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THE INSTITUTE OF ISMAILI STUDIES

# UPDATE



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

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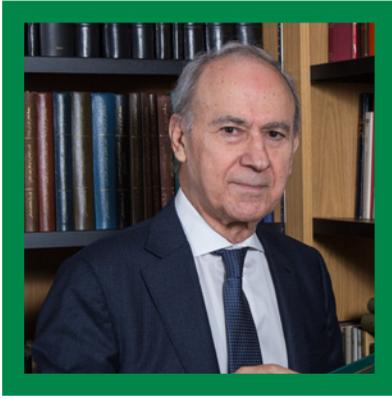
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Front Cover: Geometric Pattern A photograph of the geometric pattern designed by Fumihiko Maki, that adorns both the interior and exterior of the student residence building at King's Cross. In Islamic art geometric patterns represent the primordial symbol of unity and the ultimate source of all diversity in creation. Photo credit: Jamil Teja.





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

Dear Friends,

Since its inception, the Institute has enabled Ismaili heritage to be studied and shared. One of the distinct features of the IIS is its diversity. It is an intellectual space, where a range of scholars, educators and students collaborate, and learn from one another. This synthesis of ideas and projects enables the Institute to continue the rich tradition of pluralism and cosmopolitanism that has existed in Muslim cultures and societies throughout the centuries, and which the Institute continues to strive to embody.

In continuing this legacy, the Institute hosted two international conferences in 2016; *Fatimids and Umayyads: Competing Caliphates*, which brought together specialists on two major Muslim dynasties, to examine how the cultural and historical legacies of these dynasties interacted. The second conference drew on scholars of Ismaili studies from around the world, to discuss *Intellectual Interactions in the Islamic World: The Ismaili Thread*. Both conferences aimed to facilitate intellectual exchanges, address comparative approaches, and examine doctrinal as well as historical linkages between the Ismailis and others. We hope to publish both sets of conference proceedings in the near future. Through our publications we

continue to contribute to the field of Islamic studies and are proud to have published twelve books last year.

Preserving heritage has always been at the forefront of our work, and I am pleased to report that steady and systematic progress has continued on the Manuscript Analysis Project, with the mapping of over half of some 3000 manuscripts in our collection. This is a very important area for future scholarship and research in Ismaili studies, for the Institute and for academic communities more broadly. Through an in-depth analysis and mapping exercise, a number of important manuscripts from our collections have been identified, and edited in the original languages, as well as translated into English, as part of our Ismaili Texts and Translations Series, making them available for global scholarship.

The Institute also continues to build on its solid academic track record. The successful outcome of the Higher Education Review (HER) by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in April 2016, confirmed that the Institute operates at commendable standards within the UK Higher Education sector – a testament to the continued dedication of our staff, faculty and the commitment of our graduate students. Building on these achievements, we have established a Quality Assurance and Evaluation Unit that will focus on all quality related activities, particularly preparations for the forthcoming annual QAA review in May 2017.

At the IIS we strive to ensure that whilst our research meets the highest academic standards, it continues to respond to the needs of its constituencies, ensuring that we build a bridge between the knowledge that we produce and the needs of society, especially the Jamat. In the service of this aim, we continue to expand the production of secondary education materials for the global Ismaili community. In 2016 we published *Encounters in Muslim History: Volume*

2 – a module which broadens the students' understanding of Muslim history from the 11th to the 18th centuries, across diverse geographies.

Looking to our future, we have already established our presence in London's King's Cross area, with the opening of a student accommodation building – a pivotal marker in the Institute's future history. A bespoke, high quality building, which facilitates individual study and communal interaction, as well as supporting the multi-cultural ethos of the Institute. In a similar vein, the opening of our new academic building at King's Cross in 2018, will soon pave the way for the creation of more aesthetical, physical and intellectual spaces, whilst enhancing the educational remit of the Institute.

In 2017, we will be celebrating significant milestones in the history of the IIS, including the Diamond Jubilee of His Highness the Aga Khan, beginning in July, and marking the Institute's 40th anniversary in November. During this time, I am looking forward to launching a new publication series – *World of Islam* – which will be a series of accessible monographs for broad audiences in general, and the Jamat in particular.

I am delighted and honoured to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of the friends and supporters of the IIS for your kind generosity and continuous commitment to our multi-faceted efforts. I invite you to remain engaged with the IIS, and hope that this *Update* magazine will help us to stay connected.

*Farhad Daftary*

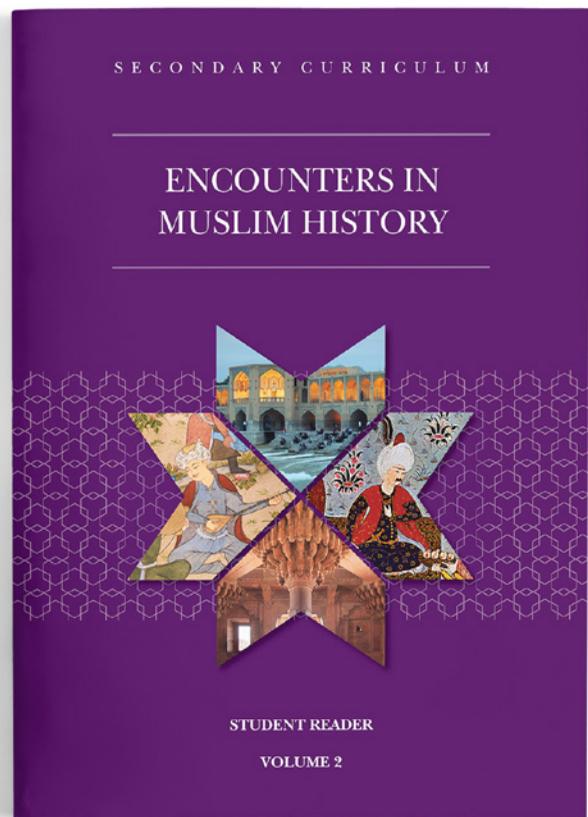
# Encounters in Muslim History

## Volume 2

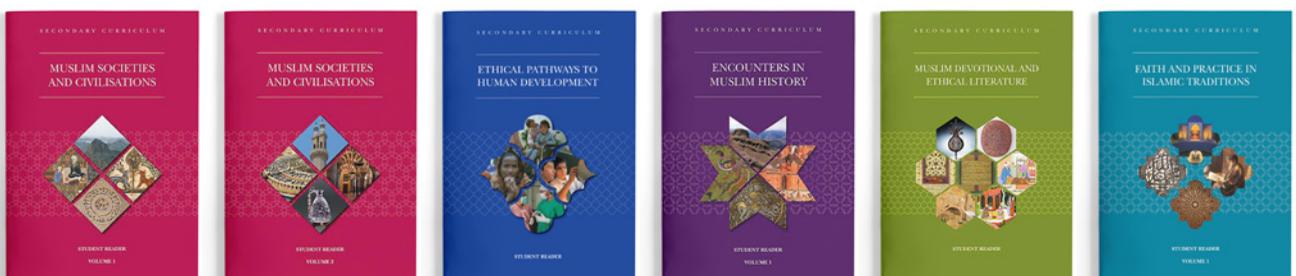
The recently launched Encounters in Muslim History module is designed to foster an understanding of Muslim history between the eleventh and eighteenth centuries.

### Overview

*Encounters in Muslim History* is the second of a series of three modules on the subject of Muslim history in the Secondary Curriculum. It continues the historical narrative presented in *Muslim Societies and Civilisations*, and prepares students for the *Muslims in the Contemporary World* module. *Encounters in Muslim History* bridges the formative and classical periods to the contemporary period, and provides an introduction to developments in Muslim and neighbouring lands from the eleventh to the eighteenth century. It examines selected facets of Muslim societies in diverse regions, including the Near East, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, China, and East and West Africa. The volume aims to deepen students' interest in the study of history, and refine their historical thinking skills. As with the other modules, this volume enables students to engage with primary sources as well as images, timelines, maps, charts, and other features representing different ways of organising historical content. Through questions and activities, students are encouraged to analyse primary sources, and are made aware of the possibility of multiple interpretations of historical evidence.



The range of modules available as part of the IIS' Secondary Curriculum include:



## The Safavid Empire

### ORIGINS OF THE SAFAVIDS

The origins of the Safavids are linked to a Sufi order, the Safawiyya, based in Ardabil, in Azerbaijan. The order was founded by Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili, a Sunni of the Shafi'i *madhhab*. Shaykh Safi's followers credited him with mystical experiences and visions. As with many of the Sufi *shaykhs* and *pirs*, Shaykh Safi claimed a spiritual lineage to Hazrat Imam Ali. In addition to being pious, Shaykh Safi was an astute merchant and politician. According to sources, most of the people of Ardabil eventually became *murids* of the *shaykh*.

### The Safawiyya gain political power

By the early 1400s, the number of Safawiyya had increased greatly, not only in Anatolia and Azerbaijan, but also across northern Syria. Many of the *futuwwat* in these regions pledged allegiance to the order.

When Shah Junayd, a descendant of Shaykh Safi, became leader of the order, he transformed the brotherhood. Junayd adopted the title of 'shah' and formed a marriage alliance with the leader of the main Turkic tribal group in control of Persia. He converted the role of *shaykh* from that of a purely religious leader to one also involved with political affairs.

Junayd's son Haydar, who succeeded his father as the master of the order, claimed he had been instructed by Imam Ali in a dream to design a distinctive cap for his followers (called the *taj*, or 'coronet'), cut out of scarlet cloth. This cap had twelve points, commemorating the twelve Imams of the Ithna Ashari Shias. As a result, the Safawiyya Sufi soldiers became known as the *qizilbash* ('redheads'). The *qizilbash*, who were mainly Turkic peoples, regarded Shah Haydar as a special emissary from God.

### Questions for reflection



- What did Shaykh Safi claim as the basis of his spiritual authority?
- How was the authority of Shah Junayd and Shah Haydar different from the leadership of Shaykh Safi?
- In what ways are the origins of the Safavids and Ottomans similar? How do they differ in their rise to power?



### Shaykh Safi

This Persian watercolour dates from c. 1582, and shows Shaykh Safi and others sitting down to a meal of fruit and meat. As a villager brings a platter of meat, Shaykh Safi tells the diners to wait until he has blessed the food.

In another story, Shaykh Safi was asked by an adviser to the Il-khanid ruler: 'Who are more numerous, your *murids* or my men?' Shaykh Safi is said to have answered: 'In Persia today, for every man at arms there are one hundred men of devotion.'

UNIT 5.2

**The Selimiye Mosque**

Sinan considered the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne (facing page; detail on the right) as his finest work. Constructed under the patronage of Selim II, the mosque was compared to the magnificent Hagia Sophia, built a millennium earlier by the emperor Justinian. Upon completion of the mosque, Sinan is said to have boasted:

*Those who consider themselves architects among the Christians say that in the realm of Islam no dome can equal that of Hagia Sophia; they say that no Muslim architect would be able to build such a large cupola. In [the Selimiye] Mosque, with the help of Allah and the support of Sultan Selim Khan, I erected a dome six cubits [c. 2.7 metres] higher and four cubits [c. 1.8 metres] wider than the dome of Hagia Sophia.*

**Ottoman culture**

The Ottomans gained control of many ports, such as those along the Black Sea, from which all other vessels were excluded. Trade within the Ottoman world increased greatly as a result.

In the major cities, government functionaries were responsible for spreading an official Ottoman style to the new territories. The Imperial Corps of Court Architects, for example, was responsible for preparing designs, procuring materials, and supervising construction of all buildings sponsored by the royal family and high officials. The royal scriptorium designed the

patterns for carpets, tiles, metalwork and textiles produced in imperial-funded workshops. In this way, the Ottomans sought to spread their culture as well as rule.



**The Ottoman world**



### The Contents of the Volumes

The module consists of two volumes. The first volume – which was published in 2014 – covered the period between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, focusing on: the rise of the Saljuq dynasty; the Ismaili *da'wa* as it developed in Persia, Syria, and Central Asia; and the engagements of Muslims with the Crusaders and the Mongols.

The second volume covers significant developments which occurred in Muslim regions in the post-Mongol period. These include the growth of a global trade system and the rise of various empires, including those of the Ottomans, the Safavids, and the Mughals.

The volume also continues with the exploration of the diverse expressions of Islam in various parts of Asia and Africa. The history of the Ismaili Imamate and Ismaili communities in different periods forms an important part of both volumes.

## The Three Units:

1

### Exchanges across Continents

Introducing some of the major events of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the unit includes the history of the Ismaili Imams and communities following the capture of Alamut by the Mongols. Also explored here is the rise of the Timurid Empire in this period. Another topic examined in this unit is the ancient trading routes, collectively known as the Silk Road, which were largely controlled by networks of Muslim traders. This exploration is extended to cover the Indian Ocean and Trans-Saharan trade routes. Students are led to examine the role played by Muslim merchants, scholars, artisans and preachers in the transmission of Islam along these routes.

2

### The Ottomans and the Safavids

Beginning with the establishment and development of the Ottoman Empire, this unit pays particular attention to the period of Suleyman, the sultan under whom the Ottomans are said to have reached their peak. The relationships that developed during this time between European nations and the Ottomans are also analysed.

The unit proceeds to examine the Safavids as the rulers of another major empire of this period. It traces the emergence of the Safavid movement, founded by the Sufi religious leader Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili. The movement gave rise to the Safavid dynasty, which became a powerful political force in Persia, and which established Shia Ithna Ashari Islam as the religion of the state.

3

### Empires in Transition

The final unit of the module begins by examining the re-emergence of the Ismaili Imams in the fifteenth century in Anjudan, in Persia. Of significance here is the revival of Nizari Ismaili literature as reflected in the writings of the Imams and *da'is*. Also covered here is the Ismaili Satpanth tradition in South Asia, and its relation to the genre of religious lyrics known as the *ginans*.

The study broadens to trace the origins of the Mughals and the expansion of their rule in the Indian subcontinent and parts of Afghanistan. A review of Emperor Akbar's rule leads to an exploration of Mughal art, architecture, scholarship, trade and diplomacy, and relationships between religious communities based on the principle of social harmony.

### Explore further

Continue your learning journey by visiting the IIS website at [www.iis.ac.uk](http://www.iis.ac.uk) where you can find accessible articles and a number of reading guides on books exploring aspects of Muslim history and civilisations.

# A Preview of the *World of Islam* Series



◆ A tiraz fabric dated to the era of al-Mu'izz (10th century). A Fatimid tiraz was usually produced in state-controlled factories which in this period were often managed by al-Ustadh Jawdhar. The inscription on this tiraz reads 'In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. May God's blessings be upon Muhammad, Seal of the Prophets, and his family ... from God ... for the servant of God and His believer, Ma'ad al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah'. *Image courtesy of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.*

Coinciding with the celebration of the His Highness the Aga Khan's Diamond Jubilee, The Institute of Ismaili Studies is launching a new accessible series, *World of Islam*. Why is this important and what makes it different?

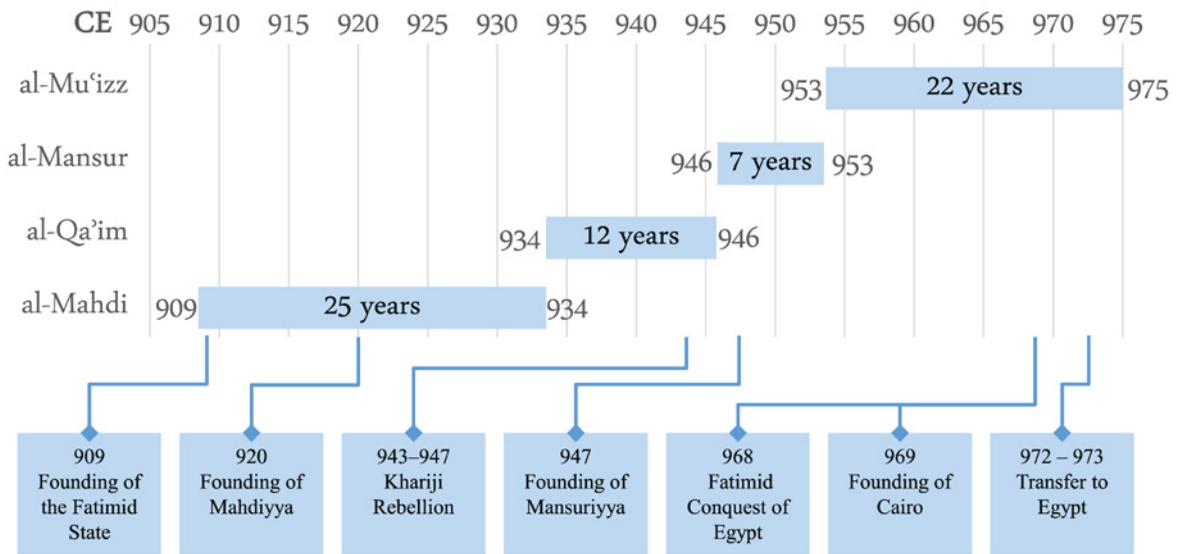
Interesting. Understandable. Relevant. These are things we all look for in our reading matter. Stop and think for a moment: what do you read? And what do you *enjoy* reading? The specific answers to these questions will be different for all of us, but in general we will find that there are things we must read and things we choose to read, as well as the emails, media updates, and advertising that end up eating into our day. Up until now, the publications of the Institute of Ismaili Studies have been academic books written by scholars and, for the most part, aimed at scholars. The expanding field of Ismaili studies has developed enormously in recent years, and the

situation of only a hundred years ago, when Ismaili literature, practices and beliefs were almost unknown outside of the Ismaili community, has been utterly transformed. These changes are largely thanks to certain key pioneers, such as Vladimir Ivanov, Wilferd Madelung and Farhad Daftary, amongst others. Through their careful research and analysis, a robust body of knowledge concerning the Ismailis has now been established. On an institutional level, the work of the IIS has proved pivotal in advancing the field, and its contribution is recognised and respected across the world.

Nonetheless, excellent scholarship does not always make for easy

reading. For some time, the IIS has been aware that there is a need to create material that will communicate Ismaili-related themes and concepts to a general readership, particularly amongst the Ismaili community. The IIS therefore set out to devise a completely new series characterised by its accessibility. The idea was that reading out of duty could become reading for pleasure. The *World of Islam* series was born.

Several defining aspects were identified in terms of what 'accessible' would mean for this project. Foremost, the series is driven by interesting and relevant subjects, which are presented in an easy-to-understand style that not only conveys



◆ Timeline of the Fatimid Imam-caliphs in Ifriqiya. Image courtesy of *The Institute of Ismaili Studies*.



◆ A green glass plaque moulded in Ifriqiya in the 10th century. In the middle of the representation of a griffin, the inscription reads 'al-Imam al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah'. Image courtesy of *Sotheby's, London*.

essential information but also gets readers a bit more excited about the topics. The books themselves are concise and portable, to fit in with busy lifestyles; they also combine

distinctive visuals with an affordable price. But the series is not limited to printed books alone: e-books will be simultaneously available, and audiobooks and translations into other

languages will follow. The IIS website is to be another valuable resource, providing additional content that over time builds into a digital repository.

We met up with Shainool Jiwa, the General Editor of the series, to learn more about the *World of Islam*.

### How is this series different to past IIS endeavours?

Our focus is ‘accessibility’, and we are really striving to bring these books – and the important ideas they contain – to a far broader audience. Having established ourselves in the academic domain of Islamic studies, we made a decision to present the fruits of our research in a language and approach that speaks to the sensibilities of the community and the general reader. So everything about this series will be more immediate: the style of writing will be easier to relate to, the ‘look’ will be more appealing and will include visuals, and as well as being attractively priced, the books themselves will be small enough to carry in a jacket-pocket or handbag. Furthermore, the Institute will also be producing e-books and audiobooks to cater for audience preferences.

### What are the first books of the series, and how were they selected?

Over years of consultation, a number of themes have been suggested by the Ismaili community. These core themes have been reviewed, and based on the topics and experts that we have in the field, the initial selection was made. The first instalment of publications will be *The Fatimids: The Rise of a Muslim Dynasty* (Shainool Jiwa) and *The Ismaili Imams: A Biographical History* (ed. Fayaz Alibhai). This was a good opportunity for us to exploit our strengths by taking familiar IIS authors and themes and adapting them to the new series style. In the future, we hope to diversify the themes.

### Sometimes history can seem very remote, but reading your book *The Fatimids: The Rise of a Muslim Dynasty*, it’s interesting to see how many things remain relevant today. Speaking as a historian, why would you say it’s important to know about the past?

Simply put, our past shapes our present. The past is never a by-gone age; it shapes who we are, our value system and identity, and informs our consciousness. Through an understanding of the Fatimids, we are further able to understand the manifestations of the Ismaili Imam in history. His Highness the Aga Khan has previously reminded us that the Fatimid epoch in our history is a significant precursor of attitudes that are appropriate for the 21st century. It was a time in which intellect played a major role in society, and when relations between Muslims and non-Muslims were admirable: warm and respectful. So, there is much to be learnt from the Fatimid period of our history that can help inform the way we live our lives today.

### In your book, you describe Qadi al-Nu‘man’s interaction with the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mu‘izz over a text al-Nu‘man was asked to write which would be straightforward and ‘light on the pocket’. Can you say something about that?

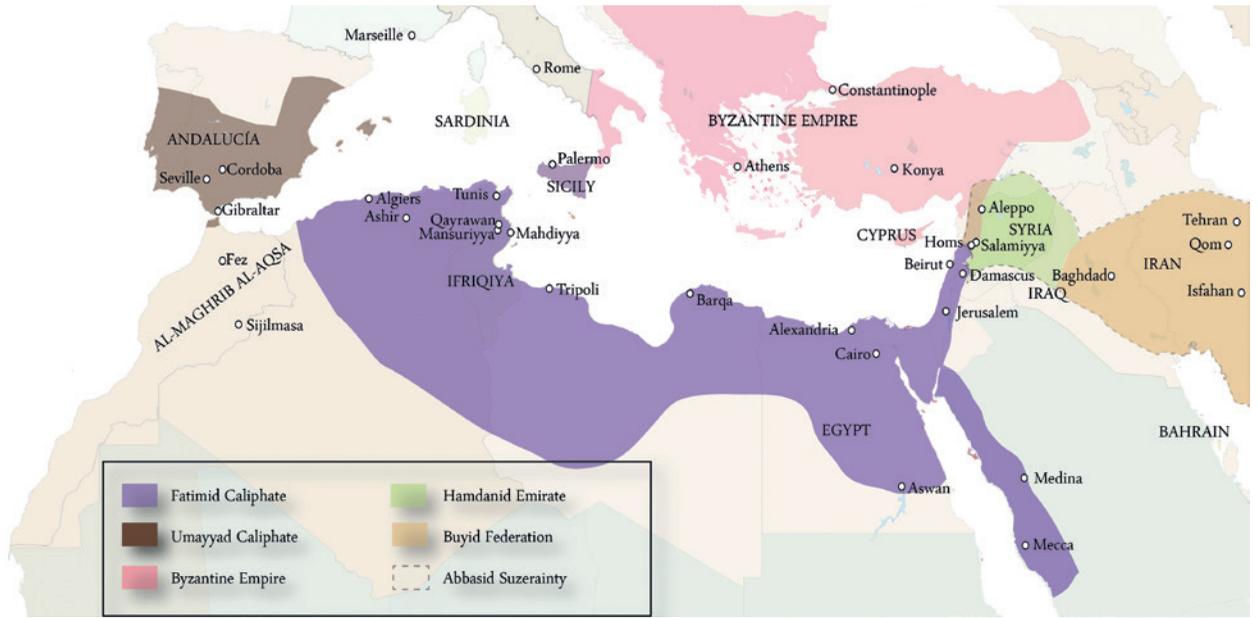
Making knowledge accessible was a key principle that the Fatimids promoted through various means, including the founding of the *Dar al-Hikma* (House of Wisdom) in Cairo. Al-Nu‘man’s expertise in the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams led him to compose many books on their sayings and teachings. Amongst the numerous texts that he was tasked to

write was a succinct account of the *Ahl al-bayt* (the family of the Prophet). He notes:

‘Some judges, governors and seekers of knowledge had asked me for a work which would provide an abridged exposition of the sayings of the *Ahl al-bayt*, which explicates their meaning, facilitates memorisation. So I began to write it and I estimated that when the book was complete it would cost no more than a dinar for those who wished to transcribe it. I presented what I had begun to write to [Imam] al-Mu‘izz. I sent that with a note in which I made a request. [Imam] al-Mu‘izz wrote back in his own hand on the reverse of the note: “In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate. May God safeguard you, O Nu‘man. I have leafed through and examined the book, and am pleased with the sound traditions and the excellent summation. However, it contains words which many of our *awliya* [‘friends’] would find abstruse, so elucidate them such that they can comprehend them so as to ensure that everyone can grasp the knowledge through the words, whether they are distinguished or commonplace. That way it will become valuable and digestible. Name it *Kitab al-ikhtisar li sahih al-athar an al-a’imma al-athar* [An Abridged Work on the Sound Traditions of the Pure Imams]. This is better than calling it *Kitab al-dinar* because it contains the knowledge of the *awliya Allah* (friends of God) which all people should desire for their souls and not [out of consideration for] their money.” (Idris, Founder of Cairo, p. 92).

### What other titles and topics can we expect from the forthcoming publications?

We are planning publications on Muslim spaces of worship and gathering, celebrations and



◆ Map of the Fatimid Empire c. 975. Image courtesy of The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

festivals, music, dance, poetry and the arts, as well as topics that address challenges to modernity and other titles that are of particular interest to the general reader.

### What are your hopes for the *World of Islam Series* and how do you see it developing in the future?

We hope that the *World of Islam* series will inspire its readers, particularly young adults in the Ismaili community, to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the rich wellsprings of the Ismaili tradition and its diverse regional and cultural expressions across the

globe. It will also provide insight for other Muslim communities, and non-Muslims, into the *World of Islam* – so often, Islam is perceived as a homogenous monolith, when, in fact, it is a multifaceted mosaic of beliefs and interpretations, traditions, literary and artistic expressions, which reflect cosmopolitan Islam.

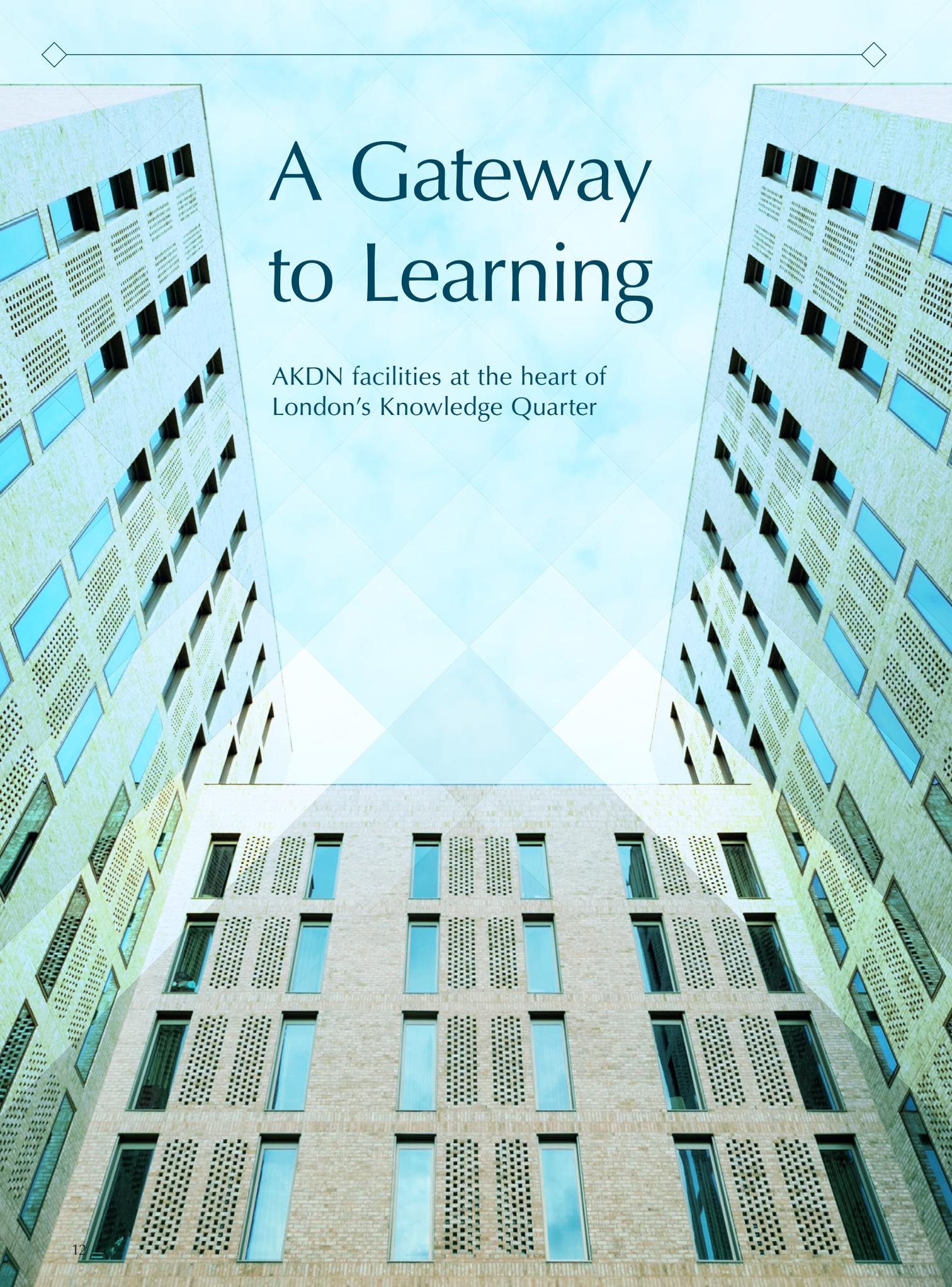
### Is there a way the Community can get involved?

We are keen to get feedback from readers to ensure that the series is responding to their interests. As the series evolves, we hope to draw on the considerable talents of the Jamat, by involving those with skills

in areas such as writing, editing, research and graphic design, to name a few, to contribute to the series.

As the principal aim of the *World of Islam* series is to inform and inspire a more general readership, it will also be useful for other Muslims and non-Muslims to learn about major Ismaili figures and key developments in history which form part of the continuing manifestations of the rich and diverse tapestry of the shared Muslim heritage.

Be inspired  
by the *World  
of Islam*



# A Gateway to Learning

AKDN facilities at the heart of  
London's Knowledge Quarter

The regeneration of King's Cross is one of the most exciting redevelopments currently taking place in London. Architects and design critics have described the site simultaneously as a symbol of London's industrial and engineering past and the creative present. During Victorian times, King's Cross was the industrial heartland of London, but by the late 20th century, the area had declined into an underused wasteland. Fast-forward to the present day and King's Cross is once again being transformed into a vibrant hub where commerce intersects with art, culture and education, alongside residential, community and leisure facilities.

As a part of the King's Cross regeneration, the Aga Khan Development Network is engaged in several building projects. A purpose-built halls of residence has recently been completed and the construction of an academic building is now underway. The academic building will provide a permanent facility for teaching, research and administration for The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) and the Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC) as well as offices of Aga Khan Foundation UK (AKF UK). The location of these buildings is in an area which is fast becoming known as London's 'Knowledge Quarter' – King's Cross, Euston and Bloomsbury being the focal point for one of the greatest knowledge clusters anywhere in the world. Designed by award-winning London-based architects – Stanton Williams – the design and specifications of the eleven-storey AKDN halls of residence is on par with the best in the student housing market, with spacious single rooms, studios, disabled rooms and

a small number of one-bedroom apartments. Within the building, there are generous communal spaces, including an onsite gym, meeting and multi-media rooms. The student residence also benefits from two open spaces, a courtyard and a roof terrace, each inspired by the beautiful gardens of Andalusia (Spain) and Maghreb (Morocco). The gardens have been designed by Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architects, who designed the Aga Khan Park in Toronto and are renowned for creating timeless poetic landscapes that put nature on the centre stage.

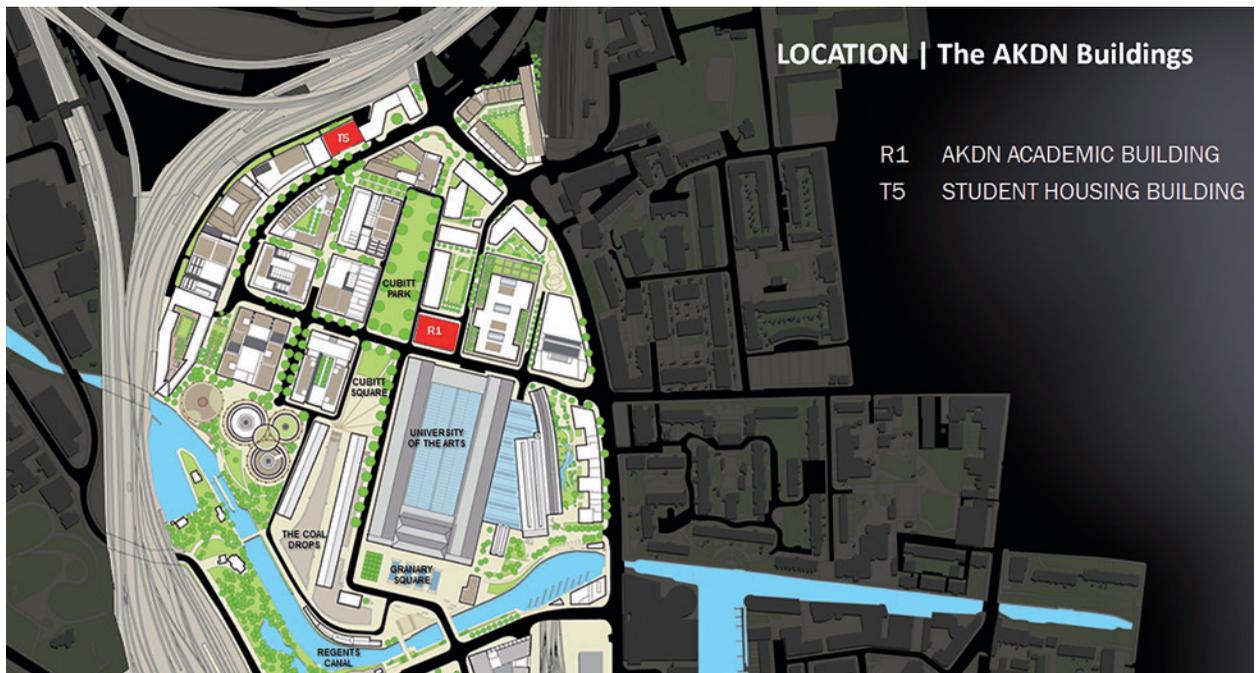
The majority of the building houses students enrolled at IIS and AKU-ISMC, there is also some accommodation available to rent for students from all over the world coming to study at other universities in London. The diversity of the students residing here is a microcosm of cosmopolitan London, and this diversity is reflected in the design intent and decor of the building.



◆ Left and right: Exterior of the newly built student residence at King's Cross. *Image credit: John Sturrock.*



◆ Designed by Vladimir Djurovic, the open spaces at the student residence building have been inspired by the beautiful gardens of Andalusia, Spain and Maghreb, Morocco. *Image credit: Hufton + Crow Photography.*



◆ A map of the new AKDN buildings at King's Cross. The proximity of the two buildings affords the opportunity to employ a common architectural handwriting between the two - strengthening the visual identity for the AKDN at King's Cross.



◆ The architect's rendition of the academic building. *Image courtesy of Maki and Associates.*

The Academic building, due to be completed in mid-2018, has been designed by Pritzker prize winning, Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki, who was also responsible for designing the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat (Ottawa, 2008) and the Aga Khan Museum (Toronto, 2014). This signature building will also feature a “ribbon of green spaces”, inspired by the rich heritage of gardens in Muslim contexts. The essential concept is that each green space within our complex of buildings should correspond to the landscape of a given country or region of the Muslim world. The collection

of gardens will be a unique and distinctive feature of the AKDN development. The relationship with the natural world will resonate harmoniously with the landscaped gardens, leafy parks, squares, and pathways already welcoming the public across the King's Cross development.

It is envisaged that the thoughtful design and quality construction of the buildings will reflect the values of the academic, social and development activities of the AKDN and the Jamat, and interweave these into the fabric of Britain's knowledge and cultural landscape. The halls of residence,

the academic building and the gardens will in time become assets, demonstrating that, “buildings can do more than simply house people and programmes. They can also reflect our deepest values, as great architecture captures esoteric thought in physical form” (His Highness the Aga Khan, Inaugural Ceremony of the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat, Ottawa, Canada, 6th December 2008).

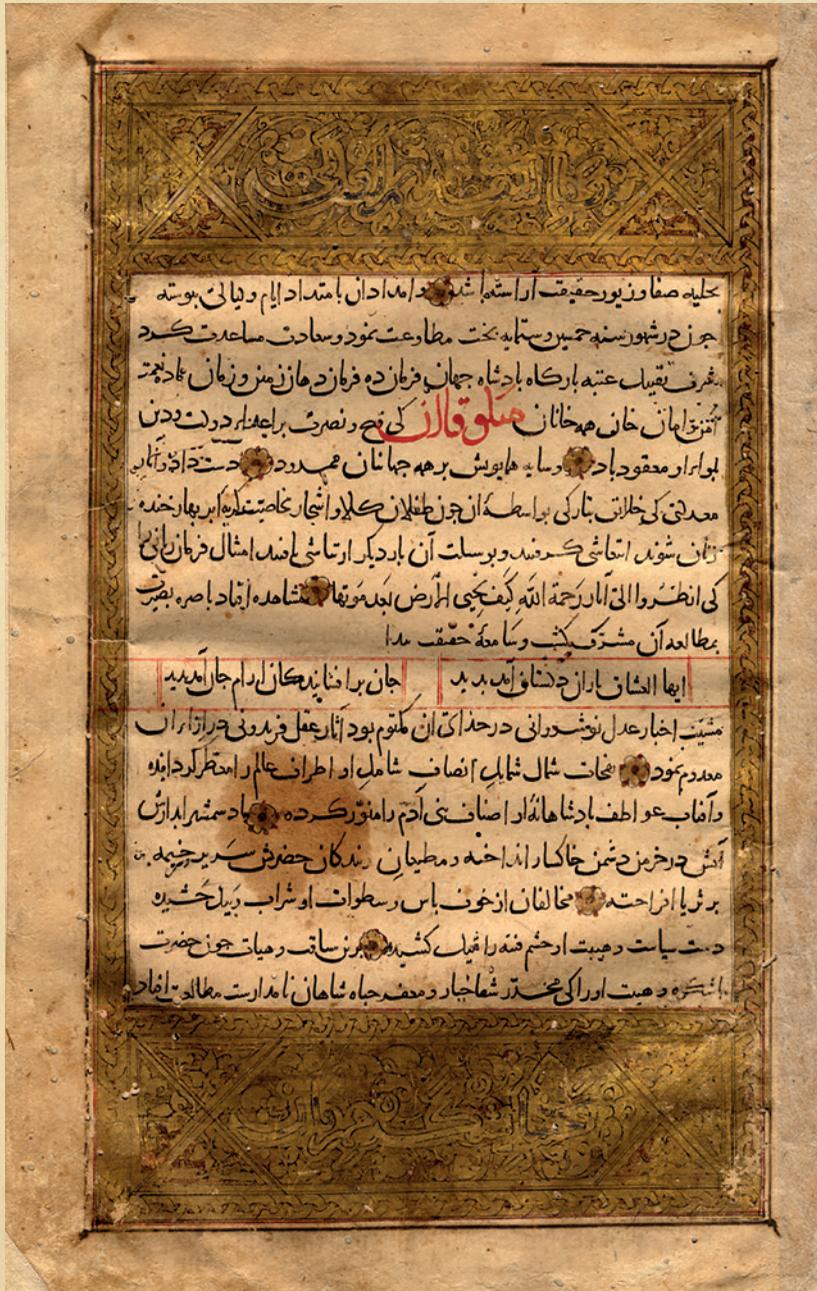
*“...buildings can do more than simply house people and programmes. They can also reflect our deepest values, as great architecture captures esoteric thought in physical form”*

His Highness the Aga Khan, Ottawa, Canada, 6th December 2008.

# Dispelling Myths through the Ismaili Special Collections

“...and of him (Rukn-ad-Din) and his stock no trace was left, and he and his kindred became but a tale on men’s lips and a tradition in the world.”

‘Ata’ Malik Juwayni<sup>1</sup>



◆ *Tarikh-i jahan-gushay* (The History of the World Conqueror) is a detailed historical account of ‘Ata Malik Juwayni, one of the oldest manuscripts of which is housed at the IIS and is dated 1297. The work describes the Mongol conquest of Persia, along with an account of the Ismailis. Image courtesy of The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

One hardly comes across an account of the Ismailis of Alamut times (1090-1256) without a reference to the Assassin legends. These legends, which began circulating in the late 12th century in Europe and the Latin Orient, stated that there was an ‘Old Man of the Mountain’ within the Nizari Ismaili sect, who drugged his followers and persuaded them to carry out orders, of killing other political rivals. These legends assumed that this was done through the use of a narcotic called, hashish. The Old Man was said to have created for this purpose a secret garden that represented all the bounties and attractions that his followers would receive in an eternal paradise, if they carried out his self-sacrificing fatal orders. Several writers have written different versions of these legends, one of which is Benjamin of Tudela, whose travelogue is part of the Special Collections at The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS).

1. ‘Ata Malik Juwayni, *Tarikh-i jahan-gushay*, trans. J. A. Boyle (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 724-725.



*“In more recent times, too, many western Islamists have continued to apply the ill-conceived term ‘Assassins’ to the Nizari Ismailis, perhaps without being consciously aware of its etymology or dubious origins”.*

Dr Farhad Daftary

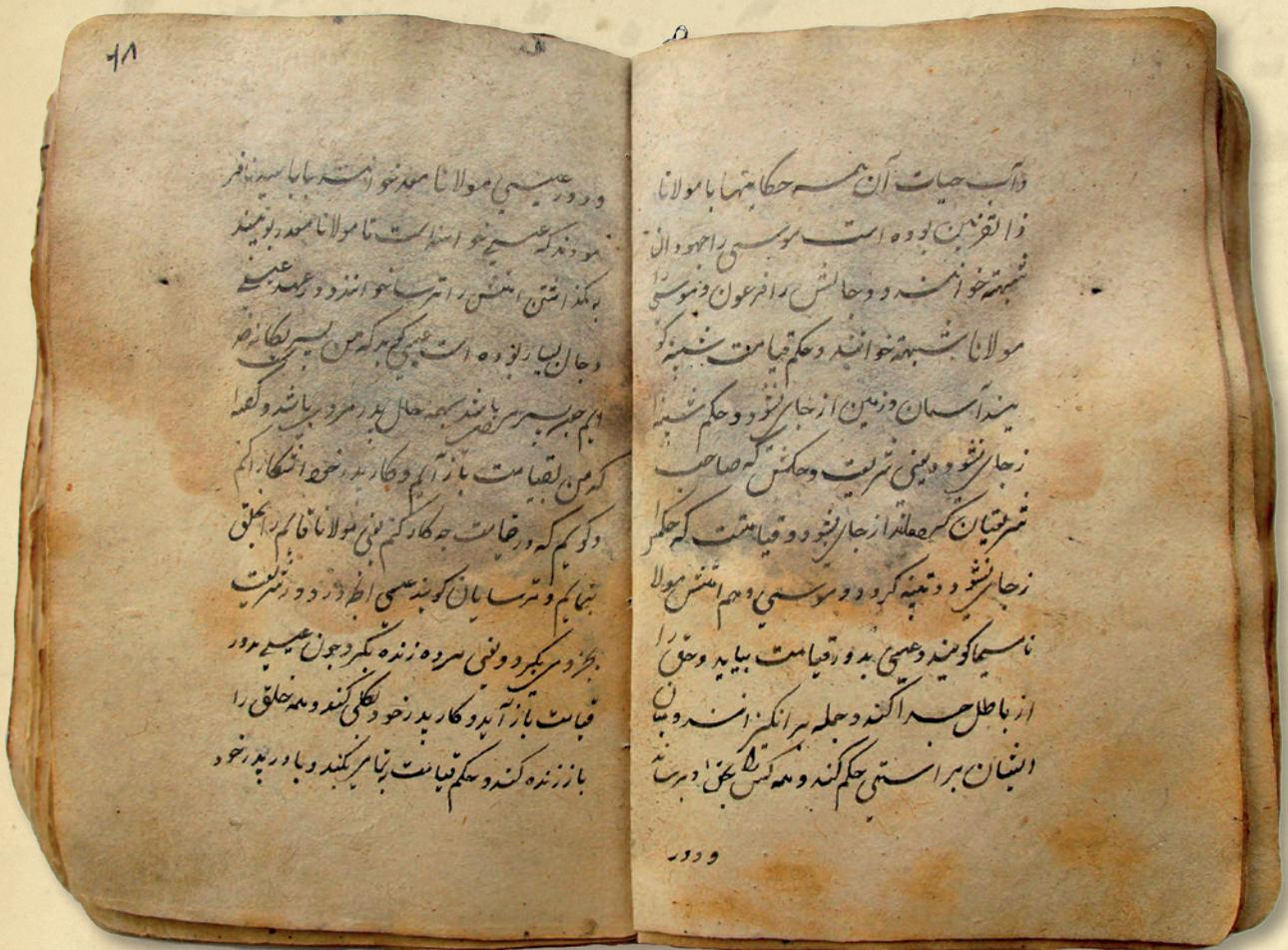
[Read the full article Introduction to The Assassin Legends on the IIS website](#)

◆ *Itinerarium Benaminus*  
The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela (Hebrew text and Latin translation), dated 1633. Image courtesy of The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

In order to test the validity of the Assassin legends, it is important to trace their origins and development. In the last few years, work by respected historians such as Vladimir Ivanow, Marshall G.S. Hodgson, Farhad Daftary and Peter Willey has helped rebuke the Assassin legends, while tracing their origins and development. Dr Farhad Daftary’s study of these legends points to an anti-Isma’ili ‘black legend’ circulated by Sunni polemicists, during the 10th century which labelled them as a sect whose founders aimed to destroy Islam from within. The Ismailis were also termed as, *hashishiyya*, in several non-Isma’ili Muslim accounts. Terms such as *hashishiyya* (hashish-users) were applied to the Nizari Ismailis as terms of abuse while there is no evidence of narcotics being the motivator for their political endeavours. It was in this hostile milieu that Western and oriental writers added imaginative accounts of the ‘Old Man of the Mountain’ and a secret garden of paradise. This attitude of various writers and historians, both Muslim and non-Muslim, aptly demonstrates the hostile and difficult political milieu that the Nizari Ismailis were facing from the 11th century onwards, living amidst the powerful and anti-Isma’ili Saljuq Turks as well as Christian crusaders.

These hostilities were also demonstrated in medieval times in the writing of many Muslim historians, theologians, jurists and heresiographers. One such example is that of ‘Ala’ al-Din ‘Ata Malik Juwayni, a Persian historian of the Ilkhanid period (1256-1353), who at the orders of Mongol ruler Hulagu Khan was able to gain access to the Alamut library before its destruction in 1256, by the Mongols. His account of the Ismailis forms part of his work titled, *Tarikh-i jahan-gushay* (The History of the World Conqueror). One of the earliest copies of this work, dated 697 AH/1297 AD, is preserved at the IIS.

With a collection of approximately 3,000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian and Indic languages, the IIS is the world’s most significant repository of special material relating to Isma’ili heritage and thought. The collection also includes valuable items relating to Islamic civilisation more broadly. The mandate of the IIS includes preserving, developing and studying this special material. It was to serve this specific purpose that the Isma’ili Special Collections Unit was established in 2013. The IIS collection includes items relating to Nizari Isma’ili history of the Alamut period, ranging from the accounts of several Western travellers to manuscripts of works on Isma’ili doctrine such as the *Haft Bab* (Seven Chapters), *Tawalla wa tabarra* (Solidarity and Dissociation), *Matlub al-mu’minin* (Desideratum of the Faithful) and *Aghaz wa anjam* (The Beginning and the End). The collection also includes Arabic, Persian and Indic manuscripts along with a significant collection of rare printed texts, periodicals, audio-visual material, artefacts and coins relating to the Fatimid and Alamut period. This article provides insights into some of the treasures from the IIS Special Collections pertaining to this period of Nizari Isma’ili history of the Alamut times.



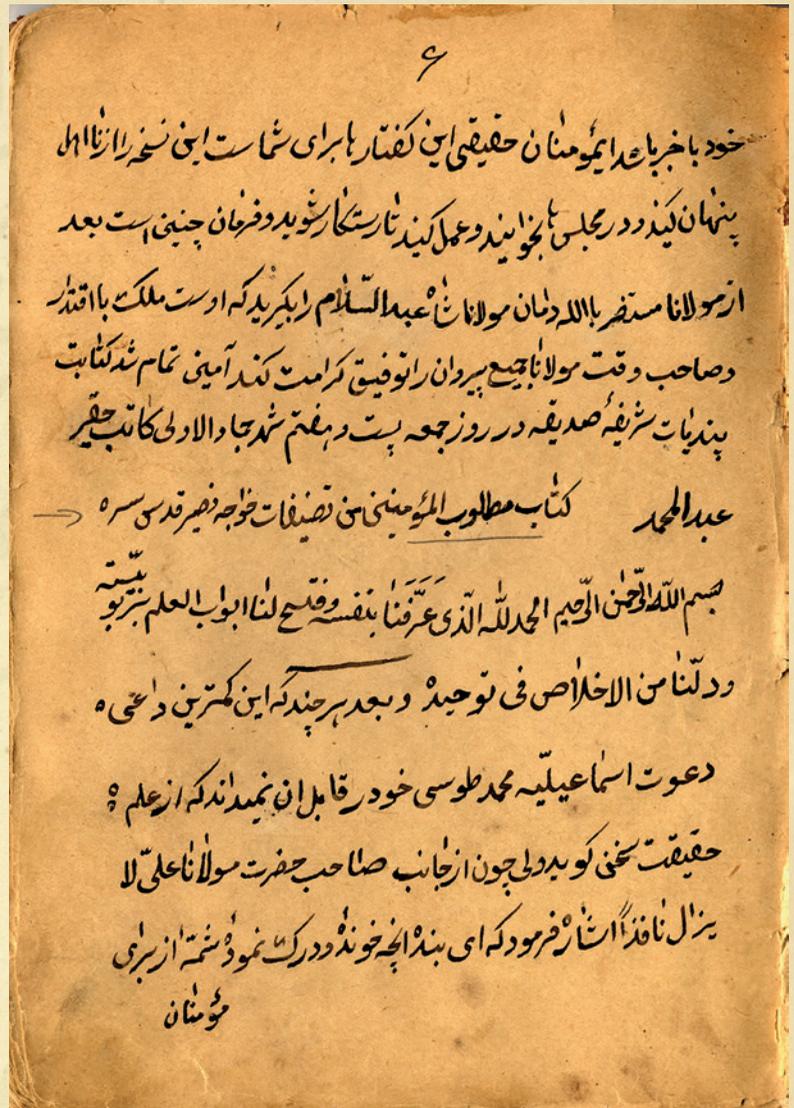
♦ Texts like the *Haft Bab* (Seven Chapters) manuscript help us understand that the observance of the Shariah formed an integral part of the Ismaili doctrines, in line with the Shi'i principles of Islam. Image courtesy of The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

*“These manuscripts and other material go a long way in dispelling myths and false propaganda about the Ismailis, long taken as the standard truth. The study of texts like Haft Bab clearly point to how the Ismaili approach to the principles of Islam, like the observation of the Shariah, was (contrary to what is generally believed) deeply grounded in principles of the Shi’a tradition of Islam.”*

Dr Wafi Momin, Head of the Ismaili Special Collections Unit, speaking about the collection pertaining to the Nizari Ismailis during the Alamut period.

Juwayni created a false account of the Ismailis, particularly their doctrines, in this work which stands refuted by discoveries of work from the Alamut times. One such discovery is that of *Haft Bab* (Seven Chapters), which has helped address claims by the likes of Juwayni, who have stated that Ismailis lie outside the purview of Islam and have abrogated the Shariah. The text of the *Haft Bab* helps us understand that the observance of the Shariah, rather than its abrogation (as is widely believed), formed an integral part of Ismaili doctrine in line with the Shi'i principles of Islam which came to find its true place in the guiding person of the Imam. The text has recently been published as part of the Institute's Ismaili Texts and Translations Series, entitled, *Spiritual Resurrection in Shi'i Islam: An Early Ismaili Treatise on the Doctrine of Qiyamat*.

The intellectual and scientific endeavours of the Nizari Ismailis in the Alamut period are also often overlooked. Hasan-i Sabbah founded a library which had treasure troves of material ranging from works on Ismaili tradition to medical, astronomical and mathematical sciences, as well as scientific equipment. The Alamut library was destroyed during the Mongol invasion in 1256; therefore the limited number of intellectual works which have survived from this time are in no way a complete representation of the intellectual activity of the Alamut period. Due to the diverse collection of material in the library, and because of the patronage of learning by Nizari Ismailis of Alamut, many Sunni and Twelver Shi'i Muslim as well as non-Muslim scholars also frequented these places of learning, and it is through their treatises that we learn about the intellectual and creative environment during Alamut times. Prominent scholars, such as Nasir al-Din Tusi, benefited from this patronage and while being in the service of Nizari Ismailis compiled major expositions on Ismaili



◆ *Matlub al-mu'minin* (Desideratum of the Faithful) was written by the celebrated 13th-century Persian scholar Nasir al-Din Tusi (1201-1274). In his work, he provides philosophical interpretations of key motifs in Ismaili thought, with special reference to the existential condition of human beings, their primordial origin and nature, their earthly existence and their destiny in the Hereafter. Image courtesy of The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

thought such as, *Tawalla wa tabarra* (Solidarity and Dissociation), *Matlub al-mu'minin* (Desideratum of the Faithful), and *Aghaz wa anjam* (The Beginning and the End) as well as on other intellectual subject matters.

A closer look at these marvels of intellectual effort shed light on the fact that the medieval Ismailis not only engaged in political endeavours to protect their community, but also sought to engage with and create works of intellectual prominence, while promoting learning and scholarship. These traditions continue today in the modern-day Ismaili ethos, through the preservation and study of Ismaili and other Muslim heritages at The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

# Introducing Salima Bhatia

## Head, Department of Communications and Development



◆ Salima Bhatia - Head of the Department of Communications and Development.  
Photo credit: Mindaugas Orlauskas. .

### Where were you working and what were you doing before you joined the IIS?

Over the last decade, there have been three strands to my work: serving as the Chairman of the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board (ITREB) for the United Kingdom and its jurisdiction, between 2009 and 2015; working on a variety of independent stage and film productions as a freelance Arts Producer; and thirdly running a family pharmacy business. Throughout my career, the needs and the desires of the audience - or the end-user - have always been at the forefront of my mind and at the heart of everything that I produce. This will definitely continue to be my *modus operandi* in my new role at the Institute.

### What is your role at the IIS?

My primary role is to oversee and provide strategic leadership to the Communications and Development department. This means ensuring that we maintain a positive and credible reputation amongst the international academic research community, and that the good work that the IIS does, and the impact of this work, is communicated effectively to all interested parties.

### What is the focus for your department going forward?

One of the major focuses in the future will be to think about how we optimise our online presence, and utilise digital media more effectively for teaching and learning.

I'm not just referring to offering a variety of online courses in Islamic Studies, but also about making resources available in various audio-visual and interactive formats, for those who want to engage in self-study. We have some talented faculty at the IIS who are engaged in unique areas of research – we need to be creative in how we share this with a wider audience, with a view to improving understanding, inspiring curiosity and encouraging future scholarship. This year we look forward to making a number of our IIS publications available as e-books, via our website, as well as increasing content on our website for Arabic, Farsi, French and Russian language users.

### What exciting projects do you have in the pipeline for 2017 and beyond?

This is a significant and exciting time for the Institute – we have the commemoration of our 40th anniversary to look forward to in November 2017, and we are also proud to celebrate His Highness the Aga Khan's Diamond Jubilee this year. Both of these milestones provide us with an opportunity to consolidate and speak about the enormous breadth of work that has been conducted over the last 40 years under the guidance of His Highness, and to propose how we can build on this for the next generation. As we cast our minds back to witness how far the IIS has come over these four decades, it is also fitting that at this juncture we look forward with renewed hope and purpose, as we excitedly gear up to move to a purpose built academic facility in Kings Cross in 2018.

# Introducing Diane Rainsbury

## Head of Quality Assurance and Evaluation Unit



◆ Diane Rainsbury - Head of Quality Assurance and Evaluation Unit.  
Photo credit: Mindaugas Orlauskas.

### Where were you working and what were you doing before you joined the IIS?

I have worked in Higher Education for many years, specialising in Quality Assurance for universities and colleges across the UK. In my previous role, I was the Deputy Director for Quality and Standards at Teesside University, where my primary responsibilities included leading on quality assurance, monitoring academic standards and preparing the university for their Higher Education Review (HER).

### What is your role at the IIS?

I lead the new unit – Quality Assurance and Evaluation, which involves developing new policies and systematic processes that will ensure that we have consistency across the institution. In doing so, I will be working collaboratively with all the departments, particularly, Graduate Studies, Curriculum Studies and Community Relations.

### What is the focus for your unit going forward?

There are three main priorities, setting up the infrastructure and plans to support IIS' strategic objectives, developing an

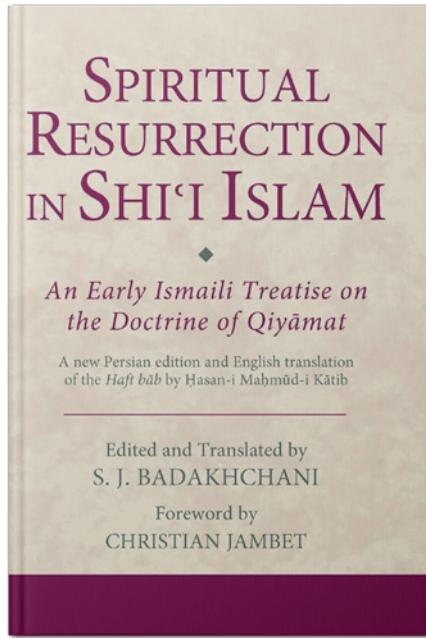
Institute wide framework for evaluations, and supporting work on a strategy to obtain degree awarding powers.

### Are there any exciting initiatives or projects that you would like to highlight for 2017 or beyond?

The 2017 Educational Oversight visit will be an exciting opportunity for the IIS to further demonstrate its commitment to quality. In the lead-up to the visit, the Institute will be working on the action plan that was formulated in response to the QAA's Higher Education Review (HER) in April 2016. By making excellent progress on our plans, we hope to obtain a commendable report again.

Simultaneously, we also want to engage more with our student body and enhance their involvement in the planning and design of the processes, to ensure that we have a much more holistic approach that enhances the student experience.

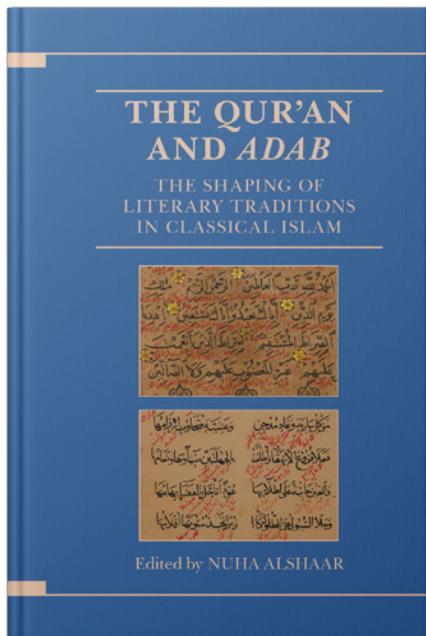
# New Publications



## Spiritual Resurrection in Shi'i Islam: An Early Ismaili Treatise on the Doctrine of Qiyamat

*Edited and translated by Jalal Badakhchani*

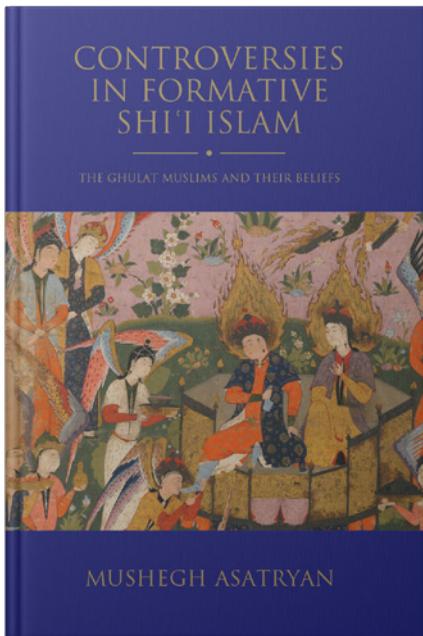
Of the few surviving Nizari Ismaili texts from the Alamut period, the *Haft bab* (Seven Chapters), which outlines the basic tenets of Ismaili philosophical theology, has proved to be the most popular. One of its many attractive features is its simple recounting of the most complicated Ismaili theological narratives, including the doctrine of the Resurrection - *qiyamat*. The current text of the *Haft bab*, edited and translated into English by S. J. Badakhchani, is based on Badakhchani's analysis of a great number of manuscripts available, including a complete and unaltered version. The concepts found in the text derive largely from the intellectual heritage of the Fatimids. These include the idea of *tanzih* - the absolute transcendence of God beyond human understanding and knowledge; *dawr* - a cyclical conception of prophetic history, consisting of seven eras; the Ismaili Imamatus as the most important pillar of Ismaili Islam; and the *qiyamat* as the completion and perfection of the religious law - *shari'at*.



## The Qur'an and Adab: The Shaping of Literary Traditions in Classical Islam

*Edited by Nuha Alshaar*

Though there have been many studies on the importance of Qur'anic tafsir (Qur'anic commentary), there are comparatively few which look at the impact of the Qur'an on other forms of literature. The *Qur'an and Adab* bridges the gap in the scholarship by placing the Qur'an in its broader cultural and literary contexts. It explores the Qur'an's relation to classical literary traditions (*adab*) from pre-Islamic times until the fifteenth century CE, focusing on the various ways in which the classical *literati* (*udaba*) engaged with the Qur'anic text, linguistically, conceptually, structurally, and aesthetically, to create works that combined the sacred with the profane, therefore merging the boundaries between formal *tafsir* and *adab*.



## Controversies in Formative Shi'i Islam: The Ghulat Muslims and their Beliefs

By Mushegh Asatryan

Among the various Muslim communities that were articulating their doctrinal positions in the early Islamic centuries, one in particular was known derisively as the Ghulat (extremists). This was owing to their specific interpretation of Shi'i Islam, which included divinisation of their Imams, and controversial religious ideas, such as the transmigration of souls. Active in Iraq in the 8th and 9th centuries, the Ghulat developed a complex worldview and produced a rich religious literature. Until now, understanding of this community has mainly relied on sources produced outside the group, which are polemical in nature. This book looks at newly recovered primary texts in order to study the Ghulat first hand. Mushegh Asatryan examines the development of the Ghulat writings, situating the community within a broader historical context and presenting a survey of their distinctive cosmology. Through his detailed analysis, the book provides insight into the formation of an early religious tradition in Islamic history as well as the nature of the community in which these texts were produced and circulated.

### Other published titles include:

A Short History of the Ismailis, by Farhad Daftary  
Translated into Chinese by Amier Saidula

Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: Sciences of the Soul & Intellect, Part III; An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 39-41  
Edited and translated by Carmela Baffioni and Ismail K. Poonawala

Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On Companionship and Belief; An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 43-45  
Edited and translated by Samer Traboulsi, Toby Mayer and Ian Richard Netton

Shi'i Esotericism: Its Roots and Developments  
By Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Maria De Cillis, Daniel De Smet and Orkhan Mir-Kasimov

The Sanaa Palimpsest: The Transmission of the Qur'an in the First Centuries AH  
By Asma Hilali

The Spirit and the Letter: Approaches to the Esoteric Interpretation of the Qur'an  
Edited by Annabel Keeler and Sajjad Rizvi

### Forthcoming publications:

Approaches to the Qur'an in Contemporary Iran  
A. Cancian

Encyclopaedia Islamica, Volume 6, Dakani to Fatimids  
W. Madelung and F. Daftary

Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On Composition and the Arts; An Arabic critical edition and English translation of Epistles 6-8  
G. de Callatay and N. El-Bizri

Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On God and the World; An Arabic critical edition and English translation of Epistles 49-51  
W. Madelung et al.

Faith and Ethics: The Vision of the Ismaili Imam  
M. A. Lakhani

Imam 'Ali: Concise History, Timeless Mystery  
R. Shah-Kazemi

Sufism, Shi'ism and Qur'anic Exegesis in Early Modern Iran: Sultan Ali Shah Gunabadi and his Tafsir Bayan al-Sa'ada  
A. Cancian

The Fatimids: The Rise of a Muslim Dynasty  
S. Jiwa

The Fatimid Empire: Diversity of Traditions  
F. Daftary and S. Jiwa

The Fragment and the Whole: Approaching religious text in a New Perspective. From Mesopotamia to Arabia  
A. Hilali

The Ismaili Imams: A Biographical History  
F. Alibhai



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