Intellectual Discourse

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Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	ʿ
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	ʾ
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
◌َ	a		◌َا، ◌َى	an
◌ُ	u		◌ُّو	un
◌ِ	i		◌ِّي	in
◌َا، ◌َ، ◌َى،	ā		◌َوْ	aw
◌ُو	ū		◌َيْ	ay
◌ِي	ī		◌ُّوّ	uww, ū (in final position)
			◌ِّيّ	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: http://rotas.iium.edu.my

Review Article

The Sun Rises in the West: A Review Essay on Ismailism

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THE FATIMIDS 2. THE RULE FROM EGYPT, by Shainool Jiwa. London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2023, pp. VIII + 240. ISBN: 9781780769486.

COMMAND AND CREATION. A SHI‘I COSMOLOGICAL TREATISE. A Persian edition and English translation of Muḥammad al-Shahrastānī's *Majlis-i maktūb*. Edited and Translated by Daryoush Mohammad Poor. London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies (Ismaili Texts and Translation Series, 25), 2021, pp. XVI + 138 + LXXXIV. ISBN: 9780755602971.

FAITH AND ETHICS: THE VISION OF THE ISMAILI IMAMAT, by M. Ali Lakhani. London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2018, pp. 1 colour illustration + XXIV + 248. ISBN: 9781788312486.

Since it became a subject of study in the social sciences and humanities, in the 19th century, the canonical history of 'Islam' has been something like this:

1. Pre-Islamic Arabia or *Jahiliyyah* (The Age of Ignorance);
2. The Prophet Muḥammad, 570-632 Christian Era (C.E.);
3. The first four caliphs or the *Rashidun* Caliphate, 632-661 C.E.;
4. The Umayyads, 661-750;

5. The ‘Abbasids, 750-1258, or the ‘Golden Age’ of ‘Islam’;
6. Decadence of ‘Islam’, until the 1850s (there are many who consider that ‘Islam’ is still in decadence…); and

7   The Resurgence/Revival/Return of 'Islam', from mid-19ᵗʰ century till now.

Conspicuously absent from this unidimensional, flawed, and hollowed narrative are the Fatimids, the only sustained Shi'i, in this case Ismaili, dynasty to rule over substantial parts of the medieval Muslim world, rivalling both the Umayyads of Al-Andalus and the 'Abbasids. At its peak, the Fatimid Empire extended from the Atlantic shores of North Africa, across the southern Mediterranean and down both sides of the Red Sea, also covering Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. One of most prosperous and influential dynasties of the Muslim world, the Fatimids (909–1171) were distinguished by their Imam-caliphs, who asserted spiritual as well as political authority, in direct descent from the family of the Prophet. Their conquest of Egypt in 969 marked the inception of a burgeoning Mediterranean empire. From there, they refined their systems of administration, judiciary, and governance, instilling principles of inclusion which contributed to stability during their caliphate. Fatimid Cairo flourished as a vibrant cultural and intellectual centre through patronage of the arts, architecture, and scholarship.

This absence from the canonical narrative is even more baffling if we consider all the fantasies swarming the Western imagination when it comes to the contact between the Crusaders and the Ismailis in the 11ᵗʰ-13ᵗʰ centuries, the Order of the Assassins, or all the media coverage surrounding the Aga Khans, be it the 'celebrity press' or more serious outlets. In an ironic turn of mood, and after the release of the video game *Assassin's Creed* in 2007 and then the movie with the same name in 2016, people who were once depicted as suicidal fanatics or forerunners of '"Islamic" "terrorism"', became symbols and beacons of freedom…[1] But, alas, this is how the modern, scientific, rational, Western mind works, in a mercurial, whimsical way, constantly jumping from realms of fantasy into other realms of fantasy.

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[1] Just to give two examples from the field of fiction, we can refer the 1938 novel *Alamut* by Vladimir Bartol (1903-1967) or the book *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, first published in 1967) by Bernard Lewis (1916-2018), the latter wearing a garb of scholarly and scientific language.

Side by side with the Sunnis and the Twelver Shi'is, the Ismailis constitute one of the most important communities within Islam, represent the second largest Shi'i Muslim community after the Twelvers (*Ithna 'Asharis*) and are today dispersed as religious minorities throughout more than twenty-five countries of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and North America. The bulk of the Ismailis recognise the Aga Khan as their Imam or spiritual leader, in this case the 49th Imam, who is considered to be the descendant of, and legitimate successor to, the Prophet Muḥammad.[2]

After a period of concealment, Ismaili propagators and missionaries began to operate in the second half of the ninth century, and in less than a quarter of a century they had founded a network of communities extending from the Maghrib, in the west, to Sind (today's Pakistan) in the east, from the mountains of Daylam, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, to the highlands of the Yemen, in the south. From the very beginning, the Ismaili missionaries came forward as teachers. Teaching and learning are the very essence of the Ismaili mission, and 'the summoner' (*al-da'i*), the propagator and teacher, was – after the Imam – the central figure of the community. The Ismailis, who are named after their sixth Imam, Ismā'īl (719-762), the eldest son of the Shi'i Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (702-765), originally called their doctrine the 'summons to truth' (*da'wat al-ḥaqq*) or simply *al-da'wa*, the summons, and their state the *dawlat al-haqq* (the righteous, rightly guided state).

As reported by historians and heresiographers of the time, the Ismailis were one of the most organised and energetic of the Shi'i communities in the third and fourth centuries after the *Hijra*, commanding popular support in many parts of the Muslim world, and offering a dynamic and progressive vision of social reform, with a sophisticated system of religious and philosophical thought, based upon an esoteric understanding of the inner meaning of the Qur'an. The vigorous expansion of Ismailism was largely due to the *da'is*, the missionaries of the Ismaili *da'wa* organisation. Although not much is yet

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[2] For a survey of Ismaili history, Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*. Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For the modern period, Farhad Daftary (ed.), *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2011).

known about its earliest history, the *daʿwa* was centrally directed from Syria in the middle of the ninth century and thereafter spread rapidly in Iraq, eastern Arabia, Iran, Transoxiana, Yemen, and North Africa.

By 909, the Ismailis had successfully established the nucleus of a Fatimid state in Ifriqiya, which was subsequently extended to the whole of North Africa, Sicily, Egypt, and the Hijaz. From the beginning of their rule, and in particular after the occupation of Egypt in 969, the Fatimid Imam-caliphs concerned themselves with social reform, the promotion of the arts and the sciences, the construction of mosques, colleges and libraries, and other public projects. The centrepiece of this programme was the foundation of Cairo, which became the new capital city of the Fatimids, and the establishment of Al-Azhar as its principal mosque and educational complex. The Fatimid encouragement of intellectual and cultural expression attracted numerous scholars, writers, poets, and artists to Egypt. In fact, at the height of its power and prosperity, Fatimid Cairo rivalled ʿAbbasid Baghdad as much in the vitality of its cultural life as for political supremacy in the world of Islam.[3]

The period of the Fatimid Imam-caliphs is considered to have marked a climax in the history of the Ismailis. In the year 909 they managed to lay the foundations of a caliphate in present-day Tunisia, in opposition to the caliphate of the ʿAbbasids centred in Baghdad. The eleventh Imam of the Ismailis, ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī (873-934), was proclaimed as caliph, and his descendants established one of the most important empires in Islamic history. In 969 they succeeded in peacefully conquering Egypt, where they founded Cairo as their new capital. In 973 the fourteenth Imam, al-Muʿizz (931-975), settled there. As a dynasty of Imam-caliphs, the Ismaili Imams were called 'Fatimids' because they traced their genealogy to the Prophet Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima and hence to the Prophet himself.

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[3] For more on this, *Trésors fatimides du Caire. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe du 28 avril au 30 août 1998* (Paris/Gand: Institut du Monde Arabe / SDZ, Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1998) and *L'Égypte Fatimide: Son Art et Son Histoire – Actes du colloque organisé à Paris les 28, 29 et 30 mai 1998*. Sous la direction de Marianne Barrucand (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris – Sorbonne, 1999). Neither of these works is mentioned in the 'Further Reading' section of Shainool Jiwa's book.

An important aspect of Fatimid intellectual life is that which centred around its academic and educational institutions such as al–Azhar and the *dar al-ʿIlm* or the 'House of Knowledge.' The former was concerned mainly with the religious sciences, in particular the teaching of the *Sharʿīah* according to Ismaili law, and offered free public education to all Muslims, including women, for whom special classes were held; the latter provided research facilities for scholars in the non–religious sciences, such as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, philology, logic, and the like. Both institutions were liberally endowed by the state and their teaching staff received regular remuneration. The promotion of learning and scholarship was a planned, premeditated policy which the Fatimids pursued vigorously from the onset of their rule in Egypt. In fact, many of their cultural policies and educational institutions introduced in Egypt were prefigured, on a smaller scale, during the early period when the Fatimids were based in north–west Africa. Furthermore, the priority accorded to the intellect by the Fatimids was intentionally pluralistic, open equally to all Muslims, Ismailis and others, Christians, and Jews, enabling the original thinker, creative scientist, or talented poet, as much as the astute politician and military strategist, to rise high in the offices of court and state.[4]

Shainool Jiwa's *The Fatimids* is a two-volume historical work on the legacy of the Fatimid Empire and is a general overview of its history, mainly recommended to non-specialist readers who want a reliable and balanced overview in accessible language and concise format, delivering a well-researched and yet easy-to-follow introduction that will stimulate to think differently about Islam. The first volume (*The Rise of a Muslim Empire*, published in 2018) details the reigns of the first four Imam-caliphs and surveys the religious and socio-political underpinnings of Fatimid rule, from its North African establishment in 909 to its transition to Egypt in 969. Jiwa's second volume (*The Rule From Egypt*) discusses the latter ten Imam-caliphs and focuses on the period 969-1171, the pinnacle of Fatimid society, up until its decline. Although some readers may be frustrated by the detail of jumping back and forth across names, dates, and events, those who are able to follow the work thematically will certainly find this book to be very informative. Jiwa condenses a

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[4] For a brief introduction to the subject, Heinz Halm, *The Fatimids and Their Traditions of Learning* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1997).

rich and fluid history into few pages while including the most essential elements, people, and institutions making up this period. Readers are provided with visual aids (maps, family tree charts, and city maps) to help identify locations and structures which would otherwise come off as abstract and jargon heavy. In addition, colourful images of important monuments such as mosques, coins, and artifacts, are added.[5]

In eight short, focused, and readable chapters (The Arrival of the Fatimids in Egypt; The Genesis of Fatimid Rule in Egypt; Towards an Inclusive Empire; The Composition of the State; Science and Scholarship in the City Victorious; The Empire of the Seas; The Fluctuations of Fatimid Rule; Late Fatimid Egypt and the Heirs of Empire), plus a brief Introduction and Conclusion (Glimpses of the Fatimid Legacy), Shainool Jiwa offers a brief history of the Fatimids, continuing the story of the dynasty from their newly founded capital of Cairo. Introducing the figures who moulded the empire, Jiwa charts the Fatimid expansion, the reasons behind its ultimate fall by the hand of Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (Saladin, 1137-1193), and the legacy that continues with the living Ismaili communities today. This lively and engaging work, including maps and colour images, draws on a broad range of primary sources to lead readers through two centuries which witnessed the triumphs and trials of the only sustained Shiʿi caliphate to rule across the medieval Islamic world. The Ismaili *daʿwa* reached far and wide, with its message gaining adherents from the Gulf of Yemen to as far as Sind. Capturing the cohesive religious fabric of Fatimid rule, Jiwa notes that al-Muʿizz pledged to maintain Sunni religious life while ruling over Egypt; she describes pillars of Sunni Islam that can serve as points of contrast to the Ismaili tradition. Individuals who can justly

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[5] Shainool Jiwa has lectured and published on Fatimid studies for over three decades. As a specialist on the Fatimids, she has written and lectured extensively on medieval Islamic history and has edited, co-edited, and translated key medieval Arabic texts relating to Fatimid history, including *The Fatimid Caliphate: Diversity of Traditions* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2017), *The Shiʿi World: Pathways in Tradition and Modernity* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015), *The Founder of Cairo: The Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Muʿizz and his Era* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2013), and *Towards a Shiʿi Mediterranean Empire: Fatimid Egypt and the Founding of Cairo* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2009).

be seen as archetypes of the Fatimid intelligentsia are referenced both biographically and through their works.

The classical Fatimid period, from the establishment of the state in Ifriqiya in 909 until the death of the eighth Imam-caliph, al-Mustansir (1029-1094), in 1094 is often referred to as the 'golden age' of Ismailism, when the Ismailis achieved a prosperous state of their own and Ismaili literature and intellectual activities reached an apogee. Fatimid history during its 'classical' period is normally divided into two phases. The initial phase, commonly designated as the North African phase, lasted just over sixty years from the establishment of Fatimid rule in Ifriqiya in 909 to the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 969 and the transference of the dynasty's seat of power there in 973. During this time the Fatimids were chiefly occupied with laying the foundations of their caliphate and assuring its endurance. In the second phase, covering a period of some hundred and twenty years from 973 until the death of the Imam-caliph al-Mustansir in 1094, the Fatimid caliphate, now centred in Egypt and enjoying stability, reached and then passed its peak of glory and territorial expansion, which was subsequently followed by the rapid decline and fall of the dynasty.

The Fatimid state entered a period of terminal decline in the eleventh century as a result of recurrent economic crises, increasing military interventions in the political and religious affairs of the state, and a major schism among the Ismailis over succession to the Imamat which led to the division of the community between the Must'alis and the Nizārīs. At the same time, the eastern Ismailis of Iran and Syria were coming under severe persecution from the Saljuqs, who had taken effective control of the 'Abbasid state. It was in these circumstances that towards the end of the 11th century the Persian Ismailis, who were then under the leadership of the *da'i* Hasan-i-Sabbah (1050-1124), acquired the fortress of Alamut and several other mountainous strongholds in Iran, and later in Syria, which came to constitute the territories of an Ismaili state. The long military struggle that ensued for almost a century between the Ismailis and the Saljuqs was one of the most turbulent

periods in Ismaili history, and later became a focus of fabulous stories and legends in medieval European literature.[6]

The conquest of Egypt itself in 969 represented an intermediary stage in the Fatimids' strategy of eastern expansion. Cairo, founded as a caliphal city by them, became the headquarters of the complex and hierarchical Ismaili *da'wa* organisation. Supreme leadership of the Ismaili *da'wa* and the Fatimid *dawla* were the prerogatives of the Fatimid Imam-caliphs. Special institutions of learning and teaching were set up for the training of *da'is* and ordinary Ismailis. Educated primarily as theologians, the Ismaili *da'is* of the Fatimid period were at the same time the scholars and authors of their community, producing what were to become the classical texts of Ismaili literature dealing with a multitude of *ẓāhir* (ظاهر, exoteric, apparent) and *bāṭin* (باطن, esoteric, hidden) subjects, with works of the *ta'wil* genre (تأويل, esoteric interpretation, hermeneutics, of the Qur'an) retaining their prominence. The *da'is* of this period elaborated distinctive intellectual traditions. In particular, certain *da'is* of the Eastern, Iranian lands, amalgamated Ismaili theology with different philosophical traditions into highly complex metaphysical systems of thought. It was indeed during the classical Fatimid period that Ismailis made their most lasting contributions to Islamic thought and culture. Modern recovery of their literature readily attests to the richness and diversity of the literary and intellectual heritage of the Ismailis of this period.

The Fatimids were not to realise their universal ideals, and they failed in uniting all Muslims under a Shi'i caliphate headed by the Ismaili Fatimid Imam-caliphs. But they did manage, at least for a while, to have their suzerainty recognised from North Africa and Egypt to the Hijaz, Palestine, and Syria. In the Hijaz, they supplanted the 'Abbasids as the custodians of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. And for one full year, 1058-1059, the *khutba* at the Friday sermon in Baghdad itself, the 'Abbasid capital, was recited in the name of the Fatimid Imam-caliph. Confronted with a variety of internal and external problems, however, the Fatimid caliphate had already embarked on a steady path of decline by the second half of the 11th century, almost one century

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[6] The origins and dissemination of these imaginative narratives were investigated in detail by Farhad Daftary in his *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Isma'ilis* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 1994).

before its actual collapse. By then, the Ismaili *da'is* operating in the central and eastern lands of Islam, from Syria to Central Asia, had achieved lasting successes. The Ismaili converts in those lands, ruled by the 'Abbasids, Buyids, Saljuqs, Saffarids, Ghaznawids and other dynasties, acknowledged the Fatimid caliph as the rightful Imam of the time. All surviving dissident Qarmatis outside Bahrayn, too, had by then switched their allegiance to the Fatimid Ismaili *da'wa*. It was largely due to the success of the Ismaili *da'is* working outside the Fatimid dominions that Ismailism outlived the downfall of the Fatimid dynasty and caliphate, and survived the challenges posed by the Sunni revival of the 11th and 12th centuries.

The Nizārī Ismailis, of whom the Aga Khan is the head, were led by Hasan-i-Sabbah, who was operating in Persia as an Ismaili *da'i*, and his seizure of the fortress of Alamut in 1090 marked the effective foundation of what was to become the Nizārī Ismaili state of Persia and Syria. As the undisputed leader of the Persian Ismailis, Hasan was already following an independent revolutionary policy against the Saljuq Turks when the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mustansir died in 1094. In the dispute over al-Mustansir's succession, Hasan upheld the cause of Nizār (1045-1095) and severed his relations with the Fatimid regime and the *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo, which had lent their support to al-Mustaʿlī Biʾllāh (1074-1101). By this decision, Hasan-i-Sabbah founded the independent Nizārī Ismaili *da'wa* on behalf of the Nizārī Imam, who was then inaccessible. The Nizārī state, centred at Alamut and with territories scattered in different parts of Persia and Syria, lasted until it collapsed in 1256 under the onslaught of the Mongol hordes. This initial phase in Nizārī history was marked by numerous political vicissitudes. Hasan-i-Sabbah designed a revolutionary strategy against the Saljuq Turks, and although he did not realise his objective, the Saljuqs failed in uprooting the Nizārīs from their numerous mountain strongholds. But Hasan did manage, despite countless odds, to found and consolidate an independent Nizārī state and *da'wa*. By around 1120, a stalemate had developed between the Nizārīs and the Saljuqs, and the Nizārī state survived, despite the incessant hostilities of the Saljuqs and their successors, until the arrival of the Mongols.[7]

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[7] For more on this, Farhad Daftary (ed.), *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

At the same time, *daʿis* despatched from Alamut organised an expanding Nizārī community in Syria. The Syrian Nizārīs, too, possessed a network of mountain fortresses, while pursuing complex policies towards various Muslim powers as well as the Crusaders. By 1273, the Mamluk Sultan Baybars I (c. 1223-1277) had seized all the fortresses of the Syrian Nizārīs, who were themselves permitted to survive as a semi-autonomous community.[8]

Hasan-i-Sabbah and his next two successors at Alamut ruled as *daʿis* and *hujjas*, or chief representatives, of the Nizārī Imams, who were then inaccessible to their followers. Subsequently, starting with the fourth ruler, Ḥasan II ʿalā dhikrihi'l-salām (c. 1142-1166), the Nizārī Imams emerged at Alamut to take charge of the affairs of their *daʿwa* and state. The Nizārīs of the Alamut period were, thus, led by three *daʿis* and *hujjas* and five Imams, who are generally referred to as the lords (*khudawands*) of Alamut in the Persian sources.

Among the considerable *oeuvre* of the eminent scholar Muḥammad al-Shahrastānī (1086–1153), the prominent Persian theologian and heresiographer, who may have been a crypto-Ismaili, the *Majlis-i maktūb* ('The Transcribed Sermon') is his only known work in Persian. First delivered as a sermon in Khwarazm in Central Asia, this treatise invokes the theme of creation and command, providing an esoteric cosmological narrative where faith, revelation, prophecy, and the spiritual authority of the Household of the Prophet are interwoven. The *Majlis-i maktūb* further discusses themes such as the evolution of religious law (*sharʿīat*) and its culmination in the *qiyāmat* (resurrection), the relation between free will and predestination, the interplay between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of faith, and the role and function of the Shiʿi Imams in the cosmological narrative. Written in the final years of his life, between 1143 and 1153, the year of his death, and no longer in government service and having withdrawn to the village of Shahrastāna, in Khurāsān, it is possible that he felt he could express his personal beliefs more openly than hitherto. At any event, the Ismaili character of the work has been noted in the past and this element of the *Majlis* receives further confirmation in this new edition and translation. Its theme is the

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[8] For an introductory survey of this theme, Nasseh Ahmad Mirza, *Syrian Ismailism: The Ever Living Line of the Imamate* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997).

Divine Command, Be! (*kun*, کُن), and Creation, a topic central to the Ismaili understanding of cosmology, which is presented in the form of a sermon (*waʿz*) comparable to the sermons of the great Fatimid *dāʿī*, al-Muʾayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 1078) collected in his *al-Majālis al-Muʾayyadiyya*, or those of the medieval Persian poets Rūmī (1207-1273) and Saʿdī (1210-c.1292).[9]

This treatise is arguably the densest expression of al-Shahrastānī's thought, and it demonstrably indicates the Ismaili inclination of this Muslim scholar, who has usually been regarded as a Shafiʿī-Ashʿarī. Daryoush Mohammad Poor's comparative study of this treatise and the corpus of Nizārī Ismaili literature from the Alamut period (1090–1256) reveals the massive impact of al-Shahrastānī's thought on every aspect of the doctrines of Nizārī Ismailis. The style of the *Majlis* is varied, immediate and engaging, and it includes logical argumentation as well as two dramatic duologues, between God and Iblīs and then Moses and Khiḍr.

Al-Khiḍr ('The Green' or 'The Verdant' One) is identified with the guide and mentor of Moses described in *Sūrat al-Kahf* (The Cave) (Qur'an 18:60–82) as 'Our exceptional servant to whom We gave compassion from Ourselves and inner knowledge from Our presence.' Exegetes interpret this as 'God-given knowledge' (*ʿilm laduni*), which complements Moses's knowledge of *Sharʿīah*. Moses travelled to *Majma' al-Baḥrayn* (the junction of two seas) together with a young man (according to Islamic sources, Moses's nephew and successor, Joshua, the son of Nun).

When Moses asked his companion to bring the fish they had taken with them to eat, Joshua told him that the fish had come back to life and entered the sea. Moses took this to be a sign of the person he was looking for and, so, they returned to the place where the fish had come back to life, meeting a person who was endowed with divine mercy and knowledge. This person was al-Khiḍr, who was asked by Moses

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[9] For a survey of, and an introduction to, Ismaili devotional poetry, especially in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, see *Shimmering Light: An Anthology of Ismaili Poetry*. Translated by Faquir Muhammad Hunzai. Introduced and Edited by Kutub Kassam (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1997).

to permit him to accompany him, but al-Khiḍr told him: 'you will not be able to have patience with me!' Moses insisted on the company and so they moved on together with the condition that Moses asked no questions about whatever actions he saw until the truth was revealed.

They boarded a ship and al-Khiḍr started to scuttle the ship. Moses objected to him, and al-Khiḍr reproached him for breaking his promise not to ask any questions. They moved on and saw a teenage boy on the way, and al-Khiḍr abruptly killed the boy. Moses objected to al-Khiḍr again, and al-Khiḍr reproached him for the second time. They then entered a village whose residents refused to give them food, but al-Khiḍr started to reconstruct a wall in that village that was on the point of falling down. Again, Moses objected to him, and this time al-Khiḍr told him that this was a parting between them, explaining the true meaning (*ta'wil*) of the events: The ferrymen were poor people whom al-Khiḍr wanted to prevent from having their boat seized by an approaching king; the child would have corrupted the faith of his believing parents and would be replaced; and the wall concealed an inheritance belonging to two orphan sons of a righteous man, a 'treasure which is a mercy from your Lord,' signifying the deep meaning, learned through patience, that behind apparent injustice lies mercy.[10]

During the sermon, al-Shahrastānī challenges the arguments of various theological schools, including the Ashʿarīs, Muʿtazilīs and the Karrāmīs, as well as those of the philosophers. In the end, it is the mystical truths of the enigmatic Khiḍr that he affirms. The concepts he outlines in the treatise went on to influence later Ismaili ideas, notably those concerning the declaration of the *qiyāmat* by the fourth lord of Alamūt, Ḥasan II ʿalā dhikrihi'l-salām, which took place in 1164. As a result, this new Persian edition and English translation of the *Majlis-i maktūb munʿaqid dar Khwārzm* by Daryoush Mohammad Poor is an

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[10] For further details and an examination of the theological sources, Irfan A. Omar, *Prophet al-Khiḍr: Between the Qur'anic Text and Islamic Contexts* (Lanham [MD, USA] / London [UK]: Lexington Books, 2022), a book that traces the story's mythical, mystical, and popular interpretations engendered by the Qur'anic story. See also, by the same author, *El-Khaḍir/El-Khiḍr: Le prophète-Sage dans la tradition musulmane* (Casablanca: La croisée des chemins, 2021, translated into French by Jean-Pierre Lafouge).

important addition to the study of early Nizārī Ismaili thought and provides a unique insight for anyone seeking to explore Islamic thought of the medieval era in general.

The current Aga Khan, Shah Karim al-Husseini, has been the Imam of the Nizārī Ismailis since 1957, and the previous Imam, Sultan Muḥammad Shah, Aga Khan III (1877-1957), was Imam from 1885 until 1957, which means that the Ismaili community has been, for almost a hundred and forty years, under the guidance of just two Imams. This means a sense of continuity and direction in a period, and in a world, which saw, and continues to see, transformations and changes on a massive scale, with political upheavals and violence impacting directly the Ismailis, be it in pre- and post-Partition India and Pakistan, the decolonisation process of East Africa, especially the expulsion from Uganda in 1972 and the independence of Mozambique in 1975, religious persecution in the former atheist U.S.S.R., the never-ending violence in Afghanistan, the revolution in Iran, the conflict in Syria, the erratic course of the Western and the Arab worlds, etc.

Daryoush Mohammad Poor's first monograph, *Authority without Territory: The Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili Imamate* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) examined the connection between the concept of authority and the transformation of the Ismaili Imamat and is the first study of the Imamat in contemporary times, with a particular focus on Aga Khan IV, the 49th hereditary leader of Shi'a Imami Ismaili Muslims. The book reveals in a scholarly manner, and within an interesting theoretical framework, how the present Nizārī Ismaili Imam has succeeded in bestowing aspects of the authority of the Imam to the office of the Imamat, transcending the Weberian boundaries of ideal types of authority. This has resulted in the institutionalisation of what the author calls 'authority without territory', examining the network of the institutions created and legitimised by the present Imam, known as the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

One would think that M. Ali Lakhani's book would be a good complement to *Authority without Territory*, since the intention with *Faith and Ethics* was to explore Islam's universal principles and values, which Lakhani holds to be central to the spiritual and ethical issues facing both Muslims and non-Muslims in the rapidly changing modern world. The book was undertaken during the currency of the Aga Khan's

Diamond Jubilee year (2017-2018). The Imam's duty has been to guide his community on the basis of Islamic principles adapted to the needs of the time, a time when Islam is under great scrutiny, when it is beset by fragmentary forces from within and without, when horrific acts are undertaken in its name - acts which most Muslims consider appalling and defamatory of their faith - and when its very nature is both misrepresented and misunderstood.

However, this book, more than providing an extensive survey of the Aga Khan's aspirations, is about the author's own ideas regarding some issues, from a traditionalist point of view, while discussing current affairs and using some selected statements by the Aga Khan to illustrate, and to lend credence to, the author's assertions. The reader must wait for the ninth and penultimate chapter to get some acquaintance with how the values of integrity and dignity are at the forefront of the AKDN's work, with the traditional Muslim concepts of cosmopolitanism and social justice guiding the Aga Khan's response to the stark challenges of the modern age.

The book grew out of a previous essay by the author,[11] and was a response to an invitation made by the Institute of Ismaili Studies to write it in order to expand on the ideas of his essay, and to present an interpretation of Islamic ethics, principally by drawing from public speeches, addresses and interviews of Aga Khan IV that describe his vision and its ethical applications. The author holds that the Ismaili Imam's aspiration for a common humanity promotes the Islamic ideals of unity (توحيد, *tawḥīd*) and social justice (عدل, *'adl*), ideals which provide the foundation for the Ismaili Imamat's humanistic work, which coalesces around notions of harmony and community, compassion and empathy, equity and empowerment, pluralistic dialogue, and engagement, seeking thereby to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of humankind through tolerance, generosity, and spirituality.

In ten chapters (The Ismaili Imam and the Imamat; Ethical Foundations; Tradition and Modernity; The Ethos of Modernism; Pluralism and the Cosmopolitan Ethic; Cohesion within the Umma;

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[11] M. Ali Lakhani, 'Living the Ethics of One's Faith: The Aga Khan's Integral Vision'. *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, 34 (2014), pp. 33-62.

Islam and the West; Cultivating an Enabling Environment; Living the Ethics of Islam; and Global Convergence), M. Ali Lakhani intention was to examine how the ideas and actions of the current Ismaili Imam provide an Islamic response to the challenges faced by Muslims in the modern era. Shah Karim's programmes, implemented mainly through the broad institutional framework of the Aga Khan Development Network, are aimed at improving the quality of human life among the disadvantaged, regardless of their religion or ethnicity. Addressing global issues ranging from healthcare and education to culture and civil society, the Aga Khan's initiatives are founded on core Islamic principles and values.

Today, as Imam, or spiritual leader, of the Shi'i Imami Ismaili Muslims, the Aga Khan has, during the more than sixty-five years of his Imamat, worked to promote a view of faith and ethics founded on principles of integrity and dignity, and on values that are central to Islam's message of peace, unity, generosity, compassion and equity, and consistent with its position as one of the major civilisational influences of mankind, seeking to articulate this core message and speaking of its relevance to the modern world. He has also made efforts to put the message into practice by creating global institutions which promote its ethos. The Aga Khan's beliefs and goals, and the inclusive and compassionate dimensions of the Islamic values that he advocates in a materialistic age, make his voice particularly relevant both to those who want to better understand Islam and to those who seek 'a light in much of the world's conflicting darkness'.

In keeping with the Islamic view of an all-encompassing reality, this ethical dimension is presented as a bridge connecting faith, 'religion' (دين, *dīn*) with worldly life (دُنْيا, *dunyā*). Rather than taking a theological approach, the book focuses on ethics and metaphysics, and on the Imam's approach to issues that he has identified as relevant to living in the modern world, as well as the Imamat's initiatives in promoting an ethical framework to address these issues. While situating the Ismaili ethos firmly within traditional Islam, this book emphasises the relevance of wide-ranging principles underlying the cosmopolitan ethic of communal harmony and the compassionate ethic of social justice, that are promoted by the Aga Khan.

While previously the Ismaili Imamat's recognition, in a political sense, was tied to territorial rule (as in the Fatimid period), the present Aga Khan has taken steps to achieve new forms of acknowledgement for the provenance and continuity of the Ismaili Imamat in the modern world. While the Imamat is politically neutral, it does not mean that it does not have political impact, since it has increasingly acquired influence internationally, among governments and in civil society, particularly about matters relating to socio-economic development, and to policies and programmes impacting the quality of life of citizens, assisted by its institutions. In 2015, the Portuguese Republic and the Ismaili Imamat reached an agreement for the establishment of the Seat of the latter in Portugal (a territory which was known is Muslim times as غرب الأندلس, *Gharb Al-Andalus*, West of the Iberian Peninsula), the westernmost country of Europe. For many centuries, the Portuguese endeavoured to expand Christianity and Christendom, having as main enemies Islam and Muslims. Many were those who theorised about a universal monarchy with the Portuguese king at its head. The Jesuit father António Vieira (1608-1697) wrote extensively about the Fifth Empire [*Quinto Império* in Portuguese], an entity with spiritual and territorial power, a messianic idea contemporary of the Fifth Monarchists in England. The idea was later developed by the poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), who envisioned a future world of peace and understanding. For the philosopher Agostinho da Silva (1906-1994), that Empire would be a purely spiritual one, without emperors, oppression, and violence, a landless empire.

According to Shiʿi gnosis, in particular the Jābirian writings, the 'sun rising in the West' was considered as the symbol of the Imam, the inaugurator of a new cycle. The next Imam will be the 50th, inaugurating a new cycle, in this case the eighth one, of the next seven Imams, heralding, perhaps, not the Fifth nor the Sixth but, and using a number which is very dear to the Ismailis, the Seventh Empire.

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Book
In-text citations:
Al-Faruqi & al-Faruqi (1986)

Reference:
Al-Faruqi, I. R., & al-Faruqi, L. L. (1986). *The cultural atlas of Islam*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Chapter in a Book
In-text:
Alias (2009)

Reference:
Alias, A. (2009). Human nature. In N. M. Noor (Ed.), *Human nature from an Islamic perspective: A guide to teaching and learning* (pp.79-117). Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press.

Journal Article
In-text:
Chapra (2002)

Reference:
Chapra, M. U. (2002). Islam and the international debt problem. *Journal of Islamic Studies, 10*, 214-232.

The Qur'ān
In-text:
(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36
(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

Reference:
The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

Ḥadīth
In-text:
(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)
(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:
(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

The Bible
In-text:
Matthew 12:31-32

Reference:
The new Oxford annonated Bible. (2007). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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