# Rethinking Texts and their Contexts in Muslim Societies:

## Interrelations between Textual Practice, Human Agency and Technological Shifts



## Conference Programme and Abstracts
## 23–24 October 2023

### The Institute of Ismaili Studies

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The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Aga Khan Centre, London

10 Handyside Street, London N1C 4DN

www.iis.ac.uk

## WELCOME NOTE

Texts, in their myriad of forms, have long remained central to the evolution of human societies, serving as a vital channel of knowledge diffusion. Examples such as the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and the Sanskrit *Veda*s remind us of the vibrancy and proliferation of 'texts' as verbal art forms since the time of primary oral cultures. The development and spread of writing systems gave a major impetus to textual productions, making possible for complex patterns of thought and new genres to emerge. Many of such genres continued to be enhanced and reinforced by oral modes of composition and dissemination, while the gradual transition from orality to textuality was greatly underpinned first by the technology of manuscript production and then by the printing press, witnessing the generation of texts on a massive scale. In recent times, the media and digital revolutions have ushered in a new era of textual proliferation, leading even to the transmutation of the 'text' into a variety of new forms and calling into question the conventional and long-cherished boundaries and practices of textual scholarship.

Against this background, the present conference seeks to make a modest, albeit timely, contribution towards rethinking the diverse trajectories and contexts of texts in Muslim societies, while examining their cumulative impact on processes of knowledge production, dissemination and consumption. In addition, this interdisciplinary conference hopes to bring into focus a relatively less explored area of the mutually transforming relationships between textual practices, human agency and technological shifts, envisaged broadly. In engaging with these issues, the conference hopes to interrogate and rethink the very idea of the 'text' and the evolving contours of textual practices. Instead of taking texts as static entities that embody a fixed core of knowledge created at a definitive moment in time — a notion perhaps significantly coloured by human interaction with texts in the form of printed books — the conference hopes to bring out their dynamic and fluid character, shaped through a dialectical relationship with multiple actors and conditioned by the exigencies of their times and contexts.

The conference features a keynote address by Prof. Wendy Doniger, a leading scholar of Hinduism and the history of religions, and varied papers by specialists and younger scholars in the fields of Islamic studies, history, literature, area studies, anthropology, music and other disciplines.

**Wafi A. Momin**
**Convenor**
**Assistant Professor**
**Head, Ismaili Special Collections Unit**

## DAY 1: MONDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2023

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| 10:00 – 10:05 | **Welcome Address** <br><br> Zayn Kassam, Director, The Institute of Ismaili Studies |
| 10:05 – 10:15 | **Introductory Remarks** <br><br> Wafi A. Momin, The Institute of Ismaili Studies |
| **10:15 – 11:45** | **Panel 1: Technologies, Dissemination and Textual (Re)formulation** <br><br> **Chair: Omar Alí-de-Unzaga** |
| | Texts, Contexts and Dissemination in Modern Iranian Sufism: Remarks on the Electronic Library of the Niʿmatullāhiyya Gonābādiyya <br><br> Alessandro Cancian, The Institute of Ismaili Studies |
| | The Burnt Archive: Writings of the Early Nizari Ismailis <br> Shiraz Hajiani, Harvard University |
| | Written, Spoken, Sung: The Formation, Circulation, and Textualisation of Islamicate Mystical Song and Poetry in Indic Vernaculars <br><br> William Hofmann, The Institute of Ismaili Studies |
| **11:45 – 12:00** | **Health Break** |
| **12:00 – 13:30** | **Panel 2: Agents, Reception and Texts** <br><br> **Chair: Delia Cortese** |
| | The Reception of *Tahdhīb* Philosophical Traditions in Modern Islamic Intellectual Thought (Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī and Mohammad Arkoun) <br><br> Nuha Alshaar, The Institute of Ismaili Studies |

The Art of Translation: Making Alexander of Aphrodisias in Arabic

David Bennett, The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Fatimid Posterity in Yemen: Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman in Ṭayyibī Sources

Fârès Gillon, Aix-Marseille University

| 13:30 – 14:45 | Health Break and Lunch |

| 14:45 – 15:45 | Keynote Address<br>The Innate and Essential Pluralism of Religious Texts<br><br>Wendy Doniger, The University of Chicago |

| 15:45 – 16:00 | Health Break |

| 16:00 – 17:30 | Panel 3: Rethinking Texts, Actors and Religio-Political Ideologies<br><br>Chair: Alex Henley |

Fazlur Rahman and the Limits of '*Islam*'

Taushif Kara, King's College London

Here I am! English language Muslim Autobiographies on Muslimness and Islam

Jonas Otterbeck, Aga Khan University – Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (UK)

The Pan-Islamic Imagination

Faisal Devji, Oxford University

**DAY 2: TUESDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2023**

| 09:45 – 11:15 | **Panel 4: Trajectories and Contexts of Poetic Traditions**<br>**Chair: Shiraz Hajiani** |
|---|---|
| | Reframing Poetic Traditions in South Asia<br><br>Ali Asani, Harvard University |
| | *Kalām-e Maulā*: Texts, Contexts and Transmission<br><br>Hussain Jasani, The Institute of Ismaili Studies |
| | Poetic Narratives and Historical Studies: Rethinking Ismaili History in Persian Poetry produced during 1256–1700 CE<br><br>Karim Javan, The Institute of Ismaili Studies |
| 11:15 – 11:30 | Health Break |

| 11:30 – 13:00 | **Panel 5: Texts, Communities and Religious Encounters**<br>**Chair: Toby Mayer** |
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| | In the Hagiographic Mode: Writing the Lives of Abū Bakr Ṣiddiqī of Furfura in Colonial Bengal<br><br>Rajarshi Ghose, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences (Kolkata) |
| | Beyond Borders: Sacrality, Space, and Textuality in the Early Modern *Nath Sampradāy*<br><br>Christine Marrewa-Karwoski, Columbia University |
| | Orality, Textuality and Religious Debates: Interreligious Contestations in Colonial South Asia<br><br>Wafi A. Momin, The Institute of Ismaili Studies |
| 13:00 – 14:15 | Health Break and Lunch |

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| **14:15 – 15:15** | **Panel 6: Qurʾān, Exegesis and Audiences**<br>**Chair: Stephen Burge** |
| | Between *tafsīr* and *taʾwīl*: The Use of Qurʾānic Verses in Works produced in Badakhshān<br><br>Nourmamadcho Nourmamachoev,<br>The Institute of Ismaili Studies |
| | Rethinking the Textual Practice of *tafsīr* in the Modern World: Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905), Journalism and Qurʾānic Exegesis<br><br>Oliver Scharbrodt, Lund University |
| **15:15 – 15:30** | Health Break |
| **15:30 – 17:00** | **Panel 7: Genres, Media and Textual Practices**<br>**Chair: Orkhan Mir-Kasimov** |
| | From Written to Oral to Written: The Eight Hundred Wisdom Sessions of al-Muʾāyyad fiʾl-Dīn al-Shīrāzī<br><br>Omar Alí-de-Unzaga, The Institute of Ismaili Studies |
| | The World Mirrored in a Nineteenth-Century Indian Scroll<br><br>Shahzad Bashir, Brown University |
| | *Al-Zahr al-bāsim* of Mughulṭāʾī: The Manuscript as Witness to the Nature of a Genre<br><br>Gurdofarid Miskinzoda, The Institute of Ismaili Studies |
| **17:00 – 17:05** | **Closing Remarks**<br>**Wafi A. Momin** |

ABSTRACTS

**Omar Alí-de-Unzaga**

**From Written to Oral to Written: The Eight Hundred Wisdom Sessions of al-Muʾāyyad fīʾl-Dīn al-Shīrāzī**

This paper discusses a work that was written in instalments and delivered orally as weekly lectures for about twenty years. These were gradually collected, and perhaps re-redacted, into groups of 100, ultimately amounting to 8 volumes. The work in question is *al-Majālis al-Muʾayyadiyya*, the Sessions of al-Muʾayyad fīʾl-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 670/1077–78), chief *Dāʿī*, or summoner, of the Ismaili Imam and Fatimid caliph al-Mustanṣir biʾllāh (r. 427/1037–487/1094).

The paper reflects on the ways scholarship has analysed the text, not from the point of view of how it was created and delivered but through what we could term 'thematic analysis', i.e., focusing on one or more themes and then, so to speak, cutting bits and pieces from the various *majālis* and pasting them together into thematic clusters. While this type of analysis can indeed yield very fruitful results, it tends to ignore the materiality and compositionality of the text as a literary creation, and in this case also as an actual delivery and a performative act.

This is all the more important when we consider the circumstances of the author and the creation of the text. Al-Muʾayyad wrote an autobiography (*sīra*) which covers the first period of his life and is full of international relations with rulers and military men, diplomacy, politics, patronage, and intrigues. Once his biographical account came to a close, he was appointed chief Summoner and began writing and delivering his *majālis*. In this respect, this paper analyses the text as the inner, intellectual autobiography of the second part of al-Muʾayyad's life, in which each session constitutes a building block which progressively leads the audience through the issues that preoccupied al-Muʾayyad and his contemporaries.

**Omar Alí-de-Unzaga** (PhD, Cambridge, 2005) is a Research Associate at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. He is also the Academic Co-ordinator of Qurʾanic Studies Unit at the IIS and the series editor of the Qurʾanic Studies Series published by Oxford University Press in association with the IIS. His critical edition and translation of the epistle '*On Character Traits' of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* is forthcoming. He has edited the volume *Fortresses of the Intellect: Ismaili and Other Islamic Studies in Honour of Farhad*

*Daftary* (2011) and is finishing a monograph titled *A Philosophical Reading of Scripture: The Use of the Qur'an in the Epistles of the Pure Brethren*. He is currently working on a project called *'Compendium of Qur'anic Citations in Works by Ismaili Authors'*.

## Nuha Alshaar
## The Reception of *tahdhīb* Philosophical Traditions in Modern Islamic Intellectual Thought (Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī, and Mohammad Arkoun)

My presentation explores the role of three Muslim reformers who engaged and adapted classical theories on *tahdhīb* (moral training for those aspiring to refine their souls to acquire good characters) as an ethical framework. They are Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) from Egypt, and Muḥammd ʿĀbid al-Jābirī (d. 2010) and Mohammad Arkoun (d. 2010) both from North Africa. More specifically, the focus will be on their reception of the ideas of pre-modern thinkers, including, Aḥmad b. Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (ca. 315-414/927–1023), Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d. 363/974), and the *Brethren of Purity* — that is, how each of the three scholars has utilised the moral framework and moral notions proposed by the pre-modern thinkers to address specific concerns in their own new context and for particular audiences. The paper will discuss these ideas and uses by ʿAbduh, Arkoun and al-Jābirī as social acts in order to facilitate changes in their own society. The objective is to highlight continuity and change, or the new emphases and moral shifts, in the utilization of *tahdhīb*. Their work will provide a platform to discuss how and why different social agents utilize similar ethical notions for different purposes in different social and political contexts. Specific attention will be paid to conceptions of the moral self, ethical subjects, and the ideas of civic *adab*. Finally, to highlight the contributions of these three scholars, the paper will make some points of comparison between their ideas and those of scholars like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's (d. 1898) *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* in an Indian subcontinental context.

Nuha Alshaar (PhD, University of Cambridge) is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, focusing on ethics, political thought, the Qur'an, and *adab* literary traditions. She has been teaching Arabic and Islamic studies at the American University of Sharjah, and at SOAS. She published *Ethics in Islam: Friendship in the Political Thought of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī and His Contemporaries* (2015). With Wilfred Madelung, Carmela Baffioni, and Cyril Uy, she co-authored *On God and the*

*World: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 49-51* (Oxford University Press, 2019). She is also the editor of *The Qurʾān and Adab: The Shaping of Literary Traditions in Classical Islam* (Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2017), among other publications.

## Ali Asani
## Reframing Poetic Traditions in South Asia

For several centuries, the poetic arts have formed the ethical, aesthetic, philosophical, and spiritual core of South Asia's faith traditions. They have provided immediate ways of communicating and transmitting profound beliefs and ideas on what it means to be human, the meaning of life, and the nature of knowledge. As performative texts, they have also been instrumental in nurturing a sense of community and belonging. With the advent of European conceptions of religions in South Asia rooted in the highly exclusivist rhetoric of colonialism and nationalism, the poetic arts, with their multivalent discourses, have been cordoned off from consideration as to what constitutes religion. As a result, they have been dismissed as syncretistic, folk, or vernacular.

In recent times, growing disillusionment with the politicization of religious discourse in South Asia – not to mention the polarization, fragmentation, and violence that it has engendered – has directed younger generations to take a closer look at indigenous traditions of poetic arts for alternative ways of thinking about religion and forms of spirituality. It is, indeed, a gallant effort of humanizing what politicized ideologies have dehumanized. This paper will look at the role that contemporary musicians, in particular the renowned Pakistani-American musician Ali Sethi, have played in reshaping and reframing these ancient traditions of poetic arts so that they may respond to the needs of contemporary audiences.

ALI ASANI is Murray A. Albertson Professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures at Harvard University. He also serves as a Governor of the Institute of Ismaili Studies and a member of the Chancellor's Commission of Aga Khan University. A specialist of Shiʿi and Sufi literatures of South Asia, he is particularly interested in the intersection between religion, literature, and the arts in Muslim societies. He was recently honoured as the Harvard Foundation's Faculty of the Year.

## Shahzad Bashir
## The World Mirrored in a Nineteenth-Century Indian Scroll

I will concentrate on a large, ornate scroll containing universal history in Persian that was lithographed in Meerut, India, in 1849 and is now at the British Library. The scroll is enigmatic for numerous reasons. It was created at the cusp of the transition from manuscript culture to lithography. The choice of the scroll rather than codex form is unusual. Its contents range widely: a Persian universal history; statistics of the East India Company; urban statistics about cities in India and Istanbul; and magical formulae for affecting enemies and beloveds. The text hints that the object was created as a gift in the context of the competitive production of knowledge. Altogether, I will reflect on the scroll as both an object and a repository of knowledge that helps us to understand the momentous transitions in Islamic thought and practice that were underway in the middle of the nineteenth century.

SHAHZAD BASHIR is the Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Humanities and Professor of History and Religious Studies at Brown University. His most recent book is *A New Vision for Islamic Pasts and Futures* (MIT Press, 2022), a digital publication whose interface performs its argument. He is currently working extensively on historical materials generated in India circa 1750-1850.

## David Bennett
## The Art of Translation: Making Alexander of Aphrodisias in Arabic

The importance of Alexander of Aphrodisias to the development of Arabic philosophy has long been recognised; among other innovations, he is presumed to be the source of the notorious doctrine of the Agent Intellect. This paper looks at the role of the translators of his work into Arabic in the 3rd/9th century as agents of philosophical invention. By treating the translators as philosophers themselves, we can see how they originated a technical vocabulary which transformed the reception of Greek philosophy. They were not working in a vacuum: notably, this paper will show how the contemporary Mu'tazilite movement informed their choices. Previous scholarship has been concerned with these translations only insofar as they were interpreted by later, canonical philosophers in the Arabic tradition, or insofar as they preserved otherwise inaccessible Greek material; my approach will foreground the translators as authors of their production.

To defend my thesis effectively, I will discuss specific problems in the account of cognition, abstract thought, and sensation. By contextualising these ideas with reference to Muʿtazilite discussions, I will show how deeply intertwined the nascent *falsafa* movement was with Islamic 'theology.'

DAVID BENNETT is the Teaching and Learning Coordinator for Secondary Teacher Educational Programme at The Institute of Ismaili Studies. David obtained his PhD in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures from University of California in 2011. He specialises in early Islamic theology and Arabic philosophy, and has published extensively on concepts, dreams, and the philosophy of nature.

## Stephen Burge

STEPHEN BURGE joined The Institute of Ismaili Studies as a Research Associate in 2009, having completed his doctorate at the University of Edinburgh. He has published two monographs, *Angels in Islam: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's al-Ḥabāʾik fī akhbār al-malāʾik* (London, 2012) and *The Prophet Muhammad: Islam and the Divine Message* (London, 2020) which was published in the IIS Accessible series, The World of Islam and as an audiobook. He has also edited *The Meaning of the Word: Lexicology and Qurʾanic Exegesis* (Oxford, 2015) and, with Asma Hilali, *The Making of Religious Texts in Islam* (Berlin, 2019). He is currently editing and translating a volume of the Anthology of Qurʾanic Commentaries Series on rituals in Islam.

## Alessandro Cancian
## Texts, Contexts and Dissemination in Modern Iranian Sufism: Remarks on the Electronic Library of the Niʿmatullāhiyya Gonābādiyya

The modern Gonābādī order is currently among the most important Sufi networks in Iran and in Shiʿi contexts. Having branched out from one of the splits that occurred within Niʿmatullāhī Sufism in the nineteenth century, during its re-establishment in Persia after more than three centuries of residency in the Deccan, its masters were original and prolific authors. During the twentieth century, the order promoted the development of their religious centres across Iran, some of which included guesthouses for pilgrims, hospitals and libraries. The two libraries attached respectively to the *mazār* in Gonābād and to the *ḥusayniyya* Amīr-Solaymānī in Tehran hold important collections of books, lithographs and manuscripts on Sufism in general and the history of the Niʿmatullāhiyya in particular.

The rise of electronic libraries and the increased availability of new technologies that have changed library practices across the world have impacted Gonābādīs textual practices too. In particular, the website sufi.it, unofficially connected to the order, features a rich e-library section where Sufi and non-Sufi texts are available for free download.

By looking at the selection of texts made available by the website, its history and workings, in this paper I intend to investigate shifting dissemination practices within the order, the different purposes underlying the pre-existing physical libraries and the new forms of dissemination and outreach, and the issues of inclusion/exclusion and identity-building suggested by the selected texts. To do so, I will analyse the website and reflect on it, against the backdrop of other similar practices within Sufism in general, and I will also elaborate on first-hand information gathered from the key persons behind the website.

ALESSANDRO CANCIAN is Senior Research Associate at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, where he works on Shiʿi Sufism, Qurʾanic exegesis and the intellectual and religious history of pre-modern Iran. A historian of religions and anthropologist by training, he has published books and articles on religious education in Shiʿi Islam, Shiʿi Sufism and Qurʾanic exegesis. His recent books include an edited volume on *Approaches to the Qurʾan in Contemporary Iran* (Oxford University Press, 2019), and a monograph entitled *The Emergence of Shiʿi Sufism: Sultan ʿAli Shah Gunabadi and His Commentary on the Qurʾan* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

## Delia Cortese

DELIA CORTESE (PhD, SOAS) is Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, Middlesex University, London. Her main areas of research are medieval Islam, particularly Ismaili, Fatimid and Nizari studies as well as Ismaili codicology. Her work focuses on topics in medieval Islamic social history ranging from the interrogation of gender issues in Ismaili history to the transmission and dissemination of knowledge. She has published articles on Sunnism as well as aspects of environmental history in Fatimid Egypt. Her publications include *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam* (with S. Calderini) (2006), *Arabic Ismaili Manuscripts: The Zāhid ʿAlī Collection* (2003) and *Ismaili and Other Arabic Manuscripts* (2000).

## Faisal Devji
## The Pan-Islamic Imagination

The Ottoman Empire's defeat in the First World War led Muslims in British India to protest against its caliph being deprived of Islam's sacred sites in the Middle East. Long understood as the most significant event in the history of Pan-Islamism, these protests are held to represent a transnational political vision grounded in theology. This paper argues the opposite, that intellectually the Khilafat Movement had little to do with the Ottomans, the war, or Islam's politicization. Instead, it radicalized British constitutional and cartographic categories, making for a new conception of imperial citizenship. Crucial to the movement was a critical attitude towards the state and an anarchic attempt to socialize if not secularise Islam outside its institutions.

FAISAL DEVJI is Professor of Indian History at Oxford. He completed his PhD in Intellectual History at the University of Chicago in 1994. He was then elected Junior Fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows, after which he went on to run the graduate programme at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, which included schools in Tajikistan and Iran. Returning to regular academic life in 2003, Faisal Devji taught for two years at Yale as a visiting lecturer and another four at the New School for Social Research in New York as Associate Professor. His publications include *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (Harvard, 2013), and *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence* (Harvard, 2012).

## Wendy Doniger
## Keynote Address
## The Innate and Essential Pluralism of Religious Texts

Texts do not belong to anyone, neither to the author nor to the reader. There are no copyrights for great religious texts; for one thing, they change every time they cross a border, or a language, and even if the words remain the same; the meanings shift, often far from what the author intended. A profound, complex text can never really be translated; it is a different text in a different language.

The multiple authorship of all texts, especially religious texts, poses a devastating problem for the wrong-headed idea of cultural appropriation. Unlike the Parthenon Marbles (formerly known as the Elgin Marbles), a text is something that no one owns; it can be in a million places at once, with a different meaning in each place.

I will take my examples from the tradition I know best, that of South Asia. I can argue for the participation of women (mothers, and non-Brahmin nurses) in the creation of texts 'by' male Sanskritists, who often learned their stories not from their Sanskrit-speaking fathers but from their Telugu- or Marathi- or Urdu-speaking mothers and nurses. We also now have (from Paula Richman and Nell Hawley) many wonderful studies of what happens to the great Sanskrit epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana, when they cross linguistic, religious, geographical, or ideological borders. And I can argue for the major contribution of low-caste authors, bards (called Sutas, charioteers and wandering oral poets) who constantly improvised important passages in the two epic poems. In another, intersecting tradition, the Pali and Sanskrit Jatakas often come out of and go back into Hindu folk traditions while remaining Buddhist texts. Aditya Behl has illuminated the complex ways in which Hindi and Arabic texts, Hindu and Muslim texts, unite in the great romantic poetic traditions of medieval India.

With such a rich array of paradigms set out for us, how can any one tradition ever claim ownership of a text?

WENDY DONIGER is Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor Emerita of the History of Religions, in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, and the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Her research and teaching interests revolved around two basic areas, Hinduism and mythology. Her courses in mythology addressed themes in cross-cultural expanses, such as death, dreams, evil, and women; her courses in Hinduism covered a broad spectrum that, in addition to mythology, considered literature, law, gender, and zoology.

Wendy Doniger's publications include *Siva: The Erotic Ascetic*; *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*; *Other Peoples' Myths: The Cave of Echoes*; *Splitting the Difference: Gender and Myth in Ancient Greece and India*; *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade*; *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth*; *The Woman Who Pretended To Be Who She Was*; *The Hindus: An Alternative History*; *On Hinduism; Redeeming the Kamasutra*; *The Ring of Truth, and Other Myths of Sex and Jewelry*; *Against Dharma: Dissent in the Ancient Indian Sciences of Sex and Politics* (the 2014 Terry Lectures at Yale); and *The Donigers of Great Neck: A Mythologized Memoir*. Among her translations are three Penguin Classics — *Hindu Myths: A Sourcebook*, translated from the Sanskrit; *The Rig Veda: An Anthology, 108 Hymns Translated from the Sanskrit*; and *Hinduism*, for the Norton Anthology of World Religions.

**Rajarshi Ghose**
**In the Hagiographic Mode: Writing the Lives of Abū Bakr Ṣiddiqī of Furfura in Colonial Bengal**

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Abū Bakr Ṣiddiqī of Furfura emerged as the preeminent Sufi *shaykh* of colonial Bengal. An affiliate of the *Ṭarīqah-i Muḥammadiyah* movement founded by Sayyid Aḥmad of Rae Bareli, Ṣiddiqī hailed from a family of religious divines who had initially settled in Medinipur but later relocated to Furfura in the Hugli district. A disciple of the distinguished Sufi and poet in Farsi, Fateḥ ʿAlī Vaisī, Ṣiddiqī galvanized Muslim support for the Ottoman causes, campaigned during the Khilafat movement, opposed Muslim participation in Gandhian movements, extended support to peasant organizations, and throughout his active career supported numerous Bangla periodicals and other Bangla publications. In course of time, he came to head a vast transnational network of disciples, and was an inveterate participant in religious sectarian debates all his life. In his own lifetime, he earned the rare distinction of being identified with exalted religious positions including, the 'renewer of the age' and the 'shadow-*qayyūm*'. He came to dominate the emergent Bengali Muslim middle class imagination in the twentieth century like no other contemporary religious charismatic figure.

In this presentation, I will discuss the first hagiography of Ṣiddiqī which was written in Urdu – *Sawaniḥ ʿUmrī* by his early disciple ʿAbd al-Mabūd Farūqī of Piyardanga, Medinipur – to demonstrate how hagiographic paradigms and eschatological ideas that had emerged during the early-modern period within the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī order, and were in circulation across South Asia and the Ottoman empire crucially, shaped the articulation of the charismatic authority of the Sufi *shaykh* during the colonial period. I will also discuss the first book-length account focused on Abū Bakr Ṣiddiqī that was published in Bangla – *Furfurar 'ichhale-chhowab' darshan* by ʿAbd al-Bārī – to demonstrate how accounts of Sufi *shaykh*s enabled the articulation of an emergent Bengali Muslim middle class cultural nationalism. I will also engage with Ṣiddiqī's first posthumous biography – *Furfura sharīfer itihās o Hajrat Abubakr Siddiki (rah) er bistarita jibānī* by Muḥammad Rūḥ al-Amīn, his preeminent disciple from Bashirhat – which holds a near-canonical status within the Furfura movement – to explain how, upon the death of Ṣiddiqī, the hagiography became a ground to sharply delineate sectarian positions in a range of religious, political, and social debates, and

urgently define for the movement the boundaries of Islamic orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Reading the three texts together, I will offer some reflections on how Sufi hagiographies in colonial Bengal enable us to finesse our understandings of the dynamics of colonial community-formation, how sectarian imaginations were grounded in multiple temporalities, and how religious imaginaries and practices profoundly impacted the forging of the 'social'.

RAJARSHI GHOSE is Assistant Professor in History at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences (CSSS), Kolkata. For his dissertation on the nineteenth-century religious scholar and preacher, Karāmat ʿAlī Jawnpūrī, he was awarded a PhD with Distinction from the University of Chicago. He has been part of more than six digital preservation projects undertaken at CSSS in collaboration with agencies such as the Endangered Archives Programme (London), Modern Endangered Archives Program (Los Angeles), Centre for Research Libraries (Chicago), and the University of Pennsylvania. Rajarshi Ghose was recently elected to the Executive Committee of the South Asia Materials Project (CRL, Chicago). He was also active in setting up a museum on the history of Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) in the Metcalfe Hall, Kolkata. His areas of research are history of Islam in South Asia, history of medieval and modern Bengal, the anthropology of Islam, and more recently digital manuscriptology.

### Fârès Gillon
### Fatimid Posterity in Yemen: Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman in Ṭayyibī Sources

It is a well-known fact that the Ṭayyibī Ismaili *daʿwa* played an essential role in the transmission, perpetuation and reinterpretation of the Fatimid intellectual heritage. Yet, due to the difficulty of access to Ṭayyibī sources, the exact extent of this 'Fatimid revival' in the Yemeni context remains understudied – as is the Ṭayyibī tradition in general. Furthermore, the works of the three main Fatimid authors who were particularly revered in the Ṭayyibī tradition – namely Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman (d. ca. 338/950), Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 412/1021) and al-Muʾayyad fiʾl-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 670/1077-78) – still require detailed studies (particularly the compositions of Jaʿfar and al-Muʾayyad). Thus, several questions can be raised in this regard: What do the Ṭayyibī authors retain from earlier Fatimid works? How do they integrate them to their system? Are the quotations faithful to the original texts? If not, how are they adapted? How are they interpreted?

Focusing on Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman and the corpus transmitted under his name, this contribution merely represents one step towards a better understanding of the Ṭayyibī reception of Fatimid literature and thought. Through a selection of direct or indirect quotations from works attributed to Jaʿfar in the *Kanz al-walad* by Ibrāhīm b. Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī (d. 557/1199) and the *Zahr al-maʿānī* by Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468), I will attempt to provide some preliminary answers to the above questions.

FÂRÈS GILLON is Associate Professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Aix-Marseille University. His research focuses on early Shiʿism and Fatimid Ismailism. He has published a number of articles on these topics in academic journals. He is also the author of *The Book of Unveiling: An Introduction to Early Ismailism. An English translation and commentary of the Kitāb al-Kashf attributed to Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman* (I.B. Tauris–Bloomsbury, forthcoming). Fârès was formerly Research Associate in the Shiʿi Studies Unit of the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

## Shiraz Hajiani
## The Burnt Archive: Writings of the Early Nizari Ismailis

A mere handful of texts are known to have survived the two book-burnings (after 606/1210 and 654/1256) of the corpus of Nizari Ismaili writings from their polity in Iran (fl. 483/1090–654/1256). This research examines the independently existing doctrinal texts and fragments preserved in the chronicles of the Ilkhanid era (fl. 654/1256–735/1335) to understand the original forms and functions of the Nizari sources and their reformulations in time. Ismailis, generally, did not write *taʾrīkh* (history *qua* history); their *daʿwa* (summons) literature was primarily meant for didactic, hortative and ritual purposes. The Nizaris, it appears, began to write regnal histories which along with their doctrinal treatises were moulded into the Ilkhanid-era dynastic histories. These Ilkhanid chronicles have been the primary sources for the study of Nizari Ismailism yet have not been accessed for the study of the early Ismailis and the Fatimids (fl. 296–566/909–1171). This demonstrates that scholarship has privileged Arabic sources such as the much later writings of al-Maqrīzī (d. 846/1442) and thereby silenced the syntheses of past actualities based on Nizari sources to understand early Ismailism and the Fatimids. This research maps the reformulation of historical and doctrinal narratives over time and analyses the purposes, forms and functions of such textual reformulations.

SHIRAZ HAJIANI is the Alwaleed Postdoctoral Fellow in Islamic Studies at Harvard University, a Research Associate in the Transcendence and Transformation Initiative of the Center for the Study of World Religions and a lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Harvard Divinity School. He is a scholar of religion and history and has taught at the University of Chicago, Harvard University and other institutions. He specialises in Islamic history and thought, Shiʻism, Ismaili studies and has regional expertise in the study and teaching of the Middle East, North Africa, Central and South Asia. His primary research project is focussed on the thought of the early Nizari Ismailis and the history of their polity in Iran (fl. 1090-1256). His current research is centred on the developments of religious thought in this small but significant Shiʻi community which led to theological transformations of the declaration, in 1164, of the *Qiyāmat-i buzurg* (the Great Resurrection).

Shiraz is completing a monograph entitled: *Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and the Emergence of Nizari Ismailism*. This book—the first monograph-length study of the life of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (r. 1090-1124), the founder of Nizari Ismailism—places the emergence of early Nizari Ismailism on the wider tableau across the Shiʻi-Sunni divides to coherently examine developments in religion and society at the end of the "Shiʻi centuries" and the crystallisation of Sunni dominance in the Islamicate realms during the Early Middle Period (ca. 900-1300). His second book project entitled: *Qiyāmat-i Buzurg* (*The Great Resurrection*): *Transcendence and Transformation of Nizari Ismaili Thought and Societies* examines the Ismaili Shiʻi conceptions of theology, cosmology, prophecy, imamate, soteriology, eschatology and anthropology as they evolved into the Nizari teachings of the *Qiyāma*. These notions of eschatology had lasting impacts on Islamicate religio-political thought in Iran and further afield; this study therefore examines the socio-political contexts and theological connotations of the declaration and teachings of the *Qiyāma* and places them within broader frameworks of human notions of cosmology and soteriology.

## Alex Henley

ALEX HENLEY is Programme Leader for the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH). He directs the IIS's flagship three-year scholarship programme, including a two-year MA delivered in partnership with SOAS. An anthropological historian, Alex is interested in the politics of religion in the modern Middle East. His research has involved extensive fieldwork in Lebanon and Jordan,

looking at processes of institutionalisation, religionisation and sectarianisation. Alex is also an associate member of Oxford's Faculty of Theology and Religion, where he was a lecturer for four years prior to joining the IIS in 2020. He had spent the previous four years in the US, first as a doctoral fellow at Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, then as the inaugural American Druze Foundation Fellow at Georgetown's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. In addition to these institutions, Alex has taught at George Washington University, Qatar University and Middlebury College.

Alex gained his PhD in Arab World Studies from Manchester University; MA in Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies from Durham University; and BA in Theology & Religion also from Durham University. He studied Arabic at Edinburgh and Damascus Universities as part of a four-year graduate scholarship from the UK's Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World.

## William Hofmann
## Written, Spoken, Sung: The Formation, Circulation, and Textualisation of Islamicate Mystical Song and Poetry in Indic Vernaculars

This paper traces the formation of Islamicate mystical expression in Indic vernaculars and its circulation through both oral performance and its subsequent textualisation in Sufi discourse texts (*malfūẓāt*), song-text collections, and other devotional texts, such as *ginān* collections. Beyond the focus of modern scholarship on the translation of Persianate Sufism into Indic vernacular forms of expression, such as the creative translation and reinterpretation of the Sufi *mathnawī* from Persian into the early Hindi (Hindavi) *premākhyān* tradition, the formation, circulation, and textualisation of early Hindi songs, sayings, and utterances in Persian Sufi literature is relatively overlooked. Investigating the shifting semantics and processes of transmission of early Hindi oral expression, where poems or sayings in the vernacular became written down in didactic textual genres such as Sufi *malfūẓāt*, this paper follows the early oral and textual circulation of Hindavi verse to its development as expressive emotional device, and its role in engendering ecstasy and emotion through performance (singing) in vernacular musical genres and set to Indian *raga*s. Using Persian, Hindavi, and Khojki textual sources, this paper asks what happens as vernacular performance became both a teaching tool and a medium of mystical expression, and what did it mean for Islamicate devotional practice that these texts were sung to Indian *raga* in the *majlis*?

WILLIAM HOFMANN's research at The Institute of Ismaili Studies explores the connections and intellectual networks surrounding music, poetry, and early Sufi practices of *samāʿ* in South Asia, particularly as they relate to Nizārī Ismāʿīlī and other Shīʿa-related devotional thought and practice. His areas of research include the cultural history of music in early modern South Asia (13th–18th century), Sufi literature in Persian and Indic vernaculars, historical ethnomusicology relating to the Persianate world (South Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia), and the history of emotions. He received his PhD in Music from SOAS in 2022. In 2022–23, he was a Senior Performing Arts Fellow at the American Institute of Indian Studies.

## Hussain Jasani
### *Kalām-e Maulā*: Texts, Contexts and Transmission

Like most literature from Western India, the Satpanth literature from the Indian subcontinent was transmitted orally for centuries before being committed to writing in the seventeenth century (hardly any manuscripts from this period have survived, but references to those manuscripts are found in the later copies). With technological advances resulting in mechanical paper-making (using wood pulp rather than textile fibres) in the 1840s and the proliferation of printing technology in the 19th century, much Satpanth literature was printed and widely circulated within India and across the Western Indian Ocean regions. Many tend to see the movement from handwritten to printed text as unidirectional. However, the spread of printing technology and circulation of religious texts across national and transnational community networks, using railways and maritime mercantile networks sustained by 'nodes' of port cities, did not mean that the manuscript tradition and scribal culture disappeared.

Using lithographs, printed editions, and manuscripts of *Kalām-i Hazrat Sūltānil Aulīā/Kalām-e Maulā* (a lyrical Hindavi text, the Arabic origin of which is attributed to the first Shiʿa Imam, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib), the paper explores the two-way movement of printed texts and manuscripts. The paper will also highlight how such venerated religious texts circulate across vast geographical and linguistic divides.

Satpanth literature, of which *Kalām-e Maulā* is a part, has been extensively studied using the lenses of identity formation and schisms as well as investigated for its 'Hindu elements'. The paper will go beyond such discourse and look at the circulation of the text in a more integrated and 'connected' world where peoples, cultures, and regions

have become increasingly linked through global networks of circulation and exchange.

HUSSAIN JASANI is Head of the South Asian Studies Unit at The Institute of Ismaili Studies. He is responsible for defining the strategic vision for the Unit, setting its research agenda, and overseeing research projects. Hussain also serves as a member of the Advisory Board for *The Encyclopaedia of the Ismailis*. He has an MA in Islamic Societies and Cultures from SOAS where he is currently pursuing his PhD. Hussain has presented academic papers at various universities internationally and conducted HR development workshops for several governmental agencies and NGOs in over a dozen countries. Hussain is an active member of the boards of various companies across different industries including an impact company fighting hunger and climate change.

## Karim Javan
## Poetic Narratives and Historical Studies: Rethinking Ismaili History in Persian Poetry produced during 1256–1700 CE

Historiography is traditionally a neglected area in Ismaili literary culture. There are many blank spots in Ismaili history due to a lack of sources, particularly, during the periods when Ismailis did not enjoy political power. However, analysis of manuscript traditions of Ismaili communities in recent years presents new historiographical narratives mainly in the form of poetry. Poetry enjoys a significant role in shaping the cultural memory of Persian-speaking world. Throughout the history of Persian literature, poetry has been used for producing works on various topics. However, when it comes to Ismaili literature, poetic narratives are usually ignored for two main reasons: first as the quality of the poetry that is not up to the high standards of Persian literature, and secondly because the Ismaili authors are not well-known and are therefore considered unreliable. This is why a large portion of Ismaili literary productions in the form of poetry has not been studied, while many aspects of history of Persian communities, particularly social and cultural history have remained obscure. This paper will examine the role of poetry in capturing some important narratives in various aspects of Ismaili history, with particular focus on works produced in the period 1256–1700 CE, after the fall of the Nizārī state in Alamūt. It will be argued that some literary productions in the form of poetry by some known or unknown authors could introduce new insights into various aspects of social history

and cultural transformations within Ismaili communities of the Persian-speaking world. In introducing a number of Ismaili poets, their contribution to Ismaili literary tradition in general and Ismaili historiography in particular will be discussed.

KARIM JAVAN is a Research Associate at the Ismaili Special Collections Unit of the Institute of Ismaili Studies. He obtained his PhD from School of Oriental and African Studies for his thesis entitled *Qiyāma in Ismaili History: A Study on the Proclamation of Resurrection and its Historical Context*. Karim is currently editing and translating a number of Persian Ismaili texts from the Alamut and later periods of Ismaili history. His forthcoming book is *View From the Fortresses: New Texts on Alamūt Literature – ʿAhd-i Sayyidnā, Two Letters by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and Selected Qaṣīdas from Dīwān-i qāʾimiyyāt by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd* (circa. 1198–1240).

## Taushif Kara
## Fazlur Rahman and the Limits of '*Islam*'

The publication and reception of Fazlur Rahman's *Islam* in 1966 eventually led to the scholar's sudden departure from Pakistan. Accused of blasphemy, espionage, and orientalism, Rahman would spend the rest of his life in exile at the University of Chicago, expanding and augmenting many of the arguments he made in that book. This paper revisits the controversy surrounding *Islam* and places Rahman's ideas and those of his critics in the wider context of early post-colonial Pakistan and the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan. Drawing on a range of archives and published materials, as well as Rahman's unpublished correspondence, the paper argues against the usual thesis that *Islam* was rejected by Islamist groups and others because of the scholar's unconventional methods. It argues instead that Rahman made subtle political claims in the book about unlimited sovereignty in the post-colonial state, and that the unceremonious reception of Islam was a reassertion of those limits by his opponents. In other words, this was not a simple conflict between 'traditional' Islamism and Rahman's 'modernism', nor was it a historiographical argument about the past. Rather, Fazlur Rahman's *Islam* was a text about the future.

TAUSHIF KARA is an historian of modern Muslim political thought based at King's College, London. He obtained his doctorate from the Faculty of History at the University of Cambridge. His doctoral dissertation on the intellectual history of the Khoja diaspora was awarded an honourable mention by the Royal Asiatic Society for the 2022 Christopher Bayly Prize. Prior to joining King's, Kara held teaching and

research fellowships at the University of Cambridge, the University of Chicago and SOAS. He graduated from GPISH in 2017 and is a former recipient of the IIS PhD Scholarship.

## Christine Marrewa-Karwoski
## Beyond Borders: Sacrality, Space, and Textuality in the Early Modern Nath Sampradāy

It is of little surprise that western ideologies and modern conceptions of the nation state have significantly affected the manner in which communal identities have been imagined, rationalized, and produced in post-partition South Asia. This is particularly the case for the Nath *sampradāy* or community, a diverse group of heterodox Yogis known for their practice of breath control, itinerancy, and a belief in one unseen god. This paper examines the ways in which important travel routes linking Western and Central Asia with India likely affected the manner in which some Nath Yogis came to understand and articulate their identity and beliefs. In this paper, I argue that the early modern Nath Yogis maintained an intentional flexibility which authorized a place for Muslim traditions and the embodiment of Islamic sacrality within the *sampradāy*. This is illustrated not only through the early modern North Indian teachings of the Yogis, today known as the *Gorakhbānī*, but also the manuscript tradition containing these teachings, and historical accounts of two of the most important Nath centres in early modern India: Gor Khatri and Tilla Jogian.

CHRISTINE MARREWA-KARWOSKI is an intellectual historian who is currently researching and writing on Nath Yogi traditions across early modern and modern North India. Her interests include religious manuscript and print histories of South Asia, monastic traditions of South Asia, Hindu nationalism, and performances of gender. She is currently a lecturer in the Department of Middle East, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University.

## Toby Mayer

TOBY MAYER is a Research Associate in the Qur'anic Studies Unit at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. After completing his undergraduate degree in Indian Studies at the University of Cambridge, he went on to study mediaeval Arabic thought at the University of Oxford, where he wrote his doctoral thesis on the *Book of Allusions* (*Ishārāt*) by the major Persian philosopher Ibn Sina. In 2001, in conjunction with Professor Wilferd Madelung, he published a critical edition and translation of

Shahrastani's *Kitab Musara'at al-Falasifa*, entitled *Struggling with the Philosopher: A Refutation of Avicenna's Metaphysics* (2001). Until 2003, Dr Mayer was a lecturer in Islamic Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where he taught courses in Islamic philosophy and mysticism. He has also worked for Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation and on various documentary film projects in India, Indonesia and other parts of the Muslim world.

## Orkhan Mir-Kasimov

ORKHAN MIR-KASIMOV (PhD in Islamic Studies from Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, France) is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. He is Senior Fellow of Higher Education Academy, and his teaching focuses on Islamic history, Shi'i history and thought, and Islamic mysticism. Previously, he lectured at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilisations (INALCO) in Paris. Since 2020, he is the series editor of the Ismaili Texts and Translations Series published by The Institute of Ismaili Studies. He has published many journal articles and book chapters on various aspects of Islamic mysticism and messianism, focusing on the late medieval and early modern periods. He has edited and co-edited several volumes and authored *Words of Power: Hurufi Teachings between Shi'ism and Sufism in Medieval Islam* (2015) and *Christian Apocalyptic Texts in Islamic Messianic Discourse* (2017).

## Gurdofarid Miskinzoda
### *Al-Zahr al-bāsim* of Mughulṭāʾī: The Manuscript as Witness to the Nature of a Genre

My doctoral thesis focused on a lesser-known work on the life of the Prophet Muhammad, authored by the fourteenth-century scholar Mughulṭāʾī b. Qilīj (d. 762/1361). This work, titled *Al-Zahr al-bāsim* was written during the Mamluk period (647-922/1250-1517), making it relatively late compared to the pioneering writings on the life of the Prophet, known as *'al-sīra al-nabawiyya'* in the Muslim tradition. The main objective of my thesis was threefold: to position this work in the broader context of the genre, to highlight its originality and to assess its significance in the development of *sīra* literature.

Upon close examination of the manuscript itself, I discovered that categorising *al-Zahr al-bāsim* within the genre of *sīra* posed challenges. Existing entries and references about this work in the secondary literature did not accurately depict its

true nature. This led me raise fundamental questions about the definition of *sīra* as a genre. I engaged in this question not only because *al-Zahr al-bāsim* happened to possess distinct characteristics compared to major works of *sīra*, but also because understanding the purpose and utilisation of each work of *sīra* in the study of the Prophet's biography is significant for our exploration of early Muslim history and thought.

In this paper, I will present the results of my attempts to define *sīra* both as a distinctive genre of literature and as a separate scholarly discipline with the aim of extending my arguments to demonstrate the nature and value of Mughulṭāʾī's *al-Zahr al-bāsim*. I will argue that this particular work reflects the conventions of works of commentary rather than those of *sīra*. I argue that Mughulṭāʾī's work stands out in the acknowledgement of its task as a commentary, because it sets out to comment on a commentary. While *al-Zahr al-bāsim* certainly exhibits many characteristics of *sīra*, it lacks some of the most defining features of the genre.

In my paper, I will also explore the history of scholarly engagement with *al-Zahr al-bāsim* and highlight how the lack of attention to the only known manuscript of the work (Or. 370) in Leiden Library Collection led to incorrect descriptions and evaluations of its nature. This emphasises the significance of thoroughly examining manuscripts, analysing texts in the context of their historical and intellectual milieu, and understanding their ultimate impact on our knowledge of the early history and historiography of Islam.

GURDOFARID MISKINZODA is the Head of the Shiʿi Studies Unit in the Department of Academic Research and Publication at The Institute of Ismaili Studies. She is also the Managing Editor of the Shiʿi Heritage Series. Her academic background is in the fields of the history of the Near and Middle East and of Islam, Islamic Studies, philology and the study of Arabic and Persian literatures. She is the editor (with Dr Farhad Daftary) of *The Study of Shiʿi Islam: History, Theology and Law* (London, 2014).

Having completed her doctoral studies at SOAS in 2007, with a dissertation on medieval accounts of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, she joined The Institute of Ismaili Studies as a Research Associate. Most recently in 2019, Gurdofarid completed an MBA in Higher Education Management at the IOE, UCL. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, UK.

**Wafi A. Momin**

**Orality, Textuality and Religious Debates: Interreligious Contestations in Colonial South Asia**

Religious debates (often known as *munāẓara*s) have long played a critical role in shaping the sectarian and communal identities among the Muslim communities and have deeply conditioned their relations with the adherents of other faiths. Disputes and contestations on theological, philosophical, juridical and other topics were widespread within Muslim circles in premodern times, limited accounts of which have survived in varying forms. With the proliferation of print technology in Muslim societies, roughly from the beginning of the 19th century, we see a preponderance of such debates made available through the press, books, pamphlets and magazines. More significantly, the print culture brought about noteworthy shifts in the art and practice of religious debates both in their verbal and written modes. The paper will examine the impact of print technology on the practice of religious debates and discuss the accompanying transformations by focusing on select examples from colonial South Asia and the intercommunal and interreligious contestations involving Muslims in the region.

Wafi A. Momin is an Assistant Professor at The Institute of Ismaili Studies where he teaches courses on modern Muslim societies and aspects of Islam in South Asia. He is also Head of the Ismaili Special Collections Unit at IIS. He received his doctorate in South Asian Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago, and is the editor of *Texts, Scribes and Transmission: Manuscript Cultures of the Ismaili Communities and Beyond* (2022).

**Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev**

**Between *tafsīr* and *taʾwīl*: the Use of Qurʾānic Verses in Works produced in Badakhshān**

The Qurʾān was historically used as a source of inspiration by theologians, jurists, poets, philosophers, and artists. While calligraphers have created pieces of art from Qurʾānic verses, scholars and poets have re-created the meaning of a given verse or a Qurʾānic concept in a different genre and language. The approach of an individual author raises the question of how medieval and modern scholars and poets have used Qurʾānic quotations in creating didactic narratives.

In this presentation, I will focus on analysing the use of whole or partial Qurʾānic verses in Persian poetic compositions produced in Badakhshān region from the 16th to the 20th centuries. The reception of Qurʾanic verse or concepts by a Persian and non-Persian speaking audience in the Badakhshān region is an interesting phenomenon. In discussing this phenomenon, I will show examples from manuals produced by local *khalīfa*s and learned men from Badakhshān, and how the Qurʾānic text, which is considered sacred and to have a healing power, is used in everyday life. Apart from these manuals, I shall also discuss the poetic compositions of Shāh Ḍiyāʾī-i Shughnānī (16th-17th centuries), Naẓmī-i Shughnānī (17th-18th centuries) and Mubārak-i Wakhānī (19th-20th centuries), and also present examples from the treatises of unknown authors that deal with the interpretation of Qurʾānic texts, their significance and use in the context of Badakhshān. One of the questions discussed in the paper is whether the terms *tafsīr* and *taʾwīl* can be applied to such Qurʾānic references in the poetic compositions and whether the authors themselves saw their works in such a light.

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## Jonas Otterbeck
## Here I am! English Language Muslim Autobiographies on Muslimness and Islam

There has been a surge of autobiographical works authored by Muslims residing in English-speaking societies. These works differ significantly from previous English-language biographical and autobiographical texts about Muslims, particularly Muslim women, living in the so-called Muslim world, who struggle to reconcile themselves with patriarchal customs and systemic oppression. Although many such texts have gained popularity, several critical studies have identified them as flawed representations, perpetuating stereotypes and prejudices.

Despite not being an altogether new phenomenon, the autobiographical works produced by Muslims in so-called Western societies have not been subjected to the

same degree of scrutiny as fictional representation of Muslims. This study examines five autobiographies authored by Muslims living in Britain. It situates these works within their cultural and historical context, explores common patterns among them, and analyses their respective representation of Muslimness and Islam.

The study employs a genealogical approach, following in the tradition of Foucault, to overstand the texts (J. Culler) rather than merely understand them. In doing so, I aim to uncover the reasons why these texts were produced in the manner that they were, examining individual words and sentences to understand their significance. The paper argues that the genre and narrative structures of these autobiographies allow the authors to communicate highly personal and introspective accounts of their relationship with Islam. While these structures offer a means of empowerment, they also impose certain limitations on the authors.

JONAS OTTERBECK is Rasul-Walker Chair in Popular Culture in Islam, and full professor of Islamic studies. He has researched Islamic discourse in contemporary Europe and creative production in relation to Islam. Further, he has published widely on the Muslim population of Sweden. His most recent book, *The Awakening of Islamic Pop Music* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021) discusses Islamic pop-music and its relation to ethical discourses of Islam.

## Oliver Scharbrodt
## Rethinking the Textual Practice of *tafsīr* in the Modern World: Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905), Journalism and Qurʾānic Exegesis

Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905) is a pivotal figure in the development of modern Islamic thought and was part of a reform movement that included his mentor Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897) and his disciple Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935). The vast majority of ʿAbduh's intellectual output was initially journalistic articles or transcripts of lectures he had given. By using such media, ʿAbduh sought to address a wider educated audience outside traditional scholarly circles. This is also evident in his engagement with the Qurʾān. He did not produce a complete commentary but gave a series of public lectures on the Qurʾān during his exile in Beirut (1885-1888) and at al-Azhar in Cairo (1899-1905). Transcripts of these lectures were collected by Rashīd Riḍā and published in their journal *al-Manār*. ʿAbduh also produced a lesser-known commentary on the last 37 *sūra*s of the Qurʾān, known as *juzʾ ʿamma*, as a training tool for teachers at schools run by his charity.

The paper will discuss how both ʿAbduh's exegetical approach to the Qurʾān as a text and the mediatisation of his exegesis through lectures and journals initiated a significant change in the textual practice of *tafsīr* in modern Islam. In his exegesis, he seeks to rationalise the general meaning of the Qurʾān and to extracts its moral message. By disseminating his commentaries to the wider public, he sought to widen Muslim engagement with the Qurʾān outside scholarly circles and initiated thereby the laicisation of Islamic discourse in the 20th century. The publication of his commentary in the journal *al-Manār* also allowed a global transmission of his approach which shaped the Qurʾānic discourses of a broad spectrum of reformist figures in different parts of the Muslim world, whether Islamists, liberals or feminists.

OLIVER SCHARBRODT is Professor of Islamic Studies at Lund University in Sweden. His research covers the intellectual history of modern Islam, Sufism, Twelver Shiʿism and Muslim minorities in Europe. He is the author of *Islam and the Baha'i Faith: A Comparative Study of Muhammad ʿAbduh and ʿAbdul-Baha ʿAbbas* (London: Routledge, 2008) and co-authored *Muslims in Ireland: Past and Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015). His latest book *Muhammad ʿAbduh: Modern Islam and the Culture of Ambiguity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2022) illustrates ʿAbduh's complex engagement with Islam's diverse intellectual traditions in his reformist discourse.

Students with teacher, Samarkand (ca. 1905–1915). Composite positive made from the three original negatives, captured in black and white on glass using red, green and blue filters.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Prokudin-Gorskiĭ, [LC-DIG-prokc-21753]. Color rendering by Walter A. Frankhauser for the Prokudin-Gorskiĭ Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

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