



# IIS UPDATE



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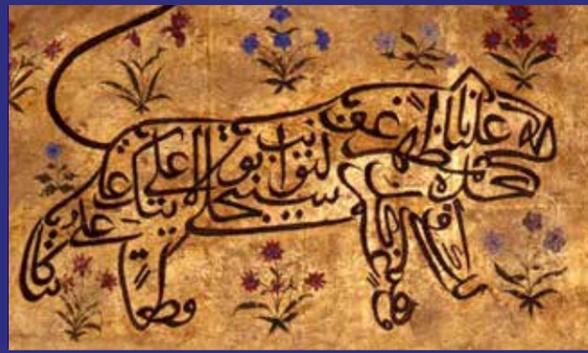
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*Muqarnas* - a decorative, architectural feature. This example is from the Imam Mosque, Isfahan, Iran.

**Dr Farhad Daftary**



Since my last message, the Institute's presence and recognition as the global centre for Ismaili Studies has grown through its ambitious publications programme, collaborations and partnerships with institutions as well as an increasing number of invitations for our scholars to present at conferences and professional association meetings.

This year, we were pleased to welcome two eminent scholars as visiting fellows to carry out specialist research in Ismaili Studies - Professor Andrew Rippin, Professor Emeritus of Islamic History at the University of Victoria, Canada, and one of the foremost authorities in the study of the Qur'an and commentaries of the Qur'an; and Dr Miklos Sarkozy whose research project will focus on the history of the Nizari Ismaili State in the Caspian provinces of Iran between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

I am pleased to announce the launch of the Shi'i Heritage Series. The publication of the first two volumes in the series marks a significant milestone in the academic record of the Institute in drawing scholarly attention to Shi'i Islam and promoting a better

understanding of its history, doctrines and practices (see page 12).

Scholars are attracted to the Institute due in part to its library resources and its extensive collection of manuscripts. This year saw the inauguration of a joint library for the IIS and the Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (ISMC) and the founding of a "Special Collections Unit" to preserve and develop the Library's unique and growing Ismaili collection of manuscripts, archival items, artefacts and recordings.

I am pleased to report that a manuscript analysis project to systematically highlight the key features of the manuscripts in our collection and to make them available for researchers and historians is now underway.



Dr Daftary & Vice Minister Zhang Lebin

It is testament to our growing reputation not only in academic circles but beyond, that the IIS and our sister organisation, ISMC, were specifically chosen by the State Administration (SARA) of China as part of a programme of visits to organisations such as the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and the Houses of Parliament.

The dialogue and conversations we began will *Insha-Allah*, be the springboard for future projects.

Our accessible publications, which draw on our scholarship and present these perspectives in a concise and easy to digest format, as well as the Secondary Curriculum are making the Institute's scholarly work available to a wider audience.

For 2014 and beyond, I am looking forward to seeing a very active Institute further developing its academic mandate to become a centre of excellence in the fields of Ismaili Studies, Shi'i Studies and Qur'anic Studies, as well as developing our research in contemporary societies and subjects which are relevant to the Ismaili Muslim community and the global *Ummah*.

As part of our mandate, we are developing interactive and media rich, learning resources on the IIS Website. We hope you will visit the Learning Pages of the IIS Website and share these resources with your family and friends.

In these exciting times, I am honoured to extend to you, friends and supporters of the Institute, my heartfelt gratitude for your support and commitment to the Institute, and invite you to remain engaged with us, to enable the Institute to move forward on its chartered course of academic excellence and service to the global Jamat.

*Farhad Daftary*

To share your feedback or to update your contact details, please email [rdc@iis.ac.uk](mailto:rdc@iis.ac.uk)

CREDITS

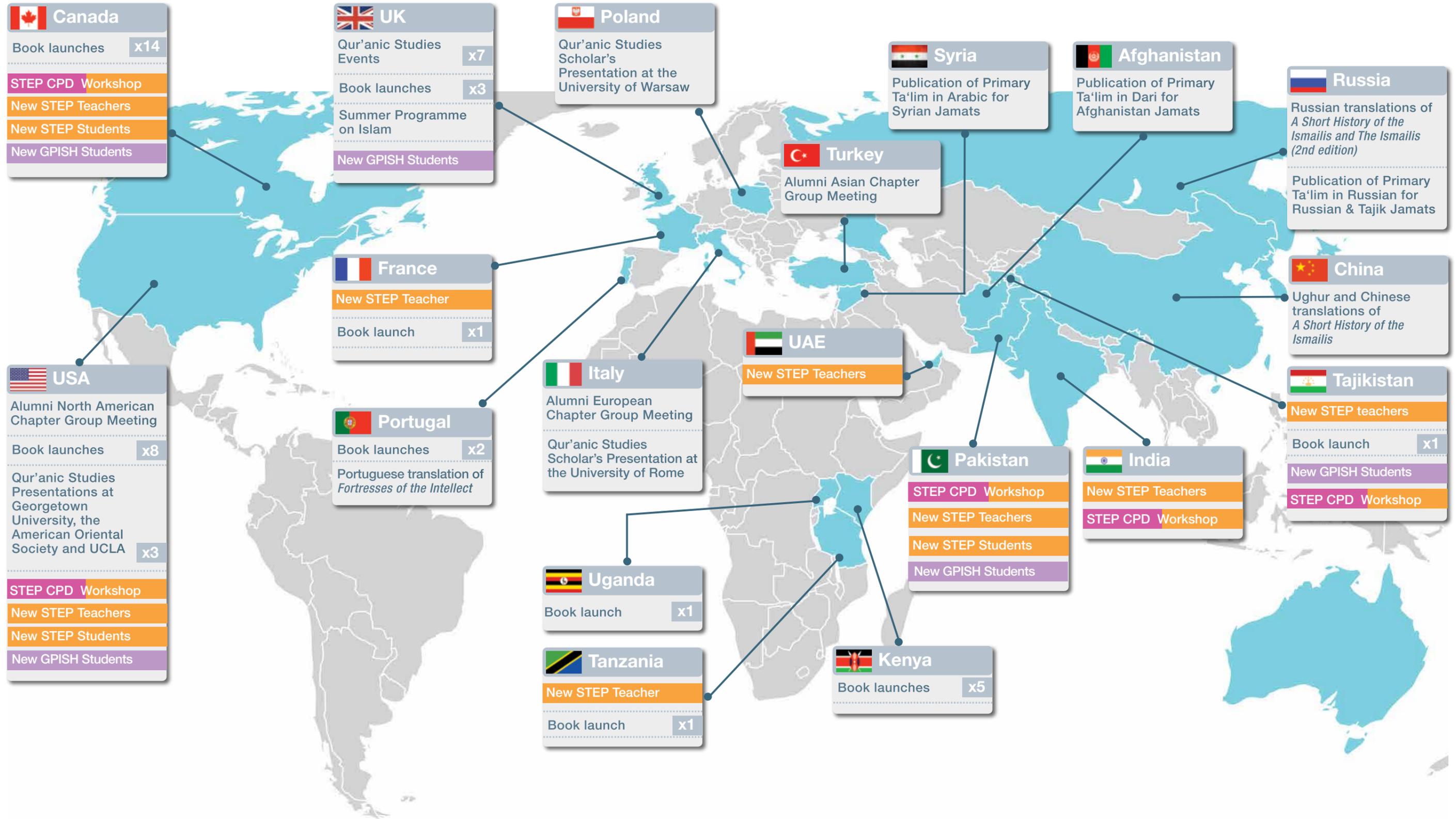
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# Geographical reach of the IIS: Highlights from 2013



CPD: Continuing Professional Development  
 GPISH: Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities  
 STEP: Secondary Teacher Education Programme

# Interview with a Member of the Board of Governors of The Institute of Ismaili Studies

## Dr Shafik Sachedina

**D**r Shafik Sachedina has been a member of the Board of Governors of the IIS since July 1995. He is Head of the Department of Jamati Institutions at Aiglemont in France where he is responsible for coordinating the activities and programmes of the Ismaili community's institutions in the 16 principal areas where these institutions exist.



“*Personally, it has been an extremely rewarding and enriching experience. The Board’s deliberations and the interaction with academics and intellectuals provide stimulating insights into issues of interest not only for the Ismaili Muslim community but, also the Ummah, as well as the global society.*”

Dr Shafik Sachedina in conversation with IIS students.

Here, he provides a unique insight into the work and vision of The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

**Please share with us what this experience has been like for you personally?**

Personally, it has been an extremely rewarding and enriching experience. The Board’s deliberations and the interaction with academics and intellectuals provide stimulating insights into issues of interest not only for the Ismaili Muslim Community but, also the *Ummah*, as well as the global society. Above all, His Highness the Aga Khan’s guidance, in his capacity as Chairman of the Board, on a diversity of issues, and also his commitment and efforts towards encouraging the progress of Islamic and Ismaili Studies has been inspirational.

**What do you feel have been the key achievements of the IIS in the past ten years?**

Over the past ten years, the wealth and variety of IIS’s research and publications programme has led to the Institute becoming a credible point of reference in the field of Islamic and Ismaili Studies within academia and beyond.

Also, Ismailis have a rich intellectual and cultural tradition and have made significant contributions to science, philosophy, intellectual and other traditions. The IIS is currently implementing an

extensive project to document and make available its manuscripts and primary sources to scholars and publishing works on a wide variety of topics.

**How will the work of the IIS impact the Jamat globally in the next 10 years and beyond?**

Over the next ten years, the IIS’s priorities include the completion of the secondary religious education curriculum, and a major research and publication programme on Qur’anic and Shi’i Studies as well as training the required human resources, as secondary level teachers, (eg STEP teachers), for the future.

The IIS recently hosted a colloquium to look at the status of Shi’i Studies in higher education. The colloquium brought together eminent scholars and academics and highlighted the need for the Institute to focus more on Shi’i Studies and address gaps in modern scholarship in that field.

Papers from this colloquium are in the process of being published. It will be exciting to see plans and strategies which came out of these deliberations being implemented.

In the next ten years, the Ismaili community will have the benefit of a world class religious education curriculum at the secondary level to complement what has already been produced at pre-school and primary levels. The first set of text books have

been very well received by the Ismaili community and, indeed, other Muslim communities have also shown an interest in the educational materials produced by the IIS.

The content of the modules has been carefully drafted to address the needs of secondary level children and work is underway on the next two themes, “Cultural Encounters” and “Faith and Practice.” By producing educational materials in ten languages, the IIS is serving the needs of the Ismaili community which is dispersed across many countries.

The Ismaili Community will continue to benefit from the availability of specially trained secondary level teachers for religious education. These are teachers who will be able to have rewarding careers in our institutions – both, in Ismaili community institutions as well as within the agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network.

Another important objective of the IIS is to publish materials that are accessible to non-specialist readers without compromising the academic quality of these publications.

This will enable a wider cross-section of readers to benefit from the scholarship generated through the programmes of the IIS.

# The Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities – Building Bridges Across the World

Every year, since 1994, the IIS has invited about a dozen students from a diverse range of countries to take part in its highly regarded three year Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH). Students are plunged into two years of intensive study at the IIS which includes two field trips, a research project and a language immersion programme. In the third year, students complete a Masters degree, usually, at a British university in a subject area that resonates with the aims of the Graduate Programme.

Click on the links below to watch video clips of *Sehreen Noor Ali* (alumna) and *Dr Laila Halani* (alumna, Head of the IIS' Department of Graduate Studies) and read what *Dr Otared Haidar* (alumna) have to say about their experiences and opportunities after graduating from the IIS.



**Sehreen Noor Ali**, from Washington D.C., graduated from GPISH in 2006 and has earned degrees from Harvard and Brown universities.



**Dr Laila Halani** - Head of the Department of Graduate Studies

Laila Halani is a graduate of the class of 1998 and now Head of the Department of Graduate Studies at the IIS. In this video interview, Laila talks about the goals of the GPISH programme and the contribution IIS alumni are making to the Ismaili community, the global *Ummah* and the world at large.



## Have your say...

This is the first time we are including video interviews in the IIS Update. We'd welcome your feedback on this new type of content. To share your views, email [rdc@iis.ac.uk](mailto:rdc@iis.ac.uk).



**Otared Haidar**

Hailing from Salamiyya, Syria, and with a background in journalism, Dr Otared Haidar completed two BA degrees in Syria before joining the Institute's Graduate Programme, as part of which she earned an MA in Modern Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Oxford.

In 2005, she was awarded a DPhil Degree from the Oriental Institute at the University of Oxford. Her doctoral research thesis was published by Ithaca in 2008 in a book entitled *The Prose Poem and the Shi'r Journal: a Comparative Study of Literature, Literary Theory and Journalism*.

Dr Otared Haidar is a full faculty member of the Department of the Islamic World and Middle East Studies, University of Oxford, where she teaches and lectures on a range of courses including language, media translation and literature at Undergraduate and Post Graduate levels.

She has also been a Visiting Lecturer of Arabic Literature and has been involved in designing and lecturing on several courses at the IIS. Read Otared Haidar's interview here.

# Preserving Fatimid Heritage for Future Generations

In 1979, The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) established its Library with a mandate to preserve the rich literary and cultural heritage of the global Ismaili Muslim Community. Over the years, the IIS Library became a leading resource centre for Islamic Studies with a special focus on Ismaili and Shi'i heritage through its significant collections of manuscripts, rare printed texts, as well as non-textual materials such as coins, photographs, audio-visual items, etc. Most recently, the IIS has formed a new unit, called the Ismaili Special Collections Unit. The first Head of this new unit is a GPISH alumnus, Wafi Momin, and he will be overseeing the preservation, management and scholarly use of this growing collection.

The special collections at the IIS started with a few hundred items, comprising mainly manuscripts and rare books. In due course, the collection expanded exponentially through a process of active acquisition as well as donations and gifts. Soon after the establishment of the IIS, members of the Ismaili community from various countries began to donate materials to the Institute which not only included textual items but a range of artefacts and memorabilia as well; some of the prized artefacts in the Institute's holdings have also come from the Office of His Highness the Aga Khan. At present, the Institute has become a primary repository of the intellectual and

cultural heritage of the global Ismaili community.

A large number of special items housed at the IIS relate to Fatimid times (297-567 AH; 909-1171 CE), a period well-known in Islamic history for its achievements in scholarly production, interreligious coexistence, and artistic and architectural expressions. The Fatimid era saw the establishment of some renowned centres of learning, for instance, al-Azhar and the Dar al-'Ilm in Cairo, promoting a vibrant culture of learning and transmission of knowledge. A number of special items in the IIS' special collections – manuscripts, rare books, coins and photographs – enrich our understanding of varied aspects of the socio-political and intellectual life during the Fatimid era by giving us an insight into theological discourses, religious doctrines, philosophical debates, scientific discoveries and legal practices prevalent at the time.

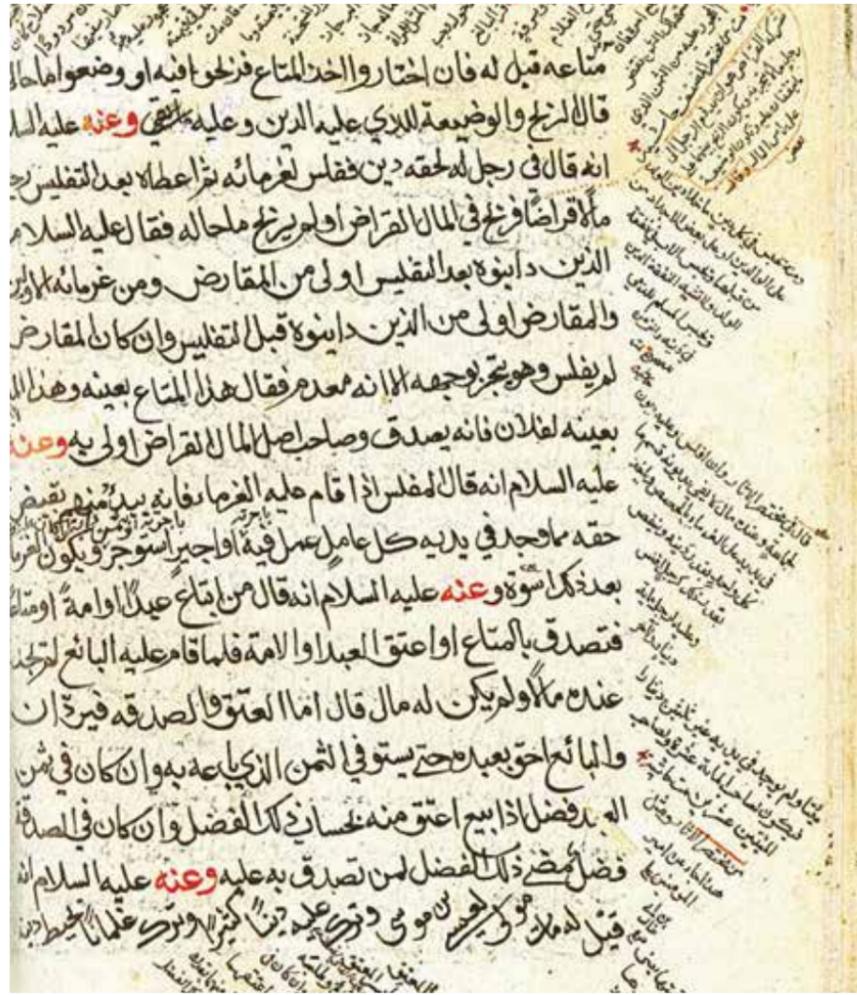
Of a staggering wealth of over three thousand manuscripts in the Institute's collection, a large number of them directly bear upon the Fatimid period in its variegated aspects. Transmitting texts mostly written in Arabic, these manuscripts mainly feature works of doctrinal nature composed by prominent intellectuals who flourished during this era, many of whom were engaged in the cause of the Ismaili *da'wa* both within and outside the political dominions ruled by the Fatimid caliphs.

Besides being a vital literary embodiment of Ismaili history and doctrines from the Fatimid times, these manuscripts also serve as an important resource for understanding the socio-political dynamics under which Ismailis and other communities have interacted with a multitude of intellectual disciplines over many centuries.

A notable figure from the Fatimid times whose works have come down to us in large numbers, recorded in many of the older manuscripts in the Institute's collection, is al-Qadi al-Nu'man (d. 363/974), an authority on law and Ismaili doctrines in his time, who served as the chief *qadi* during the reigns of Imam-caliph al-Mansur (r. 334-341 AH/946-953 CE) and Imam-caliph al-Mu'izz (r. 341-365 AH/953-975 CE). Best known as the architect of the legal system for the newly founded Fatimid state, al-Nu'man also wrote on a host of other topics, most notably on hermeneutics (*ta'wil*) and esoteric doctrines (*haqa'iq*). One of his well-known works is the *Da'a'im al-Islam* (*The Pillars of Islam*), a compendium of law for the Fatimid state dealing with religious, civil and criminal rulings; the text is widely copied in the repository of manuscripts housed in the Institute's Special Collections.

To al-Nu'man's credit is also the authorship of what may be described as a rare historical account of the founding of the Fatimid empire. Known as the

# Preserving Fatimid Heritage for Future Generations



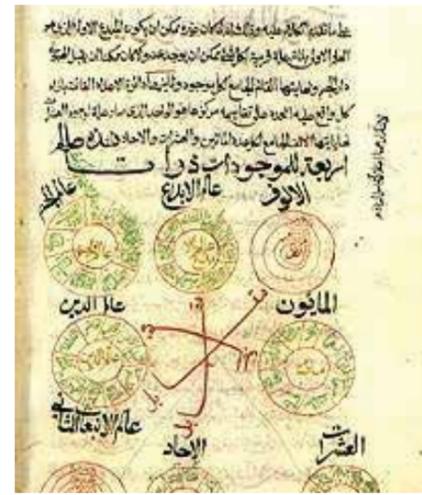
Da'a'im al-Islam, al-Qadi al-Nu'man

*Iftitah al-da'wa* (Commencement of the Mission), the account was completed in 346/957 and was partially based on some early sources which have not survived, such as the *Sira* of Ibn Hawshab (d. 302/914), a prominent Yemenite Ismaili *da'i*.

Another prominent intellectual of Fatimid times was Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani. (d. after 411/1020), whose numerous writings on theological and philosophical issues have been transmitted in a number of manuscripts in the Institute's holdings. Active for a better part of his life in the

service of Ismaili *da'wa* in Iraq and Western Iran, al-Kirmani was the most eminent *da'i* in the time of Imam-caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (r. 386-411/996-1021) who wrote prolifically on a range of doctrinal matters, especially on imamate.

One of al-Kirmani's major works is the *Rahat al-'aql* (*The Repose of the Intellect*), often considered as his *magnum opus*, elucidating principles of Ismaili philosophy couched in a comprehensive metaphysical system.



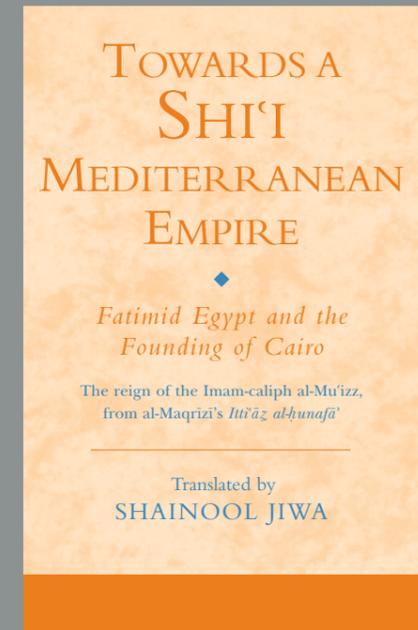
Pages from Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani's *Rahat al-'aql*

In the early years of the 5th/11th century, al-Kirmani was summoned to Cairo, apparently at the instructions of Imam-caliph al-Hakim, to intervene and resolve some doctrinal issues that had emerged within the *da'wa*. Al-Kirmani wrote several treatises during his residence in Cairo, some of them discussing the nature and proofs of the need of imamate; a notable treatise in this connection is *al-Masabih fi ithbat al-imama* (*Lights to Illuminate the Proof of the Imamate*).

Another well-known treatise of al-Kirmani, known as the *Kitab al-riyad* (*The Book of 'Gardens'*), is preserved in what may be called one of the oldest known Fatimid codices known to have survived. It was composed by al-Kirmani in order to settle an old debate on some philosophical and doctrinal matters within the previous generation of Ismailis in Iran. The manuscript in question

was donated to the IIS as part of the Hamdani collection, the major portion of which was written before 760/1359. Some of the surviving primary sources provide first hand, eye-witness accounts of the events and developments as they unfold, thus enlivening the intellectual vibrancy and cultural efflorescence of the milieu in Fatimid times.

They also convey the approaches to inclusive governance and compassionate leadership that became a hallmark of the Fatimid Age, as is evident from the following quote from *Itti'az al-hunafa'* (*Advice for the Believers in the Pure Religion*) by the fifteenth-century Egyptian historian al-Maqrizi:



Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az al-hunafa'*, translated by S. Jiwa, *Towards a Shi'i Mediterranean Empire* (London, 2009), pp. 29-30 and 57-58.

One cold, blustery winter's day in al-Mansūriyya, [Imam] al-Mu'izz summoned several of the *Kutāma* shaykhs. He ordered them to be admitted into his presence through a door that was not customarily used. He stood in a large, square room carpeted in felt, wearing a robe over his clothes. Open doors led to a library. In front of him were a raised dais and an inkpot, and he was surrounded by documents.

Then he said: 'Our brothers! On this cold winter's day, I woke up and said to the mother of the princes, who is listening to my words right now, "Do you suppose that on a day like this our brothers imagine that we are eating and drinking, adorned in garments embroidered in gold, of brocade, silk and fur of fennec and sable, with musk, song, wine and revelry as the people of the world do?"

Then I thought of sending for you so that you could see what I do when I am away from you and far from your eyes. My status exceeds yours only because I have responsibility over your affairs on earth and because God has singled me out as your Imam. I busy myself with letters that come to me from the east and the west, to which I respond in my own hand. My concern with the pleasures of the world lies solely in what protects your lives, makes your lands prosper, vanquishes your enemies and subdues your opponents.

'So when you are on your own, O shaykhs, do as I do. Do not be haughty and imperious, lest God withdraw His favour from you and bestow it on others. Show compassion to your subordinates who have no access to me, just as I am compassionate with you. In this manner benevolence may abound, virtue may prevail and justice may thrive among the people.'

## Behind the Scenes at the Institute – Launching the Shi‘i Heritage Series

As an established centre of excellence in the field of Ismaili Studies, the Institute, with guidance from its Board of Governors and His Highness, has been widening its scope of academic activities to include scholarship on Shi‘i Islam more broadly.

In 2010, the IIS held its first international colloquium, *The Study of Shi‘i Islam: The state of the field, issues of methodology and recent developments*, which attracted leaders and opinion makers in the field of Shi‘i Studies. The colloquium, held at the IIS in London, took stock of developments in modern scholarship and identified the need for an academic institution, with access to primary resources and a significant body of scholarly work related to the subject, to undertake research into the rich and extensive history of Shi‘i Islam and its role – previously understudied – in the evolution of Islam as a major world religion and civilisation.

This field of scholarship at the IIS explores a range of key themes and aims to provide a deeper understanding through excellent research of Shi‘i interpretations of the Qur’an, religious law, intellectual traditions, the role of religious authority in Shi‘i Islam, the formation of rites and ceremonies and the important contributions of Shi‘i communities to the intellectual traditions, arts, music,

architecture and literature through the ages.

A milestone event for the field of Shi‘i Studies at the IIS is the publication of the first two books in the new *Shi‘i Heritage Series* by the Department of Academic Research and Publications. The series will include the full spectrum of academic publications including monographs, edited volumes, bibliographies and translations of key texts.

*A History of Shi‘i Islam looks at the origins and history of Shi‘ism and sets the tone for the series.*

The first chapter examines the field of scholarship in Shi‘i Islam, looking at medieval Western and orientalist perspectives rooted in the “imaginative ignorance” of the Crusaders and early medieval Sunni scholarship. The book highlights the work of scholars in the early twentieth century who started to challenge the prevailing views on the emergence and doctrines of Shi‘i Islam. Dr Farhad Daftary points out in the preface of his book that “It is, indeed, a fact that Shi‘i communities of all traditions still continue to be variously misunderstood and misrepresented, whether by Muslims or by non-Muslims as well.”

The early formative years of Islam are explored in detail, from the time of the death of Prophet Muhammad to the time of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq, (died 765CE) –

the first one and a half centuries of Islam, when a multitude of Muslim groups and schools of thought were elaborating their doctrinal positions, resulting in a diversity of interpretations. Dr Daftary says, “My aim is to provide the historical framework for the study of the Shi‘a. What were some of the earliest Shi‘i ideas? What was their early history? How did the term Shi‘a originate?”

The later chapters provide a historical survey of the four communities who account for almost the entire Shi‘i Muslim population of the world – the Ithna‘asharis, or Twelvers, the Ismailis, the Zaydis and the Nusayris (now commonly known as the ‘Alawis).

When talking about his book, Dr Daftary says, “To my knowledge, this is the first book of its kind that covers all the main Shi‘i communities inclusively and as such provides an excellent entry point into the field of Shi‘i Studies. It is appropriate, therefore, to launch the Shi‘i Heritage Series with this monograph.”

Building on the historical foundations provided by Dr Daftary’s book, the second book in the series, *The Study of Shi‘i Islam* (co-edited by Dr Farhad Daftary and Dr Gurdofarid Miskinzoda), looks at how the understanding of the various branches of Shi‘i Islam evolved over time. The volume explores the study of Shi‘i Islam and the contributions of the

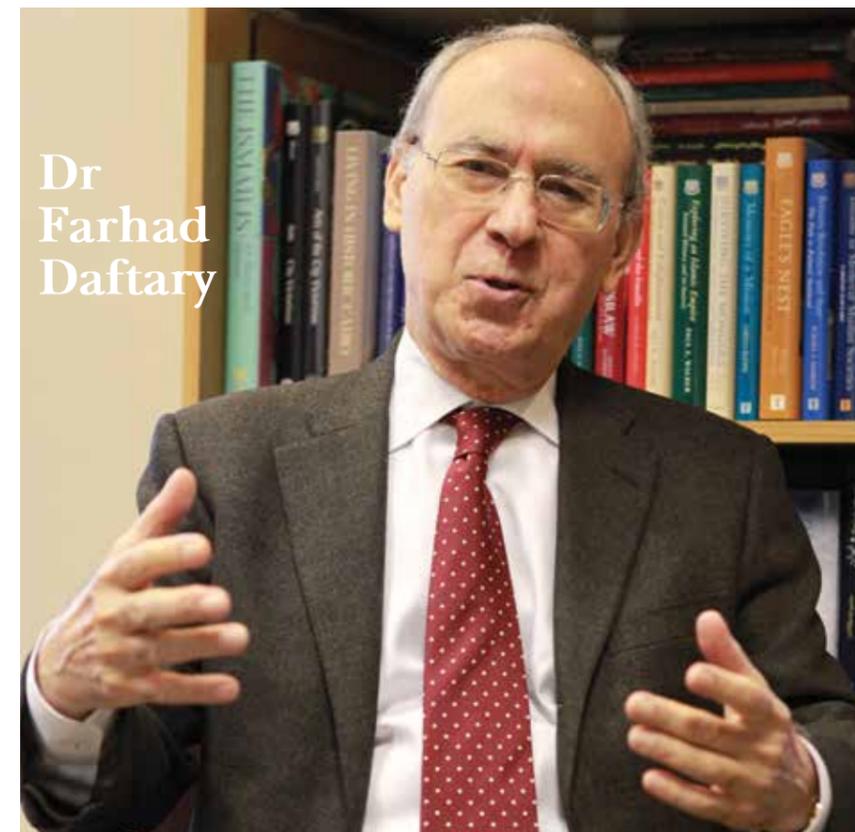
different Shi‘i communities to eight diverse subjects areas – the Qur’an and its Shi‘i interpretations, hadith, law, authority, theology, rites and rituals, as well as philosophy.

Each section begins with an introduction written by an established scholar in the field

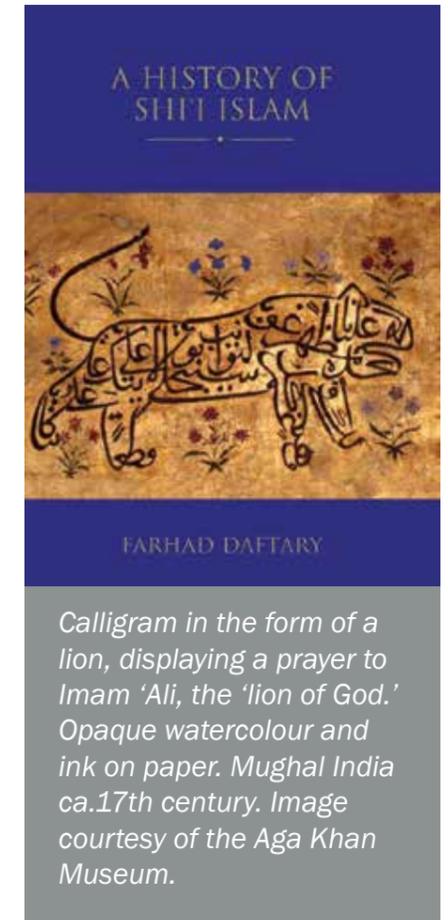
presenting the challenges and issues that exist in current scholarship. Specific case studies highlight and seek to elucidate the key themes and serve as points of reference.

The book is envisaged as a text book for graduate students and scholars in the field.

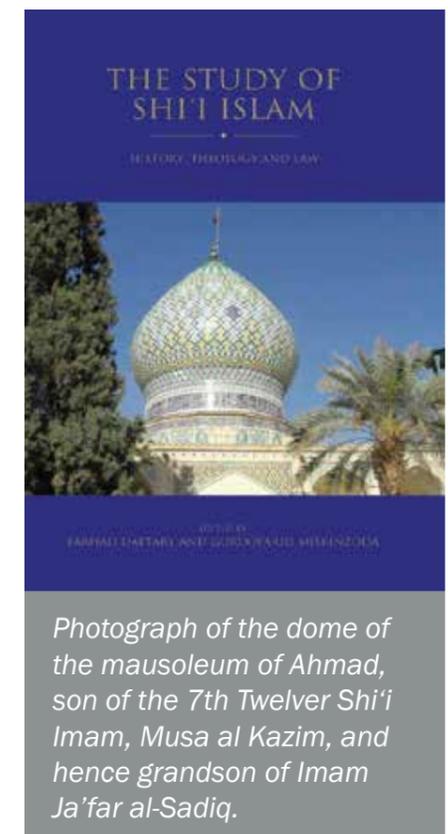
“It is, indeed, a fact that Shi‘i communities of all traditions still continue to be variously misunderstood and misrepresented, whether by Muslims or by non-Muslims as well.”



Dr Farhad Daftary



Calligram in the form of a lion, displaying a prayer to Imam ‘Ali, the ‘lion of God.’ Opaque watercolour and ink on paper. Mughal India ca.17th century. Image courtesy of the Aga Khan Museum.



Photograph of the dome of the mausoleum of Ahmad, son of the 7th Twelver Shi‘i Imam, Musa al Kazim, and hence grandson of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq.

# Behind the Scenes at the Institute – Launching the Shi'i Heritage Series

“There comes a time for an institution when it has to go into wider studies and topics, and I think Shi'i Studies is the perfect fit for the Institute because it gives a broader context to the work that we do in the area of Ismaili Studies.”

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Dr  
Gurdofarid  
Miskinzoda

Dr Gurdofarid Miskinzoda, Managing Editor of the Shi'i Heritage Series, explains that the authors of the introductions do not limit themselves to these case studies when addressing questions of contemporary relevance such as “What is a Shi'i *tafsir*? How does that differ from a Sunni *tafsir*? or How do we define a Shi'i Hadith?” Instead, they provide a comprehensive overview of the field and the state of research in that particular sub-field.

Scholars who have contributed to the volume include Mohammad-Ali Amir-Moezzi, Meir M. Bar-Asher, Farhad Daftary, Daniel De Smet, Gerald R. Hawting, Nader El-Bizri, Etan Kohlberg, Wilferd Madelung, Andrew Newman, Ismail K. Poonawala, Sabine Schmidtke and Paul E. Walker.

Clearly, the Shi'i Heritage Series builds on the Institute's academic track record and, as Dr Miskinzoda points out, the Editorial Board for the Shi'i Heritage series and the authors

who contributed to this volume consist of leading scholars in the field. She goes on to say “We do also encourage younger scholars and the volume is a result of collaboration with scholars interested in the study of Shi'i Islam within and outside the Institute.”

Dr Miskinzoda comments, “There comes a time for an institution when it has to go into wider studies and topics, and I think Shi'i Studies is the perfect fit for the Institute because it gives a broader context to the work that we do in the area of Ismaili Studies.” Drawing on her experience as a member of the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for the UK, she goes on to say, “We hope the fruits of this scholarship will help the Ismaili community to understand their wider Shi'i heritage better.” Dr Daftary and Dr Miskinzoda, both point out that this is not a new area of study for the Institute but, rather, a new focus. Dr Daftary gives examples of IIS publications – *An Anthology of Philosophy*

*in Persia* (five volumes), the *Encyclopaedia Islamica* (a 16 volume project) and the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (a 17 volume project) – which have made an impact in the field of Shi'i Studies already and he notes that “the new series builds on this success.”

Shi'i Studies at the IIS is not limited to publications. A new core course entitled *Shi'i Islam: History and Doctrines* was introduced as part of the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities in 2011.

Recently, the Institute organised a panel on Shi'i Islam entitled *Shi'ism in historical perspectives* at the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) annual meeting in October 2013, which you can read about here.

There is also an ongoing *Shi'i Studies* Lecture Series which brings leading and young scholars in the field to the IIS. Future conferences and events will be listed on the IIS Website.



Left: Professor Wilferd Madelung speaks at the Shi'i Studies colloquium.  
Right: Audience members included leading thinkers and scholars, at the Shi'i Studies colloquium held in 2010.



## Forthcoming Shi'i Heritage Series publications

Orkhan Mir-Kasimov's *Language of the Birds* – the first scholarly study of an important text produced by Hurufis (affiliated to the Alevi in Turkey today)

An English translation of M. A. Amir-Moezzi and C. Jambet's “*An Introduction to Shi'ism*”

# In Focus: Secondary Curriculum module on *Muslim Societies and Civilisations*

In the last *IIS Update*, we announced the publication of the new Secondary Curriculum module, *Muslim Societies and Civilisations* and provided a general introduction to the IIS Secondary Curriculum. In this article, we will highlight the content and associated perspectives presented in this module.

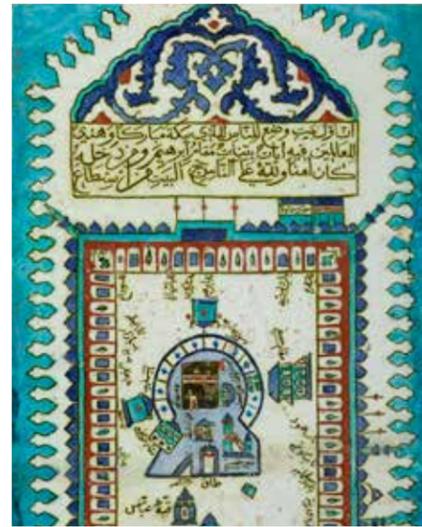
The *Muslim Societies and Civilisations* module is the first in a series of eight in the Secondary Curriculum. It introduces the rise and development of Islam, from the period of Prophet Muhammad in the sixth and seventh centuries to the rule of the Fatimid Imam-Caliphs from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. Two other modules to follow will extend this history to cover the succeeding periods, leading into the study of Muslim societies in the contemporary context.

Within the framework of the rise and fall of civilisations, students are introduced to the achievements of Muslim societies. Using the city as a space of dynamic creativity, the content presents the flowering of Muslim civilisations in all their manifold aspects. The module begins with the emergence of the early Muslim community in Mecca and Medina, before examining the development of cosmopolitan societies under various Muslim dynasties in Damascus, Baghdad, Cordoba and Cairo. These cities became a network of civilisational hubs through which the traffic of

skills, ideas and human talent circulated.

The political and social order that developed in the dynastic rule of the Umayyads, Abbasids and Fatimids created spaces of stability and growth. But as with all civilisations in history, Muslim societies were not exempt from their share of conflicts and crises, some internal and others arising from warfare with neighbouring powers. Civil conflicts arose in the time of the early caliphs, as they did in later periods when the caliphs had to contend with revolts and rebellions. Floods, droughts and famine intermittently affected large sections of populations who lived in areas prone to natural disasters. The recognition of this aspect of history, presented where possible through primary or eye-witness sources, counters perceptions of an idealised view of Muslim civilisations in the past.

Foremost among the challenges faced by the emergent Muslim societies was the question of legitimate authority and leadership. The module traces the diverse views that developed among Muslim groups on who was the rightful successor of the Prophet. This issue is examined in the time of the early caliphs and as it came to be addressed by the succeeding caliphates. Particular attention is paid to the Shia perspective which recognised the authority of Hazrat Imam Ali and his direct descendants.



Consideration is also given to the institution of the caliphate which took on different forms in the Umayyad, Abbasid and Fatimid contexts.

The development of Shia traditions, and the emergence of the Ismailis in this phase of history, features as an integral part of the broader Muslim narrative. The history of the Imam is presented in the various phases covered across the first six centuries, beginning with the life of Hazrat Ali and the early Imams in Medina, progressing to the Dawr al-Satr when the Imams were in concealment, and concluding with the Fatimid Imam-Caliphs in North Africa and Egypt. Examining the history of the Imam in relation to wider Muslim history will help the Ismaili youth identify the origins and development of their inherited tradition and instil in them a greater sense of their historical identity.

The module presents the first six centuries of Muslim history through the following units:

**Unit 1: Prophet Muhammad in Mecca and Medina:** Life in sixth-century Arabia and neighbouring regions provides the backdrop against which the Prophet's biography is introduced. The event of revelation frames the discussion of the Prophet's mission as it materialised, initially in Mecca and then in Medina. The varieties of responses which emerged to the Prophet's teachings, from overt threats to his life to the growing number of followers, reveal the tensions, conflicts and changes that were being experienced in this formative phase. Central to the consideration here is the significance of the prophetic period in the context of the ensuing development of the civilisational history of Muslims.



**Unit 2: The Caliphate in Medina:** The starting exploration here is the issue of authority and leadership that emerged soon after the passing away of the Prophet. Particular attention is paid to the significance which the event of Ghadir Khumm came to assume for the Shia, who upheld Hazrat Ali as having been designated by the Prophet as the legitimate Imam of the believers. The selection of Hazrat Abu Bakr as the first caliph leads into a study of the first four caliphs, centring on

their significant achievements as well as the challenges they encountered in their time. Hazrat Ali's support and advice to the caliphs before him are highlighted, as is his spiritual and ethical wisdom, including the respect and reverence extended to him in both Shia and Sunni traditions.



**Unit 3: Damascus and the Umayyads:** The rise of the first Muslim dynastic empire is traced by examining the Umayyads of Syria. Umayyad rule in Damascus, which spanned almost a century, led to a creative reworking of forms of governance, economy, architecture and scholarship inherited from past and contemporary civilisations. This adaptive spirit is exemplified in the monuments of the Umayyad Mosque and the Dome of the Rock through the synthesis of Qur'anic motifs with Byzantine and Sasanid architectural precedents.

A key turning point in early Shia history is the Battle of Karbala, and the bearing it had on the subsequent relations between the Shia and the Umayyads. The lives and teachings of Imam Zayn al-Abidin and Imam Muhammad al-Baqir provide insight into the development of



**Unit 4: Baghdad and the Abbasids:** Muslim history entered a new phase with the displacement of the Umayyads by the Abbasids in 750. The Abbasid caliphate lasted for over five centuries until it was brought to an end with the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258. This period saw the translation of Greek, Persian and Sanskrit texts into Arabic, the development of various disciplines of knowledge, and the rise of prominent thinkers, poets, scientists and physicians. Included here is the contribution made by Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq to Shia thought and to religious sciences such as *fiqh*. The history of the Ismaili Imams in the Dawr al-Satr and the spread of Ismaili *da'wa* from Salamiyya in Syria also form an integral part of the topics covered.



**Unit 5: Cordoba and the Umayyads:** After its demise in Syria, Umayyad rule resurfaced

## In Focus: Secondary Curriculum module on *Muslim Societies and Civilisations*

in the Iberian Peninsula in the eighth century. It led to the rise of al-Andalus, a Muslim civilisation on the European mainland, with Cordoba as its political and cultural base. Al-Andalus came to be characterised by a pluralist culture, where Muslims, Christians and Jews endeavoured to live alongside one another through observing *convivencia* (peaceful co-existence). The Andalusians, under the Umayyads and in later centuries, came to be noted for their creativity in architectural monuments, philosophical ideas and poetic styles. The caliphal city of Madinat al-Zahra on the outskirts of Cordoba and the palatial complex of Alhambra in Granada reveal the peaks to which this creativity scaled, as do the contributions of Ibn Rushd and Ibn al-Arabi.



### Unit 6: Cairo and the Fatimids:

The period between the tenth and eleventh centuries saw the rise of dynasties based on or affiliated with the Shia tradition, this phase being designated by some historians as the 'Shia century'. Prominent among these dynasties were the Fatimids, whose history is traced from the founding of the Fatimid state in North Africa to its expansion into Egypt, with Cairo as the new capital. Together with

the significant achievements of the Imam-Caliphs, also covered here are the contributions of key Ismaili figures in this period, such as Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani, Hamid al-Din al-Kirmanī, al-Qadi al-Nu'man and Nasir Khusraw, including influential women such as Sitt al-Mulk and al-Sayyida al-Hurra. The artistic, poetic, literary and scientific endeavours which gained patronage under the Fatimids are showcased, highlighting forms of creativity that were common to Muslim societies of this time but also distinctive in some respects to the Fatimids.

In teaching the *Muslim Societies and Civilisations* module, teachers are encouraged to make connections to world history and other subjects which students study in their day to day schooling. These linkages are aimed at broadening students' understanding of the interactions between Muslims with other societies and civilisations, both in the past and in modern times.

The module also engages with issues which are of significance for Muslims today, including intercultural relations, religious tolerance, the built environment, the development of political and social institutions, and the role of knowledge.

Through this approach, the module seeks to extend the study of the past from historical curiosity to its contemporary bearing on Muslims globally.

### STEP teachers' voices

“ My students have been able to develop their understanding of Muslim history and refine their historical thinking skills through the IIS Secondary Curriculum module on *Muslim Societies and Civilisations*. They have been engaged in an enquiry process where both historical and contemporary perspectives are considered. I have used strategies such as discussions, debates, drama, role-play, project work, creative writing and other similar activities to facilitate their understanding of key themes presented in the module. ”

Zohra Surani  
STEP teacher

“ Today when I reflect back on my religious education, I wish I was exposed to the IIS Secondary Curriculum modules. By drawing out examples from and making links with historical events and figures, the Student's Reader gave my students an opportunity to engage with concepts and values such as pluralism, honesty, generosity and many others. The Teacher's Guide has been the foundation for guiding these 'big themes' and aiding me to deliver something truly special and momentous for my students. ”

Nazlin Ukani  
STEP teacher

## STEP in the field Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Secondary Teachers

STEP Continuing Professional Development Workshops take IIS Faculty to five sites each year to engage with practising STEP (Secondary Teacher Education Programme) teachers in the field.

The objective of the workshops is to deepen STEP teachers' understanding of one or two IIS Secondary Curriculum modules each year. The focus this year was on the *Muslim Societies and Civilisations* module and the Muslim devotional and ethical literature module, *On the Wings of Words*.

This year, approximately 180 secondary level teachers took part in the workshops which were hosted by ITREBs (Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Boards), in Houston, Toronto, Dubai, Mumbai and Islamabad.

The workshops gave participants an opportunity to hear from the Head of Curriculum Studies at the IIS, Dr Shiraz Thobani, and to gain a deeper understanding on the perspectives and philosophical underpinnings of both modules.

Dr Shainool Jiwa, author and historian at the Institute, took a civilisational rather than chronological approach to the study of history by using three specific case studies; that of an event (the Hijra), a personality (Dai al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi) and architecture (the

Dome of the Rock) to explore and elucidate the *Muslim Societies and Civilisations* module.

A key objective was to illustrate ways in which students can be encouraged to engage meaningfully with textual materials. This was demonstrated by Mehjbeen Dattoo and Riaz Rhemtulla from the IIS, who shared their experiences of how to teach historical thinking skills in the classroom by examining a selection of historical texts from the module.

Dr Farouk Mitha explored Islamic poetry and literature. His presentation showed how literature grapples with universal questions of human existence such as the meaning of suffering, love, death etc. and how these themes can

be connected to questions adolescents are exploring at this stage in their development.

The workshops were organised in partnership with ITREBs in the five centres. Participant evaluation has informed the programme for next year, which will, as a result, include more teacher-led sessions and a teacher mentor component. Eraj Sodatsairov, Honorary Secretary at ITREB Tajikistan said:

“The CPD workshops were an opportunity for our teachers to reflect on their teaching practise. It enhanced their knowledge of the social and cultural contexts of the societies and civilisations of the time and helped them build connections to the present day. The workshops have unlocked talents and potential in our teaching teams in the field.”



Teachers and IIS personnel share creative ways to teach secondary level Ismaili Muslim children. Photograph from Mumbai Workshop.



## Steve Lewitt Head of Human Resources

“ I am going to try to provide the right skills to those with potential who want to make a career at the Institute, to go onto other jobs, either laterally or through promotion. ”

### Where were you before you joined The Institute of Ismaili Studies?

I've had a varied career in HR before I joined the IIS; I worked in the public and private sectors as well as a charity. Most recently, I was at the University of Oxford where I was Head of HR at the Ashmolean Museum and before that was an HR business partner for the Humanities, Social Sciences and University Collection divisions within the University. I've also worked for a couple of global multi-nationals such as Alstom and Siemens as well as more prosaic organisations such as the NHS and the Civil Service.

### What do you do at The Institute of Ismaili Studies?

Although my title is Head of Human Resources what that really means is trying to make sure that the Institute continues to attract the best minds, to invest in the development of its people, to make sure that everyone we employ knows what

they need to do, and, have the tools to do their job as well as they can.

### How has this year been for you since joining the Institute?

The culture of the Institute is very different to anything I have experienced up to now. Sure, there is a large overlap with Higher Education work I have done before but, curiously, it also reminds me of aspects of the state system and, because it is affiliated with the wider AKDN and Ismaili Community institutions, there is a global component to it as well. So, my time here so far has been all about learning that culture and trying to work out ways of applying HR good practice within that environment.

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

It picks up on the point I made earlier about continuing to invest in employees. We are going to be looking at developing a line manager “refresher” programme

so that line managers get a further exposure about being effective line managers in terms of focusing on the performance of their team. That will be a long-running programme of six months or more.

On top of that, we will be re-joining the Leadership Foundation (which is the main development organisation for the Higher Education sector) to make sure that those people in the IIS who are going to go on to develop careers in the Higher Education sector have got the right links and skills to enable them to do so.

Finally, in collaboration with the senior management team, I will be looking at a ‘talent management’ programme whereby, I am going to try to provide the right skills to those with potential who want to make a career at the Institute, to go onto other jobs, either laterally or through promotion, so that when they are interviewed, they do really well.

## Other Appointments

*Constituency Studies*  
**Qudsia Naunehal Shah**  
Research Officer

*Communications & Development*  
**Siddhartha Pulijala**  
Website Technical Officer

*Academic Research & Publications*  
**Miklos Sarkozy**  
Visiting Research Fellow

**Russell Harris**  
Editor

*Curriculum Studies*  
**Anastasia Makeeva**  
Translations Officer

**Lisa Magloff**  
Managing Editor

**Zamira Dildorbekova**  
Education Officer

**Zuleikha Haji**  
Assistant Editor

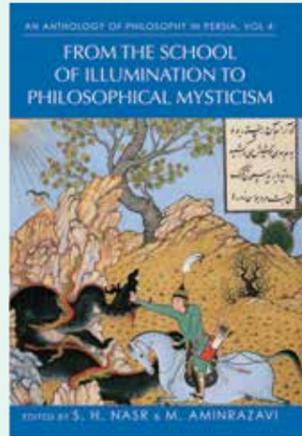
*Graduate Studies*  
**Mark Tyler**  
Senior Academic & Student Support Services Manager

*Library*  
**Jessica Lindner**  
Assistant Librarian

*Ismaili Special Collections Unit*  
(newly established unit)  
**Wafi Momin**  
Head of Unit

# New Publications

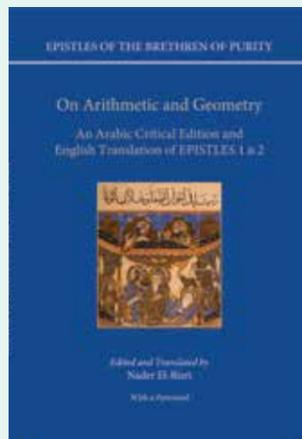
## **An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia, Volume 4** *From the School of Illumination to Philosophical Mysticism* Edited by Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Dr Mehdi Aminrazavi



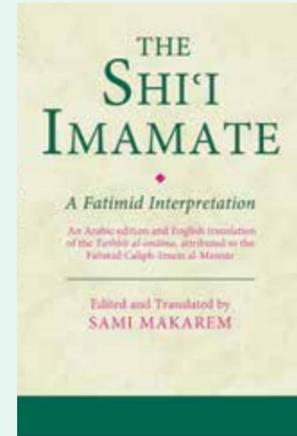
Persia is home to one of the few civilisations in the world that has had a continuous tradition of philosophical thought lasting more than two and a half millennia. The West has seen surveys of Persian art and anthologies of Persian literature, but this work is the first to present a millennial tradition of philosophy in Persia in the form of translated selections and introductory sections for each period and figure.

The fourth volume of *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* deals with one of the richest and yet least-known periods of philosophical life in Persia: the centuries between the seventh AH/thirteenth CE, which saw the eclipse of the School of Khurasan, and the tenth AH/sixteenth CE, which coincided with the rise of the Safavids.

## **Epistles of the Brethren of Purity** *Epistles 1 & 2: On Arithmetic and Geometry* Edited and translated by Dr Nader El-Bizri

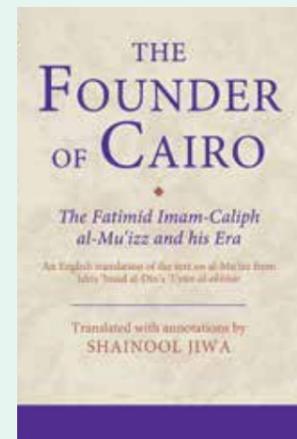


The Ikhwān al-Safā' (Brethren of Purity), the anonymous adepts of a tenth-century esoteric fraternity based in Basra and Baghdad, hold an eminent position in the history of science and philosophy in Islam due to the wide reception and assimilation of their monumental encyclopaedia, the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā'* (*Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*). This compendium contains fifty-two epistles offering synoptic accounts of the classical sciences and philosophies of the age; divided into four classificatory parts, it treats themes in mathematics, logic, natural philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, and theology, in addition to didactic fables. Epistles 1 and 2 present technical and epistemic analyses of mathematical concepts, and of their metaphysical underpinnings, investigating the properties of numbers and of geometric magnitudes, based primarily on the traditions of Nicomachus of Gerasa and Euclid. The content of this volume offers enlightening perspectives regarding the canonisation and popularisation of the mathematical sciences within the greater Islamic intellectual milieu.



## **The Shi'i Imamate** *A Fatimid Interpretation* Edited and translated by Professor Sami Makarem *Ismaili Texts and Translations Series*

The *Tathbit al-imama* (*Confirmation of the Imamate*) attributed to the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mansur (334-341 AH / 946-953 CE) is an important early Ismaili treatise on the legitimacy of the imamate of Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib and that of the Ismaili imams from among his progeny. As one of the earliest Ismaili works on this crucial and fundamental Shi'i subject it can thus be considered a major treatise on the doctrine of the imamate. The *Tathbit al-imama* does not deal with the metaphysical significance of the imamate. Rather, it concentrates on its legal and historical aspects, using proofs derived from the Qur'an, hadith and logical arguments. In this regard, it is directed at Muslims in all their different religious affiliations. This edition has been compiled from two manuscripts of the *Tathbit*, both of which are now in the collections of the library at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, with the Arabic text carefully translated into idiomatic English to retain the character and flavour of the original text as much as possible.



## **The Founder of Cairo** *The Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Mu'izz and his Era* Translated with annotations by Dr Shainool Jiwa *Ismaili Texts and Translations Series*

The reign of the founder of Cairo, the fourth Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah (341-365 AH/953-975 CE), marks a watershed in the transformation of the Fatimid state from a regional North African dynasty to an expansive Mediterranean empire. It was also under Imam-caliph al-Mu'izz that articulations of the supreme authority of the Fatimid Ismaili imamate were written and disseminated across various regions of Fatimid influence.

The writings of Idris 'Imad al-Din (d. 872 AH/1468 CE) provide a distinctive presentation of the Fatimid imamate from the perspective of the Ismaili *da'wa* itself. As the chief *da'i* of the Yemeni Tayyibi Ismailis, Idris composed his monumental '*Uyun al-akhbar wa funun al-athar* (*Sound Sources and Trustworthy Traditions*) as a record of the Ismaili imamate from its inception to his own time. As the only surviving, medieval Ismaili work documenting the history of the Fatimid dynasty, the '*Uyun al-akhbar* is among its principal primary sources.

## Forthcoming Publications

**A History of Shi'i Islam**  
*Shi'i Heritage Series*  
By Farhad Daftary

**The Study of Shi'i Islam**  
*Shi'i Heritage Series*  
Edited by Farhad Daftary & Gurdofarid Miskinzoda

**The Age of the Fatimids**  
*Muslim Heritage Series*  
Edited by Shainool Jiwa

**Encyclopaedia Islamica, Volume 4**  
**Baba Afdal-Birjandi**  
Edited by Wilferd Madelung & Farhad Daftary

**Epistles of the Brethren of Purity**  
**On the Sciences of Nature:**  
**An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 15-21**  
Edited and translated by Carmela Baffioni

**On Astronomy and Geography:**  
**An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 3-4**  
Edited and translated by Jamil Ragep, Taro Mimura, and Ignacio Sanchez with James Montgomery



# Professor Mohammed Arkoun

(1928-2010)

The Institute of Ismaili Studies is honoured to have received the donation of the Late Professor Mohammed Arkoun's archive. The archive, which has been donated by his family, documents the evolution of Professor Arkoun's production and intellectual life. It includes essays at various stages of development; letters to and from distinguished scholars, colleagues and students; lecture notes, school papers and certificates. This archive, managed by the newly formed Ismaili Special Collections Unit, and housed at the Institute's Library, will enable scholars to study the thought and times of Professor Arkoun, a key figure in the history of the IIS.

The Late Professor Arkoun was one of the most prominent and influential figures in recent Islamic Studies. In a career of more than 30 years, he was an outstanding research scholar, a searching critic of the theoretical tensions embedded in the field of Islamic Studies, and a courageous public intellectual, carrying the banner of an often embattled Islamic modernism and humanism.

A native of Great Kabylia, Algeria, he studied at the Faculty

of Literature of the University of Algiers and at the Sorbonne in Paris. He established his scholarly reputation with his early studies of the historian and philosopher *Miskawayh*, in his work *Contribution à l'étude de l'humanisme arabe au IVe/Xe siècle: Miskawayh (320/325-421)=(932/963-1030), philosophe et historien*.970). As he began to consider how one might rethink Islam in the contemporary world, his sophisticated questioning provided a welcome counterpoint to the highly ideological interpretations that dominated debate in both the Muslim world and the non-Muslim West. As the editor of *Arabica*, he maintained the journal's very high standard of scholarship, considerably broadened its scope, and played a significant role in shaping Western-language scholarship on Islam.

He is the author of numerous books in French, English and Arabic, including *La pensée arabe* (1975, 8th ed. 2008), *Lectures du Coran* (1982), *Rethinking Islam* (1994), *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (2002), *Humanisme et Islam* (2005), *Islam: to reform or to subvert?* (2006), *La question ethnique*

*et juridique dans la pensée islamique* (2010-posthumous).

His shorter studies have appeared in many academic journals and his works have been translated into several languages.

Professor Arkoun was the recipient of numerous prestigious awards. In 2001, he was invited to deliver the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh. In 2002, he was awarded the 17th Georgio Levi Della Vida Award for his lifelong contribution to the field of Islamic Studies. In 2004, he was decorated as "Commandeur" of the French Légion d'Honneur.

Professor Arkoun taught for many years at the Sorbonne University in Paris, where he became Emeritus Professor. He was Senior Research Fellow and member of the Board of Governors of The Institute of Ismaili Studies. He also served as a jury member for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. He was a visiting professor at numerous institutions, among which are UCLA, Princeton University, Temple University, the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, the Pontifical Institute of Arabic Studies in Rome and the University of Amsterdam.

