216; his *La rénovation du Shi'isme Ismaélien en Inde et au Pakistan. D'après les écrits et les discours de Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan (1902–1954)* (London, 2003); and M. Ruthven, 'Aga Khan III and the Isma'ili Renaissance', in Peter B. Clarke, ed., *New Trends and Developments in the World of Islam* (London, 1998), pp. 371–395.

19. For details, see F. Daftary, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies* (London, 2004), pp. 84–103, and his *The Ismailis*, pp. 1–33.

20. For some interesting anthropological case studies of these complex issues in the Muslim–Hindu context, see Dominique-Sila Khan, *Conversions and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan* (New Delhi, 1997), and her *Crossing the Threshold: Understanding Religious Identities in South Asia* (London, 2004), especially pp. 30–93.