

Ismaili Studies Conference: The State of the Field

Hybrid Conference Programme
21-23 November 2022

الجزء الاول من كتاب المجالس والمسائرات و
المواقف والتوقيعات عن الامام المعز لدين
الله وعن آباءه صلى الله عليه وعلى اله
وسلم صفه سيدنا قاضى القضاة نعم بن
محمد عليه السلام .

وبه نستعين ^{٢٠٢} بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وعليه توكل
الهدى الذى اكرمنا بولاية اوليائه وفضلنا
امامة الائمة من اهل بيته وهدانا بنورهم



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Aga Khan Centre, 10 Handyside St.,
King's Cross, London N1C 4DN

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Cover image:

Opening of *Kitāb al-Majālis wa'l-musāyarāt*
(The Book of Sessions and Excursions)
by al-Qādi al-Nu'mān (d. 363/974).

This manuscript was copied in 1355/1966.
Courtesy Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU),
MS 541 (Ar).

Organising Committee

Dr Farhad Daftary, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

Julia Kolb, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

Dr Daryoush Mohammad Poor, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

Naushin Premji, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

Welcome Note

This conference is intended to take stock of the field of Ismaili studies in terms of a broad range of themes from history, literature, philosophy and the intellectual traditions of Ismailis, to topics on contemporary Ismailism. This conference is also an opportunity to showcase the contributions of The Institute of Ismaili Studies to this field since its establishment in 1977, including the publications of the IIS and its various research units.

The initiation of modern Ismaili studies was marked by the pioneering contributions of Wladimir Ivanow (1886–1970), who had a prolific career and played a major role in identifying and publishing numerous texts from various Ismaili traditions. From the early orientalist perceptions of the Ismailis to the work of Wladimir Ivanow, this field of research has progressed greatly to its current academic standing. Contemporary scholarly works, mainly spearheaded by The Institute of Ismaili Studies, have been instrumental in correcting misinformation and myths and raising awareness about Ismailis not only in terms of historical sources but also with regard to philosophical, social, political and broader civilisational aspects of the life of Ismailis throughout history. As a result, contemporary scholarship has opened many avenues into this field of study which is no longer purely historical nor defined by orientalist perspectives. The growth of modern Ismaili studies and the creation of an institution dedicated to this field has placed this discipline of scholarly research on the academic map, uncovering many areas which had remained unexplored, and it has developed and expanded in many areas, which are now increasingly studied in an interdisciplinary manner by students and scholars alike.

In this conference, a variety of scholars from different disciplines are presenting papers in eleven themed panels in order to stimulate further discussions and deliberations on Ismaili studies. This conference is intended to reflect some of these developments.

Dr Daryoush Mohammad Poor

Convenor

Senior Research Associate, IIS

Day 1: Monday 21 November

09:30–09:40 **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
Daryoush Mohammad Poor, IIS

09:40–10:00 **Keynote Address**
Farhad Daftary, IIS

10:00–11:30 **Panel I: Ismailis in South Asia**
Chair: Shenila Khoja-Moolji, Georgetown University

Hagiography, Ideology and the Making of Satpanth Historiography
Wafi Momin, IIS

The Esoteric, the Mystical and the Study of Religion in Modern South Asia (online)
Soumen Mukherjee, Presidency University, Kolkata

Transnationalising the Gināns
Ali Asani, Harvard University

Reconstructing the History of Ginān Printing and Publication (Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries)
Hussain Jasani, IIS

11:30–11:45 **Health break**

11:45–13:15 **Panel II: Ismaili History**
Chair: Farhad Daftary, IIS

The Early Phases of Ismailism and its Precursors: A Defence of the Social-Historical Model
David Hollenberg, University of Oregon

The Sulayhids in the Indian Ocean World
Sumaiya Hamdani, George Mason University

Transregional and Regional Ismaili Tradition in Syria: Production, Transmission, Reception
Verena Klemm, Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities

The Kalbids of Sicily: Stalwarts of Fatimid Ifrīqiya
Shainool Jiwa, IIS

Day 1: Monday 21 November (continued)

13:15–14:45 **Lunch and health break**

14:45–16:15 **Panel III: Ismaili Doctrines and Literature, Part 1**
Chair: Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, IIS

The Question by Kumayl b. Ziyād to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib: Some Notes on a Spurious Tradition Generating Important Interpretations
Hermann Landolt, McGill University

Literary Legacy of the Nizari Ismailis of Alamut
Jalal Badakhchani, independent scholar formerly affiliated with the IIS

The Debate of Abū'l-Faḥ al-Karājikī (d. 449/1057) on Legal Analogy at the Dār al-'Ilm in Fatimid Cairo
Devin Stewart, Emory University

Principles of Fatimid *ta'wīl* in the *Majālis Mu'ayyadiyya* of al-Mu'ayyad fī al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī
Tahera Qutbuddin, University of Chicago

16:15–16:30 **Health break**

16:30–18:00 **Panel IV: Ismaili Doctrines and Literature, Part 2**
Chair: Simonetta Calderini, University of Roehampton

**A New Fatimid Author from the Time of al-Mu'izz?
On the *Ta'wīl al-zakāt* and the *Sarā'ir al-nuṭaqā'* Attributed to Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman**
Fâres Gillon, IIS

Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī and the Mu'tazila
Maria De Cillis, IIS

Commentary and Interpretation of the Qur'an: *Tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* in the Sessions of Wisdom at the Fatimid Court of al-Mustaṣfir bi'llāh
Omar Alí-de-Unzaga, IIS

The Unfolding of the Proclamation of *qiyāma* in Alamūt (559/1164)
Karim Javan, IIS

Day 1: Monday 21 November (continued)

18:00–19:45 **Networking/free time**

NB The Ismaili Centre is approx. 30 mins' travel from the Aga Khan Centre

19:45–21:15 **Mehfil-e Noor: A Celebration of Ismaili Devotional Poetry**

A collaborative endeavour of the South Asian Studies Unit (DARP, IIS) and the Association for the Study of Ginans

Light refreshments will be available until 20:00, before the start of the programme. The event will be open to invitees and registered guests.

Please register if you would like to attend the concert via the link on the conference webpage.

PLEASE NOTE: This event is at the following address:

The Ismaili Centre, 1–7 Cromwell Gardens, South Kensington, London SW7 2SL.

The Ismaili Centre is very close to the South Kensington Underground Station.

Day 2: Tuesday 22 November

09:30–11:00 **Panel V: Ismaili Doctrines and Literature, Part 3**
Chair: Fâres Gillon, IIS

Taking Stock of Extant Ismaili Manuscripts and the State of their Publications Indicating the Progress in Ismaili Studies
Ismail Poonawala, UCLA

The Dangers of Doctrinal Interpretation of Key Concepts and Events in Ismaili History
Paul Walker, University of Chicago

Pir Sabzali and the Missing Sources of Ismaili History
Shafique N. Virani, University of Toronto

A History of Religions Approach to Ismaili Studies? Possibilities and Pitfalls
Jamel Velji, Claremont McKenna College

11:00–11:15 **Health break**

11:15–12:25 **Panel VI: Ismaili Philosophy**
Chair: Nader El-Bizri, University of Sharjah

The Evaporation of Matter: A Mysterious Syrian Nizārī Text Attributed to the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz
Daniel De Smet, CNRS (Paris) and KU Leuven

The Semiotics of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's Ismaili Esoteric Interpretation (*ta'wīl*)
Rahim Gholami, IIS

On the Understanding of *ḥajj*: A 10th-Century Ismaili Interpretation of Pilgrimage (online)
Antonella Straface, Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"

12:25–14:00 **Lunch and health break**

Day 2: Tuesday 22 November (continued)

14:00–15:10 **Panel VII: The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and their Epistles**
Chair: Omar Alí-de-Unzaga, IIS

The Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ Series

Nader El-Bizri, University of Sharjah

On the Composition and Early Circulation of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*: New Insights from the OUP–IIS Epistles of the Brethren of Purity Series

Godefroid De Callataÿ, Université catholique de Louvain

The Word of God in the Face of Neoplatonic Hypostases: Ismaili Onto-Cosmologies

Carmela Baffioni, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei and IIS

15:10–15:30 **Health break**

15:30–17:00 **Panel VIII: Ismailis in Central Asia, Part 1**
Chair: Ali Asani, Harvard University

Multiplicity of Meanings in the Traditions of the Central Asian Ismailis

Hakim Elnazarov, IIS

The Muḥammad-Shāhī and Qāṣim-Shāhī Nizāris in Badakhshan and their Unification in the 17th Century

Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev, IIS

The Descendants of Sayyid Suhrāb Walī and Ismailism in Early Modern Badakhshan

Daniel Beben, Nazarbayev University

The Development of Nāṣir-i Khusraw Studies

Alice Hunsberger, State University of New York College at Old Westbury

17:00–18:00 **Networking/free time**

Day 2: Tuesday 22 November (continued)

18:00–19:00 **Concert: Duo of Santour and Duduk**

Farnaz Modarresifar* and Haig Sarikouyoumdjian**

This event is open to invitees and registered guests. There will be some standing space available in the AKC atrium area. Pre-registration required.

19:00–20:00 **Light refreshments**

***Farnaz Modarresifar** (b. 1989 in Tehran, Iran) is a Franco-Iranian composer and virtuoso on the santour, or ‘Persian dulcimer’. She started her musical career at the National Conservatory of Tehran and later obtained her first-class bachelor’s degree in Santour Performance from the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran. She also holds a first-class bachelor’s degree in Composition from the École Normale de Musique de Paris “Alfred Cortot” and the Conservatoire de Boulogne-Billancourt. In addition, Farnaz holds two masters degrees in Improvisation and Musicology from Le Pôle supérieur d’enseignement artistique Paris Boulogne-Billancourt (PSPBB) and Université Paris 8. She has appeared on Radio France-Musique and has performed at various music festivals and residences. She is one of the best-known santour players of her generation and has received several awards as a composer and musician including the Prix Alain Louvier, the ACIMC (Association of Iranian Contemporary Music Composers) Composition Prize, and first prizes in the Tehran Soloists Festival, the Festival of the Conservatories of Fine Arts of Iran and the Avaye-Mehr Festival. Farnaz is the selected composer for the Académie des jeunes compositrices of the Orchestre de chambre de Paris, and her compositions will be premiered in 2022–2023 by the Philharmonie de Paris and Théâtre du Châtelet. She is also the selected composer for the 2023 Atelier de Composition with Georges Aperghis.

****Haig Sarikouyoumdjian** (b. 1985) studied the duduk in Armenia with different teachers. With Araik Bartikian (himself a student of Djivan Gasparyan), he mastered duduk technique and its multiple nuances of timbre, along with all the subtleties of traditional repertoire (perfecting intonation, rhythmic ambiguities and multiplicities, ornamentation, modal development). He then studied Armenian repertoire in general with Gagouk Mouradian, the kamancha master, under whose direction he has been playing in the traditional ensemble Goussan since 2009. At the same time, he has collaborated on various projects directed by Jordi Savall, such as Istanbul, Mare Nostrum, la Tragédie Cathare, Esprit d’Arménie, etc. His research on duduk timbre began to draw him more and more towards instrument making. He learnt how to make his own reeds with master Ashot Martirosyan, and studied wood-turning and tuning in the Meyerrecorders studio workshop with master Ernst Meyer and his two sons, renowned Baroque recorder manufacturers. He now makes his own instruments and continues to study the whole chain of sound production, from instrument-making to interpretation. He also leads a solo career, performing notably at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, as well as in India, Morocco and Portugal. His solo album was released in 2020 by Ocora (Radio France).

Day 3: Wednesday 23 November

09:30–10:40 **Panel IX: Ismailis in Central Asia, Part 2**
Chair: Hakim Elnazarov, IIS

The Cultural Identity of the Ismailis of China in the 21st Century
Amier Saidula, IIS

The Hazāras of Afghanistan and their Shi'i and Ismaili Origins
Yahia Baiza, IIS

Musical Instruments and Construction of Identities: The *rabāb* as an Expression of Multiple Interconnected Identities (online)
Chorshanbe Ghoibnazarov, University of Central Asia

10:40–10:50 **Health break**

10:50–12:20 **Panel X: Contemporary Ismailism, Part 1**
Chair: Faisal Devji, Oxford University

Ismailis and Ismailism in Africa: Scholarly Approaches, Emerging Debates and New Directions
Zulfikar Hirji, York University

Theology and Metaphysics in Contemporary Ismaili Thought
Daryoush Mohammad Poor, IIS

Contemporary Nizari Thought's Pragmatic Turn and the Centrality of Ethics
Karim H. Karim, Carlton University

The Fatimids in Fiction
Delia Cortese, Middlesex University London

12:20–13:50 **Lunch and health break**

Day 3: Wednesday 23 November (continued)

13:50–15:20 **Panel XI: Contemporary Ismailism, Part 2**
Chair: Laila Halani, IIS

When the Local Meets the Transnational: An Analysis of the Ismaili Reunion in Tajikistan (1985–1995)
Zamira Dildorbekova, IIS

The Ismaili Heritage Project: An Introduction
Fayaz S. Alibhai, IIS

Higher Education and Iranian Ismaili Women's Empowerment
Maryam Rezaee, IIS

Writing-as-Witnessing: Reimagining Displaced Ismaili Muslim Women's Lifeworlds through Archival Marginalia
Shenila Khoja-Moolji, Georgetown University

15:20–16:00 **Closing Remarks and Farewell**
Farhad Daftary and Daryoush Mohammad Poor

Abstracts and biographies

Omar Alí-de-Unzaga

Commentary and Interpretation of the Qur'an: *Tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* in the Sessions of Wisdom at the Fatimid Court of al-Mustanşir bi'llāh

While systematic verse-by-verse commentaries of the Qur'an can be found in abundant numbers in every shape and in most schools throughout Islamic intellectual history, the case is not the same in Ismaili sources. Most Ismaili authors favoured an approach that was different to the method pursued in the *tafsīr* genre. An exception is the *Mafātīh al-asrār* of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), who set about writing a verse-by-verse commentary on the Qur'an, including both exoteric and esoteric aspects and which has survived partially (covering Sūrat al-Fātiḥa and Sūrat al-Baqara).

Another exception is the *Mizāj al-tasnīm* of Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Ismā'īl b. Hibat Allāh (d. 1183/1770), whose surviving text includes an esoteric paraphrase of sūras 9 to 29. This paper focuses on a third exception: the work known as *al-Majālis al-mustanşiriyya*, whose authorship remains unclear. This work, which belongs to the Fatimid *majālis* genre (sermons, in this case 35, delivered to the initiates), incorporates what appears to be a systematic verse-by-verse commentary of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa (Q. 1), Sūrat al-'Alaq (Q. 96) and Sūrat al-Baqara (Q. 2), up to verse 74. The paper analyses the way in which the author discusses other *tafsīrs* and interpretations in constructing a coherent interpretive discourse for his audience.

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 Qur'anic Studies at the IIS and the series editor of the Qur'anic 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-Ṣafā' 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'.

Fayaz S. Alibhai

The Ismaili Heritage Project: An Introduction

Over the last two decades nativism, the fear of difference and the threat of an 'other' has resulted in rising tension and increased geopolitical conflict. Material culture is often the first casualty of such conflict. The wanton destruction of heritage sites, particularly, not only makes immediate individual identities wither but also erases collective memories, histories and values and, therefore, the past. But even where conflict is not an issue, heritage sites around the world remain under threat due to inaccessibility, lack of knowledge and neglect. These issues are compounded for Ismaili heritage sites and have contributed significantly to the dearth of studies in the field. Aside from foundational sites of obvious relevance in Ismaili history, hundreds of other heritage sites remain understudied at best and unknown at worst.

This paper aims to fill in some of these gaps by introducing the Ismaili Heritage Project, a tripartite collaboration between The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), London, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), Geneva, and institutions of the Ismaili community, Lisbon. The project aims to document, protect and conserve the built and other tangible heritage of the global Shia Ismaili Muslims. Specifically, the paper will provide a short history of the project and outline the scope and progress of its work in the context of guiding principles articulated by the present Imam of the Ismailis. In doing so, the paper will shed new light on ongoing formal, institutional efforts to bring the history, buildings and material culture of the Ismailis alive.

Fayaz Alibhai is a Research Associate at the IIS, where he co-ordinates the Ismaili Heritage Project, a collaboration between the IIS, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and institutions of the Ismaili community. Fayaz gained a BSc in Psychology and a BA in Religion at the University of Florida, where he graduated with Honours. He completed the IIS's graduate programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities before going on to University College London where he completed an MSc in Social Anthropology. Fayaz was awarded a PhD from the University of Edinburgh for a dissertation entitled 'People, Places, and Texts: Re/presenting Islam in Edinburgh, Scotland', for which he employed ethnographic fieldwork as well as visual and textual analysis from a variety of primary sources.

Ali Asani

Transnationalising the Gināns

This paper will examine the impact of the diaspora experience on the ways in which the Satpanthi Ismaili communities have understood and engaged with the tradition of the gināns. Special attention will be given to the impact of nationalism, globalisation and the revolution in media technology on the form and function of the gināns and their relationship with contemporary communities of faith.

Ali Asani is Murray A. Albertson Professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures at Harvard University. A scholar of Muslim literary traditions of South Asia, particularly from the Sufi/Shi'i traditions, Professor Asani is particularly interested in the intersection between religion, literature and the arts in Muslim cultures.

Jalal Badakhchani

Literary Legacy of the Nizari Ismailis of Alamut

Nizari Ismailis inheriting the religious tradition of the Fatimid Ismailis are currently classified as the second largest denomination within the Shi'i branch of Islam. In the Middle Ages, apart from their presence in the political scene of a large territory extending from north-eastern Iran to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, they succeeded in producing a remarkable body of literature that not only challenged the traditional norm of Islamic theology but paved the way for the development of Twelver Shi'i theology and various Islamic schools of thought affiliated with esoteric Islam. In the aftermath of the Mongol invasion of Islamic lands and the fall of Alamut, although the seat of the Ismaili Imamate remained in Iran, the spread of its mission found fertile ground in Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

A substantial part of Nizari Ismaili literature was set down in Arabic and in the vernacular languages of the Indian subcontinent. Extant in Persian is the handful of books compiled in Alamut and Quhistan that survived the Mongol invasion and the so-called 'sacred duty' of the Nizari Ismaili's opponents who defaced the Ismaili works or destroyed them altogether. This paper charts efforts to trace reliable and genuine manuscripts of the Alamut period and their preparation for publication.

Jalal Badakhchani is a former Research Associate at the IIS. He was previously Deputy Director of the Central Library at Ferdowsi University where he obtained his MA in Islamic Philosophy. His academic output, apart from articles in learned journals and encyclopaedias, spans the entire corpus of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's Ismaili works. Dr Badakhchani has been heavily involved in the publication of two major original works on Islamic heresiography, namely, the earliest Persian translation of *al-Milal wa-niḥal* by al-Shahrastānī (2016) and *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* (2019), by an anonymous author, on astronomy and general Islamic history including that of the Ismailis until the Imamate of Nizār. Currently, he is working on the first authorised treatise on Ismaili theology known as the *Haft bāb* by Abū Ishāq, compiled around 200 years after the fall of Alamut.

Carmela Baffioni

The Word of God in the Face of Neoplatonic Hypostases: Ismaili Onto-Cosmologies

My paper describes the most relevant works written on the onto-cosmological doctrines of the main Ismaili authors (Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, Muḥammad al-Nasafī, Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī and Ḥamid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī), and also the *Risāla al-Jāmi'a*, the

'crown' of the Epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (which gives an esoteric interpretation of the encyclopaedia in which Shi'i and Ismaili doctrines seem to coexist). In the wake of these texts, I attempt to illustrate the way in which the traditional ontology of Neoplatonic origin is adapted by Ismaili thinkers, with different solutions, in the face of the demands of Islamic creationism. A crucial role in Ismaili interpretations of Neoplatonism is played by the 'Word of God'. From the Qur'anic *kun* comes an elaboration of the concept that results in a radical transformation of the two Neoplatonic hypostases — the Active Intellect and the Universal Soul.

Carmela Baffioni, former professor of History of Islamic Philosophy at the Università di Napoli "L'Orientale" (until 2012), is now a Senior Research Fellow at the IIS. She is a member of numerous academies, including the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. She has dealt with the major medieval Islamic thinkers (al-Kindī, al-Farābī, Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd) and lately with Ismaili thought (Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī and Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī). Professor Baffioni has translated Shahrastānī (parts of *Kitāb al-Milal*) and Ibn Rushd (*Middle Commentary on the Poetics*), and has also studied issues in the history of Islamic science such as atomism and embryology. Her main field of studies is the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'.

Yahia Baiza

The Hazaras of Afghanistan and their Shi'i and Ismaili Origins

The history of the Ismaili communities of modern-day Afghanistan has largely remained underexplored due to at least two factors. Firstly, the dominant conventional historiography mainly focuses on big narratives and rarely pays attention to the history and events that matter to minority groups. Secondly, anti-Ismaili polemicists intentionally fabricated many narratives about Ismaili history to obscure and bring into disrepute the origins and history of the Ismaili Imāms, *dā'īs*, *da'wa* and communities. Until the mid-20th century, the fabricated accounts were considered historical fact and dominated the field of Ismaili studies. With these two historical realities in mind, this paper explores and analyses the origin and spread of the Ismaili *da'wa* in the former region of Khurāsān and, more specifically, in modern-day Afghanistan.

Yahia Baiza is a Research Associate at the IIS, who specialises in education, history, Islamic and Afghan studies, as well as the study of refugee and diaspora communities in Europe, and manuscript analysis. He is the Regional Editor for Afghanistan for the Bloomsbury series Education and Childhood Studies. After completing the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities at the IIS and SOAS, University of London (1999–2001), Yahia obtained his MSc in Educational Research Methodology (2002) and his PhD in Education Studies (2009) from the University of Oxford. Yahia has published more than eighty academic articles, and is the author of *Education in Afghanistan: Developments, Influences, and Legacies since 1901* (2013), the editor of *Education in Troubled Times: A Global Pluralist Response* (2022) and has a forthcoming book titled *The Hazara Ismailis of Afghanistan and their History*. He is also a Member of the Academic Council of the *Hazara Encyclopedia*.

Daniel Beben

The Descendants of Sayyid Suhrāb Walī and Ismailism in Early Modern Badakhshan

Sayyid Suhrāb Walī has been often identified in scholarship as a pivotal figure in the history of Ismailism in Badakhshan, yet very little is known about him due to the lack of available sources. Ismaili hagiographical tradition claims him as having been a senior disciple of Nasir-i Khusraw (d. after 1070), while other evidence places his career in the 15th century.

This paper explores a previously unstudied body of material on this topic, namely, a corpus of genealogical texts, dating from the 17th to the 20th centuries, of various individuals claiming descent from Sayyid Suhrāb. Utilising both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the paper demonstrates how these texts can supply critical data concerning the relationship between Sayyid Suhrāb and Nasir-i Khusraw and the subsequent development of the Ismaili tradition in Badakhshan. In particular, the paper argues that these texts can provide insight into the various strategies for communal survival and cohesion pursued by the Ismaili *pīrs* under Sunni rule in early modern Central Asia.

Daniel Beben received his PhD in History and Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University and is currently Assistant Professor of History and Religious Studies at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan. His research focuses on the history of Ismaili and Sufi communities in pre-modern Central Asia, Afghanistan and Iran. His recent publications include a co-authored Persian text edition and translation of the *ʿIbrat-afzā*, the memoirs of the Ismaili Imam Hasan ʿAli Shah (Aga Khan I). He is currently working on a monograph on the history of Ismailism in Central Asia and a co-authored book on genealogical traditions in the Badakhshan region.

Delia Cortese

The Fatimids in Fiction

The perceived mystery surrounding the endorsement of esotericism — the opulent display of luxury and immense wealth, the extraordinary lives of a number of charismatic male and female figures and the universalistic ambition shown by a religious-political minority — all these factors and more have contributed, since the inception of the dynasty, to making the age of the Fatimids fertile ground as a source of inspiration for deliberate fictional representation. In this paper I discuss how and why, from literature to pulp fiction and from films to videos and digital games, animations and cartoons, the Fatimids have been making regular appearances in plots, whether as central characters or as extras.

Building on recent academic literature devoted to cinematic and literary forms of representation of ‘the Arab’ and ‘the Muslim’, I shall focus on ‘the Fatimids’ as (under)represented in modern and contemporary artistic expressions. The academic

perspective underscoring the approach to this research is not that of the literary critic but rather of the social historian. In tune with the theme of the conference, the overarching purpose of this paper is to consider the value of contemporary fiction as a resource for new directions within the broad field of Ismaili studies.

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 'Alī Collection* (2003) and *Ismaili and Other Arabic Manuscripts* (2000).

Farhad Daftary

Keynote Address

Farhad Daftary is Co-Director at The Institute of Ismaili Studies. He is a consulting editor of *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, co-editor of the *Encyclopaedia Islamica* as well as the General Editor of the Ismaili Heritage Series and of the Ismaili Texts and Translations Series. An authority on Ismaili studies, Dr Daftary has written several acclaimed books in this field, including *The Isma'īlis: Their History and Doctrines* (1990; 2nd ed. 2007), *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Ismailis* (1994), *A Short History of the Ismailis* (1998) and *Ismaili Literature* (2004). Most recently, he wrote *The Ismaili Imams* (2020) and co-edited (with J. Esots) *The Renaissance of Shi'i Islam* (2022). Dr Daftary's books have been translated into Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu and numerous European languages.

Godefroid de Callataÿ

On the Composition and Early Circulation of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*: New Insights from the OUP-IIS Epistles of the Brethren of Purity Series

The collaborative project of a critical edition of the whole corpus of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* is being published by OUP in association with the IIS as the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity series. Based on around 20 manuscripts, this project has revealed a great complexity in the transmission of this corpus that the contributors to the volumes published so far have all highlighted. In particular, in the ultimate five epistles of the corpus as we have it, the OUP-IIS project reveals significant divergences between manuscripts. These include two families of manuscripts presenting a different arrangement of Epistle 48 ('The Call to God'), the existence of two or more versions, apparently mutually exclusive, of Epistles 49 ('On the Spiritual Beings'), 51 ('On the Arrangement of the World'), and 52 ('On Magic'), and an exceptional 'esoteric addition' in one manuscript of Epistle 50 ('On the Species of Governance').

This paper emphasises that this final part of the corpus is: (1) where the divide between an Ismaili-orientated group of manuscripts and the rest of the manuscripts is the most perceptible; (2) where the references to the *Risāla al-Jāmi'a* (the Comprehensive Epistle), supposed to have been written by the same authors as the *Rasā'il*, are least likely to have been interpolated. Additionally, we shall argue that the integrality of Epistles 51 and 52, in any of their versions, to what could be regarded as the original encyclopaedic project, is to be discarded. In light of these observations, new avenues of exploration will be proposed in relation to the composition and early circulation of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* and the *Risāla al-Jāmi'a*.

Godefroid de Callatay, Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Oriental Institute of UCLouvain, has specialised in the history of Arabic sciences and philosophy, and the role played by Islam in the transmission of Hellenic knowledge to the Latin West in the Middle Ages. Amongst other subjects, he has published extensively on the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* and has contributed to the publication of various epistles in the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity series published by OUP in association with the IIS. He is currently the Principal Investigator of 'Philand' (2017–2023), an Advanced ERC project on the emergence and development of philosophy and rational thinking in 10th-century al-Andalus.

Maria De Cillis

Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī and the Mu'tazila

Through sophisticated logical and philosophically charged proofs, al-Kirmānī's writings seem often to reflect a distinctive Mu'tazilite approach towards composite doctrinal issues. Whilst with some of the arguments adopted in treatises such as *al-Maṣābīḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma* and his magnum opus, the *Rāḥat al-'aql*, he seems to support the rational theological school, on other occasions, a much more complex outlook emerges. In works such as the *Tanbīh al-hādī wa'l-mustahdī* and the *Risālat Mabāsīm al-bishārāt bi'l-imām al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh*, al-Kirmānī openly criticises the Mu'tazilites, often comparing their positions to those of the Magians. Again, in his *al-Aqwāl al-dhahabiyya*, designed to criticise the philosophical views of Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī (d. 313/925) on the exclusive salvific role of reason, al-Kirmānī binds intellectual reasoning to the necessity of the imamate and prophecy as tools on the path to redemption, thus implicitly denouncing certain Mu'tazilite views.

Maria De Cillis is a Senior Research Associate at the IIS and also a Managing Editor of the Shi'i Heritage Series. She has authored *Salvation and Destiny in Islam: The Shi'i Ismaili Perspective of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī* (2018), *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought: Theoretical Compromises in the Works of Avicenna, al-Ghazālī and Ibn 'Arabī* (2014) and has co-edited *L'ésoférisme shi'ite, ses racines et ses prolongements/Shi'i Esotericism: Its Roots and Developments* (2016) as well as writing a number of journal articles and encyclopaedia entries. She has taught the Qur'an at SOAS, and medieval Islamic philosophy and speculative theology at Birkbeck College, University of London. Dr De Cillis's research interests include Islamic metaphysics, Sufism, Shi'i esotericism and Ismaili philosophy.

Daniel De Smet

The Evaporation of Matter: A Mysterious Syrian Nizārī Text Attributed to the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz

In 1874, Stanislas Guyard published an Arabic Nizârî manuscript discovered in Syria (Fragments relatifs à la doctrine des Ismaélis). As one of the first Isma'ili texts printed in the West, this collection of small treatises received some attention from scholars of the 19th and first half of the 20th century, but then fell into oblivion as more and more Isma'ili sources were made available. However, it contains some highly remarkable pieces, such as a treatise attributed to al-Mu'izz, in which the Fatimid caliph exposes a cosmology with different creating forces and a theory about the gradual evaporation of matter during the cyclical evolution of the world. In my paper, I will study this cosmology and its possible sources, trying to find out what marks the particularity of Arabic Syrian Nizârî philosophy. In contrast with Eastern Nizârî texts written in Persian, the Syrian Arabic tradition remains largely unknown, although a still increasing amount of texts are accessible today. The exploration of this corpus is an important task for the further development of Isma'ili studies. My paper aims to be a modest contribution to this.

Daniel De Smet, Directeur de Recherche at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), teaches Arabic philosophy at KU Leuven. His main fields of research include Fatimid and Tayyibi Ismailism, the adoption of Neoplatonism in Islamic philosophical thought, and the founding texts of the Druze religion, of which he provided the first critical edition. He is currently preparing an edition, translation and extensive study of al-Ḥārithī's *al-Anwār al-laṭīfa*, a main summa of Tayyibi esoteric doctrine.

Zamira Dildorbekova

When the Local Meets the Transnational: An Analysis of the Ismaili Reunion in Tajikistan (1985–1995)

This paper contributes to a virtually non-existent account of the religious 'renewal' among the Shia Imami Ismaili ('Ismaili') Muslims in Tajikistan, by exploring a sparsely documented period of their early reunion (1985–1995) with their spiritual leader Aga Khan IV after seventy years of Soviet isolation. It provides a background to the early transnational and local Ismaili encounters and posits that the story of Ismaili reintegration is traceable to at least the late-Soviet period. By examining a series of events and developments against the backdrop of the country's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and the outbreak of the civil war (1992–1997), the paper further claims that the history of the conflict became critical for the understanding of the processes shaping Ismaili reunion and local discourses. The latter, in turn, came to be informed acutely, among other directives of the Aga Khan, by the messages of peace, unity, stability, pluralism and diversity. It is argued that these pronouncements,

which became the common framework of local Ismaili reference, have increasingly fed into and transformed the community's perceptions of religious (and, indeed, national) identity, underpinning the restoration of peace and social order among the Ismailis as well as contributing to broader cohesion with the state. The paper also contributes to the emergent understanding of the role of faith in peacebuilding (and its longevity).

Zamira Dildorbekova is Programme Leader for the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) at the Department of Graduate Studies, the Institute of Ismaili Studies. Zamira holds an MPhil in Development Studies from the Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex) and a PhD in Islamic Studies (University of Exeter). Her primary research interests focus on contemporary Islam and Ismailism in Central Asia.

Nader El-Bizri

The Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' Series

This paper offers some highlights regarding the institutional project of publishing the Arabic critical editions and annotated English translations with historical and analytic commentaries of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (*Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*), which is being undertaken at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, in collaboration with Oxford University Press. This longstanding group endeavour has resulted since 2008 in the publication of sixteen volumes that cover the bulk of the fifty-two epistles constituting this 10th-century CE proto-encyclopaedia, which discuss diverse interdisciplinary themes in mathematics, logic, natural philosophy, psychology, metaphysics and theology.

The ongoing scholarly impact of the publication of these volumes has been widely evidenced through the high number of academic citations and reviews they have received, in addition to the dissemination of their contents in conferences and via online platforms. This seminal project continues to unfold in terms of finalising the publication of the remaining epistles, which are currently being studied in their manuscript form, as well as being edited and translated, in addition to publishing the Arabic critical edition and annotated English translation with commentaries of the *Risāla al-Jāmi'a* (*The Comprehensive Epistle*).

While specialists continue to debate the attributes of the Ismaili intellectual leitmotifs that can be associated with the *Rasā'il* corpus, and the extent of their bearings on its outlooks, topics and evolution, it remains the case indeed that grasping the constitutive elements of this influential textual legacy relies on the field of Ismaili studies in contextualising its historical lineage and sociocultural particulars, as well as gaining a *fortiori* a deeper epistemic understanding of its conceptual significance, and a richer aesthetic appreciation of reading it as a classical oeuvre of *belles-lettres*.

Nader El-Bizri is Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Sharjah. Previously, he was Professor of Civilization Studies and Philosophy at the American University of Beirut, as well as a Leverhulme Visiting Professor of Intellectual History at Durham University, an Affiliated Scholar with the Department of History & Philosophy at the University of Cambridge and an Associate of the Senior Combination Room at King's College, Cambridge. He specialises in Arabic sciences and philosophy, architectural humanities and phenomenology, and serves as the General Editor of the IIS-OUP Epistles of the Brethren of Purity series. He has received, inter alia, the Prize of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, and has been elected as a Mellon Fellow at Claremont McKenna College.

Hakim Elnazarov

Multiplicity of Meanings in the Traditions of the Central Asian Ismailis

The Ismailis of Central Asia preserved distinctive religious traditions, which have evolved over many centuries under the influence of various Islamic traditions and pre-Islamic beliefs and practices. Their traditional belief system and religious rites and rituals bear the imprint of various civilisations which dominated the cultural landscape of Central Asia in various periods of its history. The amalgamation of various religious beliefs and practices, particularly from the Sufi tradition, find their reflection in many religious and cultural practices and customs which are observed by the Ismailis in the region. The paper analyses some of the seminal practices of the Central Asian Ismailis, such as the *Chirāgh-i Rawshan* ceremony, performance of *Maddo/Qasida* and other forms of devotion, to demonstrate the syncretic character and multifaceted dimensions of these practices. It is argued that the imprint and influence of various traditions have enriched Central Asian Ismailism and have enabled it to gain a strong foothold in the cultural landscape of the community.

Hakim Elnazarov is Head of the Central Asian Studies Unit (CASU) at the IIS. He received his PhD from King's College London in the history of empires. His thesis analysed Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Pamirs and Hindu Kush at the end of 19th and early 20th centuries. Dr Elnazarov completed his undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the Tajik State University in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. He also obtained a degree of Master of Education from the Institute for Educational Development at the Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan. Dr Elnazarov has worked in higher education in Tajikistan and East Africa, and his research interests include the history and intellectual heritage of the Central Asian Ismailis, Islamic education and the languages and cultural practices of the mountain societies of Central Asia.

Rahim Gholami

The Semiotics of Nasir-i Khusraw's Ismaili Esoteric Interpretation (*ta'wīl*)

This paper examines the semiotics of the sign (*zāhir*) and the signified (*bāṭin*) as expounded by Nasir-i Khusraw. The focus of the essay is on the hermeneutical significance of the following verse (Q. 41:53) in which the Qur'an states: 'We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their souls, till it is clear to them that He is the Real. Suffices it not as to thy Lord, that He is witness over everything?' This reciprocal dialectic between the outer and inner signs leads to a gradual verification of the truth and reality of each and every sign, be it in the horizons or in people themselves. In other words, the aim of the esoteric interpretation of the signs of the Creator — whether they are found in nature as the creation without (the Act of God), or in people's souls as the creation within (the Word of God) — is the illumination and realisation of the reality of the outward and inward signs, even though the inward signs of the scriptures may appear symbolic and ambiguous in their one-to-one relation with the outward signs of the creation.

Rahim Gholami is a Research Associate at the IIS. He gained an MSc in Translation Studies at the University of Edinburgh with a dissertation on the *Translating Genre & the Discourses of Shams-i Tabrīzī*, having completed the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities at the IIS (2001). In 2013, he was awarded the IIS Doctoral Scholarship to pursue a PhD (part-time) in Ismaili Studies at the University of Exeter. In October 2021, Rahim received his PhD degree with a thesis entitled: 'The Wayfarer's Sojourn at the Banquet: The Hermeneutics of Nāṣir-e Khusraw's Esoteric Guidance'.

Fâràs Gillon

A New Fatimid Author from the Time of al-Mu'izz? On the *Ta'wīl al-zakāt* and the *Sarā'ir al-nuṭāqā'* Attributed to Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman

An essential corpus for mapping the history of Ismaili and Fatimid thought, the dozen works transmitted under the name of Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman remain understudied to this day. Given the variety of doctrines, styles and vocabulary of the corpus, it is unlikely that we are indeed dealing with the works of a single author. Furthermore, some of these works contain Neoplatonic concepts, while others are completely free of them.

Among the former, the *Ta'wīl al-zakāt* and the *Sarā'ir al-nuṭāqā'* stand out. Dating from the time of the Imām-caliph al-Mu'izz (r. 953–975), they both display a highly sophisticated and personal style, as well as what should be considered as the first pre-Kirmanian Fatimid attempts to combine the 'traditional' *da'wa* doctrine with Neoplatonic concepts and vocabulary. This paper will provide evidence that these two works are to be attributed to the same author without a doubt — whether this author should indeed be identified as Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman or not.

Recent studies have suggested that the adoption of Neoplatonism by the Fatimid court might be connected to the rapprochement between al-Mu'izz and the Eastern *da'wa* represented by Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī. The last part of my study will take this hypothesis further by demonstrating the strong connections between al-Sijistānī's philosophy and the contents of the *Ta'wīl al-zakāt* and the *Sarā'ir al-nuṭaqā'*.

Fâres Gillon, Research Associate in the Shi'i Studies Unit of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, specialises in Shi'i and Ismaili doctrines, with a particular focus on the Fatimid period. As part of his research into the formation and evolutions of Fatimid Ismailism, he is currently working on the corpus of works attributed to Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, attempting to establish both their sources and their impact on Fatimid thought.

Chorshanbe Ghoibnazarov

Musical Instruments and Construction of Identities: The *rabāb* as an Expression of Multiple Interconnected Identities

This paper introduces the Pamiri *rabāb*, a musical instrument that plays a significant role in ceremonies and ritual practices among Ismaili Muslims in Badakhshan, Tajikistan, and serves as an emblem and marker of ethnic, religious, cultural and national identities. The paper presents the interrelation of musical instruments and identity, and examines various ways in which religious, cultural and national identities are interconnected and expressed by the instrument, musicianship, construction of the instruments, anecdotes and memory related to the instruments and the making of the musical instruments.

Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, Assistant Professor and Research Fellow at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School of Development, teaches Cultural Landscapes at the Naryn and Khorog campuses. He holds a PhD in Central Asian and Cultural Studies from the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University, Berlin, and an MA in Muslim Cultures from the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations at the Aga Khan University in London. Dr Goibnazarov was on the Fulbright Visiting Scholar fellowship for the 2019–2020 academic year at the Music Department of Harvard University.

Sumaiya Hamdani

The Sulayhids in the Indian Ocean World

This paper reviews the history of the Sulayhid state in Yemen (1047–1138) in the context of its Indian Ocean importance. While the Sulayhids have received some attention from historians, they have largely been considered in the narrow context of either Ismaili or Yemeni studies. For scholars of Ismaili Shi'ism, the Sulayhids represent an example of Fatimid and post-Fatimid success, whereas for Yemeni historians the dynasty's conquests and queen, Arwa, are presented as an example of

national significance. Arguably, the Sulayhids more importantly participated in the formation of a diasporic community which connected the Yemen with India, through the sustained contact of Tayyibi Ismaili scholars over several centuries.

Studies of diasporic communities in the Indian Ocean world, such as those of Engseng Ho, have explored the importance of genealogy in connecting Yemen with Southeast Asia, but less has been written about the role of Muslim scholars' efforts to acquire cultural capital across the Indian Ocean through the transmission of knowledge. The Tayyibi Ismaili community founded by the Sulayhids serves as an example of such connections. In examining the biographical and bibliographical information of two Tayyibi Ismaili scholars from the 16th and 19th centuries, this paper hopes to build on the recent research of S. Traboulsi and D. Cortese and provide a contribution to the study of Sulayhids in the Indian Ocean world.

Sumaiya Hamdani, Associate Professor in the Department of History at George Mason University, specialises in Middle East and Islamic History. She received her master's and PhD degrees in Islamic History from the Department of Near East Studies, Princeton University, and is the author of *Between Revolution and State: The Path to Fatimid Statehood* (2006). Her current research is on the Tayyibi Ismaili community in Yemen and India.

Zulfikar Hirji

Ismailis and Ismailism in Africa: Scholarly Approaches, Emerging Debates and New Directions

This paper critically examines scholarly research and approaches to the study of Ismailis and Ismailism in Africa. The paper situates this scholarship within various disciplinary frameworks (i.e. Ismaili studies, Islamic studies, history and anthropology) with a view to assessing the manner in which these disciplines shape our understanding of Ismaili communities in Africa, the questions they ask and the evidence they employ. The paper will also situate the study of Ismailism and Ismailis in Africa within studies of Islam and Muslims in Africa. In this regard, a central set of issues that the paper considers is why there are a curiously limited number of studies of Ismailism and Ismailis in Africa, and the extent to which these works challenge the decades-long focus of the 'authentic' Islamic expressions of Muslims from the so-called 'heartlands' birthplace of Islam in the Middle East. Similarly, the paper will explore the extent to which the study of Ismailism and Ismailis in South Asia has informed studies of Ismailism and Ismailis in Africa. With reference to both the latter cases, the paper will explore how current calls for the 'decolonisation' of Western academia could serve to reposition and revitalize the study of Islam and Muslims in Africa and elsewhere, setting new directions and new critical engagements with the histories and futures of Africa's Ismaili Muslim communities.

Zulfikar Hirji (DPhil, Oxford) is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at York University, Toronto. His research explores knowledge production, representation and identity, material, visual and sensory cultures and critical pedagogies, with a focus on Islam and Muslim societies in a range of historical and contemporary contexts, particularly coastal East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean. He has conducted archival, field-based and community-engaged research in East Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Europe and North America. His published works include *Approaches to the Qur'an in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2019), *Islam: An Illustrated Journey* (2018) with F. Daftary, *Between Empires: Sheikh-Sir Mbarak al-Hinawy (1896–1959)* (2012), *Diversity and Pluralism in Muslim Contexts* (2010) and *The Ismailis: An Illustrated History* (2008) with F. Daftary.

David Hollenberg

The Early Phases of Ismailism and its Precursors: A Defence of the Social-Historical Model

As an independent group and movement, it has long been accepted that Ismailism's origins can be traced to ninth-century Khuzestan (in what is today southwest Iran) where Ismailism was first fully formed and quickly spread throughout the Islamic world. The fullest account of this history in modern historiography is Heinz Halm's magisterial *The Empire of the Mahdi*. This history is distinct from, but related to, Halm's textual studies of the so-called 'gnostic' groups of eighth-century Kufa that emerged in the generation following the death of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765) in the late eighth/early ninth century. In his work on the *'ghulāt'*, Halm emphasised that despite sharing some shared terminology and concepts, they were not directly related to the origins of Ismailism.

This last claim, that Ismailism should be viewed as separate from the eighth/ninth-century Kufan esotericists, has recently come under renewed scrutiny. The most substantial scholarship challenging this view is offered by some learned articles by Daniel De Smet. In light of the preservation of the early Kufan 'Mufaḍḍal tradition', sources in Ismaili libraries, as well as the adoption of their doctrinal schemata by later Tayyibi Ismailis, De Smet argues that Ismailism's initial phase should be traced to eighth-century Kufa.

In this paper, after rehearsing the evidence for both arguments, I argue that ultimately the social-historical model, first proposed by S.M. Stern and reaching its fullest form in Halm, remains the most useful. Similarities between 'proto-Ismailism' and other early *ghulāt* are less important than their differences.

David Hollenberg is Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Oregon and Senior Fellow at the UNESCO Crossings Institute. His research interests include Ismaili and Nusayri doctrine, Zaydi scholasticism and manuscript culture. He and co-Principal Investigator Mushegh Asatryan were recently awarded a three-year National Endowment for the Humanities Scholarly Editions and Translations grant to edit and translate the *Manhaj al-'ilm wa'l-bayān wa-nuzhat al-sama' wa'l-'iyān* (The Method of Knowledge and Clarification and the Pure Joy of Auditing and Witnessing,) a doctrinal treatise ascribed to the Nusayri author Muḥammad b. 'Alī 'Iṣmat al-Dawla (d. ca. 450/1058). His publications include *Beyond the Qur'an: Ismaili ta'wil and the Secrets of the Prophets* (2016).

Alice Hunsberger

The Development of Nāṣir-i Khusraw Studies

Since the mid-1970s, when I started my doctoral dissertation studies on Nāṣir-i Khusraw, the 11th-century Ismaili philosopher, poet and Fatimid missionary, I have witnessed a tremendous growth of academic and Jamati interest in this important Ismaili figure. The bibliography of my book published by the IIS in 2000, *Nāṣir-i Khusraw, The Ruby of Badakhshan*, lists only 18 studies under ‘Works About Nāṣir-i Khusraw’, beginning in 1879. But in the past 20 years, the IIS has led the way in publishing new scholarship on Nāṣir-i Khusraw, as well as preparing inspired educational materials for adults and young learners.

This paper aims to present not only the new translations and editions of Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s scholarly works, but also to show how deep the lessons have gone into the religious education curricular materials and programs. This paper will show the connection between the IIS’s stringent academic standards for scholars and its equally stringent standards for curriculum development — and the results. For example, in Edmonton, to show Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s travels, educators devised a day full of activities and learning stations. In Lisbon, working with IIS teachers, I watched high-school students in one day prepare and present a puppet show, sets and all, for nursery school classes, about Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s ‘Lessons from the Baths at Basra’. These living lessons are why IIS scholars must fret over commas, over the right balance in a line of translated poetry and over discovering the inner meanings that Ismaili writers such as Nāṣir-i Khusraw are trying to convey.

Alice Hunsberger gained her PhD on Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s philosophy from Columbia University. She is the author of the acclaimed biography *Nasir Khusraw, The Ruby of Badakhshan* (translated into five languages). She helped enlarge the field by organising an international conference in London (2005) to focus more scholars on the poetry of Nasir Khusraw, and published their articles in *Pearls of Persia: The Philosophical Poetry of Nasir-i Khusraw* (2012). A former Research Fellow at the IIS, Dr Hunsberger currently teaches Islamic Studies at SUNY Old Westbury.

Hussain Jasani

Reconstructing the History of Ginān Printing and Publication (Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries)

The gināns, the lyrical religious literature of Satpanthis, were part of the community’s oral traditions before they started being copied for personal and community usage in the late 17th century. The paper argues that the move from the tradition of producing handwritten texts to lithographs/printed texts was not driven by just religious zeal (as popularly believed) nor was only the result of the development of printing technology. The paper argues that it was due to the newly created demand across transnational settlements resulting from the 19th-century migration within

India and across the Indian Ocean regions. In doing so, the paper also attempts to reconstruct the prosopography of a marginalised actor, Allādin Ghulām Ḥusayn of the press Ghulām-i Ḥusayn Chhāpkhānu, who was a professional scribe (late 19th and early 20th century).

Allādin worked with the Oriental Printing Press, Mumbai, in the 1860s and played a crucial role as a witness in favour of Aga Khan III in a famous court case (1905–1908) involving the Ismaili Imam of the Time and his cousin, Haji Bibi. During the hearing, Allādin was questioned about his printing activities, and, in response, he spoke extensively about his publications. However, surprisingly, neither has his contribution to the printing and publication of *ginān* literature been acknowledged, nor have materials produced by him been studied. The paper brings to light over 50 hitherto unnoticed/unrecognised texts published between the 1860s and 1907 and discusses the importance of studying these lithographs and printed material produced by Allādin.

Hussain Jasani is Head of the South Asian Studies Unit at the IIS. Hussain is responsible for defining the strategic vision for the Unit, setting its research agenda and overseeing research projects. He also serves as a member of the Advisory Board for *The Encyclopaedia of the Ismailis*. Hussain is an IIS graduate and has an MA in Islamic Societies and Cultures from SOAS where he specialised in Islam in South Asia. He also has a Diploma in Religious Education from the Institute of Education, University of London. He is currently studying for his PhD at SOAS. 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.

Karim Javan

The Unfolding of the Proclamation of *qiyāma* in Alamut (559/1164)

Much has been said and written about ‘the proclamation of *qiyāma*’ in 559/1164 in Alamut, but there are yet many aspects that remain ambiguous for scholars in the field of Ismaili studies. Recently, some theological underpinnings of the event have been studied by scholars such as Henry Corbin, Christian Jambet, S.J. Badakhchani and Daniel De Smet, and much research has been focused on its doctrinal framework. However, one of the aspects requiring further research is the socio-political context of the event in which the *qiyāma* was announced.

This paper will investigate the circumstances in which the *qiyāma* unfolded, and see what reasons lay behind the decision of Ḥasan ‘Alā Dhikrihi al-Salām to initiate this extraordinary event. Relying on many primary sources of the Ismaili community, along with the available historiography of the time, this paper sheds light on different historical and ideological backgrounds of the declaration of the *qiyāma*. In this context, various historical events prior to the *qiyāma* are studied in order to examine which circumstances laid the foundation for the new era in which this long-awaited expectation was fulfilled. This paper examines events as early as the

initiation of the 'new *da'wa*', known as *Nizāriyya*, by Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ, as well as to what extent the early historical and doctrinal grounds ultimately led to the proclamation of *qiyāma* by Ḥasan 'Alā Dhikrihi al-Salām.

Karim Javan, Research Associate at the Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU), gained his BA and MA in Persian Literature from Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran, before pursuing the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities at the IIS (GPISH, class of 2004). He acquired an MPhil in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Cambridge. After graduation, he taught Persian on the graduate programmes of the IIS and the Aga Khan University–Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC). In 2014, he joined the ISCU, cataloguing Persian manuscripts held by the Aga Khan Library. In 2018, he obtained his PhD from SOAS for his thesis entitled '*Qiyāma* in Ismaili History: A Study on the Proclamation of Resurrection and its Historical Context'. Dr Javan is currently editing and translating a number of new Persian Ismaili texts from the Alamut and later periods of Ismaili history. He became a fellow of the HEA in 2021.

Shainool Jiwa

The Kalbids of Sicily: Stalwarts of Fatimid Ifrīqiya

The history of the Banū Abī'l-Ḥusayn al-Kalbī as the preeminent dynasty of Muslim Sicily is well-known. Ruling as Fatimid viceroys over the island for over a century, Kalbid rule commenced with the governorship of al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Kalbī (d. 353/964) in 336/948 during the reign of the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Manšūr bi'llāh (r. 334–341/946–953) and continued with brief interruptions until 445/1053. The pinnacle of Kalbid rule saw the flourishing of Muslim Sicily in seaborne trade and agriculture, distinct cultural developments on the island and the burgeoning of Muslim Palermo.

Though well-established as a dynasty who drew their legitimacy from Fatimid sovereignty, the synonymy of the Kalbids with Sicily has however largely overshadowed their broader role in mainland Fatimid Ifrīqiya. A close reading of Fatimid sources, notably *Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhar*, in conjunction with later medieval chronicles and biographical dictionaries, allows for a critical reconsideration of their role.

This paper traces the broader importance of the Kalbid dynasty in mainland Ifrīqiya, locating the Banū Abī'l-Ḥusayn as a dynastic house which gained influential positions in Fatimid lands. Through the careers of al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. al-Kalbī, his sons Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan (d. 358/969) and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan (d. 363/974), as well as al-Ḥasan b. 'Ammār al-Kalbī (d. 390/1000) amongst others, this paper situates the Kalbids as having close relations with, and a distinctive status at, the Fatimid court, while also being pivotal to Fatimid campaigns in Ifrīqiya and the Mediterranean littoral. The paper concludes by situating the Kalbids as an Ifrīqiyān dynasty whose functions and impact were second only to those of the Fatimids.

Shainool Jiwa is a specialist in Fatimid studies and a Senior Research Fellow at the IIS. Dr Jiwa's latest publication, *The Fatimids: 1. The Rise of a Muslim Empire* (2018) is a title in the World of Islam series, for which she also serves as the series General Editor. She is also a co-editor of *The Shi'i World: Pathways in Tradition and Modernity* (2015) and *The Fatimid Caliphate: Diversity of Traditions* (2017). Dr Jiwa has edited and translated key mediaeval Arabic texts relating to Fatimid history, including *Towards a Shi'i Mediterranean Empire* (2009) and *The Founder of Cairo* (2013).

Karim H. Karim

Contemporary Nizari Thought's Pragmatic Turn and the Centrality of Ethics

This paper maps contemporary Nizari Ismaili thought on current issues. Unlike the metaphysical inquiries of earlier periods, contemporary Nizari Ismaili thought has mainly sought to deal with the pragmatics of engaging the public sphere. This effort has largely been shaped by the current Imam's development-oriented activities which have become a prominent part of the community's focus. Concepts such as ethics, the enabling environment, pluralism, cosmopolitanism, civil society and meritocracy have generally been addressed using certain epistemological approaches from contemporary humanism, sociology and political science. This is distinct from past Ismaili thinkers' existentialist and cosmological concerns, expressed within earlier philosophical frameworks. Some isolated efforts have been made to examine the contemporary concepts in relation to themes from earlier thought, but a broad Nizari Ismaili philosophical approach dealing with present-day issues has yet to emerge.

The area of ethics is pivotal in current Nizari discourses; it implicates all other contemporary concepts. However, there has not been a comprehensive exploration of the topic, either within Muslim or post-Enlightenment Western frameworks, with the possibility of identifying an intellectual terrain for a coherent Nizari Ismaili approach in our times. Most of the work conducted to date has also tended not to engage substantially with historical Ismaili writings on ethics, like that of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, Naysābūrī, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Ṣadardīn and Mustanṣir b'illāh II. Such an exploration is likely to be illuminative, given the blend of the metaphysical and the pragmatic in some of these individuals' works.

Karim H. Karim is Chancellor's Professor at Carleton University and Director of the Carleton Centre for the Study of Islam, Ontario. He was previously Co-Director of the IIS and Director of Carleton's School of Journalism and Communication. Dr Karim is a prize-winning author and has published extensively on contemporary Ismaili topics. He has delivered several distinguished lectures at venues around the world. Dr Karim organised the Second International Ismaili Studies Conference (2017) and was the keynote speaker at the Third International Ismaili Studies Conference (2021). He has received an award from the Government of Canada for promoting co-operation between religious communities.

Shenila Khoja-Moolji

Writing-as-Witnessing: Reimagining Displaced Ismaili Muslim Women's Lifeworlds through Archival Marginalia

This paper emerges from my forthcoming book in which I tell the story of how Shi'a Ismaili Muslim women recreated community in the aftermath of multiple displacements over the course of the 20th century. Drawing on oral histories and memory texts, the book illuminates the placemaking practices through which these women refashion communal ties, and place themselves and their co-religionists in new environments.

This paper, in particular, considers cookbooks written by three displaced Ismaili women to uncover how they engage in memory-work and placemaking in the diaspora through the sharing and modification of Ismaili food cultures. Specifically, I examine Lella Umedaly's *Mamajee's Kitchen*, Noorbanu Nimji's *A Spicy Touch* volumes one through four, and Yasmin Alibhai-Brown's *The Settler's Cookbook*. In the hands of Ismaili women, the cookbook becomes a memoir, an advice manual, a testimony and a wish. Through them, they introduce readers to histories of communal encounters from East Africa to Canada, memorialise their past lives, pass on heritage food practices to the next generation and imagine familial and communal futures. They re-frame the trauma of displacement by crafting new forms of emplacement, rooting themselves in diasporic environments, discovering and interacting with other culinary histories and creating new ones. The cookbooks then are simultaneously mnemonic and aspirational; they show how we might both long and belong.

Shenila Khoja-Moolji is Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani Associate Professor of Muslim Societies at Georgetown University, and previously Assistant Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at Bowdoin College. Dr Khoja-Moolji is an interdisciplinary scholar working at the intersections of feminist theory, cultural studies and Islamic studies. Her research interests include Muslim girlhood(s), masculinities and sovereignty and Ismaili Muslim women's history. She investigates these topics empirically in relation to Muslims in Pakistan and the North American diaspora. She is the author of award-winning books, *Forging the Ideal Educated Girl: The Production of Desirable Subjects in Muslim South Asia* (2018) and *Sovereign Attachments: Masculinity, Muslimness, and Affective Politics in Pakistan* (2021). She is currently working on a book that traces the transnational lives of displaced Ismaili Muslim women.

Verena Klemm

Transregional and Regional Ismaili Tradition in Syria: Production, Transmission, Reception

What can be said about a literary history whose evidence, as in the case of the Syrian Ismailis, is largely hidden, unrecorded and, in the worst case, destroyed and lost? Which texts circulated here, and can we gain insights into their history, the conditions and forms of their transmission, their reception or their loss?

This paper provides insight into the production, transmission and reception of Ismaili literature in Syria. We will draw here, albeit selectively, on the insight potential the tradition offers, particularly as seen through a group of collective manuscripts (*majmū'āt*) now preserved in the Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU) of the IIS.

Verena Klemm is Director of the long-term project 'Bibliotheca Arabica. Towards a New History of Arabic Literature' at the Saxon Academy of Sciences, Leipzig. She was Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the University of Leipzig, specialising in culture and history until March 2022. She initiated several research projects to record and research the collection of Arabic, Persian and Ottoman manuscripts at the University of Leipzig, such as the project on the Damascus private library *al-Rifā'īyya*. Her publications cover the history and literature of the Fatimid period, Islamic manuscripts in a cultural-historical context and modern Arabic literature and literary debate.

Hermann Landolt

The Question by Kumayl b. Ziyād to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib: Some Notes on a Spurious Tradition Generating Important Interpretations

The famous question about 'the Truth', addressed by Kumayl b. Ziyād to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the latter's cryptic answers to him, is a tradition not recognised as authentic by the majority of learned traditionists, but has been the subject of numerous commentaries from the 12th century onwards up to modern times in Shi'i Iran. Perhaps not surprisingly, it was also at the core of Martin Heidegger's challenging of the presuppositions of traditional academic philosophy. The paper will focus on two questions: (1) Who might be considered the 'inventor' of this spurious tradition? And (2) Why did it generate commentaries reflecting different interpretations by many Sufis as well as members of the Shaykhī school of Shi'ism?

Hermann Landolt is Emeritus Professor, McGill University. Born in Basel, Switzerland, and educated in Basel and Paris, his research has been conducted mainly in Iran and Turkey. Professor Landolt has taught in various countries such as Canada, England, France and Indonesia and is now retired.

Daryoush Mohammad Poor

Theology and Metaphysics in Contemporary Ismaili Thought

Contemporary developments in the Ismaili community, as evident in the proliferation of institutionalisation of the Imamate and the community, have led many to argue that theology or metaphysics has now been driven into the shadows. Part of this claim stems from the fact that the current sophisticated network of Ismaili institutions has necessarily led to the development of a bureaucracy and the prominence of a

generation of elite managers and administrators. This new formation can arguably be described drawing upon the Weberian ideal type of legal-rational-bureaucratic leadership which is visibly distinct from a traditional or a charismatic style of leadership.

In this paper, I argue that, while certain aspects of classical metaphysics and *kalām* have become redundant in the contemporary world (even though Ismailis did not particularly welcome *kalām*), there is evidence to show that there is a contemporary articulation of the older issues in an evolutionary manner. Problems are there. But the argument that there is no metaphysics or sophisticated philosophy is a hasty conclusion.

Daryoush Mohammad Poor is a Senior Research Associate in the Department of Academic Research and Publications at the IIS, and a lecturer for the Department of Graduate Studies. His first monograph, *Authority without Territory: The Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili Imamate* (2014) is a fresh theoretical engagement with contemporary institutions of the Ismaili Imamate. His most recent book, *Command and Creation: A Shi'i Cosmological Treatise*, is a Persian edition and English translation of Muḥammad al-Shahrastānī's *Majlis-i maktūb* (2021). He is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy in the UK. He is also the series editor of the Ismaili Heritage Series.

Wafi Momin

Hagiography, Ideology and the Making of Satpanth Historiography

Historians have long grappled with the questions and problems surrounding the origins and growth of the Satpanth tradition in South Asia. On this issue, a large amount of scholarly work has focused on assessing and utilising the hagiographic tales and other stories from the ginān literature. In particular, scholars have looked at how relevant materials from the gināns shed light on better understanding the lives and mission of the charismatic saints, known as *pīrs* and *sayyids* in the tradition. Through such work, historians have sought to elucidate various facets in the development of the Satpanth tradition, drawing information from the ginān corpus and supplementing it with data gleaned from other sources.

Wafi Momin is Head of the Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU) at the IIS. Dr Momin also teaches courses on modern and contemporary Muslim societies and aspects of Islam in South Asia at the IIS. He received his doctorate in South Asian Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago, and has written on the Ismaili tradition in South Asia and its interaction with Indic religious currents.

Soumen Mukherjee

The Esoteric, the Mystical and the Study of Religion in Modern South Asia

Drawing upon select understudied strands of academic interventions in the field of religion from early 20th-century South Asia, this paper strives to retrieve a lost phase of that scholarship. This was a time when some of India's best minds in that field showed a sincerity in engagement with mysticism and esotericism that has remained unparalleled. This paper explores some of their broader conceptual and methodological issues and enquires whether these could help us better appreciate aspects of Ismaili studies. Reminiscent at one level of debates within the framework of Religionswissenschaft in the fin-de-siècle years, these scholars, with their focus on premodern religio-cultural encounters, gave expression to their discomfort with both the hegemonic colonial efforts to streamline religious identities in terms of binaries, and with contesting religious nationalist projects that thrived on that idiom of binary identities. For them — writing predominantly in the vernacular and, ironically, understudied even in post-colonial discourse — this was both a quest to accomplish an intellectual autonomy and also to re-inscribe India's cultural past.

Mysticism and esotericism provided effective technologies of the self with which to question hegemonic cultural impositions. What do we learn from their intellectual oeuvres and how do they help us re-examine such encounters as well as scholarship on the same for communities such as the Ismailis, which had historically maintained vibrant dialogues with kindred mystical traditions, cutting across the strictures of binary identities? Could we, finally, see their scholarship as early stirrings of a nuanced understanding of esotericism and mysticism, not qualified with the prefix of 'Islamic'/'Hindu'/'Buddhist', but as an alternative, shared entity lending each of them a common set of vocabularies for conversations?

Soumen Mukherjee, FRAS, holds a Doctorate in South Asian History (University of Heidelberg, 2010). He teaches History at Presidency University, Kolkata. His research interests and publications lie in the fields of the socio-religious and intellectual history of modern South Asia and their transcultural ramifications. He is the author of *Ismailism and Islam in Modern South Asia: Community and Identity in the Age of Religious Internationals* (2017) and joint editor (with Christopher Harding) of the peer-reviewed themed issue, *South Asian History and Culture*, 9 (2018), entitled 'Mind, Soul and Consciousness: Religion, Science and the Psy-disciplines in Modern South Asia'.

Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev

The Muḥammad-Shāhī and Qāṣim-Shāhī Nīzāris in Badakhshan and their Unification in the 17th Century

In the second quarter of the 14th century, the Nizari Ismailis bifurcated into the Muḥammad-Shāhī and Qāṣim-Shāhī branches. Modern scholars are of the opinion that the population of the mountainous regions of Badakhshan followed the line of the Muḥammad-Shāhī Imams until the 18th century when that line of Imams ended, whereas the Qāṣim-Shāhī line survived until modern times. The focus of this presentation will be on the unification of the Muḥammad-Shāhīs with the Qāṣim-Shāhīs in the 17th and 18th centuries in Badakhshan.

Based on narratives preserved in the *Silk-i Gawhar-rīz* and other sources, I discuss the socio-religious changes that led to the transformation and eventual unification of the Nizari Ismailis in Badakhshan. I highlight the role of local religious dignitaries such as the *pīr*, *khalīfa*, *rāhī* and *hādī* and their role in the unification process.

Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev is a Research Associate and Projects Coordinator in the Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU) at the IIS. He obtained his BA in Oriental Studies, specialising in Arabic and Persian languages and literature, from Khorog State University, Tajikistan. Dr Nourmamadchoev holds an MPhil in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies from Cambridge University and a PhD in History from SOAS. His doctoral thesis was entitled 'The Ismā'īlīs of Badakhshan: History, Politics and Religion from 1500 to 1750', which was supervised by Dr Heidi A Walcher and Dr Konrad Hirschler. He teaches in various educational programmes of the IIS and serves as a supervisor for the STEP programme.

Ismail Poonawala

Taking Stock of Extant Ismaili Manuscripts and the State of their Publications Indicating the Progress in Ismaili Studies

This paper intends first to survey the total book production of the Ismaili *da'wa* from its early beginning through various historical phases taking in Iran, Yemen, North Africa and Egypt until the collapse of the Fatimid empire in 567/1171. The paper continues with the Yemeni phase of the Musta'li-Tayyibi *da'wa* up to the year 973/1566 when its headquarters were moved from Yemen to the west coast of India. The sources, in addition to the published Ismaili and non-Ismaili works, such as the seven-volume set of '*Uyūn al-akhbār by Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn* and '*Aqā'id al-thalātha wa'l-sab'īna firqa* by Abū Muḥammad al-Yamanī, include the author's own access to various public and private family collections, particularly in the Indian subcontinent. This review of the edited works will be arranged according to various disciplinary

fields with critical remarks and evaluations.

Ismail Poonawala is Professor Emeritus of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he has taught since 1974. He has also taught at McGill and Harvard universities. A specialist in Ismaili history and doctrines, he is the author of *Biobibliography of Ismaili Literature* (1977), a comprehensive survey of Ismaili authors and their writings including manuscript holdings in public and private collections. Recently, he edited *Turks in the Indian Subcontinent, West and Central Asia: Turkish Presence in the Islamic World* (2016).

Tahera Qutbuddin

Principles of Fatimid *ta'wīl* in the *Majālis Mu'ayyadiyya* of al-Mu'ayyad fī al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī

For Muslims, the Qur'an and shari'a brought by the Prophet Muhammad in the early 7th century CE constitute God's message to humankind. Since the very beginning of Islam, they have sought to understand their true meaning. They grappled with some of the Qur'an's apparent contradictions. The Fatimid hermeneutic — culminating in the *Majālis* of pre-eminent Fatimid scholar al-Mu'ayyad fī'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078) — answered these questions by harmonising revelation and reason through the divinely guided, authoritative exposition of the living Imam from the line of the Prophet Muhammad and his Legatee 'Alī. In a recent article, I have distilled and analysed ten interdependent principles of Fatimid symbolic scriptural interpretation, *ta'wīl*, from the *Majālis Mu'ayyadiyya* that together articulate a comprehensive, coherent and logical system of hermeneutics: (1) the rationality of faith; (2) inversion of the literary perception of real and figurative; (3) harmonisation of the physical and spiritual worlds; (4) mutual validation of the exoteric and esoteric aspects of the shari'a; (5) the substance of *ta'wīl* manifest in God's unity, God's call and the system and hierarchy of spiritual ascension; (6) the concept of living history, with the stories of the prophets reflected in Muhammad's mission; (7) the methodology of *ta'wīl*, presented through scriptural evidence and rational proofs; (8) *ta'wīl* as the true knowledge integral to salvation; (9) the sole authority of the divinely guided Prophet, Legatee and Imam to interpret the Qur'an and shari'a; and (10) the rationale for *ta'wīl*.

Tahera Qutbuddin is Professor of Arabic Literature, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, the University of Chicago. She holds a PhD from Harvard University. Professor Qutbuddin's scholarship focuses on intersections of the literary, the religious and the political in classical Arabic poetry and prose. Using this interdisciplinary approach, she conducts research in the areas of classical Arabic oratory and Islamic preaching (*khutba*); the Qur'an, the hadith traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and the sermons and sayings of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib; Fatimid poetry; Tayyibi (and Da'udi Bohra) history and literature; and Arabic in India.

Maryam Rezaee

Higher Education and Iranian Ismaili Women's Empowerment

This paper endeavours to bridge a gap in the current literature regarding Ismaili women in tertiary education in Iran. It will explore the impact of tertiary education on Ismaili women's empowerment in the cities of Mashhad and Tehran. The paper's findings are drawn from interviews with women and two questionnaires. To analyse the relationship between empowerment and higher education, this paper will look beyond the direct and immediate economic outcomes and take into account long-term and indirect results. In this regard, Rowland and Kabeeer's models of empowerment, Stomquist's theory of the indirect relationship and Sen's concept of human capability, are explored.

Maryam Rezaee is a lecturer and a research consultant at the IIS. Dr Rezaee holds a PhD in Politics from the University of York, an MSc in Gender and Social Policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a BA in Mathematics from the University of Al-Zahra in Tehran. She has 12 years of teaching and research experience at the IIS, including teaching courses on an Introduction to Shi'ism, Research Design and Methods, and Modern Ismailism with particular reference to the Ismailis of Iran, and History. Her research interests include women and development, education, Islam and religion, ritual and cultural studies and Ismaili heritage. She has presented several papers and two documentaries at national and international conferences.

Amier Saidula

The Cultural Identity of the Ismailis of China in the 21st Century

The Ismailis in China are one of the thirteen historical groups inhabiting the Xinjiang region. Geo-culturally Xinjiang belongs to the Central-Asian cultural sphere. The region maintained its Islamic and Central Asian cultural identity even after it was annexed by the Manchu Qing dynasty in the late 18th century. After becoming part of China, de facto cultural autonomy persisted among the ethno-culturally diverse inhabitants of the region and mitigated the impact of political dominance by the Chinese. While the natives of Xinjiang were allowed to run their day-to-day life in accordance with their Islamic and Central-Asian heritage, political power was concentrated in the hands of the Han Chinese without much resentment from locals. This arrangement worked until the cultural life of ethnic minorities was upended by the endless political campaigns of the Chinese, especially under communist rule.

Amier Saidula is a Senior Research Associate at the Central Asian Studies Unit of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. He completed his graduate studies at North-western University of Political Science and Law in Xi'an China, with a degree in Chinese Laws. He also holds a degree in Chinese Culture and Chinese Language from the North-western University of Nationalities in Lanzhou, China. He completed postgraduate study on Islamic Studies and Humanities at the

IIS and holds a Master of Laws (LLM) from SOAS, University of London. Dr Saidula obtained his PhD in Anthropology from the University of Edinburgh. His main research interest is the culture and traditions of the Ismailis in China.

Devin J. Stewart

The Debate of Abū'l-Faṭḥ al-Karājīkī (d. 449/1057) on Legal Analogy at the Dār al-'Ilm in Fatimid Cairo

From extant records, Abū'l-Faṭḥ al-Karājīkī (d. 449/1057) appears to be a scholar of secondary importance in the Twelver tradition, less prominent than his main professor, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, the leading Twelver scholar of Buwayhid Baghdad. However, modern scholars may be underestimating his standing simply because of the capricious attention given by the Twelver biographical tradition to scholars in Egypt and Syria during his time, and the parallel fact that many of those scholars' works have not survived. However, primarily on account of the survival of his major anthology, *Kanz al-fawā'id* (The Treasury of Instructive Lore), al-Karājīkī stands out in a number of ways. He was profoundly engaged in the theological debates of his day, with Sunnis and with Ismaili, Zaydi and Twelver Shi'a, with the Twelver legal tradition and even with astronomy — something rare among Twelver jurists. He also wrote commentaries on Ismaili works — notably on al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's *Da'ā'im al-Islām* (The Pillars of Islam), which later biographers took as evidence, erroneously, that al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān was a Twelver.

This study includes the translation and analysis of a debate at the Dār al-'Ilm in Cairo between al-Karājīkī and a Sunni jurist on legal analogy. Examination of this text provides information regarding the operations of Dār al-'Ilm, a famous but somewhat elusive Fatimid institution studied by Heinz Halm, Paul Walker and others, drawing mainly on an account by al-Maqrīzī. It also sheds light on debates regarding legal theory in the 5th/11th century and shows al-Karājīkī's debt to al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's work on legal hermeneutics, *Ikhtilāf uṣūl al-madhāhib*.

Devin Stewart gained a BA in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University in 1984 and a PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 1991. He has taught at Emory University since 1990. His research focuses on the Twelver and Ismaili traditions of Shi'i Islam and other topics in Arabic and Islamic studies. His publications include *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shiite Responses to the Sunni Legal System* (1998), *Disagreements of the Jurists* [an edition and translation of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's *Ikhtilāf uṣūl al-madhāhib*] (2015) and *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (co-authored, 2001).

Antonella Straface

On the Understanding of *ḥajj*: A 10th-century Ismaili Interpretation of Pilgrimage

The aim of the paper is to examine *ḥajj*, as described in the *Kitāb al-ʿIftikhār*, the last work of the 10th-century *dāʿī* Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī, who devoted the last chapters of this treatise to the esoteric interpretation of the *arkān al-Islām*. Applying *taʿwīl* to *ḥajj*, al-Sijistānī distinguished exoteric from esoteric pilgrimage; he related the first to the ‘physical house’ of God, namely the Kaʿba in Mecca, and the second to His ‘spiritual house’, that is the Imam. Unlike the ‘physical house’, the ‘spiritual house’ will not undergo decay and corruption.

Antonella Straface is Associate Professor of History of Islamic Thought and of History of Philosophical and Scientific Doctrines in Islamic World at the Department of Asian and African Studies of Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”. The field of her research is Ismailism in mediaeval times. Among her latest publications are a series of articles on the esoteric interpretation of the ‘pillars of Islam’ according to the opinion of Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 971) and the monograph *Ismailiti: storia e dottrina* (2019).

Jamel Velji

A History of Religions Approach to Ismaili Studies? Possibilities and Pitfalls

Categories that we generally use to study religion in the academy — myth, ritual and the sacred, for instance — were devised largely without data from Islamic religious traditions. At the same time, scholars of Islamic religious traditions often deploy tools outside the religious studies frameworks to study Islamic phenomena. This paper argues that the recent proliferation of research in Ismaili studies provides a rich wellspring of data that can add to our understanding of the constituent components of religion itself. After providing specific examples for possible engagement, I highlight the potential pitfalls of some of these approaches, the latter largely informed by sustained engagement with undergraduate audiences.

Jamel Velji is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Claremont McKenna College. His work lies at the intersection of Islamic studies and religious studies, and he is particularly concerned with the ways in which narratives, rituals and symbols can effect social transformations. He has written extensively on various aspects of apocalypticism, and his book *An Apocalyptic History of the Early Fatimid Empire* is the inaugural volume of Edinburgh University Press’s series on Islamic Eschatology and Apocalypticism. His current research examines the Islamic history of coffee, and how that history becomes retold in various European and American contexts.

Shafique N. Virani

Pir Sabzali and the Missing Sources of Ismaili History

It was an age of empires. Communist Russia's Asian expansion threatened to collide with British interests in India, the 'jewel in the crown'. Neighbouring China, itself largely at the mercy of a bevy of warlords, looked on. Rudyard Kipling had memorably described the shrewd espionage, crafty exploration and imperialistic diplomacy throughout Central Asia as 'the Great Game'. In 1923, a new spectator, and perhaps unwitting participant, entered the Game — an Indian gentleman named Sabzali. Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, leader of the Ismaili Muslims, sent Sabzali on an arduous mission to establish contact with the isolated Ismaili communities in the mountainous regions of Central Asia. Sabzali kept a remarkable diary in Gujarati about the harrowing journey, which I recently rediscovered. This discovery has the potential to transform our understanding of modern Ismailism. I am currently preparing a bibliography of Ismaili publications in South Asian languages, and this paper on the sources for the study of Pir Sabzali provides a heuristic device that will give us insights into the types of unexplored primary source materials available for the study of Ismailism in a variety of languages and formats. It will also draw attention to the existing collections of such literature, and the need to have them systematically preserved.

Shafique N. Virani received his PhD from Harvard University. He is Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Toronto and founded the Center for South Asian Civilizations. His research focusses on Ismaili and Twelver Shi'ism, Qur'anic studies, Sufism, and Arabic, Persian and South Asian Muslim literatures. Translated into over 20 languages, his work has received awards and recognition from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the American Academy of Religion, and the Middle East Studies Association, among others. Describing him as 'a visionary', UNESCO honoured him for dedicating his efforts 'to the cause of extending the frontiers of knowledge and the welfare of humankind.'

Paul Walker

The Dangers of Doctrinal Interpretation of Key Concepts and Events in Ismaili History

Allowing doctrine to play a determining role in deciding what happened or did not at various points in Ismaili history is often inevitable to some degree and need not be totally avoided in all cases. However, scholars who allow it should always be conscious of doing so and generally admit as much. Failure to address an issue in question openly gives the impression of partisan advocacy trying to pass as impartial scholarship when it is not. Still the situations where the matter arises are many and varied and not necessarily always obvious and therefore recognised or admitted. They are often by no means alike.

In this presentation/discussion, the author turns to four cases that potentially bring up the possibility of interpretation based on doctrine rather than evidence in the historical record. The selected ones are: First, the name of the first Fatimid caliph; was it 'Abdallāh or 'Ubaydallāh, a matter more of interest than profound importance? Second, the dating of the *Rasā'il Ikhwan al-Ṣafā'*, a complicated problem with a variety of solutions offered by modern scholarship, some of which seem to favour a Bohra tradition, or lean in that direction, despite little evidence to support it. Third, the claimed designation of Nizār by his father, a point typically taken for granted as well established by those repeating this claim but for which no evidence of such a designation is cited, nor is the opposing case of al-Musta'ī, which is partly based on the non-existence of any such previous designation, mentioned. Finally and fourth, the curious matter of Shahrastānī's sectarian affiliation as either openly or secretly Ismaili. The evidence here is admittedly difficult and does indeed require interpretation. However, it is also susceptible to the influence of doctrine in place of careful analysis, perhaps a wish to claim the allegiance of the famous author by twisting a few facts in that direction.

Paul Walker is Deputy Director for Academic Programs, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Chicago, (PhD University of Chicago, 1974) and was director of the American Research Center in Cairo for over ten years (1976–86). He has published numerous papers and more than a dozen books, among them *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī* (1993); with Wilferd Madelung, *An Ismaili Heresiography: The 'Bāb al-Shayṭān' from Abū Tammām's Kitāb al-Shajara* (1998); *Ḥamid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Hākīm* (1999); with Wilferd Madelung, *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shi'i Witness* (2000); *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and Its Sources* (2002); *Caliph of Cairo: al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, 996–1021* (2009); and most recently, also with Wilferd Madelung, *Affirming the Imamate: Early Fatimid Teachings in the Islamic West*, an edition and English translation of works attributed to Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shī and His Brother Abū'l-'Abbās (2021).



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