The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Nizari Ismailis and Spiritual Resurrection

Conference Programme
19 February 2025

A contemporary view of the Rock of Alamut (ca. 2012).
By kind permission of Julia Maudlin.

Organising Committee

**Department of Academic Research and
Publications, The Institute of Ismaili Studies**

Dr Daryoush Mohammad Poor
Naushin Premji
Julia Kolb
Florence Sharp

Nizari Ismailis and Spiritual Resurrection

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Welcome

Various discussions and interpretations of the history and thought of the Nizari Ismaili Muslims have been central to Ismaili studies. Among the most prominent of these, mention should be made of the Assassin Legends and their appearances in the fantasies of the Europeans of Crusader times, famously articulated in the travelogue of Marco Polo and which have been perpetuated ever since. During the past century, the groundbreaking works of Wladimir Ivanow, the rigorous and prolific historiographical contributions of Farhad Daftary and the establishment of the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), have elucidated our knowledge of the Alamut period in Ismaili history and thought. Consequently, we now have a more accurate understanding of the Assassin Legends, as well as of the Alamut period in Ismaili history and thought more broadly.

A significant number of primary sources from the Alamut period have now been critically edited and published by the IIS, and this work continues. Despite these advances in scholarship, two major areas in the study of Nizari Ismailism from the Alamut period remain enigmatic and contested: the legends about the Ismaili *fidāʾīs*, or devotees, and their alleged indoctrination and lack of moral probity, and the declaration of spiritual resurrection (*qiyāma*) by the first Nizari Ismaili Imam who emerged at the Alamut fortress. The first was systematically debunked in Daftary's *The Assassin Legends* (1994) but continues to persist in the fields of Ismaili studies and historiography – and in the popular imagination through retellings such as recent television series from Egypt and Turkey. The endurance of the topic demonstrates that there is still work to be done.

The second area, concerning myths around the Nizari Ismaili interpretations of *qiyāma* and any alleged changes in the ritual practices of the community at that time, also calls for more research and thus forms the theme of this conference. The most prominent narratives of the declaration of spiritual resurrection, proclaimed in 559/1164 by Ḥasan ʿAlā Dhikrihi'l-Salām (d. 561/1166), relied on accounts of detractors. During recent years, with the discovery of Nizari Ismaili manuscripts from the Alamut and post-Alamut periods, some of these dominant perceptions have increasingly been reviewed and challenged with more nuanced scholarship.

This conference is intended to bring to the fore scholarly perspectives and the latest research on this controversial event and its broader significance for Nizari Ismailis, as well as the historical and social context in which the *qiyāma* was declared. The context of the event is of particular importance and relevance because it was not singularly Shiʿi or Nizari Ismaili. Similar ideas propounded by Sufi groups strongly hint at the broader social and intellectual bedrock of the event, transcending the doctrines of a minority community sequestered in remote fortresses. This conference welcomes a wide array of academic contributions, covering a range of perspectives.

Dr Daryoush Mohammad Poor

Associate Professor
Department of Academic Research and Publications, IIS

Conference Programme
Wednesday, 19 February 2025

08:15 – 09:00

Registration

09:00 – 09:10

Welcome and Opening Remarks: Daryoush Mohammad Poor

09:10 – 09:30

Keynote Address

Shiraz Hajiani, Independent Scholar

09:30 – 11:00

Panel 1
Chair: Omar Alí-de-Unzaga

The Nizari Proclamation of the *Qiyāma* and its Doctrines: A View from Afar

Delia Cortese, Middlesex University

Sources on the Qiyāma in Ismaili Manuscripts

Karim Javan, IIS

The *Qiyāma* and the Mongols
(Mongols and Ismailis before 1256 according to the *Dīwān-i Qāʾimiyyāt*)

Miklós Sárközy, Károli Gáspár University of the Hungarian Reformed Church

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11:00 – 11:30

Health Break and Group Photo

11:30 – 13:00

Panel II (hybrid)
Chair: Faisal Devji

Symbols No More: The *Qiyāma* and the History of Religions (online)
Jamel Velji, Claremont McKenna College

Pledging Fealty after the Resurrection: Analysing an Arabic Oath of Allegiance from the Alamut Period (in-person only)
Shafique Virani, University of Toronto

The Influence of the Psychology of Resurrection in Nizari Ismaili Thought
Bassam Zahra, Université de Sherbrooke

13:00 – 14:30

Lunch and AKC Tours
Group A tour, 13:00 – 13:40; and Group B tour, 13:45 – 14:25

14:30 – 15:00

Assassins: Beyond the Legend – series premiere

15:00 – 16:30

Panel III
Chair: Farhad Daftary

The *Qa'im* in Ismaili Thought: Theological Development and Political Context(s)
Murid Shah Nadiri, University of Oxford

Nizari Historiography Near the End of Time: A Reconstruction of the Alamut Library
Aslisho Qurboniev, IIS

Paradoxes of Worship in the Era of Resurrection
Daryoush Mohammad Poor, IIS

16:30 – 17:00

Health Break

Conference Programme
Wednesday, 19 February 2025

17:00 – 18:30

Panel IV (online)
Chair: Karim Javan

Nāṣir-i Khusraw and the Confluence of Ismaili and Sufi Traditions: Philosophical Bridges in Medieval Islamic Thought
Theodora Zampaki, Hellenic Open University

Rethinking *Qiyāma*: The Emergence and Genealogy of the Nizari Imams
Khalil Andani, Augustana College

Poetic Theology: A Study of the Imam's Image in the *Dīwān-i Qāʾimiyyāt*
Seddigheh Kardan, McGill University

18:30 – 19:30

Free Time (with refreshments)

19:30 – 20:30

Concert
Composer:
Maestro Parviz Meshkatian
Behdad Babaei
Madjid Khaladj
Vahid Raemi

Please note, due to the technical nature of the concert, admittance will not be permitted after the doors close.

Abstracts and Bios

State of the Study of the Emergence of Nizari Ismailism during the Islamicate Early Middle Period

Shiraz Hajiani

SHIRAZ HAJIANI, PhD, is a scholar of religion and history and an educator with over a decade of teaching, including at the University of Chicago and Harvard University. His dissertation "Reconstructing Alamut—New Approaches to the Study of the Qiyāma and the Nizari Polity in Iran" completed at Chicago, contributes new approaches and readings of the history, thought and religious developments among the nascent Nizari Ismailis and their polity in Iran. His re-readings of the chronicles along with newly uncovered doctrinal treatises which he has edited and translated reveal not only complex relations and tumultuous conflict between the Nizaris and their religio-political adversaries, the Abbasids, Saljuqs and the Mongols, but also reveal factionalisms among the Nizaris which influenced their eschatological beliefs.

Shiraz has just completed the Alwaleed Postdoctoral Fellowship in Islamic Studies and the Postdoctoral Fellowship in Transcendence and Transformation at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University. He was a lecturer in Islamic Studies at Harvard Divinity School. Currently, Shiraz is preparing a monograph, *Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ* and the *Emergence of Nizari Ismailism* in which, through lenses of Ismaili Shiʿism and the Nizari polity, he examines Islamicate history of the early Middle Period. He is also working on two translation projects: i) *Concealment and Manifestation*: *Early Nizari Ismaili Treatises on Eschatology and Soteriology,* which will bring to publication ten doctrinal and historical tracts; and ii) an annotated translation from Persian of the lengthy account on the Fatimids (fl. 909–1171) and the Nizari polity (fl. 1090–1256) in the *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* (Compendium of Histories) of the Ilkhanid Mongol *wazīr Rashīd* al-Dīn Faḍlallāh (d. 1318).

Rethinking Qiyāma: The Emergence and Genealogy
of the Nizari Imams

Khalil Andani

The Nizari Ismaili declaration of *qiyāma* on 8 August 1164 was closely linked
to an equally important disclosure: the emergence of a manifest Imam from
the lineage of Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir (d. 1095) among his Ismaili followers in
Alamut. Modern scholars (Daftary et al.) have largely reproduced a narrative first
established by the highly polemical Āṭā-Malik Juwaynī (1226-1283) and followed
by the Ilkhanid historians. According to this narrative, there was no Nizari Imam
present at Alamut for seventy years after Nizār's death. Ḥasan ʿAlā Dhikrihi'l-Salām
(Ḥasan II, d. 1166), who was the son of Muḥammad b. Kiyā Buzurg-Umīd, initially
claimed to be the *khalīfa* and *ḥujja* of an absent Nizari Imam; at some point, Ḥasan
II claimed the Imamate for himself. His son and successor, Muḥammad (d. 1210),
then established a Fatimid–Nizari lineage for his father and himself.

My paper presents an alternative narrative concerning the presence of the Nizari
Imams at Alamut, the *qiyāma*, and the historicity of the Fatimid-Nizari genealogy
of the Nizari Imams. First, I present evidence consisting of historical reports
that an Imam from the progeny of Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir was already present in
Persia several years before the *qiyāma* declaration. Al-Fāriqī (1117–1181)
reports this in his *Tarīkh*, which contains historical events up to 549/1154
(despite not being completed until 560/1164), and several other historians
(Juwaynī, Qazwīnī, al-Andalusī, Ibn Muyassar, Rashīd al-Dīn, and Mustawfī)
corroborate this general claim.

Second, I offer a new lens to understand the Imamological claims of Ḥasan II when he declared *qiyāma*. Ḥasan II most likely claimed to be the *ḥujja* (proof) and *khalīfa* (deputy) of the Qāʾim (Lord of Resurrection). According to the Fatimid *daʿīs* al-Nuʿmān (d. 974) and Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. ca. 1070), these titles (*ḥujjat al-qāʾim*; *khalīfat al-qāʾim*) describe a special rank of Imam who represents the Qāʾim and undertakes his mission.

Third, I show that the Fatimid-Nizari genealogy of Ḥasan II and the Imams succeeding him was generally regarded as authentic by medieval Muslim scholars. Several notable historians, biographers, and ʿĀlid chief genealogists (*nuqubāʾ*) recognized the Nizari Imams of Alamut as genealogical descendants of Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir. Meanwhile, the claim that the Nizari Imams were the descendants of Muhammad b. Kiyā Buzurg-Umīd is nowhere to be found outside Ilkhanid sources, which suggests that Juwaynī himself may have fabricated this claim.

KHALIL ANDANI is an Assistant Professor of Religion at Augustana College and holds a PhD and two MAs in Islamic Studies from Harvard University. He specializes in Islamic intellectual history, Ismaili history and thought, and contemporary Islamic philosophy of religion. He has published extensively in various academic journals and volumes. His doctoral dissertation on 'Revelation in Islamic Thought' won Best Dissertation of the Year (2020) from the Foundation for Iranian Studies.

The Nizari Proclamation of the Qiyāma and its Doctrines:
A View from Afar

Delia Cortese

Following Ḥasan II's proclamation of the *qiyāma* in Alamut on 17th Ramaḍān 559/8 August 1164, a number of contemporary sources provide us with details of the event and reflections as to how the Resurrection should be understood. These writings range from Nizari Ismaili accounts and commentaries contemporary to the event to works by medieval, mostly Sunni, historians covering the vicissitudes of the Nizari Ismailis in their chronicles. These sources have been extensively explored and to this day form the basis of what we know about the *qiyāma* brought about by Ḥasan II and its aftermath. What has thus far escaped the attention of scholarship is an investigation into what the reaction of the other Ismaili branch, the Ṭayyibīs of Yemen, might have been to the proclamation of the Resurrection in Iran and Syria. In this paper, I explore passages contained in a text, *Kalām fī tarbiyya* by Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥārithī (d. Ṣanʿāʾ, 584/1188), included in the Ṭayyibī work known as *Majmūʿ al-Tarbiyya*, to argue that they voice a Ṭayyibī understanding and response to the doctrines that took hold among the Nizari Ismailis following the proclamation of the *qiyāma*. When analysed in the broader context of Ṭayyibī literature of the late 12th century, this and other works betray their need – in light of the renewed manifestation of the line of Imams among their rival Nizari Ismailis – to defend the necessity for the existence and perpetuation of their *daʿwa* on behalf of their Imam, al-Ṭayyib. This was the infant whom they believed to have succeeded his father, the Fatimid caliph al-Āmir, but who since 524/1130 has remained hidden to this day.

DELIA CORTESE (PHD, SOAS) is a Senior Research Fellow at Middlesex University, London. Her main areas of research are medieval Islam, particularly Ismaili, Fatimid and Nizari studies as well as Ismaili codicology. Her work focuses on topics in medieval Islamic social history ranging from the interrogation of gender issues in Ismaili history to the transmission and dissemination of knowledge. She has published articles on Sunnism as well as aspects of environmental history in Fatimid Egypt. Her publications include *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam* (with S. Calderini) (2006), *Arabic Ismaili Manuscripts*: *The Zāhid ʿAlī Collection* (2003) and *Ismaili and Other Arabic Manuscripts* (London, 2000). Her forthcoming monograph is titled *The Fatimids*: *Portrait of a Dynasty* (2025).

Sources on the Qiyāma in Ismaili Manuscripts

Karim Javan

The study of the proclamation of the Resurrection by Ḥasan ʿAlā Dhikrihi'l-Salām in the year 559/1164 encounters significant challenges, primarily due to the scarcity of internal sources addressing the historical and theological dimensions of this event. Historically, the primary sources of information have been historiographical accounts, notably those by ʿAṭā Malik Juwaynī in his *Tārīkh-i jahāngushā* and Rashīd al-Dīn in *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh*. However, these accounts are now often regarded as unreliable.

Although certain published texts from Nizari literature, such as *Haft bāb* and *Rawḍa-yi taslīm*, offer valuable insights into the theological interpretations of the doctrine of *qiyāma*, they do not collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of all its dimensions. Notably, numerous passages from the *Fuṣūl*, the principal body of literature authored by Ḥasan ʿAlā Dhikrihi'l-Salām and his successors, appear in various manuscripts and yield important insights into the ethical and theological aspects of the doctrine in its original context. These dispersed texts are typically recorded under titles such as *Faṣl* or *Qiṭʿa*, though the authorship is not always explicitly identified.

This presentation aims to provide an overview of these texts and the themes they encompass. An essential component of this analysis involves the methodological approach employed in identifying and studying these texts, which relies on various linguistic and stylistic features. Ultimately, this paper seeks to elucidate the more obscure aspects of the proclamation of *qiyāma* in its original formulation, as well as subsequent interpretations and modifications.

KARIM JAVAN is a Research Associate at the IIS Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU). After completing an MA in Persian Literature in Mashhad, Iran, and an MPhil in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Cambridge, he joined the Graduate Program in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH, class of 2004) at the IIS. He obtained his PhD on '*Qiyama* in Ismaili History: A Study on the Proclamation of Resurrection and its Historical Context' from SOAS in 2018. Apart from being a member of the faculty, Karim is currently working on cataloguing Persian manuscripts at the IIS and editing and translating a number of newly uncovered Persian Ismaili texts.

Poetic Theology: *A Study of the Imam's Image in the Dīwān-i Qāʾimiyyāt*

Seddigheh Kardan

Dīwān-i Qāʾimiyyāt, the significant poetic oeuvre of Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib from the Alamut period during the early 7th/13th century, presents such magnificent verses in praise of the Imam of the Age:

> *Know that the One, the Eternal, and the*
> *All-Encompassing, the Imam of the Time*
> *and the Lord of the Age, is our Mawlana.*
>
> *Do not speak of His attributes, for the*
> *Active Intellect is blind due to the radiation*
> *of that Absolute Light* (Kātib, 2011: 97).

This paper examines the intricate relationship between poetry and theology in constructing the image of the Imam in this *Dīwān*.

Drawing upon methodologies from literary analysis, comparative studies, and intellectual history, this research aims to argue that despite the inherent hyperbole of poetic language, the descriptions of the Imam in this corpus are deeply rooted in robust theological foundations. To substantiate this claim, a comparative analysis of the *Dīwān* and *Rawḍa-yi Taslīm*, the poet's philosophical prose work produced under the direct influence of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, is undertaken. This study elucidates the intimate relationship between poetry and theology during this distinctive phase of Ismaili history, emphasizing the importance of rendering intricate theological and philosophical concepts into poetic form for the general populace. It also underscores literature's capacity to bridge the gap between complex theology and popular understanding.

SEDDIGHEH KARDAN is a PhD candidate in Islamic Studies at McGill University. She holds a BA in Persian Language and Literature and an MA in Religions and Mysticism from the University of Tehran, Iran. Subsequently, she earned a second MA in Muslim Cultures from the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilizations (ISMC), Aga Khan University, London. Her research interests encompass Ismaili and Twelver Shiʿism, Qurʾanic studies, mysticism, Islamic philosophy and intellectual history, and Muslim literatures in Persian, Arabic and South Asian languages. Concurrently, she contributes to Professor Shafique N. Virani's scholarship at the University of Toronto as his research assistant and translator, beside her position as a teaching assistant at McGill.

Paradoxes of Worship in the Era of Resurrection

Daryoush Mohammad Poor

One of the key themes in the declaration of *qiyāma* is the personification of truth (*tashakhkhuṣ*). Often seen in the context of attributing divine qualities to the Imam of the Time, this *tashakhkhuṣ* in turn became represented – arguably, erroneously – as *ghuluww* (exaggeration).

With *qiyāma* as a focal point, this paper will consider certain tensions found at the intersection between related themes such as the pristine monotheism (*ḥanīfiyya*) and what it means to turn one's faith towards God. For example, Ibrahim is the archetypal figure of this faith, which is presented by Shahrastānī in contradistinction to the faith of the Ṣābiʾā. Or, turning one's face towards the Holy Mosque (the direction of prayer) is another rich symbolic area that is open to varying interpretations. In the esoteric Ismaili interpretation, turning one's face towards God means turning one's face towards the Imam of the Time, because the Imam is the manifestation of truth and the embodiment of God's command in the realm of creation. This presents an apparent paradox, whereby submission to a man (*rajul*) – this unique human being on earth – becomes central to pristine faith, from the Ismaili perspective. Similarly, the Kaʿba itself is an allegory for the Imam of the Time, and so visiting the Imam of the Time can be interpreted as performing the *ḥajj* pilgrimage. In exploring these themes and paradoxes, this paper will draw on primary sources of Nizari Ismaili literature from Shahrastānī to Ṭūsī and poetry from Nizārī Quhistānī.

DARYOUSH MOHAMMAD POOR is an Associate Professor in the Department of Academic Research and Publications at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, and a lecturer for the Department of Graduate Studies. He is also the series editor for the Ismaili Heritage Series, the Interim Head of Constituency Studies Unit.

He received his PhD in Political and Social Studies from the University of Westminster in 2012. His first monograph, *Authority without Territory*: *The Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili Imamate* (2014) is a fresh theoretical engagement with contemporary institutions of the Ismaili imamate. He co-edited and co-translated the memoirs of the 46th Ismaili Imam, *The First Aga Khan* (2018), with Daniel Beben. His most recent book, *Command and Creation*: *A Shiʿi Cosmological Treatise*, is a Persian edition and English translation of Muḥammad al-Shahrastānī's *Majlis-i maktūb* (2021).

The Qaʾim in Ismaili Thought: Theological Development and Political Context(s)

Murid Shah Nadiri

This paper examines the theological development and historical role of the concept of the *mahdi/qaʾim* within Shiʿi Islam, with particular attention to its articulation in Ismaili imamology. It argues that the idea was originally centred on the belief in a divinely guided concealed Imam who would appear and initiate the *qiyāma* and who became important in Ismaili theology only during the concealment of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl through a cyclical idea of history. Nonetheless, it persisted even after Imams re-emerged, sometimes defying the earlier Ismaili cyclical theory and expectations associated with the *qaʾim*. By situating the doctrine of the *qaʾim* within Ismaili theological and political contexts, this paper analyses the enduring significance of the *qaʾim* in shaping Ismaili history and theology: as a source of tension for the Imams navigating their authority while present among their followers, and as a catalyst for transformative events, such as the *qiyāma* declaration at Alamut, which (re)defined the political, religious, spiritual, and communal dynamics of the Ismaili community. Through a comparative chronology of key events, this paper argues that there is a recurring sequence underlying the declaration of *qiyāma*: (a) the concealment of the Imam, (b) anticipation and preparation for the *mahdī/qaʾim's* appearance, (c) declaration of *qiyāma* upon the Imam's (re)appearance, and (d) the eventual reinterpretation of *qiyāma* to consolidate allegiance to the present Imam.

MURID SHAH NADIRI is an Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Centre Scholar in History at Keble College, where his doctoral research focuses on the cross-regional networks of Ismaili *da'wa* between Central and South Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Before going to Oxford, he completed the MSc in Globalised Muslim World at the University of Edinburgh, writing a dissertation on the partition of Badakhshan during the so-called Great Game, paying special attention to Afghan historiography in addition to the more routine British imperial sources. He undertook the MSc at Edinburgh as part of the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, where he completed an MA in Islamic Studies and Humanities (awarded by SOAS University of London) and wrote a dissertation on the *chirāgh-i rawshan* ceremony and how migration has affected experiences of the ritual among Shughnani Ismailis living in Canada.

Nizari Historiography Near the End of Time: *A Reconstruction of the Alamut Library*

Aslisho Qurboniev

The paucity of Nizari historiography, including for the period of the *qiyāma*, is sometimes attributed to the destruction of Ismaili libraries, included the famed Alamut library, which was ostensibly destroyed during the Mongol capture in 1258 CE. Recent research, such as the work of F. Bora and M. Biran, has problematized similar *topoi* in relation to the destruction of Fatimid and Abbasid libraries, yet the dramatic book-burning event at Alamut still awaits critical re-examination. While the current paper is not concerned with the theological interpretation of the *qiyāma* in Nizari thought, our fuller understanding of the materials read and authored at Alamut, it will be argued, has some implications for interpreting the event, such as its anticipation and reception by the community. This paper builds on the author's ongoing manuscript research and bibliographic efforts to reconstruct the 'Alamut Library' as a digital corpus of primary Ismaili sources in Arabic and Persian including those authored during the so-called Alamut period. Specifically, the paper seeks to address the circulation of early Ismaili works at Alamut, including general works of history and science, which are usually not included within 'Ismaili literature' proper. As will be shown, the transmission of these texts points to the continuity of longer historical, philosophical traditions and theology, which, reveals Alamut as far from being an isolated outpost, but rather as a major centre for all sorts of learning, including historiography.

ASLISHO QURBONIEV is a historian of the premodern Islamic world, with a focus on scholarly communities, knowledge production and transmission in Arabic and Persian, especially during the Fatimid period (909–1171). He obtained his PhD from the University of Cambridge in 2019. In 2020 Aslisho joined the ERC-funded KITAB (Knowledge, Information Technology and Arabic Book) project at AKU-ISMC as a postdoctoral fellow. As part of KITAB he coauthored a multigraph on the history of Arabic written tradition, which is forthcoming. Aslisho has published several articles on Fatimid and Ismaili history, including a coauthored two-part article that contributes to the study of manuscript legacy from the Alamut state: '"A Scholarly Copyist": Early Ilkhanid Intellectual Networks through the Prism of Two Colophons,' in Sabine Schmidtke and George A. Kiraz (eds), *Literary Snippets*: *Colophons Across Space and Time* (2023), pp. 431-455.

The Qiyāma and the Mongols (Mongols and Ismailis before 1256 according to the Dīwān-i Qāʾimiyyāt)

Miklós Sárközy

The present talk examines the *Dīwān-i Qāʾimiyyāt* and its views on the Mongols. The *qiyāma* of 1164 characteristically shaped the worldview of the Nizari Ismāʿīlī thinkers and poets which resulted in the creation of this collection of odes celebrating the *qiyāma*. It is interesting to see however, that among the odes with a distinct religious content we can discover poems celebrating the coming of Mongol armies as a sign of the *qiyāma*. Instead of condemning the Mongols we find several instances where Nizari Ismaili authors of the *Dīwān-i Qāʾimiyyāt* celebrate Mongol victories and praise the virtues of Chinggis Khan who freed Nizari Ismaili from the Sunnī Khwārizmians.

This jubilant pro-Mongol tone however ended after 1231 when Jalāl al-Dīn Mingburnī, the last Khwārizmšāh died. Certain later odes of the *Dīwān-i Qāʾimiyyāt* clearly reflect this changed attitude heavily inciting against the Mongols calling Jingīz-i thānī (the second Chinggis, aka Ögedei Khan) as the enemy of the Nizari Ismaili. One of the odes gives a vivid description of the Nizari Ismaili assassination of Chaghatai Qorchi the chief Mongol military governor of the south Caucasus around 1249 and this event possibly could have been the *casus belli* for the massive Mongol attack against Alamut in 1256.

MIKLÓS SÁRKÖZY is Associate Professor in the Institute of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Károli Gáspár University of the Hungarian Reformed Church, Hungary. He is the author of many books, journal articles and chapters, most recently *The Early Nizari Ismailis and their Neighbouring Powers*: *Politics in the Caspian Provinces* (2024), as well as contributions to *Texts, Scribes and Transmission*: *Manuscript Cultures of the Ismaili Communities and Beyond* (2022) and the *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences* (2018). His research interests include Ismaili studies, early Islamic and medieval Iran and Central Asia.

Symbols No More: *The Qiyāma and the History of Religions*

Jamel Velji

Scholarly studies on the *qiyāma* have variously interpreted its significance as an admission of Nizari failure against the Seljuks (Hodgson); a new opportunity for individual spiritual freedom (Corbin and Jambet); and a graphic expression of protest among those in power (Lincoln) (Velji 2016: 116; see also Badakhchani 2017: 32–35). In this paper, I examine the advent of the *qiyāma* as a remarkable event in the history of religions in which the grammar of symbol and symbolized becomes eradicated through the realization of a radical apocalyptic ontology. After illuminating how a handful of Fatimid predecessors used symbolic language to envision the *qiyāma*, I show how this effacement of symbol and symbolized operates in portions of the *Haft-bāb*. I then illustrate how this concept of symbolic eradication represents a novel form of apocalyptic invocation within Ismaili traditions. I end this discussion by showing how a fuller understanding of symbolic collapse mediated during this event can significantly enhance our knowledge of apocalypticism in Islam and the history of religions.

JAMEL VELJI is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Claremont McKenna College. His work lies at the intersection of Islamic studies and religious studies and is particularly concerned with the ways in which narratives, rituals, and symbols can effect social transformations. He has written extensively on various aspects of apocalypticism, and his book *An Apocalyptic History of the Early Fatimid Empire* (2016) was the inaugural volume of Edinburgh University Press's series on Islamic Eschatology and Apocalypticism. In addition to work on classical Islamic eschatology, he is working on a book on Islamic histories of coffee.

Pledging Fealty after the Resurrection: Analysing an Arabic Oath of Allegiance from the Alamut Period

Shafique Virani

The Alamut period Nizari Ismaili work, *al-Dustūr wa-Daʿwat al-Muʾminīn li'l-Ḥuḍūr* (The Protocols and Invitation of the Faithful to the August Presence) attributed to Shams al-Dīn b. Aḥmad (or Muḥammad) b. Yaʿqūb al-Ṭayyibī (d. 652/1254), offers fascinating glimpses into post-*qiyāma* Ismaili history and thought. Despite the identification, editing, and translation of several Persian Ismaili works from this period, Arabic Nizari literature from the era remains largely inaccessible and unexplored by scholars, with the exception of some significant findings related to Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) and Rashīd al-Dīn Sinān (d. 589/1193).

Written in captivating rhyming prose, *The Protocols* outlines the intricate ceremony for inducting new initiates into the faith. A catechism of sorts, the text is organized around stages associated with each cycle's Herald and Foundation (*Nāṭiq* and *Asās*), followed by a recitation of the Imam's lineage and culminating in a ritual prayer ceremony.

This presentation will uncover the valuable insights the text offers into post-*qiyāma* Ismailism, highlighting the continuity of themes from Fatimid writings, early shared vocabulary with Sufism, and even communication channels between Nizari and Mustaʿlian Ismailis.

SHAFIQUE N. VIRANI (PhD, Harvard University) is a Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Toronto and was the founding director of its Centre for South Asian Civilizations. His research focuses on Ismaili and Twelver Shiʿism, Quranic studies, Sufism, and Arabic, Persian, and South Asian Muslim literatures. He is the author of *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages*: *A History of Survival, A Search for Salvation* (2007) and co-author and editor of *Islam's Spiritual Pillars*: *The Meaning of Muslim Practice in Nāṣir-i Khusraw's Face of Religion* (forthcoming). Translated into over 20 languages, his work has received awards and recognition from the American Academy of Religion, the Middle East Studies Association, the British Society for Middle East Studies, the government of Iran, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, among others.

The Influence of the Psychology of Resurrection in Nizari Ismaili Thought

Bassam Zahra

This paper offers a comprehensive overview of the psychology of resurrection in Nizari Ismailism, with focus on Syrian sources, tracing the historical roots of *qiyāma* and elucidating its declaration and significance, before examining its theological implications.

In the declaration of *qiyāma*, emphasis was placed on personal spiritual awakening and enlightenment that leads to a direct experience of the divine and epiphany. This shift was seen as the culmination of the Imam's spiritual guidance, allowing followers to transcend the material world and attain a higher state of consciousness.

The process of ego annihilation, as emphasized in Sufi traditions, aligns with Jungian frameworks of ego death, facilitating transformative healing and the emergence of a higher self.

In the context of modern psychiatry, the concept of resurrection can be understood and articulated through the lens of neuroscience and psychology. Although there are some efforts with respect to the application of Sufi enneagrams, scholars have a responsibility to explore and teach this important concept using contemporary scientific frameworks, to deepen our understanding of its psychological significance and relevance in today's world.

BASSAM ZAHRA, with a strong professional background in orthopedic surgery and medical research and publication, has spent 25 years studying Islamic philosophy and preserving heritage. He has a deep understanding of Fatimid resources and is currently exploring Nizari theology and the works of Sufi masters.

As a consultant and Clinical Assistant Professor, he holds certifications from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgery, and the CSPQ Quebec Specialist Certificate.

Nāṣir-i Khusraw and the Confluence of Ismaili and Sufi Traditions: Philosophical Bridges in Medieval Islamic Thought

Theodora Zampaki

This paper examines the philosophical and theological links between Ismaili and Sufi traditions, centring on the writings of Nāṣir-i Khusraw as a significant case study. Khusraw, an 11th-century Persian philosopher, poet, and theologian, uniquely linked Ismaili esotericism with Sufi mysticism, highlighting the dynamic relationship between rational thought and spiritual experience in medieval Islamic philosophy. We shall explore his integration of cosmological and metaphysical ideas through a thorough analysis of his *Dīwān* and *Wajh-i dīn*, especially focusing on his application of *ta'wīl* (esoteric interpretation) to reveal Qur'anic meanings, highlighting both similarities and differences with Sufi allegorical interpretations.

Khusraw's poetry reflects Sufi themes like divine love, spiritual elevation, and soul perfection, whereas his prose expresses a cosmology that is hierarchically structured and deeply ingrained in Ismaili beliefs. Utilizing Greek logic, Neoplatonic metaphysics, and Ismaili theology, he developed a framework that attracted both rationalist and mystical audiences. This paper emphasizes that Khusraw's interaction with Sufi concepts was not just coincidental but intentional, seeking to encourage intellectual dialogues with a wider audience, encompassing Sufi-influenced groups. Placing Nāṣir-i Khusraw within the intellectual movements of 11th-century Persia, this study highlights his function as a bridge between Ismaili and Sufi traditions.

THEODORA ZAMPAKI holds a PhD in Graeco-Arabic Studies from the University of Ioannina, Greece. Also, she has completed her postdoctoral research in Graeco-Arabic studies. She has been working as Adjunct Professor at the Hellenic Open University since 2017. She has been offering courses for OLLI at Furman University, USA since 2021. Her research interests focus on Arabic and Islamic studies (Graeco-Arabic studies, Islamic philosophy, history and culture of the Arabs).

Concert information
Programme

The concluding event of the conference will be a live performance of classical Iranian music with Behdad Babaei on setar, Madjid Khaladj on tombak and Vahid Taremi on shurangiz. The concert consists of celebrated pieces composed by the late Maestro Parviz Meshkatian (1955–2009) and improvised pieces by Behdad Babaei accompanied by Madjid Khaladj and Vahid Taremi.

Composer:

Maestro Parviz Meshkatian
Pīshdarāmad-i Humāyūn
Darāmad (improvisation)

Justujū (Quest)
Chakāwak (improvisation)

Samāʿ Āʾīn
Bīdād (improvisation)

Muqaddima-yi Bidād
Bayāt-i Rajiʿ (improvisation)

Artist Biographies

Behdad Babaei

Behdad Babaei (b. 1974 in Neyshabur, Iran) is a composer and multi-instrumentalist. Absorbing the intricate Iranian classical repertoire from revered Maestros Boroumand and Meshkatian, he has immersed himself in the world of modulation and Persian classical music.

Behdad's exploration into varied setar styles was ignited by Maestro Meshkatian's generosity and the guidance of Maestro Pirniakan, Maestro Tolouei and Maestro Shajarian. Since 1994, he has appeared on stages across Iran and beyond through collaboration with the Aref Ensemble. Performing with world-class luminaries like Maestros Shajarian and Nazeri, he is featured in albums such as "Dar Khial" and "Vatan-e Man".

His compositions have been performed at international festivals, and he is currently working on a book that analyses the playing styles of renowned maestros on the setar. For the last two decades, Behdad has taught and nurtured musicians and held masterclasses in Iran as well as in England, Germany, and Italy.
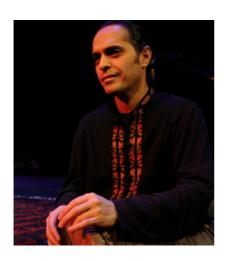
Vahid Taremi

Vahid Taremi is an Iranian composer and a skilled player of traditional Iranian instruments such as the tar, setar, and shurangiz. He was born in 1987 and pursued his education at the Islamic Azad University, Tehran North Branch, where he earned both a BA and an MA in Persian Literature. He attended the Tehran Conservatory of Music from 2006 to 2009.

As a composer, Taremi has published several notable compositions. In 2019, he contributed to the album "Little Black Fish", which was released by the HaftCraft label in Belgium. In 2016, he also improvised a piece for the album "Khayyam Khani" released by RAHA records. His other compositions include the albums "Shahre Sangestan" (2012) and "Khan-e-Hashtom" (2010), which he both composed and conducted.

A notable highlight in his career was performing "The Phoenix" at the prestigious Holywell Music Room, as part of the Oxford International Song Festival in 2023. Vahid has also made significant contributions to radio, television, and cinema. He has been a music critic and analyst on various programmes, including "Arghanoun", "Karaneh", and "Taranom". He has also written music for films such as "A Report from Manaslu" (2015), "The Deteriorating World of Natia" (2013), and "Door Masho" (2014). His contributions extend to the theatre, where he has composed music for several productions. Notable works include "Afsoone Parizad" (2009), "Shab Kouche Eshgh" (2008), "Az o Be Yek Eshare" (2007), "Setare Kouchouloo" (2007), and "Istgah" (2006).

Madjid Khaladj

Born in Ghazvin, Iran, in 1962, Madjid Khaladj began studying the tombak at the age of seven. Highly active internationally, he has performed in festivals, concerts and conferences around the world. He has produced various recordings and art movie soundtracks with Ry Cooder and Lisa Gerrard and has appeared on radio and television broadcasts.

In 1984, he was invited to teach Iranian percussion instruments at the Research Institute in Musicology of Paris-Sorbonne University. He used this opportunity to introduce many western musicians to Iranian music. In 1996, he founded the Ecole de Tombak in Paris (the Centre for Iranian Percussion Study). Since 1998, he has also been teaching at the Cité de la Musique in Paris and at the State Academy of Music in Basel, Switzerland (Musik-Akademie Basel in Switzerland).

Majdid Khaladj has developed a distinct approach for innovations in Persian percussion, in both improvisation and accompaniment, whose echoes are present in the work of contemporary percussionists who have embraced it over the past few years. The unequalled beauty of his style, his mastery of rhythm, and the brilliance of his improvisational work not only place him in the top rank next to the great classical Persian music maestros

The Institute of Ismaili Studies