

THE INSTITUTE OF ISMAILI STUDIES

# UPDATE

Celebrating 40 Years



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

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**Front Cover:** Aga Khan Centre in London. *Photo: Edmund Sumner.*

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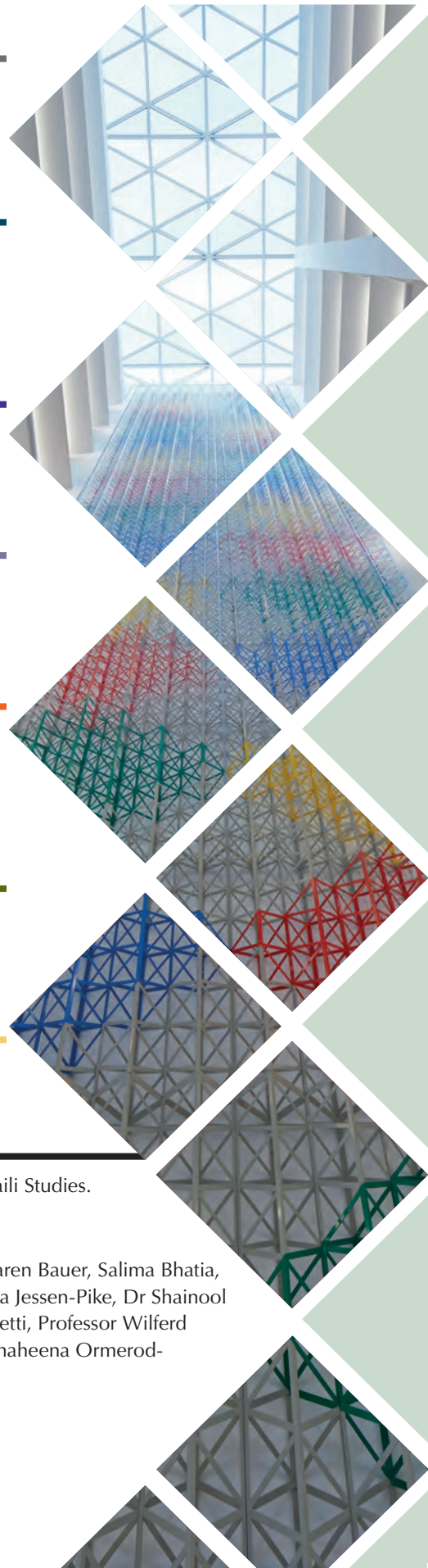
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◆ Dr Farhad Daftary, Co-Director,  
The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Dear Friends,

Over forty years ago, His Highness the Aga Khan announced the establishment of The Institute of Ismaili Studies. He envisioned that this place would “secure the fruits of Ismaili scholarship in the history, philosophy, theology and literature of Ismailism and Islam by virtue of an academic institution created by our own efforts and resources.” An academic institution is almost entirely about people. Our human intellectual endeavours and the continuous development of minds and knowledge have been critical to fulfilling His Highness’ vision. The collective endeavours and dedication of colleagues, past and present, is what has made the Institute what it is today.

2017-2018 has been a truly remarkable year for us in so many ways. We began our fortieth anniversary celebrations with a commemorative lecture entitled, *Connecting the Past, Present and Future* at the Ismaili Centre, London - an opportunity to spotlight our four main priorities, *heritage, knowledge, people* and the *future*. Prince Rahim Aga Khan also joined staff and students for a celebratory event, where he reflected on the uniqueness of the Institute, and how IIS has been breaking new ground since its inception.

One of the defining moments of the year was moving to our permanent new home, the Aga Khan Centre, King’s Cross, in London’s Knowledge Quarter. Historically, the notion of a knowledge quarter has been a significant facet of Islamic urban centres. We find examples of this in the historic Fatimid *Dar al-Ilm* (House of Knowledge) complex in Cairo and *Bayt al-Hikma* (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad. Their libraries and academic endeavours have been widely recognised as key hallmarks of Islamic civilisations and have provided inspiration for intellectual activity for over a millennium.

Similarly, one of the central features of the Aga Khan Centre is the Aga Khan Library, London. With state-of-the-art facilities, the library services scholars, researchers and students from around the world. Alongside our valuable collections of rare books, manuscripts and coins, the library is an active space for the production of knowledge – following the great tradition of libraries throughout Muslim civilisations. As an enabling space for education, knowledge, cultural exchange and insight into Muslim civilisations, the Aga Khan Centre allows us to further bridge the gap in the understanding of Muslim cultures.

Through innovative research and scholarship, we have brought people together, generating dialogue, through a variety of events from international academic conferences such as *The Renaissance of Shi’i Islam in the 15th–17th Centuries: Facets of Thought and Practice*, which investigated the intellectual contributions of Shi’i Muslims during this period, to various *Continuing Education Programmes* for leadership, educators and interested participants from the Ismaili community.

Building on our academic achievements, we are proud to have signed a Memorandum of Agreement

with SOAS University of London - a formal arrangement whereby SOAS will award MA degrees for both GPISH and STEP. This accreditation is a significant milestone in the history of our graduate programmes, and it gives me great pride that this momentous partnership coincided with the Diamond Jubilee of His Highness the Aga Khan, as well as the Institute’s fortieth anniversary.

In commemoration of His Highness’ Diamond Jubilee, we have produced three special publications, *The World of the Fatimids*; *The First Aga Khan*; and *Islam: An Illustrated Journey*. Lavishly illustrated and written in an accessible style, *Islam: An Illustrated Journey* complements the popular Golden Jubilee publication *The Ismailis: An Illustrated History*. It tells the fascinating story of Islam, highlighting key events, personalities and achievements of the various periods of Islamic history in all major regions of the Muslim world.

When I look back to the guidance given at the inception of IIS forty years ago, and the many discussions since, I am struck by how forward thinking and innovative the direction of our Chairman, His Highness the Aga Khan, has been.

It is also through the ongoing support from you, our friends, that we can continue to realise His Highness’ vision. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for your generosity and commitment. I encourage you to visit us at our beautiful new building, the Aga Khan Centre, by booking a tour through the [agakhancentre.org.uk](http://agakhancentre.org.uk) website. I hope that this *Update* will serve to keep us connected as we move forward with our journey to promote scholarship towards a better understanding of Islam, not only as a great religion with a multiplicity of expressions and interpretations, but also as a major world civilisation.

*Farhad Daftary*

# Inauguration of the Aga Khan Centre in London's Knowledge Quarter

“ *It is clear to me that in holding dear the values of humility, honour, magnanimity and hospitality, the Ismaili Community takes its inspiration from you, Your Highness, and from your extraordinary ‘Greatness of Soul.’ In similarly inspiring this Centre, you have set it on a path to serve the world with great distinction, just as Your Highness has yourself done throughout your remarkable life.* ”

**His Royal Highness Prince Charles speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Aga Khan Centre, London, 26 June 2018.**

◆ His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and His Highness the Aga Khan unveil a plaque to officially inaugurate the Aga Khan Centre in King's Cross, London. Photo: AKDN / Shyrose Bhanji.





◆ His Highness the Aga Khan in conversation with Lord Ahmad, Mayor Sadiq Khan, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, and Dr Walid Ghali, Head of the Aga Khan Library Photo: AKDN / Shyrose Bhanji.

On 26 June 2018, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales inaugurated the Aga Khan Centre in the presence of His Highness the Aga Khan. Among the guests were the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and the Minister of State for the Commonwealth and United Nations, Lord Ahmad.

“ One of the central challenges that faces our world today is the challenge of harmonising many highly diversified voices within an increasingly globalised world. I use the word “harmonising” carefully – for our ideal here is not a chorus that sings in unison, but one that blends many distinctive voices into an intelligent, resonant whole. But to do that requires a deep understanding of what makes each voice distinctive. And that is the essential function of the educational endeavors that will make this place their home. ”

His Highness the Aga Khan speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Aga Khan Centre, London, 26 June 2018.



◆ His Royal Highness Prince Charles and His Highness the Aga Khan discuss the features of the Garden of Life on the ninth floor of the newly inaugurated Aga Khan Centre with garden designer Madison Cox. Photo: AKDN / Nayyir Damani.

Dr Omar Ali-De-Unzaga, ◆ Deputy Head of the Department of Academic Research and Publications in conversation with Professor Fumihiko Maki, as Gary Kamemoto looks on. Photo: Jamil Teja.



To mark this historic occasion, His Highness the Aga Khan was accompanied by the Noorani family, and expressed great pride in opening the Aga Khan Centre. He said: *“The value of education, of course, is at the heart of this project. We are proud to open here a new home for two important educational institutions associated with the Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili Imamate. These institutions - through their teaching and research, their rich library and archival resources, as well as their tours and public programmes - will enrich the lives of people from the entire world.”*

He described the Aga Khan Centre as a beautiful new architectural accomplishment in the heart of London's Knowledge Quarter, in a city which itself has been one of the great connecting points for the entire world.

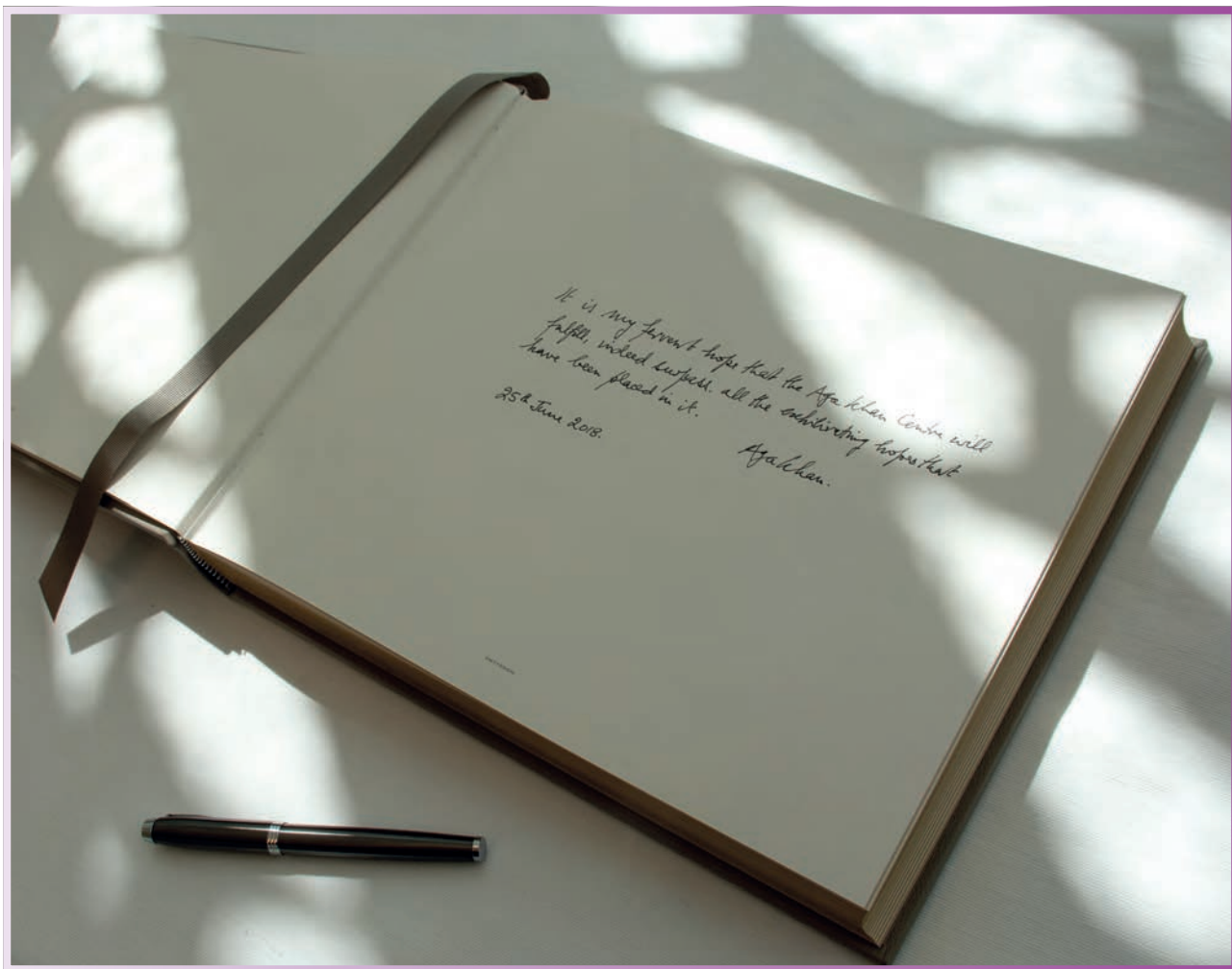
In his address, His Royal Highness Prince Charles congratulated His Highness the Aga Khan for celebrating sixty years of remarkable leadership and the contributions that he has made throughout his lifetime. He said, *“Your Highness, the extraordinary work that you have done throughout your lifetime, in*

*the service of humanity and in the name of Islam, is as remarkable as it is invaluable. For that, you are owed the greatest debt of gratitude and I did just want to take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of us all, if I may."*

Prince Charles further remarked how the Aga Khan Centre will enable future generations to gain a better appreciation of the intellectual and cultural contributions that Islamic civilisations have made to our world. He said, *"I have no doubt that this new space will make a profound difference to such a vital mission and will help ensure that future generations gain a better appreciation of the profound intellectual and cultural contributions that Islamic civilisations have made to our world."* Prince Charles also noted that he shares the same determination as His Highness the Aga Khan to tackle ignorance by building bridges cultures and societies.

Speaking about his aspirations for the future, His Highness the Aga Khan said: *"My strong expectation is that, from this new home, our education-oriented institutions will contribute powerfully to building new bridges of understanding across the gulfs of ignorance."*

The Aga Khan Centre is a place for education, knowledge, cultural exchange and insight into Muslim civilisations. It will be a home to a number of organisations founded by His Highness the Aga Khan, including The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC), and the Aga Khan Foundation UK (AKF UK). Together, the organisations work to bridge the gap in the understanding of Muslim cultures. The Centre will also serve as a space which connects the public to global development issues and the work of the Aga Khan Foundation.



◆ Before departing the Centre, His Highness the Aga Khan wrote a message in the guest book, saying: *"It is my fervent hope that the Aga Khan Centre will fulfil, indeed surpass, all the exhilarating hopes that have been placed in it."* Photo: Jamil Teja.

# A Celebration of People

“Forty years may feel like a long time, but it’s a very short time in the life of an academic institution. IIS is a unique institution in terms of its mandate and role and it hasn’t simply been following an established model which has been implemented before...this anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on our progress and achievements, and to celebrate the people who have made them possible.”

Prince Rahim Aga Khan, IIS Celebration, 24 November 2017.

November 2017 marked the 40th anniversary of the formal inauguration of The Institute of Ismaili Studies. To commemorate this important milestone, which fell during His Highness the Aga Khan’s Diamond Jubilee year, the Institute hosted two events - a special celebration for staff and students, where Prince Rahim Aga Khan was the guest of honour, and a commemorative lecture at the Ismaili Centre, London.

The events celebrated both the vision of IIS and the people who have contributed to developing an academic centre for Ismaili studies, that has had a significant impact on the field of Shi’i and Ismaili studies over the last 40 years.

In his remarks at the celebration event, Prince Rahim thanked members of staff, for their contributions to the work of the Institute, and their commitment to His Highness’ vision. He remarked that this was a momentous day, where we should reflect on the Institute’s progress and achievements, and celebrate the people who have made this possible. He further commented on how the students are the life blood of the Institute and represent our future. Reflecting on the formation of IIS, Prince Rahim considered how it was prescient and timely. He said that we have been dealing with the globalisation of the Jamat (community) and its patterns of migration, which has made it even more important for IIS to be able to provide the Jamat with authentic, and well-prepared materials to enable an understanding of its history and heritage, and of matters of faith and practice. Prince Rahim noted that IIS is a unique institution which has been breaking new ground and has created something which does not exist elsewhere. Since its inception IIS has strived to be an open space for dialogue and for the cross-fertilisation of ideas and people. Its work has been underpinned by the vision of its founder - His Highness the Aga Khan, and reinforced by a number of creative, intelligent and committed individuals, who have come together in a space dedicated to thinking about Muslim cultures and societies. It was therefore fitting that on its 40th anniversary, thirteen long-standing staff members, were recognised by Prince Rahim and Dr Farhad Daftary for their dedicated services.





### Long Service Recognition Award Recipients

#### Dr Jalal Badakhchani

Joined in 1979.  
Research Associate, Department of Academic Research and Publications.

#### Rita Bishop

Joined in 1997.  
Personal Assistant to Dr Aziz Esmail.

#### Dr Farhad Daftary

Joined in 1988.  
Co-Director of IIS and Head of the Department of Academic Research and Publications.

#### Dr Aziz Esmail

Joined in 1988.  
IIS Governor and Chair of IIS Academic Steering Committee.

#### Joy Johnson

Joined in 1990.  
Administrative Assistant, Department of Curriculum Studies.

#### Kutub Kassam

Joined in 1983 until 2018.  
Senior Editor and Researcher,  
Department of Academic Research and Publications.

#### Khadija Lalani

Joined in 1989.  
Senior Library Assistant,  
Aga Khan Library.

#### Hadi Mirshahi

Joined in 1993  
Manager for Human Resource Development in Central Asia,  
Department of Community Relations.

#### Alnoor Nathani

Joined in 1994.  
Design and Production Manager,  
Department of Curriculum Studies.

#### Shamim Salaam

Joined in 1995.  
Translations Co-ordinator,  
Department of Curriculum Studies.

#### Anna Spinola

Joined in 1983 until 2018.  
Receptionist, Department of Finance and Administration.

#### Dr Shiraz Thobani

Joined in 1983.  
Head of the Department of Curriculum Studies.

#### Shams Vellani

Joined in 1976.  
Special Projects & Former Executive Officer.

IIS welcomed guests to a lecture entitled *Connecting the Past, Present and the Future*, at the Ismaili Centre, London. A series of four short talks were delivered by Dr Farhad Daftary, Dr Omar Ali-De-Unzaga, Dr Laila Halani and Dr Walid Ghali – who explored themes integral to the Institute’s work, under the banners of: **heritage, knowledge, people** and the **future**. This was followed by a lively discussion with the audience on the role and relevance of an academic Institute devoted to Ismaili and Shi’i studies in the modern world. Dr Farhad Daftary, Co-Director of IIS and the Head of Academic Research and Publications, who is the author of many seminal and ground-breaking publications on the history of Ismailis and Ismailism, spoke about IIS’s role in the preservation and study of the community’s heritage. He stressed the importance of correcting earlier common misconceptions about the Ismailis, noting that even well into the 20th century there were orientalist works being published that still described Ismaili beliefs and practices as heretical. One particular legend, on which Dr Daftary has spent much of his academic life, is the perpetuation of the ‘assassin’ myth. *“It takes time to debunk and deconstruct legends”,* Dr Daftary told the audience, adding that *“there has been a change in perception, at least in part, due to the work the Institute has done to facilitate greater access to knowledge.”*

Speaking on the theme of **knowledge**, Dr Omar Ali-De-Unzaga, Head of the Qur’anic Studies Unit and the Deputy Head of Academic Research and Publications, reflected on the role of IIS in developing and disseminating knowledge, through its publications and other academic endeavours. He also provided insights into his personal passion and area of specialism, the *Rasa’il Ikhwan al-Safa’*

(The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity), an encyclopaedic set of epistles to which the Institute has devoted a series of publications, in collaboration with a team of international scholars.

In her talk on investing and developing **people**, Dr Laila Halani, Head of Graduate Studies, provided personal insights into her first experiences of IIS as a student in the early nineties. She discussed how the two graduate programmes – Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH) and the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) were creating international *“change agents”* and how students around the world are today able to access IIS’s research, through the primary and secondary curriculum, the latter of which is delivered by qualified teachers trained and supported by the Institute.

Dr Walid Ghali, Head of the Aga Khan Library, discussed the **future** of academic research and digital humanities, speaking particularly about how the Institute plans to utilise technology to digitise, preserve and make rare books and manuscripts accessible to a wider audience. In addition, he also spoke about the Institute’s new home in London’s King’s Cross, and the new state-of-the-art library which will improve access for visitors and opportunities to engage with some of the Institute’s special collections.

Through these two 40th anniversary commemorative events, IIS was able to showcase and celebrate its work and the contributions of its talent, which have been ably guided by the leadership of His Highness the Aga Khan, whilst looking forward to building an even more exciting and greater future.





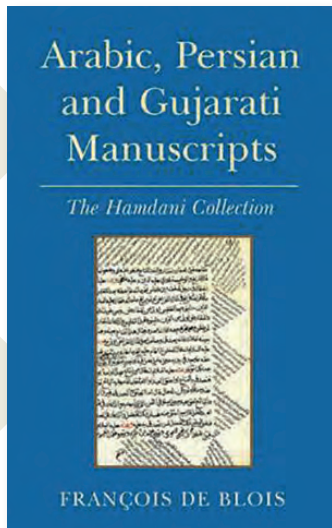
# Celebrating 40 Years of Connecting the Past, Present and Future

“What some describe as a clash of civilisations in our modern world is, in my view, a clash of ignorances. This is why education about religious and cultural heritage is so critically important and why we will continue to invest in these institutions. We deeply believe that scholarship, publication and instruction – of high quality and generous breadth – can provide important pathways toward a more pluralistic and peaceful world.”

His Highness the Aga Khan, 3 July 2008

The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), founded by His Highness the Aga Khan plays an important role in building knowledge related to Muslim religious and cultural heritage. Founded 40 years ago in 1977, IIS promotes scholarship and learning in historical and contemporary contexts utilising a perspective that is neither narrowly theological nor exclusively parochial. His Highness’ quote above underlines that there has been a critical shift in the challenges faced by global societies that are diverse and often unequal. To be successful today, there

is a need to develop knowledge-based societies, where intellectual capital and the ability to conceptualise and translate knowledge as a shared resource is a key asset. IIS is invested in this effort, as it continues its research programmes, as well as in the growth of its educational programmes, which seek to develop tools for students of all ages to better understand their heritage, the history of Muslim societies and to relate this understanding to their contemporary, lived reality.



◆ *Arabic, Persian and Gujarati Manuscripts: The Hamdani Collection* by Professor François de Blois. The publication is a catalogue of rare and unique manuscripts generously donated by Professor Abbas Hamdani to IIS library. © The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.



◆ *The Kitāb al-Riyād*, part of the Hamdani Collection, is one of the oldest Ismaili manuscripts housed at IIS. It was composed by one of the distinguished 5th/11th century Ismaili da'i Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani. The manuscript preserved at IIS was copied in two hands: the largest part was copied before 760/1359, but the last 18 folios were added in 988/1580. © The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.

## HERITAGE 40 years of shining a light on the past towards illuminating the future

Every community has a history and memory and there is a need for an intellectual space where this heritage can be preserved, studied and communicated. Part of the vision in founding the Institute was to ensure the preservation of the Ismaili community's heritage, as well as the creation of resources, both human, intellectual and cultural to mediate between the community's past, its present and its future. In this quest, a large part of the work of the Institute is dedicated to the preservation and analysis of manuscripts, artefacts and memorabilia held in the special collections. Its work facilitates the research of primary sources that deepen the understanding of Ismaili history, philosophy and practices. Furthermore, the collection catalogues enable scholars and

students from across the world to access the collection, or to study them in London, thereby contributing to the scholarship of these important parts of Islamic heritage.

With a collection of over 3,000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian and Indic languages, IIS houses the world's most significant repository of special materials relating to Ismaili heritage and thought. In addition, rare objects from seals and coins to photographs and memorabilia are also being preserved. Some of the pieces that were originally donated and secured by the Institute, are now exhibited at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada.

## KNOWLEDGE 40 years of shaping the narrative through academic research and publications

Consolidating new knowledge has been central to the Institute's work since its inception. *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines* by Farhad Daftary (1990), was the first comprehensive historical survey of the Ismailis, from their origins, during the formative period of Islam, to modern times. This publication along with other titles in the Ismaili Heritage Series, have become invaluable references for students and scholars of Ismaili history and Islamic studies. Over the last four decades, IIS has produced over 140 publications which perform an essential function in rebalancing the understanding of Muslim cultures and societies, as well as in correcting misconceptions regarding Ismaili and Shi'i history, thought and doctrine.

The Institute's Ismaili Texts and Translations Series facilitates research of primary source materials, enabling critical editions of historical texts to be available in their original languages, in addition to English. By translating original texts from Persian and Arabic into English, the Institute enables the thought of influential medieval philosophers such as Nasir al-Din Tusi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) to be accessed and studied by a new generation of scholars. The Ismaili Texts and Translation Series has published 25 volumes, and future publications will include critical editions and translations of manuscripts in Indic languages. The Institute has made significant strides in developing Ismaili Studies as an academic field in its

own right, and rebalancing the Shi'i and Ismaili components as important aspects of Islamic scholarship internationally. As Dr Farhad Daftary, the long-time Co-Director of IIS reflects:

*"Our work has allowed us to assess where the study of Shi'i Islam is today and identify the gaps – the work of our research unit on Shi'i Studies aims to fill those gaps. This facilitates pluralism and diversity in scholarship – so that when students embark on a degree in Islamic Studies they have exposure to the history and culture of Ismailis and other Shi'i communities. The credibility of our research means that many universities, western and*

◆ Students accessing resources housed at the Aga Khan Library, London. Photo: John Sturrock.



*eastern, now have our publications on their core reading list. This is a great achievement in a relatively short period."*

The Institute's defining work in the area of Qur'anic Studies promotes scholarship on the plurality of interpretations inspired by the Qur'an, and developed throughout Muslim history. The ground-breaking *Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries* draws on *tafsir* (exegesis) in different languages, from a variety of schools of thought, to facilitate access to the broadest understanding of the Qur'an, by sampling some 1200 years of commentaries, across diverse geographies and traditions.

Sharing knowledge and providing access to the Library and our special collections is part of our core mission and with this in mind, IIS continues to digitise its manuscripts and rare books, so that these treasures can be studied - with the help of new technologies - by scholars from all corners of the globe.

Whilst an important part of our work is directed towards maintaining our academic track record, it is vital that knowledge from our research programmes also informs the development of our educational materials, and our teaching programmes. The same academic rigour forms the backbone of the production of our curricula materials and our graduate studies programme.

## PEOPLE 40 years of developing minds and investing in people

Although based in London, the Institute has an international mandate to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The plurality of the global Ismaili community, is itself reflected in the diverse profiles of the Institute's staff, student body and faculty. In addition, IIS publications are actively translated into many different languages from Portuguese, French and Russian to Arabic, Persian and Chinese.

The classroom textbooks developed for pre-school to secondary aged children have been translated into nine languages, and used by the Jamat residing in over 25 countries. Working in partnership with the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Boards (ITREBs), the secondary curriculum is taught by STEP teachers to thousands of students worldwide - helping them to understand their heritage in relation to contemporary and global contexts. 35 years of investment in pre-school, primary and then secondary curricula development, is coming full circle.

The Institute is now turning its attention to early childhood development, producing materials in partnership with experienced education and human development agencies within the Aga Khan Development Network.

IIS offers two demanding Masters level programmes to Ismaili students from around the world - the Graduate Programmes in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH) and the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP). Both GPISH and STEP students are taught by IIS faculty, as well as international lecturers who are renowned in their fields. These programmes equip students with a solid grounding in Ismaili Studies, and at the same time, a broader understanding of how the community is situated within the wider Ummah. IIS invests heavily in the quality of graduate studies with the aim of developing future leaders and intellectuals, as articulated by His Highness the Aga Khan in his address to IIS students at the 25th anniversary graduation ceremony in 2003:



*"As these young men and women grow into leadership positions in their own societies, including teaching future generations through their schools and universities, it is my hope that it will be these new generations of our intelligentsia, who, driven by their own knowledge and their own inspiration, will change their own societies and will gradually replace many of the external forces who today appear, and indeed sometimes seek, to control our destinies. These young men and women will become leaders in the institutions of civil society in their own countries, in international organisations, and in all those institutions, academic, economic and others, which cause positive change in our world."*

His Highness the Aga Khan presenting certificates at the IIS's 25th anniversary graduation ceremony, 19 October 2003. © The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

## Future 40 years of laying the conceptual and intellectual foundations for future generations

Guided by His Highness' vision and supported by the on-going generosity of its donors, IIS has for the past forty years sought to respond effectively and meaningfully to the needs of the multiple communities it serves.

Up until now, IIS's publications have been academic books written by scholars, and for the most part, aimed at scholars. Scholarship however does not always make for easy reading and for some time now, IIS has been aware that there is a

need to create material that will communicate Ismaili related themes to a general readership. IIS has therefore set out to devise a completely new accessible series under the banner of the *World of Islam*.

2018 was also the year in which IIS moved into its purpose built, permanent home in King's Cross, London - designed by the Pritzker prize winning Japanese architect, Fumihiko Maki, who also designed the Aga Khan Museum (Toronto) and the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat (Ottawa). The new building is also home to the Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, and the offices of the Aga Khan Foundation UK. As well as featuring state-of-the-art teaching facilities and an extensive Library, the new building has spaces for thoughtful reflection, in the form of six courtyard and rooftop gardens, inspired by a variety of landscapes in the Muslim world, as well as an exhibition space open to members of the public.

The mandate of the Institute is cognisant of its multiple responsibilities, of contributing to the academic arena of Ismaili and Islamic studies, whilst at the same time preserving Ismaili religious and cultural heritage, as well as serving the religious education needs of its communities. Whilst the work of IIS is ongoing, significant strides have been made over the last 40 years in realising the hope expressed in 1977 by His Highness the Aga Khan, to see The Institute of Ismaili Studies grow into an internationally recognised academic centre at the forefront of Ismaili and Shi'i Studies.



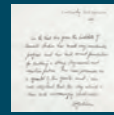
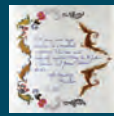
◆ The Aga Khan Centre in London's King's Cross.  
Photo: Edmund Sumner.

“While our academic research in established areas such as Shi'i Islam, Qur'an, tafsir and Central Asian communities will continue, we are expanding our research on the heritage of the South Asian Ismaili communities. We are constantly working towards His Highness' vision for The Institute to be an internationally recognised academic centre for Ismaili Studies. We are privileged to have His Highness as our Chairman, directing the priorities and intellectual persona of IIS. There is much to look forward to on the horizon, and still much work to be done to uncover and explore gems from Ismaili and Shi'i history.”

Dr Farhad Daftary, Co-Director of The Institute of Ismaili Studies

# IIS at a Glance

“Not since the Fatimid period has there been in existence a research centre for my Jamat to secure the fruits of Ismailism and Islam, by virtue of an Message from His Highness the Aga Khan, sent to Jamats worldwide, 25 November 1977



1977 1979 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1990 1994 1995



1998 2000 2002



## 115 Staff

IIS was founded in 1977 with 6 members of staff. It now employs 115 people.



## 50,000 Volumes

The library opened in 1979 with 300 volumes. It now has over 50,000 volumes with a particular emphasis on publications related to Ismaili and Shi'i studies.



## Over 140 Publications

IIS published its first book in 1983. To date, IIS has produced over 140 publications and translated many titles into French, Arabic, Persian, Portuguese and Russian.



## 3,000 Manuscripts

Over 3,000 manuscripts are held in the Ismaili special collections, including one of the oldest Ismaili manuscripts in the world from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.



*for Ismaili Studies... This is therefore a significant step in making it possible academic institution created by our own efforts and resources ”*



### 10 Languages

IIS secondary curriculum modules have been published in 10 languages and are used in 25 countries.



### 3,000 Participants

Since 2001, over 3,000 people have participated in programmes led by IIS, such as ITREB Members Training and Leadership Orientation Programmes, Waezeen Training and the Summer Programme on Islam.



### 45 PhD Scholarships

Since 1997, 45 doctoral scholarships have been awarded.



### 615 Graduates

615 people have graduated from programmes offered by IIS, including 284 students from STEP and 235 from GPISH.

1997



2003

2004

2007

2008



2009

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018



# A Source of Inspiration and Illumination

“ We celebrate today a beautiful new architectural accomplishment. As we do so, we also honour those who have made this Centre possible – and the values that have inspired their work. Two of those values which deserve special mention today – the value of education as a force for cooperation and healing in our world – and the value of architecture as a source of inspiration and illumination. ”

His Highness the Aga Khan, Inauguration of the Aga Khan Centre, London, 26 June 2018.

At the heart of London’s Knowledge Quarter in King’s Cross stands the new permanent home for the UK institutions of the Ismaili Imamat and the Aga Khan Development Network. Located in a 67-acre area at King’s Cross – one of the largest city-centre redevelopments in Europe, with a rich industrial and artistic past. The development at King’s Cross comprises of a student accommodation building, Victoria Hall, and the Aga Khan Centre, an academic facility. The academic building incorporates teaching and learning spaces, the Aga Khan Library, London, as well as offices for The Institute of Ismaili Studies, the Aga Khan University’s Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations and the Aga Khan Foundation UK.

Designed by Pritzker Prize winning architect Fumihiko Maki, the Aga Khan Centre is the third project that Maki has worked on for the AKDN. The first two he designed were the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat in Ottawa and the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto.

This project was an opportunity to create a compound visual and cultural impact within a tight urban setting. Two distinct features of Maki’s design support this objective. First, a ribbon pathway of green spaces connects to the public realm by way of a series of private courtyards, roof gardens and terraces, inspired by the plurality of architectural traditions from within Muslim cultures and societies. Second, a glass roof-scape links seamlessly to the design features of the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat and the Aga Khan Museum in Canada.



◆ The Aga Khan Centre in the heart of London’s Knowledge Quarter in King’s Cross.  
Photo: John Sturrock.

### Islamic Gardens at King's Cross

The concept of a 'ribbon pathway' of green spaces not only illustrates the Islamic garden as a concept, it also creates a unique concentration of outdoor spaces in London, with their own identity; representing the pluralism of the Islamic world. Each green space corresponds to the particular cultural landscape of a given region, where the Ummah resides, creating a sense of seclusion, environmental privilege and contained beauty.

Six gardens, courtyards and terraces in the Aga Khan Centre rise through the teaching and learning spaces. On the ninth floor, a garden, a courtyard and a terrace create a series of spaces that offer multiple vantage points over the city. These gardens are physically sculpted out of the building with five of them visible from outside, whilst the sixth – the Garden of Light – is secluded. Specific verses from the Holy Qur'an and from poets such as Ferdowsi, Rumi, Hafez and Sa'di, as well as inscriptions from the luminary poet and philosopher, Nasir-i Khusraw, have been calligraphed and carved into stone panels in the Garden of Light on the ninth floor. These verses remind us of the long-standing tradition of contemplation and scholarship within Muslim heritage.



◆ Inspired by the talar – a Persian throne and a place to address congregations. This long column-free balcony frames the view over King's Cross and the London skyline. *Photo: John Sturrock.*



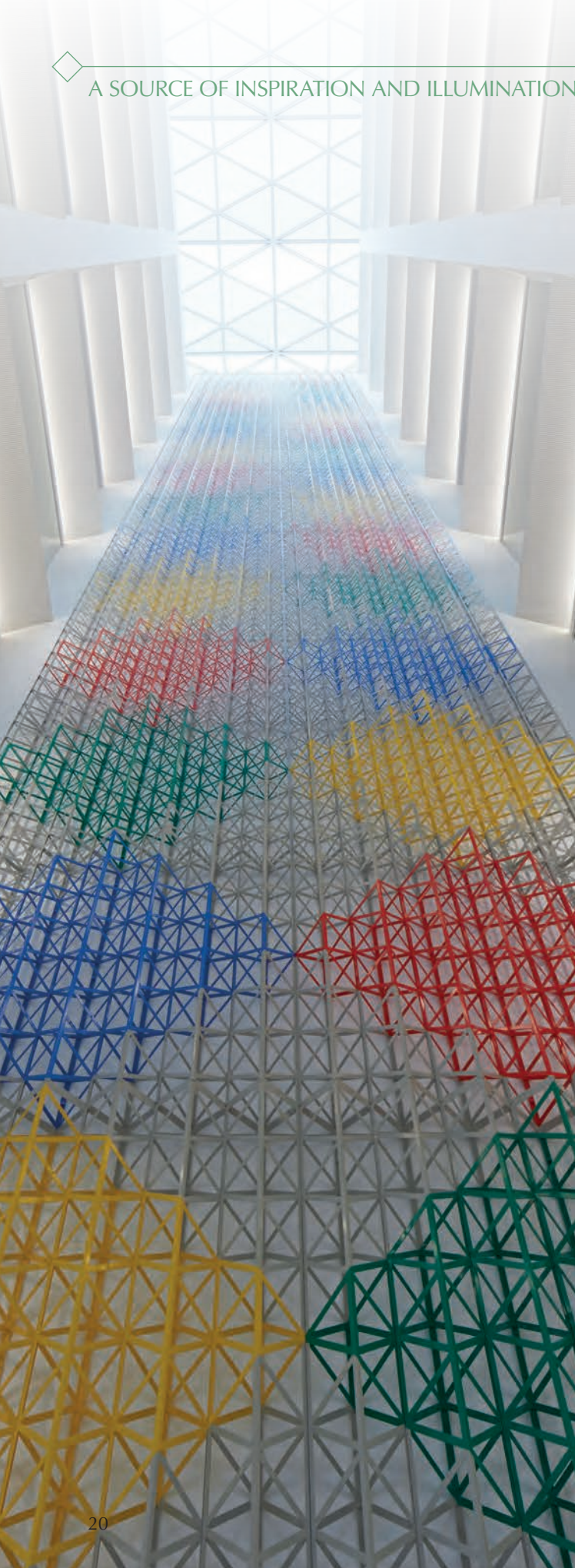
◆ Inspired by the loggias of Egypt, the Middle East and Persia, the Garden of Tranquility which has been designed by Maki and Associates plays an informal role as a shared recreational space between the staff and student lounges. *Photo: Hufton and Crow.*



◆ Designed by Nelson Woltz and inspired by the gardens of Andalusia, the Garden of Light is located on the top floor of the Aga Khan Centre. *Photo: Edmund Sumner.*



◆ Designed by Madison Cox, this rooftop garden for staff and students is inspired by the great gardens of the Mughal Empire. The water flowing through the four part chahar-bagh layout echoes the Kashmiri waterfalls of the late Mughal gardens and the narrow elegant channels of their early counterparts. *Photo: John Sturrock.*



There is a seventh, metaphorical garden at the heart of the building — the Atrium. The Aga Khan Centre is punctured by a shaft of light in the form of a six metre-wide atrium that connects all the residents of the building horizontally, vertically and diagonally. It draws the light down, linking the nine floors and drawing the spaces inside the building together. Referencing the Islamic architectural form of an interior quadrant courtyard, the atrium becomes the light and transparent backbone of the building. Beginning at the first floor and evoking a Central Asian, Middle Eastern or Indian haveli, the meeting point at the base of the atrium becomes a connector — a space enabling chance encounters that might spark different conversations and collaboration, thereby leading to a broader and more pluralist discourse.

### Architecture and Design

A restrained modern exterior is executed with crisp precision, while inside, a tapestry of global materials and influences from Muslim cultures slowly unwinds. The motif of the eight-pointed star follows the light as the gardens, courtyards and terraces weave their way up the nine-storey atrium. Pockets of design elements inspired by geometry, arabesque and mosaic, punctuate the building. Flush windows have been whitened with a pattern of ceramic fritting and are set into the limestone to catch the movement of light, creating an iridescence that unifies the external facade into a single beacon of white amidst the grey-scale architectural landscape of King's Cross.

### The Atrium Focal Point

The bright geometric lattice-work sculpture – Rhapsody in Four Colours - by the Pakistani-born British artist Rasheed Araeen, ascends 35 metres through the atrium, leading one's gaze upwards to the elaborate glass and steel matrix at the top of the building. With the volume of glass rooftop, Maki and Associates reference the work of the architect and gardener, Joseph Paxton, for his work on the 1851 Crystal Palace Great Exhibition, and Decimus Burton for his design of the 1863 great glass Temperate House at Kew Gardens, London.

### The Star Motif

The Aga Khan Centre is subtly ornamented by variations of a bespoke octogan and eight-point star pattern that Maki and Associates have drawn from the heritage of geometry and abstraction in Islamic art. It has inspired the design of architectural elements appearing in the lattice-work screens that mirror the *mashrabiya* and *jali* screens of the Middle East

◆ Designed by Rasheed Araeen, the 'Rhapsody in Four Colours' is a 35-metre high sculpture that celebrates the connection between 20th century geometric abstraction and the achievement of Islamic civilisation. *Photo: Edmund Sumner.*

and the Indian subcontinent; the steel balustrades, ceilings, carpets and mosaics. This pattern has also been used at the Victoria Hall student accommodation building. The eight-point star connects these two buildings by creating a perpetuum mobile as found in decorative elements of Muslim cultures. It is also used as the logo for the Aga Khan Centre.

**The Future**

The ground floor of the building performs many functions. It will not only house a retail space and restaurant, but also a small gallery to engage with the public. The gallery hosts exhibitions that weave together many thematic threads and interests of the institutions of the Ismaili Imamat and AKDN. Inspired by manuscripts in the Library's special collections, some exhibitions will present artefacts connected with Muslim cultures and civilisations, while others will be related to the development work of the AKDN. These exhibitions will offer insights into important themes of our time and will showcase some of the lesser-known facets of Muslim cultures. Associated events and garden tours will also give visitors the chance to discover and explore the Aga Khan Centre.

The opening exhibition in the gallery entitled, *Gardens and Well-Being: An Islamic Perspective* is an immersive, multi-sensory exhibition offering glimpses into the ways in which gardens have been imagined, designed and enjoyed in Islamic civilisation.

“Taken together, this winding ribbon of special spaces is an eloquent tribute to the rich diversity of the Muslim world. What they will make possible for those who walk these pathways, the people who will live and work here and public visitors as well, is a wonderful journey of refreshment and discovery.”

**His Highness the Aga Khan speaking about the Islamic Gardens at King’s Cross, London, 26 June 2018.**

The Aga Khan Centre is subtly ornamented by variations of a bespoke eight-point star pattern that Maki and Associates have drawn from the heritage of geometry and abstraction in Islamic art. *Photo: Hufton and Crow.*

To read the full speech made by His Highness the Aga Khan, visit: <http://www.akdn.org/speech/his-highness-aga-khan/opening-aga-khan-centre-london>  
 To read the full speech made by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, visit: <https://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/speech/speech-prince-wales-opening-aga-khan-centre-kings-cross-london>

# Education on Islam for the Twenty-First Century

On 25 November 1977, in his message to the Jamat on the founding of The Institute of Ismaili Studies, His Highness the Aga Khan, expressed his vision of an academic centre dedicated to research and scholarship in the fields of Islamic and Ismaili studies. His Highness saw this new institution contributing, alongside its academic activities, to areas such as religious education in the Jamat (community) through the preparation of educational materials and human resources of a qualitatively superior level. Five years later, in 1982, an Education Unit was established at the Institute whose remit was to develop a multilingual graded curriculum for the global Ismaili community, directed at the civilisational, humanistic and normative study of Islam and the Ismaili Tariqah.

In the intervening forty years that have passed since the founding of the Institute, the geopolitical landscape of the Muslim world, and within it that of the Ismailis, has experienced significant forces of change, from the end of the Cold War to the recent conflicts in Iraq and Syria. While many of the concerns which have surfaced in Muslim contexts have centred on issues of governance, economy, and Islam in the public space, also foregrounded in current debates has been the role of education as one of the critical determinants of the conditions in Muslim societies, both in terms of past outcomes and future prospects. What forms of education can address sectarianism and factionalism, militant extremism and terrorist violence, social intolerance and ideological polarisation, continues to be a standing challenge, not only in Muslim societies, but across the globe.

The global and regional conflicts that have been played out in the emergent phase of the twenty-first century have been attributed to complex forces and influences. Within this mix of factors, it needs to be asked what role unfounded suspicions, uninformed attitudes, and unchecked prejudices have exerted in fuelling political and social divisiveness, and whether comprehensive forms of intercultural education, along with other awareness raising strategies, had they but been instituted more rigorously in the educational



Independent learning using the Ta'lim curriculum. Photo: ITREB India. ◆

systems of the twentieth century, might not have created conditions for more conducive relations between cultures now being driven apart by oppositional forces.

Education, with all its limitations but also its recurring promise of a better future, continues to offer the hope, that if the younger generations are educated well to comprehend historical and contemporary societies - and the dynamics which remain among them - they will begin to grasp that social relations between differing ideological groups have not always or entirely been defined by belligerence and aggression, but that discursive engagements have been instrumental over the ages in tempering hostilities and opening up channels of trust and cooperation. In the times in which we live, it has become not only a high imperative but a moral obligation for each society and community to do what it can to educate its young in forms of understanding that will secure peaceful co-existence within the family we call humanity.

Over the past four decades, The Institute of Ismaili Studies has been engaged in the intellectual endeavour to conceptualise and give practical form to modes of education on the study of Islam, with special attention to Shia and Ismaili traditions, which can offer new paradigms of understanding Muslim societies and communities from historical and contemporary perspectives. These approaches seek to situate readings of Islam on the broadest possible canvas of civilisational history in order to bring into relief the encounters, interactions and engagements which have transpired between peoples of different faiths and cultures within Muslim societies, but also beyond their borders, with other groups. While the study of premodern and current history often gravitates towards conflicts and warfare, the educational approach adopted strives to reveal how civilisational histories, including those of Muslims, have been defined in substantial ways by constructive exchanges across a whole spectrum of human endeavours, from the economic and technological to the cultural and intellectual.



Students conducting group work using the secondary curriculum. ♦  
Photo: ITREB Canada.

Contributing to the bounded perception of Muslim history has been the near exclusive textualist focus on theology, law and exegesis in conventional programmes of Islamic education which, while essential to any study of Islam, has often been at the expense and neglect of the fascinating landscapes of civilisational and cultural history

which have lain hidden from sight. The educational curricula and their associated programmes conceived by the Institute, in redressing this tendency, have aimed at presenting the multifaceted, intersectional and layered nature of social experiences, in relation to their particular locations in time and place, so as to generate insights into how interpretations of Islam as a lived faith and ethic have intermeshed with aspects such as governance and authority, economic and commercial transactions, the human habitat and social life, and not least, the creativity embodied in expressions ranging from philosophical thought and literary output to musical and artistic production.



♦ A family in Tajikistan learning together from the Ta'lim curriculum.  
Photo: Parisa Sheralieva.

However, no education would be true to itself if it did not equip the young to see the times for what they are. While, therefore, the high accomplishments of Muslim civilisations are celebrated, it ought not to culminate in the idealising of history, but on the basis of facts, lead to revealing the reality of societies working their way through their limitations to confront the great problematics of their age. Such approaches invite pedagogies of critical analysis, the questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions, and the active nurturing of the investigative spirit.

A core challenge for this conception of education is striking the appropriate balance between exposing the young, on the one hand, to the manifold Islamic traditions that have found expression in Muslim contexts, and on the other, ensuring that the identification of what is distinctive about being Ismaili is not subdued. Equally important is that the sense of self-worth does not become dogmatic but is humanistically inclusive in its outlook to the world at large. The adopted educational philosophy seeks to steer away from both the narrow modes of indoctrination characteristic of rigidly confessional instruction and the open-ended study of multiple faiths with its attendant risk of reducing personal convictions into relativised lifestyle choices. Understanding what faith means to a community of tradition is essential to acquiring an ear for the tonality of religiosity, which may lead the young to adopt a more critical stance towards the unquestioning rejection of all beliefs that appear to be metaphysical.

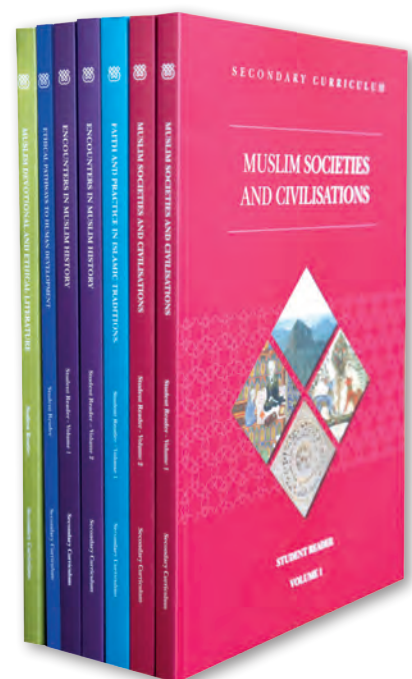
In the development of innovative educational programmes on Islam and the Ismaili tradition over the past four decades, there have been no precedents in the recent history of the community which could act as reference points. Under these conditions, it has been necessary to develop, anew, tools of thought, models of instruction, and pedagogies of engagement which answer, as best as they can, to realising the desired vision of education. This process has also required the generating of institutional

know-how and human resources to furnish the needed specialisms. The Institute now stands on the verge of having completed an entire cycle of curriculum development, from preschool to secondary, whose output in terms of a range of instructional materials has been made available in ten languages and introduced in over twenty countries globally. As the Institute embarks on the next phase of this endeavour, it looks to identifying from its experiences the refinements that can raise the present quality of education to a higher level of aspiration.

Four decades in the life of a new institution is admittedly a short span of time when compared to established centres of learning, and even shorter in relation to the centuries-old history of a community of tradition. When measured against the lifespan of individuals, however, forty years are of no small consequence, offering potential scope for substantive and transformational education. In this respect, the Institute has endeavoured to cater to the current generation, at a point of critical import in its history, by opening an entry point into its intellectual heritage. As new generations appear on the horizon, it is to be expected that the modes of community-centred education, building on what has so far been accomplished, will continue to turn to the inspiration and wisdom embodied in the community's historical tradition and have it speak to changing times through the language of educational engagement.

“ We should aim at educators who are able to contribute to instruction in Shia Imami Ismaili education with sincerity and sophistication; who are able to benefit from and contribute to Islamic civilisational programmes in Humanities at schools and in relevant spheres of the AKDN as and where appropriate; and who represent at the pedagogic level the vision of an Islam which, sensitive to tradition and mindfully open to modernity, constitutes the message which the endeavours of contemporary Imamat and the programmes of the AKDN seek to communicate. ”

His Highness the Aga Khan,  
Chairman of The Institute of Ismaili Studies



◆ The Secondary Curriculum modules developed by IIS.  
Photo: John Sturrock.



# IIS and SOAS Memorandum of Agreement

On 6 September 2018, the IIS hosted a celebratory event at the Aga Khan Centre to commemorate the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between SOAS University of London and The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS). The Memorandum of Agreement is a formal arrangement whereby SOAS will award MA degrees for the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH) and the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP).

Both GPISH and STEP were designed by the IIS following extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders and experts in the field of Islamic Studies. The Institute has always worked towards designing and delivering programmes that could match – and possibly exceed – the quality standards of leaders in the UK Higher Education sector. As a result of these efforts, the IIS's work and efforts have been consistently rewarded by reviewers, from external examiners and consultants up to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) - the governing body responsible for the quality assurance of Higher Education institutions nationwide. Commenting on the shared vision of the two Institutions, Professor Deborah Johnston, Pro-Director (Learning and Teaching) at SOAS University of London said:

*“SOAS and The Institute of Ismaili Studies have a history of working together and a shared interest in developing scholarship around the study of Islamic history, tradition and culture from a range of perspectives. Both institutions seek to examine Muslim cultures and societies from a number of disciplines - from the arts and literature to society and politics. SOAS's move to validate IIS programmes acknowledges their excellent quality and, in particular, we commended IIS on their work around student support and professional development opportunities for staff. Together we look forward to making a significant contribution to enhancing the study of these subjects.”*

The agreement with SOAS means that for the first time since the inception of GPISH, students who join the programme from September 2019 onwards, will receive a double Master's degree. An MA in Islamic Studies and Humanities will be awarded by SOAS for the first two years of the programme. Their second Master's degree will be conferred after the completion of their third year by a UK degree-granting university in a subject area that resonates with the aims of the graduate programme. In addition, STEP graduates will also be awarded an MA in Muslim Societies and Civilisations by SOAS, and a further Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching and Reflective Practice (PGDip), by UCL Institute of Education.

Reflecting on the formalisation of the partnership, Dr Farhad Daftary, Co-Director of the IIS said:

*“The accreditation by SOAS is a significant milestone in the history of the IIS's graduate programmes, and further strengthens our long-standing relationship with an institution that shares our ethos of promoting scholarship and the learning of Muslim cultures and societies. The formalisation of our continued academic partnership will enhance the sharing of knowledge, exchange of ideas and potentially even foster collaborative research and publications in the future. It also gives me great pride that this momentous partnership has coincided with the Diamond Jubilee of His Highness the Aga Khan, and the fortieth anniversary of the IIS.”*



◆ IIS and SOAS leadership and faculty members with students at the celebratory event commemorating the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between the two institutions. Photo: Nayyir Damani.

# The Establishment of the Aga Khan Library, London

“ *As one looks back over the history of learning and of advancement, one sees time and again that centres of learning flourished in strong, outward-looking cultures. Great universities and libraries benefited from the nurturing conditions provided by self-confident civilisations, and in turn, gave back to those civilisations the useful products of scholarship. The strong university was not a sign of government’s weakness, but rather of its aspirations and its strength. In the great expansion of the Muslim culture from the 8th through the 11th century, centres of learning flourished from Persia to Andalusia.* ”

**His Highness the Aga Khan, Convocation Address, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan, 19 November 1994.**





◆ The spacious new library offers enclosed spaces for concentrated study and new learning commons overlooking the Terrace of Learning, where students can work more informally and collaboratively. Photo: John Sturrock.

Libraries have played a pivotal role in the formation of Muslim intellectuals throughout history. One of the greatest models, *Bayt al-'Ilm*, established in 395/1005, was situated in the heart of Fatimid Cairo. A detailed historical account of the design, collections, and services of this library is found in the works of many important historical writers, such as al-Maqrizi, who said: *"[it] was a fascinating place dedicated not only to reading and research but also offering a space for education through lectures and debates."* Despite the current technological revolution in the field of librarianship, it is these activities that remain at the core of most academic and research libraries around the world.

The Aga Khan Library, London, is located in the heart of the Aga Khan Centre, occupying two floors in the centre of the building. Its location, design and collection epitomises the values inherent in dialogue, intellectual pursuit and respect for pluralism. In 2014, The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) and the Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC) established one joint library, instead of retaining two separate entities. In

conjunction with the opening of the Aga Khan Centre, His Highness the Aga Khan approved the proposal to name the joint library the Aga Khan Library, London.

The primary objective of the Aga Khan Library is to support the teaching and research in its parent institutions. Moreover, the library is committed to fostering knowledge of Islam, past and present, and facilitating access for external researchers and students to resources on the history, faith and cultures that comprise the global Shia Ismaili community.

Housed in state-of-the-art facilities, the Aga Khan Library offers a comfortable research space, enclosed reading rooms for concentrated study, and learning commons to enable collaborative group study and discussions. A new addition is a secure archival for its rare books, manuscripts and collections. The library also benefits from a simply designed, tranquil terrace - the Terrace of Learning - which extends the library into the outdoors and forms part of the ribbon pathway of green spaces that are incorporated

◆ Established in 1979, IIS library was shaped by the Institute's intellectual endeavours and fields of activity. When it merged with the AKU-ISMC library in 2014, its research collection was supplemented by resources relating to the study of Muslim civilisations and contemporary Islam. Photo: John Sturrock.

in and around the building. Inspired by the cloisters and courtyards of southern Spain, Morocco and Egypt, the Terrace of Learning is tiled in a range of decorative marbles in a geometric design, planted with scented flowering and evergreen herbs.

It is said that any library is a growing organism; the Aga Khan Library, London, is a live example of this principle which is evident in the rapid growth of its collection, as well as the generous space in the new library. Currently the library houses over 50,000 volumes covering a range of themes and topics from historical and contemporary studies on Islam in multiple languages. These volumes include 5,000 reference titles and hundreds of rare books - mostly from the 18th & 19th centuries, with an important presence of literary works in Ottoman and Turkish. The library's digital collection has progressively grown, and now offers access to more than 2000 journals, databases, encyclopaedias, dictionaries and other reference resources to support research and teaching.

Over the years, many acclaimed scholars in the field of Islamic Studies have graciously donated their personal collections to the Aga Khan Library, further enriching an already valuable repository of materials. These include,

amongst others, the collections of the late Professor Mohammed Arkoun, a key 20th century thinker in Islamic Studies and a Member of IIS's Board of Governors; Professor Annemarie Schimmel, a renowned scholar of Indo-Muslim communities; Professor Peter Avery, a distinguished British scholar of Persian studies and more recently Dr Farhad Daftary, an eminent historian of Ismaili Studies and the Co-Director of The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

The library collection on Ismailis and Shi'i studies complements the unique and significant collection of Ismaili manuscripts (approx. 3000 titles from the Middle East, Central and South Asia) that are housed in Institute of Ismaili Studies' Ismaili Special Unit. It is worth mentioning that this collection is the largest of its kind in the world, making the Aga Khan Centre a premiere reference point for research on Ismaili Studies. Inspired by the great intellectual traditions and historic libraries from across Muslim civilisations, particularly from the Fatimid era in North Africa and Egypt, the Aga Khan Library is much more than a space for holding valuable collections. It is a space that facilitates the cross-fertilisation of ideas, through research, analysis, debate and discussion, with the underlying ethos of universality of knowledge accessible to everyone.





◆ Quiet study spaces surround the library over the two floors. Photo: John Sturrock.

Speaking about the services and information access, Dr Walid Ghali, Head of the Aga Khan Library, said: *“Being in the heart of London’s Knowledge Quarter, we are well placed to offer the library’s collections and services to surrounding academic organisations as well. All our users benefit from a wide range of research and reference support services, including individual training sessions on complex issues to inter-library loans to and from eminent European, North American and Middle-Eastern Libraries. Nowadays academic libraries, face a monumental challenge due to the popularity of Google and other open access initiatives, which have created a competitive environment. In response to this challenge, we, academic librarians, are obliged to take a sharp proactive approach to promote the collections and services of our libraries.”*

With its collections represented in the World’s Largest Library Catalogue (World Cat) and the National Academic and Specialist Library Catalogue (COPAC) in the UK, the Aga Khan Library, London, has significantly expanded its partnerships and services to external academics and research institutions as well. The library faculty and staff are active participants in sharing their expertise and knowledge with the other organisations and researchers, through conference papers, publications, codicology workshops and taster sessions on Library and Information Science (LIS) programmes. The next move for the library will be to join the ‘M25 initiative’ where major universities and academic libraries are networking to further improve and provide higher level services to their users.

# An Insider's Guide to the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity

Who does not want to be happy?

There is not a single creature that does not pursue happiness for him or herself and prize their own life dearly. Yet there are so many ideas as to what happiness truly is and how we can achieve it - for many people it can sometimes seem elusive. To increase our chances of success, first we need to understand what lasting happiness is, and then we need to be shown a way to get there by someone who knows.





Looking back to medieval times, various fields of science were being established with a systematic approach to knowledge. Though Western Europe was still floundering in the so-called “Dark Ages”, in Islamic lands science was flourishing. Centred around the House of Wisdom (*bayt al-hikma*) in Baghdad, the translation movement breathed fresh life into the legacy of Ancient Greek civilisation, bringing works of great philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus into circulation in Arabic — during the very period when they were lost to the West, as is widely known. At the same time, various *madhhabs* (schools of jurisprudence) in Islam were being consolidated and religious sciences were crystallising. Just as the English ‘science’ derives from the Latin verb *scire*, meaning simply ‘to know’, the Arabic word for ‘science’ (*‘ilm*) is from the verbal root ‘-l-m, also meaning ‘to know’. Of the many medieval ‘sciences’, the highest were those dealing with the soul (*nafs*) and intellect (*‘aql*), and spiritual/metaphysical matters, or divine sciences (*ilahiyat*).

The work known as the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*Rasa’il Ikhwan al-Safa’*) is a collection of 52 epistles — or short treatises (*Rasa’il*) — synthesising the sciences of the time. The content is diverse both in its subjects and also in its influences, bearing the marks of many different traditions, such as Islamic, Hellenic, Indic, Zoroastrian and Sabian. Many questions surround the authorship of this encyclopaedic work, was there a single author or a group? Was it composed all at once or over time? Much has been written on the unresolved identity of the anonymous Ikhwan or ‘Brethren’, the question of their Ismaili affiliation, as well as on the date of composition of this work. We know that, having originated in Basra (Iraq), the *Rasa’il* circulated widely in al-Andalus by the mid-tenth century. But, fascinating as its origin and history may be, the real treasure of this work lies in its content, which harmonises reason and revelation. The present IIS series of critical editions and translations, co-published by Oxford University Press, has attracted the participation of more than twenty eminent scholars. In line with the fraternal ethos of the Brethren of Purity, this collective scholarly endeavour has benefited from the collaborative efforts and diverse perspectives of its contributors. To-date, the volumes published have been well reviewed by the academic community, and it is hoped that the series will yield further fruits in the fertile field of *Ikhwan* studies, stimulating new scholars to continue a

robust tradition of enquiry on the *Epistles*. For academics and those interested in knowledge, there is certainly much to investigate here. Eminent scholar of the *Ikhwan* and a prolific contributor to the series, Professor Carmela Baffioni said “Every time I have them in my hands it seems to me that I discover something new in each of their words and phrasings, however accustomed to them I may be ... Certainly, the *Ikhwan’s* unshakeable faith and convictions are moving, and a model for us as well.”

For the general readers, the presentation of the text may seem daunting, with its critical apparatus and academic paraphernalia. However, those recognising the need to seek a ‘cure’ for themselves – as the *Ikhwan* frame the human condition in the story of ‘The Doctor and the City of the Sick’ (Epistle 44) – would do well to study this text and take its meaning to heart. From mathematics to magic via natural history and metaphysics, the *Rasa’il* cover a comprehensive range of subjects and are sometimes described as an encyclopaedia, though they read more like a curriculum. We could even call it a ‘self-help guide’, presenting a roadmap for the *nafs* (‘self’ or ‘soul’). The *Rasa’il* outline a spiritual path, showing novices, people that would follow these teachings, where to begin and where to go; it is truly a *tariqa* (path). The text has a soteriological purpose - it aims to show people how to attain salvation or, in other words, true and lasting happiness (*sa’ada*)! So, what is the secret? In a nutshell: we must cultivate knowledge (*‘ilm*) in order to understand how to live ethically and to co-operate with our fellow beings. Realising our genuine purpose as human beings requires that we first understand our mutually connected situation and how we relate to the rest of the cosmos. The *Rasa’il* are divided into four parts: mathematical, natural, intellectual, and divine sciences. There is a progression through this educational programme from what is more

immediate to the readers' own experiences, and therefore easier to understand, to the more abstract or subtle ideas. The earlier *Epistles* deal with topics related to an investigation of the world around us – the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, the earth and the heavenly bodies – while the later *Epistles* consider the call (*da'wa*) to God, spiritual beings (*ruhaniyat*) and magic (*sihr*). Despite the apparently clear division of topics indicated by the titles, certain key themes permeate the entire work and are repeated throughout in relation to the different topics at hand. To get some flavour of the work, let us look briefly at just two of these key themes.

The theme of interdependence is expressed through the analogy between microcosm and macrocosm. Just as the medieval conception placed the earth at the centre of the universe, man was viewed as being at the centre of the spiritual universe, with animals, vegetables, minerals, and elements below, and celestial beings above. According to this way of thinking, much influenced by the Neoplatonists, there is a subtle relationship between the sub-lunar realm below (also known as the world of generation and corruption, or the mundane physical

world) and the celestial realm above, with the human being as microcosm (little cosmos) mirroring the entire universe as 'macroanthropos' (giant man). This view is in stark contrast to the modern prioritisation of self that extracts the individual from the nexus of the world, severing her relationship with the outer and inner worlds (nature and God, respectively). Appreciating a deeper causality than what we usually see manifesting in the material world opens up the possibility of reading God's signs (*ayat*) that can point us towards happiness.

Such an understanding of the world is linked to another key theme of the Ikhwan: the immortality of the soul. We are instructed to take a long view of our existence, with 'death' marking only the corporeal death of the physical body. Here, there is another causal relationship at work, between what we do in this life and what will happen in the hereafter, so we should take the precious opportunity we have now to prepare. By following the 'straight path' towards God, and becoming habituated to ethical behaviour, we can rise through the stations of existence to escape the 'sea of matter' (equated with the sub-lunar realm) and even attain the rank of the angels, whose purpose is to help other beings:

“ *Every time I have them in my hands it seems to me that I discover something new in each of their words and phrasings, however accustomed to them I may be... Certainly, the Ikhwan's unshakeable faith and convictions are moving, and a model for us as well.* ”

Professor Carmela Baffioni, Eminent Scholar and Contributor to the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity (*Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'*) Series.



“O my brother, may God help you and us through a spirit coming from Him, did you watch your soul, did you work for its righteousness, did you search for its rescue, did you open its prison, did you free it from the immersion in the sea of matter, the prison of nature, and the obscurations of bodies, did you relieve its burdens — the causes that hinder it from rising to the reign of heaven, entering the group of angels, journeying in the expanse of the world of the spheres, ascending in the grades of paradise, and breathing those sweet-smelling plants mentioned in the Qur’an?”

(Epistle 15)

In an article entitled, ‘Rasa’il Ikhwan as-Safa in the literature of the Ismaili Taiyibi Da’wat’, the eminent Ismaili scholar Husayn Hamdani, wrote “the *Rasa’il Taiyibi Da’wat* in Yemen. They are spoken of as the Qur’an of the Imams while the Qur’an is the Qur’an of the Muslims in general.” So, to use the characteristic refrain of the Ikhwan, ‘O brother, wake from the torpor of ignorance and the slumber of negligence’ – reach for the text and follow the straight path to happiness!

While the ideas outlined above could initially sound remote and not easily applicable to our lives, familiarity will bring them ‘closer to the grasp of beginners’. The many key themes are therefore reintroduced in different ways throughout the work, which is also interspersed with engaging allegorical stories and examples. It is a rich work and rewarding read.



◆ Epistles of the Brethren of Purity Series. Photo: John Sturrock.



# The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions

“*The Qur'an-e-Sharif, rich in parable and allegory, metaphor and symbol, has been an inexhaustible well-spring of inspiration, lending itself to a wide spectrum of interpretations. This freedom of interpretation is a generosity which the Qur'an confers upon all believers, uniting them in the conviction that All-Merciful Allah will forgive them if they err in their sincere attempts to understand His word. Happily, as a result, the Holy Book continues to guide and illuminate the thought and conduct of Muslims belonging to different communities of interpretation and spiritual affiliation, from century to century, in diverse cultural environments.*”

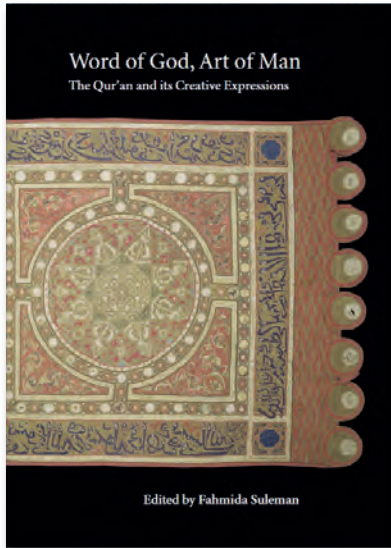
His Highness the Aga Khan, Word of God, Art of Man Colloquium, London, 19 October 2003

In the library of world scriptures, the Qur'an is one of the most widely read, studied and revered. Founded in 2001, the Institute's Qur'anic Studies Unit promotes scholarship on the plurality of traditions inspired by the Qur'an, which have developed throughout Muslim history, up to the present time. Dr Omar Ali-De-Unzaga, Head of the Qur'anic Studies Unit at IIS says: *“Interpretation of the Qur'an took place even during the period of revelation. Contemporaries of the Prophet would approach him for clarification or interpretations on verses they thought were unclear. Even in the first generation of Muslims there were diverse understandings. It could be argued that many of the schools of thought within Islam developed as a result of these differing interpretations of the Qur'an. These differences fostered dialogue, and sometimes mutually exclusive positions. Yet, Muslim scholars always recognised that the Qur'an encompassed various possibilities of interpretation”.*

One of the aims of the Institute's Qur'anic Studies Unit is to analyse the various interpretations of the Qur'an and explore the circumstances that gave rise to them. Interpretations can be found in many genres, from poetry, philosophy to mystical writings. However, the main repository of these interpretations is within the genre of *tafsir* (Qur'anic commentary).

## Taking no sides in the debate

To broaden the understanding and reception of the Qur'an through the ages, the Institute regularly brings together international scholars from various disciplines to participate in a dialogue at symposiums and seminars. In addition, the rich diversity and plurality of approaches and opinions throughout history and in contemporary times are also presented in its publications through the Qur'anic Studies publications series. The Qur'an has and continues to be subject to contending, often antithetical ideas and interpretations. The publications take no sides in these debates.



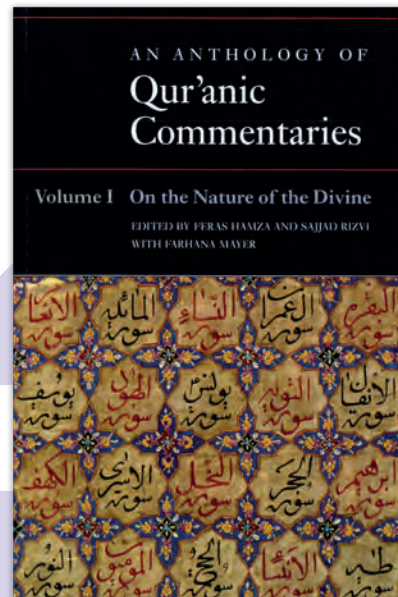
◆ *Word of God, Art of Man* is a beautifully illustrated volume of papers presented during the international colloquium, 'The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions' held during IIS's 25th anniversary celebration. As the title suggests, *Word of God, Art of Man* examines the many artistic traditions that developed around the Holy Qur'an, rather than focusing on the legal, theological and philosophical traditions it has also inspired. Photo: *The Institute of Ismaili Studies*.

### What is tafsir?

Exegesis of verses of the Qur'an can take many different shapes.

Technically, *tafsir* refers to the genre of literature in which scholars set out to explicate the circumstances, the meaning, and the grammar of each Qur'anic verse. Typically, an author (*mufassir*) of a book of *tafsir* does not provide one simple interpretation but presents the multiple interpretations given by their predecessors. Not all *tafsir* work is the same, some include mystical interpretations, others are purely based on *tafsirs* and others delve into philosophical and theological concepts.

In 2003, the international colloquium *Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions* - which was held at the Ismaili Centre, London, as part of IIS's 25th anniversary celebrations - laid the foundation for the ethos of the Unit. While most Qur'anic studies conferences focus on the textual reading, codification, transmission and interpretation of the text, this colloquium focused on the sacred words as a source for creative and artistic inspiration for Muslims worldwide and throughout the ages. Attended by over 200 scholars, the papers presented at the colloquium, which then led to the publication of the same name, examined the diverse expressions of the Qur'an. Commenting on their approach, Dr Omar Ali-De-Unzaga said: "We work with all the different groups of scholars who study the Qur'an with different aims and approaches. Because of the complexity of the task, we galvanise people from different schools and approaches to contribute to the body of knowledge on the Qur'an. This is not something one individual can do, but an institution such as ours can, and this is the Unit's focus." The Unit is now one of the largest departments focusing on Qur'anic studies in the West. Its scholars contribute to major editorial boards such as the American Academy of Religion's Qur'an group, whilst also shaping the direction and dialogue of how the Qur'an is studied in the future.

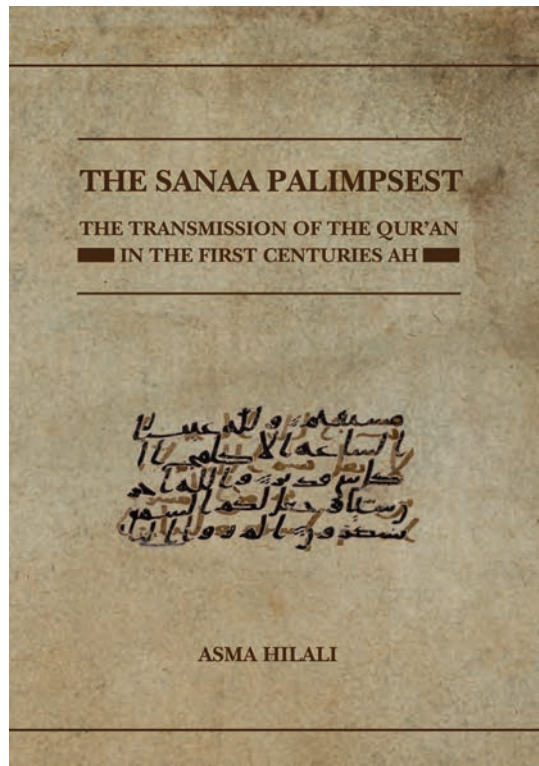


This volume demonstrates the richness of the genre of Qur'anic commentary and the plurality of interpretative voices that have engaged the text of the scripture. Photo: *The Institute of Ismaili Studies*.

A ground-breaking initiative in this ongoing dialogue is the Anthologies project, which explores verses of the Qur'an in detail, translating and setting the context around the *tafsir* or commentary that has been written on them. The first volume which was published in 2008, explored the commentaries on *ayats* of the Qur'an which were on the nature of the Divine. Other *ayats* on women, rituals and ethics are also being explored. For each volume, six *ayats* of the Qur'an are selected and the twenty *tafsirs* are translated in English. Spanning from the eighth century to the present day, covering all schools of thought, each commentary is extensively annotated and commented on.

**A wide lens**

The translation of primary sources is fundamental to the Unit's study of *tafsir*. Much of the literature on the Qur'an written in the modern period, particularly in major Muslim languages, other than Arabic, is not easily available. Among the early publications in the Qur'anic Studies series was *Approaches to the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesia*. Indonesia is home to one of the largest Muslim populations, but much of what has been written and published in Bahasa, Indonesia, on the Qur'an and other Islam-related topics was inaccessible to the non-Indonesian reader. Through this type of work, the Unit is making available to all those studying the Qur'an, *tafsirs* from various parts of the world.



**The future**

Currently being developed, *Qur'an through the Ages*, is an innovative new project from the Institute, which was originally envisaged with the contributions of the late Professor Andrew Rippin - one of the foremost scholars on Qur'an and *tafsir* studies. This multi-author and multi-disciplinary project will span over thirteen subject areas, from art to theology, and literature to philosophy. Recounting how the project was born, Dr Ali-De-Unzaga said: *"This is a very exciting project. It is effectively the history of the reception of the Qur'an, which has never been done before. The late Professor Arkoun helped to plant the seed for this project, when he was discussing The Great Code by Northrup Frye in class during my time as a GPISH student. The book examines the influence of the Bible on western art and literature, and on the western creative imagination in general. Professor Arkoun talked about how we have nothing like this for the Qur'an and some years on from this discussion, this project was born."* The project will bring scholars together from all over the world, regardless of their ideology, with expertise in various subjects, to look at how the Qur'an has been used, interpreted and influenced people.

The wealth of knowledge within the Unit is also specifically shared with the Ismaili community, through multiple accessible channels, from the secondary curriculum modules, Continuing Education Programmes to the Institute's graduate programmes – GPISH and STEP. The teaching is based on scholarly research, which promotes discussion, considering alternative views and provides contextualisation, so that students are able to combine a rational approach with a spiritual attachment to the faith.

Reflecting on how his role as Head of Qur'anic Studies at IIS has impacted him, Dr Omar Ali-De-Unzaga commented: *"The study of the Qur'an continues to open doors to the spiritual depths of the Qur'an. It continues to open up avenues of light, but it is a continuous puzzle as you encounter so many interpretations. But it is a puzzle that makes you want to explore further. Studying the Qur'an keeps the connection to the beginning of Islam open. It keeps open a very personal channel between one's self and the original revelation and that's incredibly inspiring."*

◆ Published in 2017, *The Sanaa Palimpsest: The Transmission of the Qur'an in the First Centuries AH*, provides an analytical introduction to, and an annotated edition of, one of the oldest sets of Qur'an fragments yet discovered. Photo: The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

## Key Milestones of the Qur'anic Studies Unit

- 1999: Anthology project begins
- 2001: Qur'anic Studies Unit was founded
- 2003: Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions colloquium
- 2005: Approaches to the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesia is published
- 2008: First volume of the Anthology is published
- 2012: The Vernacular Qur'an is published
- 2012: The Qur'an and Adab conference
- 2014: Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community is published
- 2016: The Spirit and the Letter is published
- 2017: The Qur'an and Adab is published
- 2017: The Sanaa Palimpsest is published
- 2017: Sufi Hermeneutics is published
- 2017: The Sanaa Palimpsest workshop is held

◆ The dispersed Blue Qur'an to which this folio belongs is one of the most famous surviving Qur'an manuscripts. The text of this outstanding Qur'an is copied in gold ink outlined in black on a deep indigo-blue parchment. Small silver rosettes punctuate the flow of the text at the end of each verse and add a decorative element to an already spectacular folio. Although rare in Qur'an manuscripts, the gold-on-blue aesthetic was used in royal manuscripts in the courts of the Abbasids (750–1258) and the Fatimids (909–1171). *Photo: The Institute of Ismaili Studies.*



# Evolving Approaches to Teaching and Learning



Academic programmes, like all living things, change and evolve with time in response to evolving needs and circumstances. Both the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH) and the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) have undergone key developments and changes in the past few years in order to keep them relevant and innovative, vis-à-vis the sector standards and the needs of the Ismaili community. A wide-ranging reflection which started in 2012, led to a substantial restructuring of GPISH in 2014, and to date four student cohorts have been benefitting from this new curriculum. A similar process begun for STEP in 2014, and in 2017, the first cohort enrolled in a revised version of the programme where the teacher training aspects have been significantly enhanced. In addition the MA element of STEP is also being revised, taking stock of the lessons learned after more than ten years since its

inception. Speaking about the innovative restructuring of the programmes, Dr Laila Halani, Head of the Department of Graduate Studies commented:

*“When GPISH was launched in 1994, the programme’s interdisciplinary approach to Islamic studies was innovative and cutting edge. More than two decades on, in order to retain its uniqueness, the curricula for GPISH and STEP have been rethought to take into account recent scholarship, theoretical debates and methodological innovations in the field. An example of the latter is that the revised curricula is taught by faculty who integrate research and teaching allowing students on these programmes to benefit from ongoing research and for both faculty and students to contribute to knowledge production in the field as co-constructionists.”*



The Institute has always worked towards designing and delivering programmes that could match – and possibly exceed – the quality standards of leaders in the UK Higher Education sector. IIS’s work and efforts have been consistently rewarded by reviewers, from external examiners and consultants to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the body responsible for the quality assurance of Higher Education institutions nationwide. The last QAA annual monitoring visit in 2017 confirmed commendable progress against the Institute’s stated action plan. Reflecting on IIS’s quality standards, Diane Rainsbury, Head of the Quality Assurance Unit said:

*“IIS continues to build on its solid academic standing and its successful academic partnerships with leading Universities. The academic standards of its innovative and distinguished graduate programmes of study have been consistently*

*acclaimed by external examiners and our wider academic community. IIS has a well-established and successful track record with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) that has consistently affirmed that the academic standards of our graduate programmes and the quality of teaching and learning meet UK expectations. Following the earlier Higher Education Review IIS received a commendable outcome in its monitoring visit, and in 2018 the QAA also affirmed that IIS continues to meet UK expectations.”*

The Graduate Studies department and its programmes are constantly evolving its teaching and learning methodologies. Working with students and faculty, the academic committee overseeing the programmes has been consistently enhancing both GPISH and STEP in terms of subject content, pedagogy, as well as academic management – all of which have prepared IIS for another major step in the history of our

programmes. In 2018, following extensive reviews, both GPISH and the MA component of STEP have undergone a successful validation process by the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, University of London), a leading institution in the UK for a range of related to IIS's graduate programmes. This partnership, coupled with the existing collaboration with the University College London (UCL), demonstrates the level of quality that the Institute strives to achieve and endeavours to maintain.

Commenting on the partnership, Professor Deborah Johnston, Pro-Director (Learning and Teaching) at SOAS University of London said:

*“SOAS’s move to validate The Institute of Ismaili Studies programmes will help to make a significant contribution to enhancing the study of Islamic history, tradition and culture, which will be a major benefit to students on these programmes. This partnership will enable closer collaboration with a major institute in the heart of London specialising in Muslim cultures and societies. In particular we commended IIS on their work around student support and professional development opportunities for staff.”*





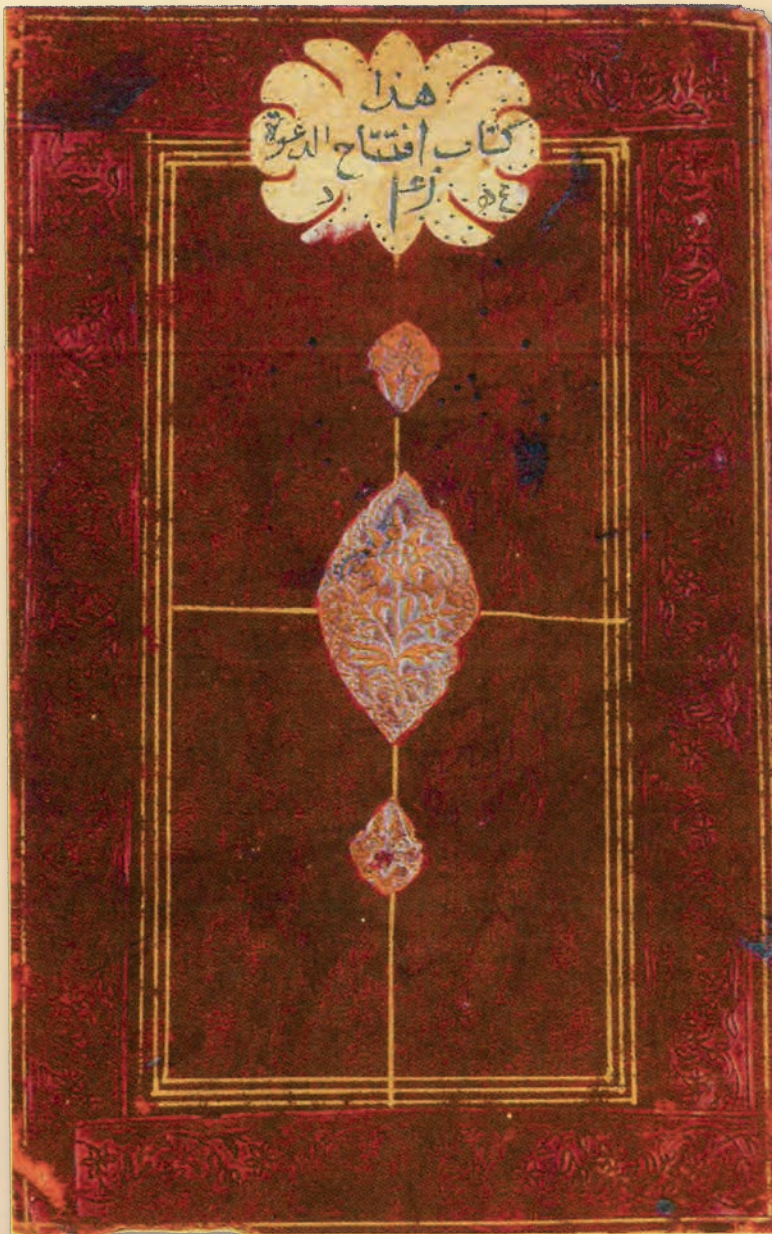
From September 2019, STEP students will continue to benefit from studying towards two bespoke postgraduate awards: the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Reflective Practice (PGDip) awarded by the University College London (UCL) and the MA in Muslim Societies and Civilisations awarded by SOAS. GPISH students will benefit from graduating with two Master's degrees of which one will be the MA in Islamic Studies and Humanities awarded by SOAS, before students undertake another Master's degree at a UK University.

This development is a significant milestone for IIS and its graduate programmes – made all the more special as it coincided with the Diamond Jubilee of His Highness the Aga Khan, the fortieth anniversary of IIS and the move to our permanent home at the Aga Khan Centre.

The successful track record with QAA, the validation of our higher education offer, the consistent presence and growth of the Institute as a highly reputable centre of learning on the national and international scene, are all conducive to the future objectives that the IIS is pursuing.



# Exploring Intellectual Treasures – The Journey of a Manuscript



◆ *Ifitah al-da'wa wa-ibtida' al-dawla* (The Commencement of the Mission and Establishment of the State) by al-Qadi al-Nu'man (d. 363/974). This is arguably the most authoritative Ismaili historical work on the early *da'wa* until the establishment of the Fatimids in North Africa. Image: © The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

For centuries, humans have been fascinated with looking back in time; be it to understand how significant events unfolded or to discover how people lived. It is this desire of discovering and making sense of the past that has led man's imagination in the pursuit of time-travel. While the prospect of a time-travelling machine may be fictional, some communities are fortunate to have access to a material and literary heritage that enables a better understanding of the past, sheds light on the present and helps inform the direction and shape of the future.

It is treasures of this nature that the Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU) at IIS is dedicated to preserving, making them accessible for research and scholarship with a view to sharing this knowledge with wider constituencies.

Since its establishment 40 years ago, IIS has dedicated a number of resources



◆ Exploring primary sources housed at IIS. Photo: John Goldberg.

to building and studying its repository of special collections. Being the largest known repository dedicated to Ismaili literary heritage materials, the collection includes over 3000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian and Indic languages from various time periods, along with rare books, coins, artefacts, medals, archival papers, photographs and memorabilia, amongst other material.

When items from the past are gifted to IIS, how are they preserved, managed and studied? Caring for a manuscript involves various steps.

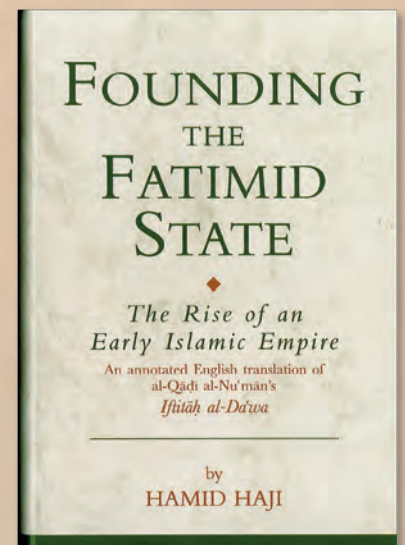
### Preservation

Upon arrival at IIS, a specialist carries out an assessment of a manuscript's condition and conservation needs. If the manuscript appears to be contaminated - for example, with pest activity, it is housed separately to protect other materials, before arrangements are made for its decontamination and conservation. ISCU also engages in preservation which includes preventive measures such as the use of acid-free boxes along with acid-free tissue papers to house special materials, careful handling and storage in a temperature and humidity controlled environment amongst other things. In order to facilitate minimal handling, many manuscripts are digitised to provide wider access, while the original can be protected from further damage caused by mishandling and various environmental factors.

### Cataloguing, Research and Publications

IIS mandate not only includes the conservation and preservation of these manuscripts, but also to facilitate the research and study of these treasure troves of knowledge. Manuscripts are catalogued by staff in the, and researched and studied by a broad spectrum of scholars from around the world – providing an opportunity to thoroughly explore Ismaili history and heritage. Dr Wafi Momin, Head of the Ismaili Special Collections Unit said: *“Besides provoking awe, fascination and curiosity, handling a relic of the past acquires another meaning when it further informs the present. It is as though we have a visitor not only to look after but also to converse with and learn from. That is the beauty of having something passed down to the present – it makes for a more engaged and informed world.”*

*Founding the Fatimid* ◆  
State. *The Rise of an Islamic Empire.*  
Photo: © The Institute of Ismaili Studies.





◆ Researchers taking a hands-on approach and examining a range of manuscripts from IIS special collections. Photo: John Goldberg.

Publications focusing on critical editions and the study of the manuscripts in our collection are given a priority focus. The Ismaili Texts and Translations Series is dedicated to the translation and critical analysis of primary and secondary sources, including the manuscripts housed at IIS. Such initiatives make the texts, more accessible to a wider audience and inform and shape scholarship, including other IIS projects, from the secondary curriculum to higher and continuing education programmes.

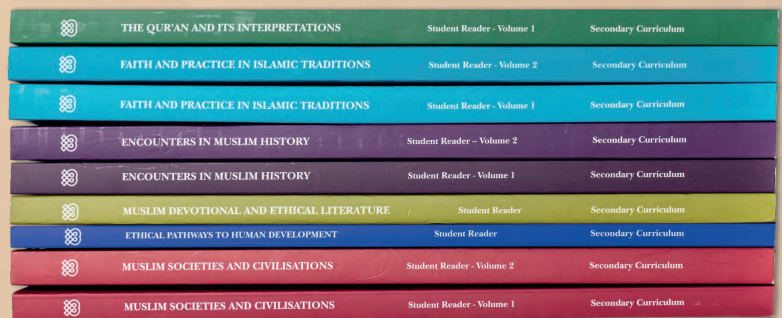
A prime example is the annotated publication, *Founding the Fatimid State: The Rise of an Early Islamic Empire. An annotated English translation of al-Qadi al-Numan's Iftitah al-Dawa* by Hamid Haji. Part of the Ismaili Texts and Translation Series, *Iftitah al-da'wa* (Commencement of the Mission) is an extensive piece of work on Fatimid historiography, and as such it is a significant primary source for understanding Ismaili history. It presents an in-depth account of the background to the establishment of Fatimid rule in Yemen and North Africa.

The *Iftitah* was proclaimed as the official code of the Fatimid state, and continues to be one of the primary sources of Ismaili law to the present day for some Muste'alvi Ismaili communities. It conveys the successive phases of the Ismaili *da'wa*, and its rise in Yemen, under the direction of Dai Ibn Hawshab. Composed by al-Qadi al-Nu'man, the official historian and Chief Jurist of the Fatimid State at the time, this work is based on many official archival and biographical sources. Whilst the Ismaili Texts and Translations Series facilitates further

research of primary source materials, and shapes the academic field of Ismaili studies, it also enables the synthesis of new knowledge which is disseminated through the curricula and resources developed for teachers. Reflecting on the value of our primary sources, Nadim Pabani, a STEP teacher in the UK reflected:

*“As a teacher, one of the most important things is to make the history of Islam come alive! There are so many exciting ways in which this can be done, but one of the most unique ways is to use primary sources, which I have found inspires curiosity and kindles the spark of interest in my students. There is something special about reading the words of people who have lived many years, even centuries, ago. As students engage with these texts and materials, which have been made available - and more importantly accessible – by IIS through the secondary curriculum, students are*

*able to live that history and walk in the footsteps of some of the most influential thinkers and scholars of the Muslim past. So much of the teaching I do relies on being relatable to the lives of my students. I have found that - in referencing the primary sources - I have been able to make connections to their lives and the practice of faith. This is all possible due to the way in which the primary sources have been seamlessly interwoven within the secondary curriculum. Without these gems, the richness of this history would remain hidden, but with them we are able to extract the spirit of this history and make it come alive for students, both within the classroom and beyond, as it permeates their lives and strengthens their identity and connection to their faith!”*



IIS secondary curriculum modules. Photo: John Sturrock. ◆

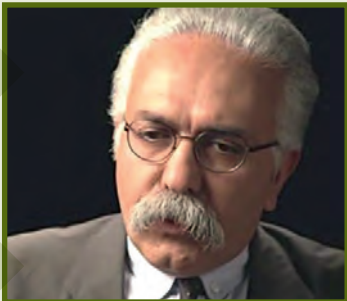
*“ IIS manuscript collection is the largest of its kind focusing on different aspects of Ismaili history and thought, as well as broader Muslim intellectual traditions. These manuscripts provide us with rare glimpses into a dynamic world of ideas, doctrines, legal practices, scientific advancements, rituals and beyond, alongside a network of actors who were behind this manuscript culture – historians, philosophers, theologians, jurists, poets, scribes, readers, artists, binders, papermakers and so on. ”*

Dr Wafi Momin, Head of the Ismaili Special Collections Unit.

# 40 years of Pioneering Academic Work

Over its forty-year history, IIS has established itself as a reputable academic centre of Islamic studies, with a particular focus on Shi'i and Ismaili studies. The Institute's Department of Academic Research and Publications favours research which is civilisation-based and interdisciplinary in its approach to the study of Islam, not merely confining itself to the study of Islam's theological and religio-legal traditions. To facilitate this approach, a variety of seminars, conferences and public lectures are organised by the Institute, which serve as a platform for scholars from around the globe to engage in dialogue and share a range of perspectives and ideas. The Institute also provides scholars with the opportunity to publish a range of publications intended for specialists; such as occasional papers, monographs, critical editions, translations, conference proceedings and bibliographical works. In many cases, they also contribute towards teaching modules on IIS's postgraduate and continuing education programmes. Its research serves a number of audiences, including the Ismaili community, the academic community and the interested general public.

Through its endeavours to build bridges of partnership, cooperation and understanding, IIS has attracted many prominent scholars from around the world in joint research initiatives. Here are some reflections from scholars who have had a long-standing association with IIS.



**Professor Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi**

*Professor of Islamic Studies, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Sorbonne University, Paris; Senior Research Fellow, The Institute of Ismaili Studies*

“My collaboration with IIS, this wonderful institution of scholarship and research, dates back to the 1990s when I started sending my PhD students directly or indirectly studying Ismailism to the IIS library. Two of them obtained a research grant from IIS, Orkhan Mir-Kasimov and Fârès Gillon. The first is now a Senior Research Associate at IIS. In 2005, I was named a Senior Research Fellow, along with eminent colleagues Wilfred Madelung, Hermann Landolt and the late Mohammed Arkoun. As such, I am actively involved in the various fields of research covered by IIS, including the production of the *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, and two series of publications for Shi'i Studies and Qur'anic Studies. For many years, a large number of particularly important books have been published in these two series. In the framework of IIS, I have published, my book *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam Beliefs and Practices* in 2011. At the same time, IIS has actively and generously supported the publication of several books that I have edited within the framework of my university, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Sorbonne). For

example, the volumes dedicated to Professors Etan Kohlberg (2008) and Guy Monnot (2013) and *L'ésoférisme shi'ite, ses racines et ses prolongements/Shi'i Esotericism, its Roots and Developments* (2016). This last book of nearly 900 pages, edited with Daniel De Smet and two faculty members of IIS, Maria De Cillis and Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, is one of the first initiatives to study the spirituality of Shi'i Islam in its different components from his ancestors to modern times. Dozens of the world's leading researchers have contributed to it. Finally, I had the honour of organising the publication of the French translation of three important books of Dr Farhad Daftary (*La légende des Assassins, Les Ismaéliens dans les sociétés musulmanes médiévales and Traditions intellectuelles en Islam*). As you can see, I am attached to IIS through strong friendly, scientific and institutional relationships. It makes me very happy and honored.”



**Professor Wilferd Madelung**

*Senior Research Fellow, The Institute of Ismaili Studies. Emeritus Professor of Islamic Studies, University of Chicago; Laudian Professor of Arabic at the University of Oxford*

“I have been involved with IIS ever since its foundation, in particular, giving occasional lectures to the students.

After my retirement from my professorship at Oxford University in 1998, I have become a part-time Senior Research Fellow at IIS, carrying out research for the Institute, editing and analysing Ismaili texts from its library holdings and aiding younger scholars with their research. Several of IIS' publications carry my name as their author, often jointly with other scholars. In conferences held by the Institute, I usually present a research paper. Most recently, I have been involved in the history of the *Ikhwan al-safa'* within the Institute's project of publishing a critical edition of the Encyclopaedia of the *Ikhwan al-safa'* (Epistles of Brethren of Purity project). I am also editing and examining alchemy texts composed by early Ismaili authors.

All this research within the frame of The Institute of Ismaili Studies has served to counter the historical vicious denigration of Ismailism by Sunni polemicists as an extremist heretical and atheist movement, seeking to destroy Islam by proving that Ismailism is in fact, profoundly Islamic and close to the teaching of Prophet Muhammad. This is now accepted widely by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.”



**Professor Hermann Landolt**

Senior Research Fellow,  
The Institute of Ismaili Studies. Emeritus Professor of Islamic Studies and Persian at McGill University

“It gives me pleasure to seize the present occasion to recall my own experiences in association with IIS during two different periods of its development. In 1982, I joined IIS for a limited period of two years as a delegate of McGill University. Besides coordinating the McGill programme at IIS, my task during that period was to help reorganise IIS itself in collaboration with the then Executive Officer Mr Shams Vellani. IIS, at that time, also had a ‘Paris Branch’ whose main purpose was to prepare new publications of the works of Professor Henry Corbin. I acted as the general editor for one of those publications - Corbin's *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*. I was also in a position to invite international academics, such as Professor Toshihiko Izutsu to IIS, where he conducted a much-appreciated seminar on al-Bīrūnī's Arabic translation of Patanjali's Yoga sutras. In 2000, having retired from McGill, I was again invited to join IIS, this time as a Senior Research Fellow, to share in the ongoing discussions and research in Ismaili

and related studies. IIS had greatly developed over time, under the leadership of Professor Azim Nanji (Director 1998-2008) and Dr Farhad Daftary (Head of Academic Research and Publications 1992-Present and Co-Director 2008-Present), in co-operation with its important library. At present, I am working on the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity project, and my own long-standing plan to publish a new edition and translation of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī's *Kashf al-mahjūb* (Revelation of the Veiled).”



**Dr Karen Bauer**

Senior Research Associate,  
The Institute of Ismaili Studies

“I began my academic career studying interpretations of the Qur'anic verses on women's roles.

Scholars had argued that Muslim doctrines grew more restrictive towards women through time; but there was little understanding of why this change occurred. I soon became interested in the genre of Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsīr*) itself. How did this genre develop through time? Who wrote works of *tafsīr*? What was left out? Why? IIS provided me with the space I needed to explore these questions. In a volume that appears in the Qur'anic Studies series, I showed how the aims and methods of the authors affected their interpretations (*Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur'anic Exegesis 2nd/8th – 9th/15th centuries*). While working in the Qur'anic Studies Unit, I have also written articles on *tafsīr*, including one about Fatimid Ismaili interpretations of women's place in the creation, and the prescription for kindness in *tafsīr* and very early marriage contracts (including from Fatimid Cairo). All of this research culminated in my monograph, *Gender Hierarchy in the Qur'an: Medieval Interpretations, Modern Responses* (CUP, 2015). My monograph was runner-up for the BKFS book prize 2016 and was described as “by far the best monograph on the history of Qur'anic exegesis that has been published in recent years, [which] will be an indispensable resource for future scholars.” I am currently working on two projects at IIS – *Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries: On Women*, co-edited with Feras Hamza. In this book, which consists mainly of translations of primary sources, we explore why medieval interpretations are so conservative and we also highlight the variety of modern interpretations of women's roles, which grant women equality with men. There is no other such collection in existence, and it is intended to be a resource for students and researchers for many years to come.”

# New Publications



## Islam: An Illustrated Journey

By Farhad Daftary and Zulfikar Hirji

Lavishly illustrated and written in a style accessible to all, *Islam: An Illustrated Journey* is a beautiful visual book that tells the fascinating story of Islam. Each of the book's nine chapters highlights the key events, personalities and achievements of the various periods of Islamic history in all the major regions of the Muslim world. Beginning with the pre-Islamic period, the book takes the reader from the formation of Islam and its development in the Arabian Peninsula through the rise and decline of all the major Islamic dynasties including the Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, Ottomans, Mughals and Safavids and into the modern day. The book provides portraits of diverse Muslim traditions and communities of interpretation, both past and present, such as the Sunnis, Shi'is and Sufis, among others. The chapters also contain specially designed sections that feature many of the masterpieces of Islamic art, architecture and literature in different historical and geographical contexts.

Published in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee, *Islam: An Illustrated Journey* complements the popular Golden Jubilee publication *The Ismailis: An Illustrated History*.

“This history book takes the reader on a visual journey across the globe and down the centuries bringing to life key events and high points in the story of the unfolding of the diverse civilisations of Islam.”

Farhad Daftary

“In writing this book I rediscovered the breadth and scope of Islam's rich histories. It is my hope that the book's words and images transport readers to the different times and places in which Muslims have lived and convey new ways of seeing Islam's diverse expressions.”

Zulfikar Hirji





Mughal India developed a tradition of decorating objects with gems. Jeweled arms such as the curved gold handbe, set with gold rubies of an enamelled dagger made in the 16th or 17th century (shown below left) were given to important members of the court or army and as diplomatic gifts.

Mughal paintings often depict rulers and courtiers in palatial or garden settings with a variety of glass decanters, cups, glasses, bottles, and water pipes (Anqas) that were used to smoke a variety of products including tobacco which was introduced into India by the Portuguese in the late 16th century. Made in the first part of the 18th century, the colourless glass Anqas have shown them to be decorated with gilded applique leaves, tendrils, and large flowers with central insets of blue glass.

India's Mughal dynasty traced its ancestry back to the Turko-Mongol ruler Timur. The dynasty's founder, Babur (r. 1494-1530) conquered northern India by 1526. The Mughals established themselves as the India's main power during the reign of Babur's grandson Akbar (r. 1556-1605) when Mughal territory extended from Gujarat to Bengal. Akbar and his successors Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) and Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658) ushered in a great Indo-Islamic cultural flourishing that continued until the reign of the last major Mughal ruler, Awrangzeb (r. 1658-1707).

The Mughals were great builders and lent their patronage to the arts. Their buildings and gardens in Delhi, Agra, and Lahore synthesized the aesthetic traditions of Iran, Central Asia and India. The Mughals used trading networks of the Indian Ocean and Central Asia's silk road to build their economy. Indian raw materials and products travelled East and West and influenced consumer tastes from Europe to Southeast Asia.

mughal india

Like other early modern empires, the Mughals used gunpowder in battle. Invented in China sometime in the 8th century, gunpowder technology spread throughout the Muslim world, particularly after the Mongol invasions. The 17th century nautilus-shaped flask is made of wood and was used for carrying gunpowder. It is exquisitely covered with a marbled pattern of blue and black lacquer, and decorated by delicate floral designs in gold.



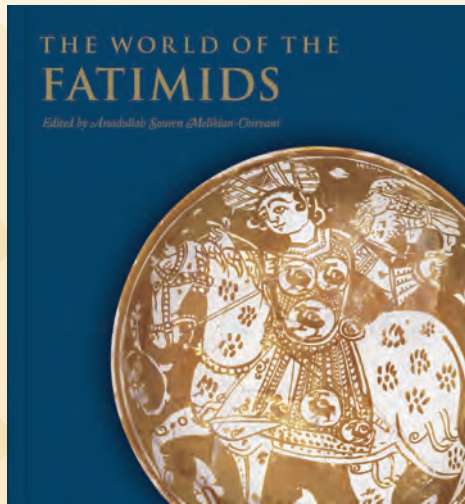
Contemporary Southeast Asia has one of the world's largest Muslim populations. The region and its ethnically diverse local inhabitants were historically part of seaborne trading networks connecting China to the Indian Ocean and beyond from Arabia, Persia and India to China. Hinduism and Buddhism arrived in their own through sea trade routes, as did Islam. Islam has become more prominent in the region after the 15th century beginning in Wallace's Sumatra. Despite conversions from Hindu-Buddhist dynasties in the region, Islam spread to Sumatra, Malaya, Borneo, Java, and the Philippines (facing the Java Sea Strait) from where it spread to Celebes, Sulawesi, and Mindanao in the southern Philippines.

Opposite: Along with traders, Sufis were integral to the spread of Islam in the region. As in other parts of the Muslim world, Sufis often accommodated local inhabitants' pre-Islamic beliefs and culture, many of which were incorporated into or harmonized with Muslim practice. Shadow puppet plays (wayang) based on Hindu epics (including the Ramayana and Mahabharata), remained popular even after the adoption of Islam. This cultural tradition remains an integral part of the Southeast Asian's culture.

southeast asia

First invasion of the Sultanate of Singapore. Reached in 1814 for Sultan Hussein Shah (d. 1813), the first Sultan of Singapore. The British East India Company made a deal with Sultan Hussein to establish a trading post at Singapore in 1819, which ultimately led to the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 in which the British and Dutch empires divided up Southeast Asia between them.

◆ Glimpses into Islam: An Illustrated Journey. Photos: The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

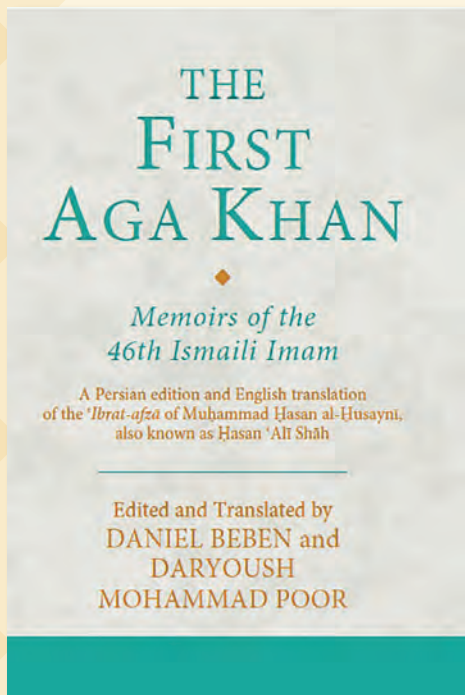


### The World of the Fatimids

*Edited by Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani*

Co-published by the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, The Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, and Hirmer Verlag in Munich, *The World of the Fatimids*, tells the story of one of the most complex societies ever in the Islamic world. Between the tenth and twelfth centuries CE, the Fatimid caliphate ruled over present-day Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Sicily, and Syria. Tracing their descent from Prophet Muhammad's daughter Hazrat Bibi Fatima – who was married to the Prophet's cousin Hazrat Ali - the Fatimids reinvigorated Islamic art, producing splendid pottery, metalwork, rock crystal, wood, textile, and calligraphic creations. This art showcased ingenious techniques, superb decorative methods, and lively motifs displaying an inventive dynamism in the use of material and abstract forms. Architecture, too, became a hallmark of Fatimid grandeur, resulting in such magnificent structures as al-Azhar University in Cairo, the Fatimids' capital.

One of the most comprehensive studies of Fatimid art and architecture ever published, this survey in fourteen essays features the artistic creations of one of the most inventive periods in Islamic culture.



### The First Aga Khan: Memoirs of the 46th Ismaili Imam: A Persian edition and English translation of the 'Ibrat-afza of Muhammad Hasan al-Husayni, also known as Hasan 'Ali Shah

*Edited and translated by Daniel Beben and Daryoush Mohammad Poor*

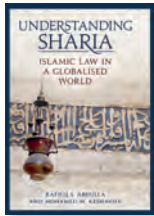
The *'Ibrat-afza* is the partial biography of Hasan 'Ali Shah Aga Khan I (1219-1298/1804-1881). Also known as Muhammad Hasan al-Husayni, he was the forty-sixth Imam of the Nizari Ismailis. This Persian text has been written as an autobiography, although it was committed to writing in 1266/1850 in Bombay, not by the Imam himself but by a Persian luminary. For the first time, the *'Ibrat-afza* is also translated into English here. It was originally lithographed in Bombay in 1278/1862 and reprinted subsequently with numerous errors three times in Tehran. A Gujarati translation of the work appeared in India in 1865, soon after its original publication.

The text of the *'Ibrat-afza* as a primary source is particularly significant in terms of three distinct contexts: the Nizari Ismaili Imamate, power politics at the contemporary Qajar court of Persia with its strong Sufi underpinnings, and the evolving relations between Aga Khan I and the British in India.

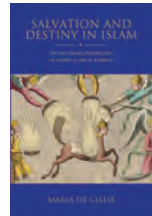
As far as we know, Aga Khan I was also the first Ismaili Imam to have composed an autobiography. The eventful career of this Imam coincided with the final decades of the Nizari Ismaili Imamate in Persia. The Aga Khan's departure from Persia in 1257/1841, which proved permanent, actually marked the transference of the seat of the Nizari Ismaili Imamate after more than seven centuries from Persia to India.

The *'Ibrat-afza* sheds invaluable light on the events leading to this watershed in Ismaili history, which can be much better appreciated in the light of the Imam's own faithfully recounted testimony.

## Other Published Titles



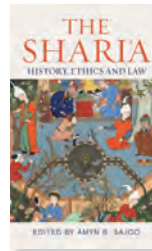
- ◆ **Understanding Sharia: Islamic law in a Globalised World**  
By *Rafiq S. Abdulla and Mohamed M. Keshavjee*



- ◆ **Salvation and Destiny in Islam: The Shi'i Ismaili Perspective of Hamid al-Din al-Kirmāni**  
By *Maria De Cillis*



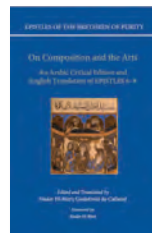
- ◆ **The Fatimids: 1. The Rise of a Muslim Empire** (Published in English, Portuguese, Russian and Urdu)  
By *Shainool Jiwa*



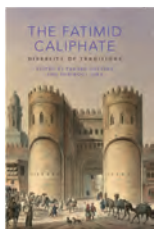
- ◆ **The Shari'a: History, Ethics and Law**  
By *Aryn Sajoo*



- ◆ **Faith and Ethics: The Vision of the Ismaili Imam**  
By *M. Ali. Lakhani*



- ◆ **On Composition and the Arts: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 6-8**  
*Edited and translated by Nader El-Bizri and Godefroid de Callatay*



- ◆ **The Fatimid Caliphate: Diversity of Traditions**  
*Edited by Farhad Daftary and Shainool Jiwa*

- ◆ **Fifty Years in the East: The Memoirs of Wladimir Ivanow** (Russian edition)  
By *Dr Farhad Daftary*

- ◆ **Shi'i Interpretations of Islam: Three Treatises on Islamic Theology and Eschatology** (Tajik edition)  
*Edited and translated by S. J. Badakhshani*

## Forthcoming Titles

**An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries Volume II: On Women**

*Edited by Karen Bauer and Feras Hamza*

**Approaches to the Qur'an in Contemporary Iran**

*Edited by Alessandro Cancian*

**Approaches to the Qur'an in Sub-Saharan Africa**

*Edited by Zulfikar Hirji*

**Beyond the Mosque: Diverse Spaces of Muslim Worship**

*By Rizwan Mawani*

**Encyclopaedia Islamica Vol. 6 Dakani to Fatimids**

*Edited and translated by Wilferd Madelung and Farhad Daftary*

**Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On God and the World; An Arabic critical edition and English translation of Epistles 49-51**

*Edited and translated by Wilferd Madelung, Cyril Uy, Carmela Baffioni, and Nuha Al-Shaar*

**Intellectual Interactions in the Islamic World: The Ismaili Thread**

*Edited by Orkhan Mir-Kasimov*

**Muhammad, Prophet of Islam: Abrahamic Past, Muslim Present**

*By Stephen Burge*

**Sufism, Shi'ism and Quranic Exegesis in Early Modern Iran**

*Edited by Alessandro Cancian*

**The Ismaili Imamate: a Biographical History**

*By Farhad Daftary and Fayaz Alibhai*



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