



IIS UPDATE



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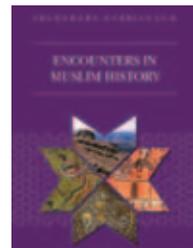
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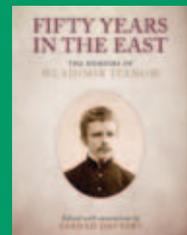
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Visit the newly designed, user-friendly website - iis.ac.uk - and **be inspired!**

To share your feedback or to update your contact details, please email communications@iis.ac.uk

CREDITS

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Message from the Co-Director

**Dr
Farhad
Daftary**



I write this message, having recently attended the opening ceremony of the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto which Prince Ayn Agha Khan described as a “gateway into the history and artistic traditions of the Muslim world.” He spoke about the “growing knowledge gap ... contributing to dangerous divisions” and outlined the contributions that the Aga Khan Museum hopes to make towards closing this gap.

His words led me to reflect on how the IIS, since its inception nearly 40 years ago, contributes to the building of knowledge and learning about the Islamic and more specifically Ismaili tradition, through a modern revival of Ismaili scholarship. The Institute’s intellectual roots can be traced back to the Fatimids and their patronage of the arts and learning with the founding of what became the first Muslim university of *Al-Azhar* and the *Dar al-Ilm*. The establishment of the IIS by His Highness the Aga Khan continues this tradition of institutions contributing to knowledge and learning.

Our recent and forthcoming publications, including my own work on the founder of modern scholarship on the Nizari Ismailis – *Fifty Years in the East*:

The Memoirs of Wladimir Ivanow demonstrates how today we are building on a rich heritage of learning and ensuring that the IIS continues to be regarded globally as the premier reference point for Ismaili Studies.

The Institute continues to address the learning needs of the Ismaili Muslim community with the publication of its Secondary Curriculum module *Encounters in Muslim History (Vol. 1)*, extending the coverage of our educational materials to the history of the Alamut period *Encounters in Muslim History (Vol. 2)*, to be published in 2015, will cover Muslim history up to the eighteenth century. We look forward to bringing you news on the units *Faith and Worship and The Qur’an and Its Interpretations (volume 1)*.

In last year’s *IIS Update*, I announced the establishment of the ISCU (Ismaili Special Collections Unit) whose role is to preserve and develop the Institute’s unique and growing Ismaili collection of manuscripts, archival items and artefacts. The Unit’s work in preserving, cataloguing and digitising these collections, will ensure that valuable heritage and knowledge in the fields of Shi’i and Ismaili Studies will continue to be made available and advance further scholarship in these areas.

One example of the contribution the IIS is making to modern scholarship is the launch of the multi-year project, *Qur’an through the Ages*. Professor Andrew Rippin, IIS Senior

Research Fellow from the University Of Victoria, Canada, will work with 60 to 80 scholars from across the world to explore how Muslims have understood the Qur’an in all aspects of their intellectual and social life, in different historical periods and across a variety of geographical areas.

As we look to the future and our plans to create a revitalised centre for learning in our new premises located at Kings Cross, I am delighted to be able to tell you that we are now part of an exciting initiative, “The Knowledge Quarter”, that brings together organisations involved in promoting learning and ideas in the Kings Cross area of London, which is led by the British Library. Being involved in this learning partnership will allow the IIS to create a greater awareness of its work with these institutions, and beyond.

We would like to receive your comments on this edition of the *IIS Update*. [Click here](#) to share your thoughts and suggestions.

I am honoured to extend to friends and supporters of the Institute, my heartfelt gratitude for your support and commitment to the Institute, and to invite you to remain engaged with us to enable the Institute to continue on its journey on the path of academic excellence and service to the global Jamat.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Farhad Daftary". Below the signature is a horizontal line that tapers to a point on the right side.

Behind The Scenes - Qur'anic Studies at the Institute

“...the Qur'an-e Sharif , rich in parable and allegory, metaphor and symbol, has been an inexhaustible well-spring of inspiration, lending itself to a wide spectrum of interpretations. This freedom of interpretation is a generosity which the Qur'an confers upon all believers, uniting them in their conviction that All-Merciful Allah will forgive them if they err in their sincere attempts to understand His Word. Happily, as a result, the Holy Book continues to guide and illuminate the thought and conduct of Muslims belonging to different communities of interpretation and spiritual affiliation, from century to century, in diverse cultural environments. The Noble Qur'an extends the principle of pluralism also to adherents of other faiths.”

His Highness the Aga Khan's speech at the Opening session of 'Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions', 19th October 2003.

In 2001, The IIS established a Unit devoted to Qur'anic Studies. Although there had been a growing interest in Qur'anic Studies globally since the 1980s and 1990s, much of the scholarship has increasingly focused on the philological studies of the Qur'an –which focused on the text of the Qur'an and its relationship with previous scriptures.

Qur'anic Studies at the IIS aims to go further and cover the full spectrum of the reception of the Qur'an, including the diverse views on the Qur'an held by Muslims belonging to the various communities of interpretation, in different regions, and over the centuries, in an inclusive way.

Scholars

The work of the Qur'anic Studies Unit enables scholars at the Institute, as well as experts from other organisations, to analyse the methods and approaches that have been used to interpret the Qur'an, from the earliest period of Islam up to the present day.

Research areas range from the interaction between philosophy and interpretation of the Qur'an in the tenth and eleventh centuries; to Political Islamic thought; to ethics and gender studies, to Qur'an and *hadith*; Shi'i and Sufi schools of thought and interpretations of the Qur'an; anthropology of Islam and even the more unusual study of angels in Islam.

The IIS' Qur'anic Studies Unit have collaborated with renowned scholars in the field. In 2013, Prof Andrew Rippin, Professor Emeritus of Islamic History at the University of Victoria joined the IIS as a Visiting Research Fellow and when asked about his involvement in IIS projects and publications, said:

“

I have been consistently impressed with the work the Qur'anic Studies Unit has done at the Institute and I am excited to be able to join this group of scholars in their projects. This will be an enriching environment for me to work in...

”

For a full listing of the research interests and projects that scholars in the Qur'anic Studies Unit at the IIS are involved in, visit the Qur'anic Studies section of the IIS Website.

Conferences & Seminars

The Qur'anic Studies Unit regularly organises conferences and exploratory workshops. Conferences bring together Qur'anic Studies specialists and scholars from around the world . The results of their deliberations and scholarly exchanges often lead to new ideas and proposals for future research, as well as edited multi-author volumes which allow complex topics and themes to be presented and analysed by specialists from a range of disciplines and fields of study.

Qur'anic Studies Series

The Qur'anic Studies Series aims to present the wealth of intellectual, spiritual, artistic, political, and juridical effort devoted to the Qur'an, from the earliest times.

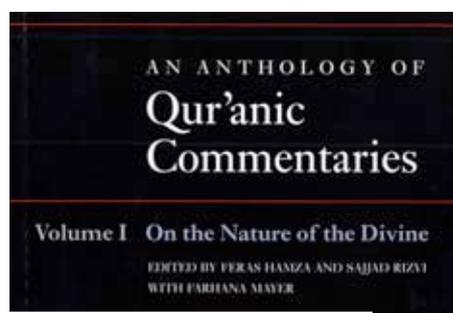
This is particularly significant given the central position of the Qur'an within the Muslim World. Where scriptural sources continue to command

passionate interest, the Qur'an has been subject to contending views, debates and interpretations.

The Qur'anic Studies Series presents an impartial view of these debates, portraying a comprehensive picture of the various approaches and opinions. As the Academic Coordinator of the Unit, Dr Omar Ali-de-Unzaga, explains, "Qur'anic Studies at the IIS is about inclusiveness and allowing for the plurality of views to be heard, without expressing support for a particular view or interpretation."

By translating *tafsir* works into English for the first time, the series allows previously inaccessible works to become more accessible to scholars and students in Qur'anic and Islamic Studies. To this end, publications in the series include introductory and explanatory materials to contextualise the primary source materials.

The Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries



The first volume in the Anthology, *On the nature of the Divine* includes a selection of Sunni, Shi'i (including Isma'ili), Ibadi, Mu'tazili and Sufi commentaries from the second century to the present day.

The field of *Tafsir* (exegesis/critical explanation of the Qur'an) literature is vast and encompasses the whole spectrum of Muslim schools of thought. For example, the British Library collection alone houses more than 400 individual commentaries on the Qur'an. In the 1980s, there was an increase in scholarship in *Tafsir* literature in Western academia, but given the breadth of the field, the impact of these studies had been limited. It was against this background, that the Institute embarked on *The Anthology of Qur'an* – a multi volume, thematic study - to make available, in translation, a wide range of Qur'anic Commentaries and give a chronological overview and cross section of commentaries on a wide variety of subjects.

Each volume of the anthology, of which the first volume *On the Nature of the Divine* has been published, presents groups of Qur'anic verses on a specific theme or topic alongside a number of commentaries from various schools of thought, translated into English, giving students access to the primary text.

Each commentary is situated within its historical, linguistic and cultural contexts, and attempts to take into account the particular viewpoint of the author to explain why certain conclusions are reached. Undertaking this type of systematic analysis involves unpacking layers of meaning

and presents scholars with numerous challenges.

Quite often, *Tafsir* commentaries include debates that were going on at the time, and can also be seen as an expression of diverse theological, legal and mystical understandings of the letter and meaning of the Qur'an. In this way, the *Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries* provides a window into the development of Islamic intellectual history.

The Reception of the Qur'an beyond the *Tafsir* Tradition

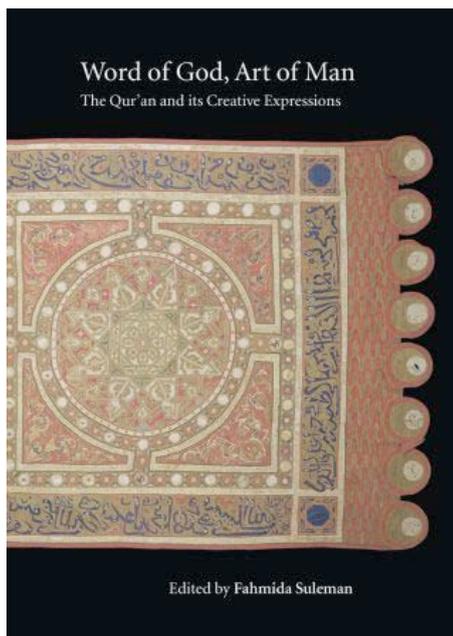
The *Tafsir* genre is a highly specialised, technical field of scholarly study. Muslims have also approached and engaged with the Qur'an through a variety of approaches including jurisprudence, literature, art and poetry. The Qur'anic Studies Unit has enabled and continues to encourage new research into these approaches and interpretations of the Qur'an.

One example was the organisation of "The Qur'an and Adab Traditions" conference in 2012. It was recognised that while there is a body of scholarship on the Qur'an's importance in religious literature, relatively little attention had been paid to the influence of the Qur'an and its exegesis upon the kind of activity that was later to be known as *adab* (belles lettres, including poetry, elegant prose, anecdotal writing in Arabic and other languages of the Muslim world) and how in turn, the

Behind The Scenes - Qur'anic Studies at the Institute

udaba', (writers of the *adab*), contributed to the reception history of the Qur'an.

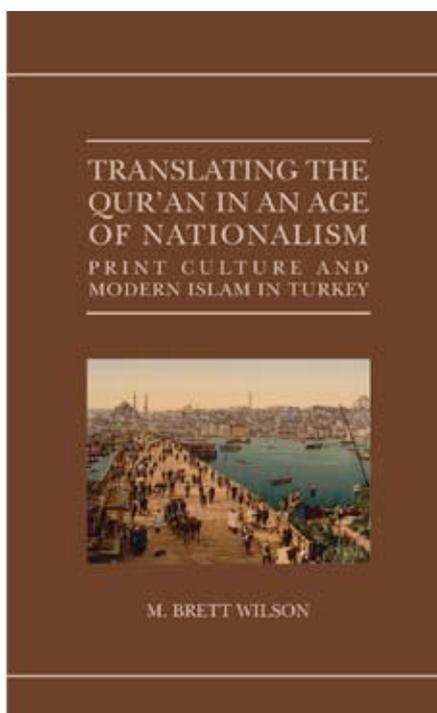
The conference began the process that is enabling scholars to better situate the reading and interpretation of the Qur'an in a larger social and cultural context, and to understand how the Qur'an was interpreted and received outside the professional scholastic circles of *tafsir* works. The outcome of the conference, will be an edited volume of works written by scholars from the IIS and outside.



Word of God, Art of Man - The Quran and It's Creative Expressions, a volume of collected essays, selected from the proceedings of a conference of the same name to mark the Institute's twenty fifth anniversary in 2003, addressed another area of study of the Qur'an which had been overlooked: how the Qur'an has inspired creativity and an artistic aesthetic.

The conference and book included examples of everyday objects, medieval coins and early illuminated copies of the Qur'an as well as contemporary paintings decorated with Qur'anic script demonstrating how the Qur'an has inspired artists through the centuries.

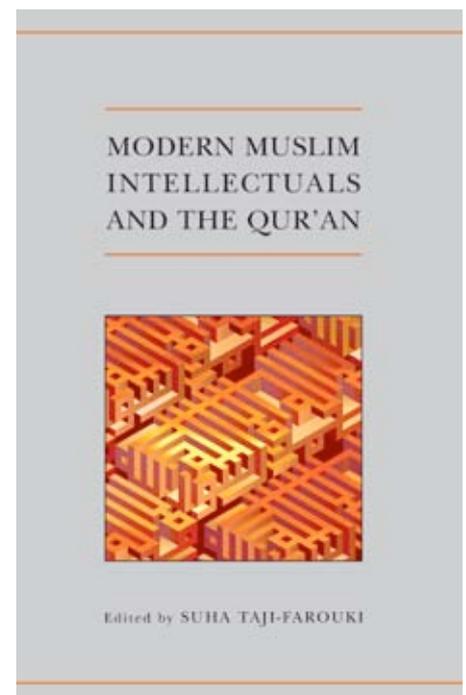
Geographical Regions and Translations



Throughout history, many Muslims considered that translating the Qur'an was impossible, impermissible and in some instances, impious. Remarkably, what began with sparse and often contentious publication of vernacular commentaries and translations in South Asia and the Ottoman Empire evolved into widespread Qur'anic translations and commentaries in the twentieth century.

The interaction with the Qur'an and its interpretations beyond Arabic-speaking regions had been given limited attention until the late 1990s. The IIS was one of a few institutions of higher learning that aimed to redress this balance, publishing works and hosting conferences which brought together established and emerging scholars to analyse the reception of the Qur'an in Indonesia, Iran and, most recently, Turkey.

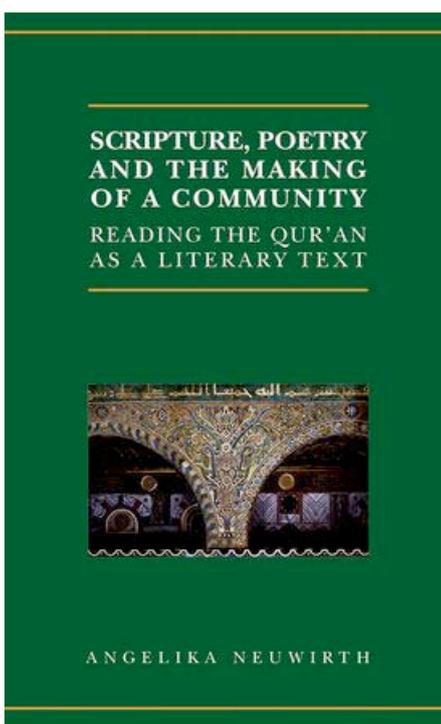
Contemporary Studies of the Qur'an



At the IIS, the study of the interpretation of the Qur'an is not limited to an historical analysis. One of the key areas of research is the exploration of the diversity in how Muslims have responded to issues of modernity.

The first publication in the Qur'anic Studies Series examined the writings of ten contemporary Muslim intellectuals employing current critical methods to understand the Qur'an. The volume was groundbreaking, as it situated and evaluated a new trend in Muslim interpretation characterised by direct engagement with the words of the Qur'an and assessed responses to this new trend among Muslim and non-Muslim audiences alike.

The IIS, as an academic research institute, is well placed to look at Qur'anic Studies from a comparative perspective. One of the leading scholars in Qur'anic Studies today, Professor Angelika Neuwirth, recently published a work as part of the Qur'anic Studies Series.



In the volume *Scripture, Poetry & The Making of a Community-Reading the Qur'an as a Literary text*, she elaborates on how the Qur'an as an oral proclamation was received by pre-Islamic listeners educated in late antiquity.

The Future

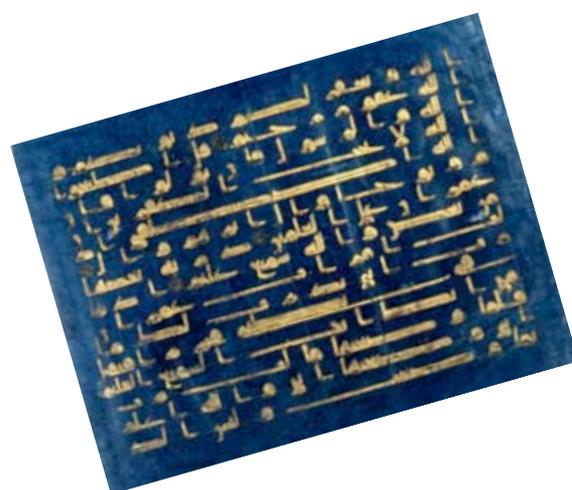
Currently in development is the ambitious "The Qur'an Through the Ages" project which will gather the views of sixty to eighty scholars writing on a range of disciplines from art and architecture to philosophy, jurisprudence, literature and education. The work will be organised chronologically and will examine a range of geographical regions, asking the question: 'How have people's readings of the Qur'an shaped civilisations?'

An element of this will be to consider the Qur'an in the Internet Age. "The Qur'an represents a transition between orality and the written...

The Qur'an literally means "recitation" and yet it refers to itself as 'Kitab', literally 'the book', something which is written... the Qur'an has been transmitted orally and in writing and now we are witnessing a new platform, the Internet which allows us to experience and approach the Qur'an in novel ways..." says Dr Ali-de-Unzaga. The Internet will certainly continue to provide opportunities for scholars to reach new audiences, students and the non-specialist reader. Previously

difficult to access commentaries are now searchable by keyword and available in translation. It will be important for academics and research centres to reach out to non-specialist audiences providing them with authentic, well researched, sources which are situated in their historical, cultural and political contexts.

"The hope is that digital technology will make new visual and learning tools available which will enable scholars to make new connections and gain fresh insights" says Dr Ali-de-Unzaga. "Whether the unit is designing a module for the Institute's graduate programme or advising on content for the Secondary Curriculum, the role of Qur'anic Studies at the IIS is about explaining how communities and schools of thought have interpreted and been inspired by the Qur'an through the ages. As a scholar working in the field, it remains relevant, exciting and certainly at the cutting edge of Islamic Studies."



Secondary Curriculum: Encounters in Muslim History

This module is the second in a series of three on the subject of Muslim history in the IIS's Secondary Curriculum. The first module, *Muslim Societies and Civilisations*, introduced the rise and development of Islam in the first six centuries of Muslim history. The second module, *Encounters in Muslim History*, continues this narrative by covering succeeding events in Muslim contexts from the eleventh to the eighteenth century. The third module, *Muslims in the Contemporary World*, will conclude with a study of Muslim societies in the modern period.

Encounters in Muslim History I was released in 2014. It focuses on significant developments in Muslim regions between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, including the rise of the Saljuq dynasty, Ismaili da'wa as it developed in Persia, Syria and Badakhshan; and the engagements of Muslims with incoming forces such as the Crusaders and the Mongols.

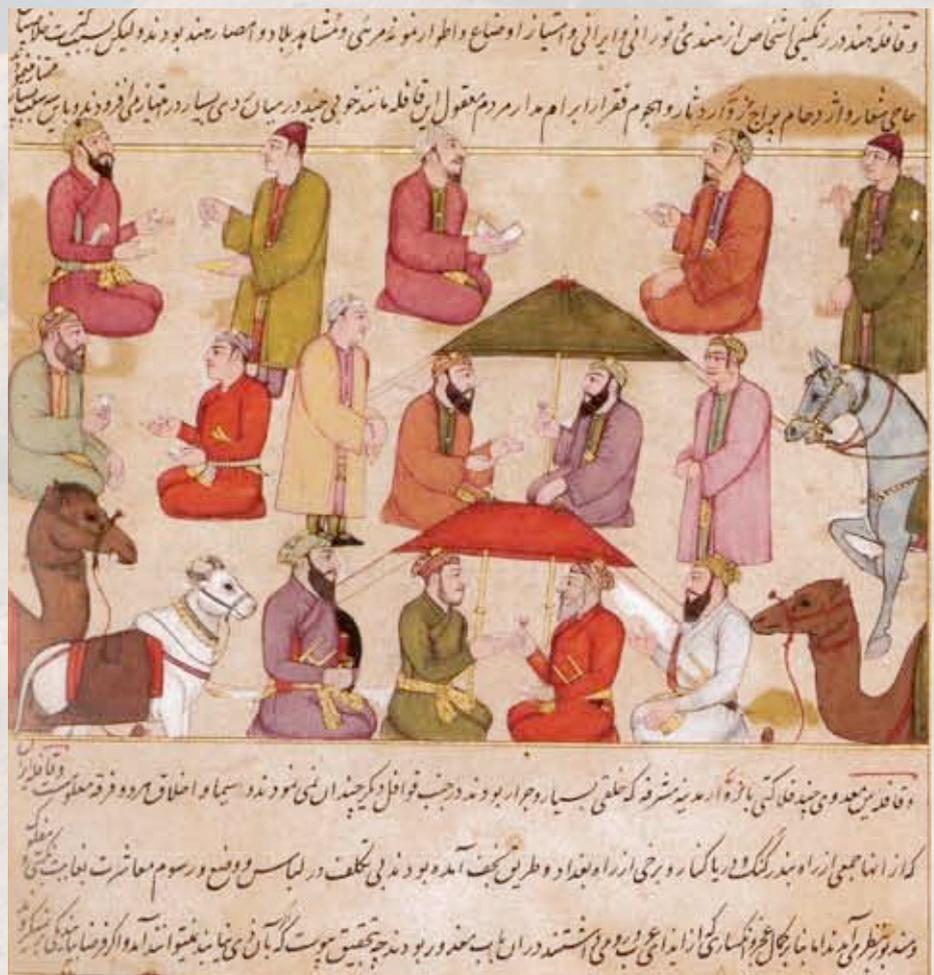
The second volume, which is at an advanced stage of preparation, deals with the post-Mongol period, tracing the growth of a global trade system, together with the rise of the Timurid, Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman empires.

Also explored in this text are the diverse expressions of Islam which evolved in various parts of Asia and Africa, including regional expressions of the Ismaili tradition.

Unit 1: Past events and new developments begins by reviewing the first six centuries of Islam.

Special attention is paid to the spread of Islam to eastern regions, illustrated through the expansion of the Fatimid da'wa to parts of Iraq, Persia, Yemen, Gujarat, Sind and Central Asia. Also covered here is the topic of Turkic peoples and their entry into Muslim lands, and the rise to power of the Saljuqs, including the development of their intellectual and cultural institutions.

A study of the encounters between European and Muslim lands concludes the unit, highlighting key events in this period which had an impact on the interactions between the peoples of this region.

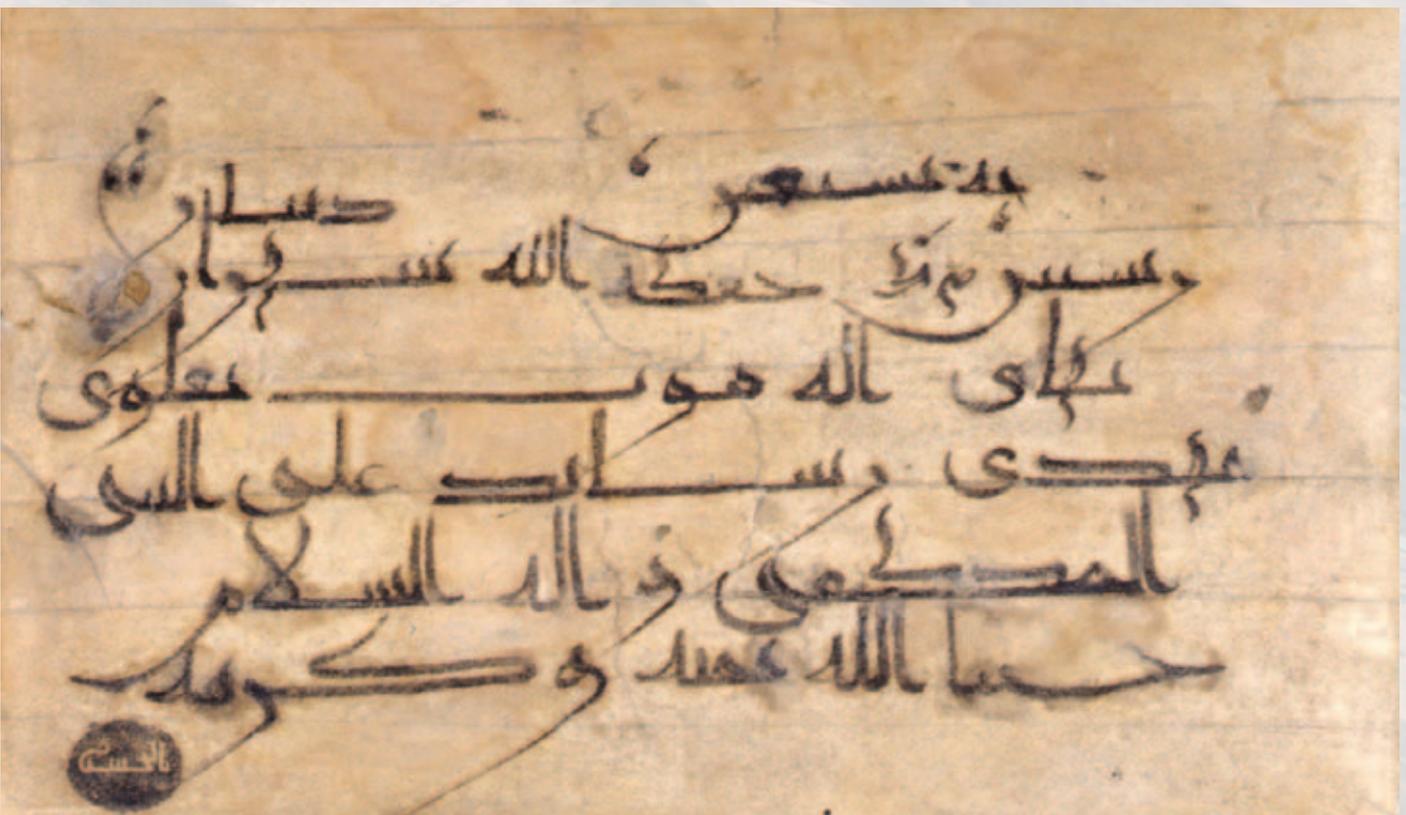


Detail of an encampment of pilgrim caravans from India and Persia, miniature painting from the book *Anis al-Hujjaj* ('The Pilgrim's Companion'). Important events, such as pilgrimages, brought people of diverse cultures together.



A decorated section of wall inside the fortress at Alamut

Below: This is a vellum copy of the original sale document which documents Hasan-i Sabbah purchasing the fortress of Alamut with a draft of 3,000 gold dinars.



Unit 2: Ismailis in the Saljuq period traces major shifts in regional power between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries which led to the establishment of the Saljuq state and the rising dominance of the Sunni tradition of Islam.

Against this background, students learn about the development of *madrasas* in Persia, Iraq and Syria, and the contributions of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali to Islamic thought. The unit also focuses on the Nizari Ismaili *da'wa* in Persia and Syria and the founding of a Nizari-Ismaili 'state', with its centre at Alamut. The role of the *da'is* Hasan-i Sabbah and Rashid al-Din Sinan is discussed in detail, as is the re-emergence of the Nizari Ismaili Imams at Alamut. An analysis of the origins and transmission of the 'Assassin' legends forms part of the unit.

Secondary Curriculum: Encounters in Muslim History

Unit 3: Encountering the Mongols explores the impact of the Mongol conquests on Muslim societies and civilisations, beginning with their origins and the wide-sweeping expansion of their rule from Mongolia. Close attention is paid in this unit to the consolidation of the Nizari Ismaili communities in Persia and Syria. An important scholar studied here is Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, who lived and worked in Alamut for a period of time. Among the events examined in this period are the destruction of Alamut by the Mongols and the sack of Baghdad which ended the Abbasid caliphate.

The concluding section explores the growth of Sufi *tariqas* and the institutionalising of *tasawwuf* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, including the life and activities of selected Sufis such as Shams al-Din Tabriz, Jalal al-Din Rumi and Farid al-Din Attar.



This is an astrolabe dating from 1650-51. The astrolabe used a plate containing a map of the night sky for a particular latitude. The observer would identify a well known star in the sky, and then use the astrolabe to measure its position. The astrolabe could then provide information about other stars, when they would rise or set. It was also used to measure the position of planets in the sky. In one of his works, al-Tusi discussed all of the various circles and arcs on this sophisticated instrument and their function.

Acknowledgments for images used in this article

All images appear in *Encounters in Muslim History, Student Reader, Vol 1.*

1. The fortress of Alamut, a decorated section of wall inside the fortress, © The Owner.
2. An encampment of pilgrim caravans from India and Persia, illustration from the *Anis al-Hujjaj*, copied by Safi ibn Vali, India. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art. MSS 1025 (folio 17a) © Nour Foundation, Courtesy of the Khalili Family Trust
3. Copy of the Purchase Document of Alamut on vellum © The Institute of Ismaili Studies.
4. Planispheric astrolabe made and signed by Muhammad Mahdi, Iran, 1650-1651. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art. SCI 161. © Nour Foundation, Courtesy of the Khalili Family Trust.
5. Carved marble Mihrab tile, Ghazna, Afghanistan, 12th century. © The David Collection, Copenhagen. Photograph Pernille Klemp 1979.

Key Themes

While this volume is broadly organised chronologically, the following themes are interwoven into all three units –

Diverse expressions of Islam

The development of various expressions of Islam from the eleventh to the thirteenth century is one of the major themes explored in this volume. Students learn how different manifestations of Islam emerged over a period of time as a result of multiple factors, one of them being the encounters that materialised between diverse groups of people in different regions. Students examine the growing diversity among Muslims in aspects such as religious thought and worship, language, literature, learning, art and architecture.

Interactions and exchanges

The expansion of Muslim rule from Arabia brought Muslims into contact with people from a wide range of religious traditions, cultures and ethnic backgrounds. The interactions between incoming groups and local populations led to the emergence of new ideas, institutions and expressions of faith, and influenced aspects such as art, architecture, literature and technology. Using examples from selected regions, the content extends students' understanding of the role of human interactions in the development of culture and civilisation.

Human movement and settlement

The theme of migration and its impact on Muslim lands is explored in this volume through the examples of various Turkic tribes. Human movement and settlement in history led to conflicts as well as peaceful exchanges, resulting in interactions between people of different cultures. These interactions in turn influenced the profile of societies and civilisations. The migration of the Turkic tribes into Muslim lands had a major impact on, among other things, forms of governance, models of authority, diverse ways of understanding and practising faith, and institutions of learning.

Importance of knowledge

Building on the previous study of institutions of learning such as the *Bayt al-Hikma*, *al-Azhar* and the *Dar al-Ilm*, this volume extends students' understanding of the patronage and support which various Muslim dynasties extended to educational institutions in the regions under their rule. The importance that Muslim rulers placed on knowledge is highlighted through a number of examples, such as the establishment of Nizamiyya *madrasas* during Saljuq rule and the promotion of learning at Alamut. Students also learn about prominent scholars of this time and their significance in Muslim history.

Turning points in history

The idea of historical turning points is discussed in this volume to highlight the significance of selected events in the Muslim past. Like other periods, Muslim history from the eleventh to the thirteenth century witnessed critical events such as the fall of Alamut and the end of the Abbasid caliphate. Such events have been interpreted by historians as signalling the end of one era and the beginning of another.

Misperceptions and stereotypes

The current volume explores the additional theme of myth-making and its impact on social perceptions. Many writers in the medieval past presented history in the form of tales and stories for their specific audiences. Both Muslims and the Crusaders recounted legendary stories about one another. Often tales and facts became distorted to a point where they bore little resemblance to the events or people that were being described.

These stories tended to generate misperceptions and stereotypes about different groups of people in Muslim and European lands. The 'Assassin' legends have been discussed in this volume as a case study to examine the impact of such stories.

Secondary Curriculum: Encounters in Muslim History

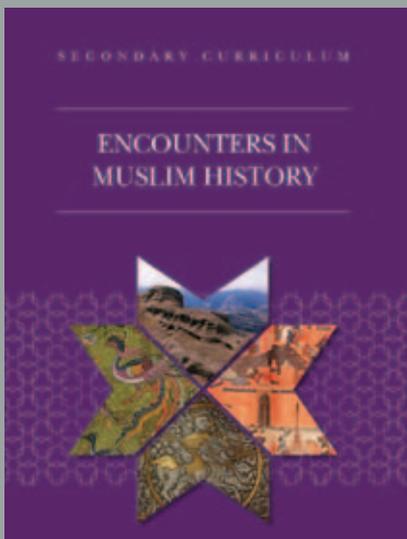
Approach to history

An important aim of this module is to reinforce historical thinking skills in students and develop their interest and expertise in the study of history. Students are led to analyse historical sources, discuss multiple interpretations of historical evidence, and infer from available evidence how people in the past understood themselves. Teachers are also encouraged to make connections to world history and to the historical content that students study in their everyday schooling.

The content covered in the volume brings out critical issues that have significance for Muslims today, such as identity, intercultural relations, religious tolerance, migration and the role of culture and knowledge in society. By approaching these issues through the lens of history, it is hoped that students will gain an insight into how encounters between people, cultures and ideas have long-lasting influence on the development of societies and civilisations.



Wheels & Columns – This marble tile was used in a mihrab. The niche on the tile shows the influence of both Indian and Abbasid culture on Ghaznavid art. The palmettes in the central wheel ornament are similar to decoration used in Abbasid art, while the two short columns are in an Indian style. The word ‘Allah’ is inscribed in Arabic on either side of the lamp.



Approaching the Curriculum in the Classroom

“The structure of the Teacher’s Guide, starting from a question of enquiry and progressing into various activities, will help me to engage my students with the curriculum and connect the materials to their lives.”

Tazim Jiwa, STEP teacher, Canada

The IIS Summer Programme on Islam - an interactive learning experience for adult learners

Every summer, around forty candidates, originating from a variety of cultural, professional and social backgrounds, come together on this seven-day residential programme. Consisting of workshops, discussions and lectures, the IIS Summer programme aims to provide a social, cultural and civilisational introduction to Islam, whilst situating the Shi'a Ismaili Tariqah within the larger context of the intellectual and historical development of Islam.

As part of its commitment to developing alternative teaching and learning opportunities for its adult learners, this year's programme included a visit to the Royal Ontario Museum's "Cairo Under Wraps: Early Islamic Textiles," exhibit as an integral facet of the programme.

The exhibit provided an illuminating case study which gave participants an opportunity to explore Cairo as a civilisation through garments, objects and scripts. The exhibit included almost eighty precious, early Islamic texts, dating from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. Many of the garments were decorated with Arabic inscriptions invoking Allah and naming the Fatimid ruler. Alongside items used by the Royal household, the exhibit includes pieces used in the daily life of Muslims at the time.

Dr Zulfikar Hirji, from York University, who served as the Academic Director for

the IIS Summer Programme explained how the programme design ensured participants would maximise the learning opportunity offered by this exhibition:

"Prior to visiting the museum, it was important that participants had a classroom-based session to understand how to approach collections at the museum... As part of our learning outcomes we wanted participants to consider how the exhibits were used and how they give us a window into Fatimid times... We also allowed for the personal element of learning which explores

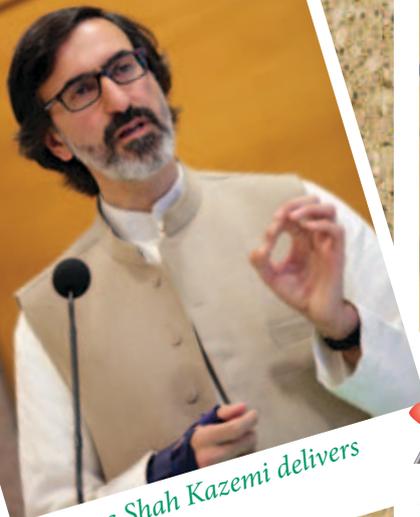
how the artefacts impact individuals and what they found personally interesting. At the museum, we took participants on guided tours and then they were encouraged to engage with the exhibition at their own pace and share their thoughts on its layout, components and historical significance. By walking in the footsteps of Muslims living in 10th century Cairo and engaging with elements of their daily life in the exhibition, participants were able to experience learning beyond the classroom and see the past come to life."



Below - Participants and Lecturers from the Summer Programme are joined by leaders of the Ismaili Community in Canada.



A year in pictures



Dr Reza Shah Kazemi delivers a lecture.



Dr Mohamed Keshavjee in conversation at a book launch event in Portugal.



IIS Joins the Knowledge Quarter - a partnership of thirty-five academic, cultural, research, scientific and media organisations in London. British Chancellor George Osbourne is pictured above at the launch ceremony in London.



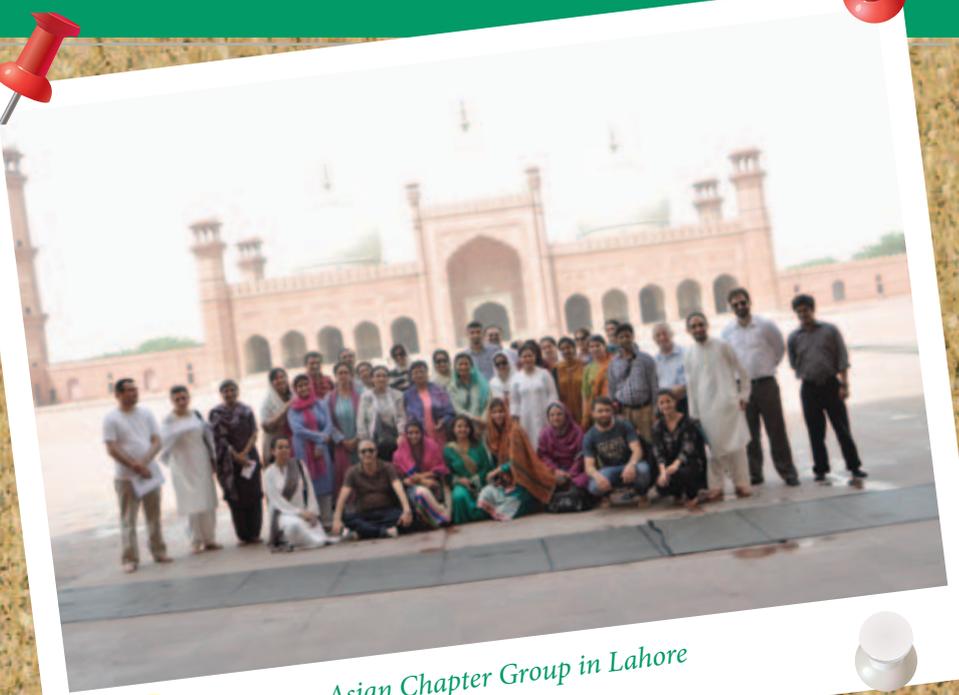
STEP Cohort 5



IIS Panel at the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) conference in Washington DC.



Certificate presented to Dr Farhad Daftary on his appointment as lifetime member of the Near Eastern Section of the Accademia Ambrosiana.



Asian Chapter Group in Lahore



Graduation Ceremony



European Chapter Group in Al Mahdiyya



North American Chapter Group in Atlanta



IIS welcomes new GPISH class of 2017



International Training Programme participants with Jamati leadership from UAE and programme faculty and staff

Persian Ismaili Manuscripts of The Institute of Ismaili

The Ismaili *da'wa* flourished in the Persian speaking areas from the early periods of Ismaili history and created an environment that gave rise to a large number of texts and literature related to the Ismaili tradition in Persian. Unfortunately, a large number of these works were destroyed by numerous invasions, such as those by the Mongols and the Timurids, or as a result of gradual decay. However, a significant amount of literature has survived and the IIS has been able to collect and preserve some of it. The first collection of Persian manuscripts that came to the IIS was from the Ismaili Society which was mainly collected by the pioneer of Ismaili Studies, Wladimir Ivanow, in India. The rest of the collection has either been donated by individuals or acquired in auctions.

Today, the Institute's collection of Persian manuscripts includes approximately three hundred manuscripts, including those that relate to Ismaili history and doctrine as well as those on broader themes. In addition to its own holdings of original manuscripts, the IIS continues to acquire copies and microfilms of important texts and to make these available to scholars.

The Persian Ismaili Manuscript Collection

The Persian Ismaili manuscripts represent a wide range of materials in the field of Ismaili

history and thought, as well as community affairs. Generally, from an aesthetic point of view, the Persian Ismaili manuscripts were not produced for artistic purposes. Apart from a few copies of Nasir Khusraw's works, which are partially illuminated, the bulk of the Persian Ismaili manuscripts in the collection were prepared in a very humble way as they were produced to preserve Ismaili tradition and literature in what were, on the whole, challenging circumstances.

Majmu'as

Apart from works such as *Wajh-i Dīn* and *Dīwān* of Nāsir Khusraw as well as the *Dīwāns* of famous poets like *Nizārī Quhistānī* and *Hasan-i Mahmūd Kātīb*, the Institute does not hold major monographs. Most of the Institute's Persian Ismaili manuscripts are in the form of what are called *Majmu'as* (anthologies), which include several titles. They could include important works such as *Haft Bāb-i Baba Sayyidna* from the Alamut period as well as a one page *qasida* by a local poet, or a note on a particular family or something related to the Jamat. The largest *Majmu'a* in the IIS' collection consists of forty-six different titles.

Themes

The Institute's collection of Persian manuscripts cover different aspects of Ismaili beliefs and doctrines as well as materials related to the practice

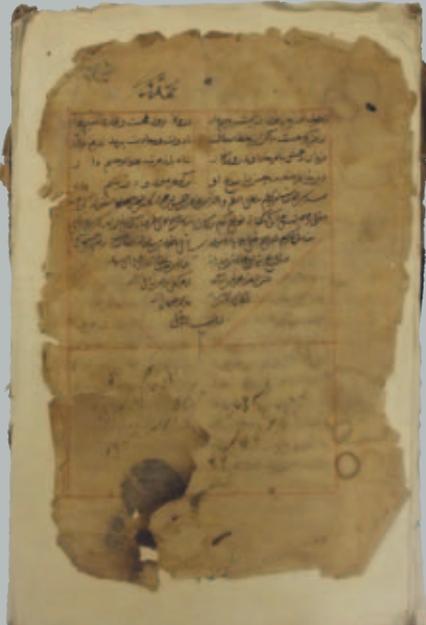
of faith. Apart from the works of Nāsir Khusraw, which are generally considered part of the Fatimid tradition, the bulk of the IIS' Persian collection belongs to the Nizari tradition, starting with the establishment of Hasan-i Sabbah at Alamut in 483 AH / 1090 CE. There are also works produced during the post Alamut period which extends to the present day. Many of the works are untitled, undated, and often the names and origins of the authors are unknown.

Manuscript analysis involves deciphering these details through linguistic features and ideological themes and discourses. For example the works produced during the Alamut period display distinct characteristics which distinguish them from, for instance, the works of Khayr Khwah Hirati during the post Alamut period in terms of language, style and doctrinal discourse

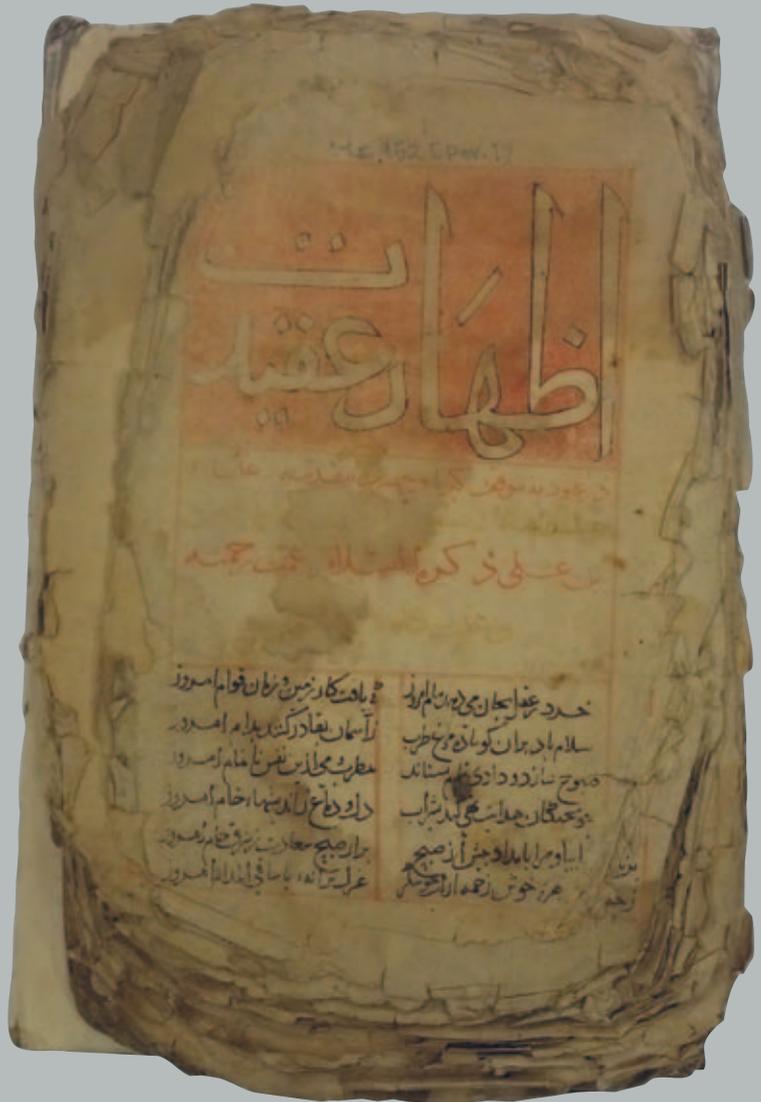
There are many short *risalas* (messages) which mainly seem to be extracts from an Imam's sayings on different aspects of *tariqah* (practices). Some of them are individual letters normally called *fasl* (farman/ edict) addressing the Nizari communities in different regions.

These *fasls* appear to originate from the Alamūt period and discuss different ethical and ideological matters. The recovery of these texts has given scholars and students important insights into the period which had not been available previously.

Examples of Persian Ismaili works from the IIS collection



Diwan-i Qa'imiyat (Colophon, dated 832) Ms. 952 (Per) (The Institute of Ismaili Studies).



Diwan-i Qa'imiyat by Salah al-Din Hasan-i Mahmud (Completed in 631/1233) (opening page), Ms. 952 (Per) (The Institute of Ismaili Studies).

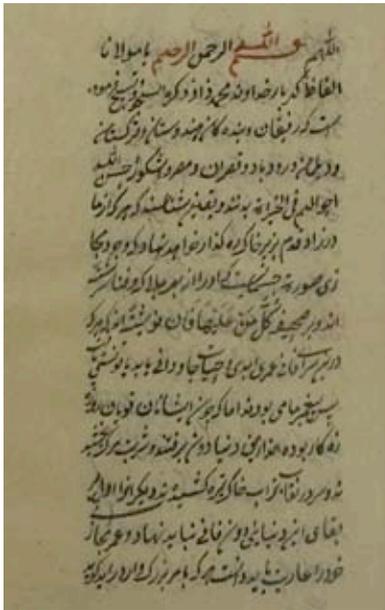
This is a collection of poetry on celebration of the Qiyama era during the Alamut period by Salah al-Din Hasan-i Mahmud. It is believed to have been completed in 631 AH/1233 CE and presented to Imam Ala al Din Muhammad in Alamut.

Wajh-i Din

This is one of the most important works of Nasir Khusraw (b. 304 AH/1004 CE) on Ismaili theology and religious obligations, comprising 51 chapters. It has been a major source of reference on different aspects of religion for the Ismaili communities of Central Asia and Iran.



Persian Ismaili Manuscripts of The Institute of Ismaili



Alfaz-i Guharbar-i Khudawand Muhammad

This text is believed to have been written by the head of the Muhammad Shahi branch of the Nizari Ismailis after the fall of Alamut, and includes an account of a visit by this Imam to his followers in different regions of “Bukhara, Samarqand, Khata, Khutan, (Central Asia) Balkh, Chin wa Machin (China), Tabat, Kashmir, Farang (Europe), Ucha and Multan”.



New IIS publication

Diwan-i Qa'imiyyat (Девони Қоимиёт) of *Hasan-i Mahmud Katib* (Tajik edition)

Transliterator and editor of the Tajik edition:
Ato Mirkhoja,

The Tajik edition of the book is based on the Persian edition edited by Dr Jalal Badakhchani. *The Diwan-i Qa'imiyyat* (Poems of Resurrection) is one of the finest texts of Ismaili literature during the Alamut period. The *Diwan* is composed in praise of the Ismaili Imams and is imbued with expressions and terminology, which provide insight into the development of Shi'a thought and literature. The interpretation of Ismaili terminology in poetical forms makes it one of the unique and enduring sources of knowledge about the Ismaili understanding of Imam and their religious outlook during the Alamut period. As such, the publication of the *Diwan* in the Tajik language will foster a better understanding of Ismaili teachings and literature among the scholarly community as well those who are interested in Ismaili literature and poetry.

● Areas where Ismaili manuscripts were produced



New Avenues: Interview with Shafique Virani, IIS Visiting Fellow

The IIS awards a limited number of Visiting Research Fellowships enabling recipients to carry out study and research in fields which are of particular interest to the Institute. Usually, Fellows join the Department of Academic Research and Publications and the results of their research are often published.

In this interview, Dr Shafique Virani from the University of Toronto, who joined the IIS as a Visiting Research Fellow in July 2014, talks about his research interests and shares his views on the potential impact of scholarship on wider society today.



Dr Virani receives the AAR (American Academy of Religion) 2014 "Excellence in Teaching Award"

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The library collection here (at the IIS) is unparalleled anywhere else in the world as far as holdings on Ismaili Studies are concerned.

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Please can you elaborate on the research you are involved in at the IIS and what you hope will be the outcome of this work?

On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of His Highness the Aga Khan's accession to the Imamate, the IIS and the AKU-ISMC (Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations) hosted him at a special ceremony. In his remarks on the occasion, His Highness singled out one particular dimension of the work of the IIS and ISMC that he described as "enormously exciting" - the identification and mobilisation of

new source materials.

The projects that I am currently working on are very much focused on this "exciting" area - the mobilisation of little-studied primary source materials. In Arabic, I've been working on the *Asas al-Ta'wil of al-Qadi al-Nu'man* (d. 363/974), which explains the spiritual dimension and esoteric symbolism of the life stories of the prophets.

This work was considered so important that it was translated into Persian as *Bun-yad-i Ta'wil*, most likely by the illustrious

Ismaili scholar *al-Mu'ayyad fi'd-Din al-Shirazi* (d. 470/1078), and I hope to be able to publish this Persian version of the text as well.

One of the most important historical sources for the Ismailis during the reign of the Safawid dynasty is the *Risala of Khayrkhwah Harati* (fl. 10th/16th c.). I have identified a number of new manuscripts of this work and hope to complete an updated critical edition and translation. Similarly, I've been studying the *Tazyin al-Majalis* or "Ornament of Assemblies" of the

da'i Husayn b. Ya'qub Shah (fl. 11th/17th c), which explains the spiritual meaning of a variety of festivals from the Muslim world, including 'Id al-Fitr, 'Id al-Adha, and *Nawruz*.

One of the least studied areas of Ismaili history and thought is the *Satpanth* tradition of South Asia. To this end, I'm working on the Gujarati diaries of Pir Sabzali Ramzanali (d. 1938). Excerpts from all of these four projects were published by the IIS in *An Anthology of Ismaili Literature: A Shi'i Vision of Islam* in 2008.

You have affiliations with many prestigious organisations, and a long relationship with the IIS. Can you tell us what prompted you to return to the IIS?

At my home institution, the University of Toronto, I've had the good fortune of contributing to scholarship in a number of senior administrative roles, including as Chair of the Department of Historical Studies, and as founding Director of the Centre for South Asian Civilizations. While involvement in these capacities has been very enriching, it leaves limited time for research activities. My sabbatical year provided an opportunity to return to the projects that I've described, and there was no better place to work on them than at The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

The library collection here is unparalleled anywhere else in the world as far as holdings on Ismaili Studies are concerned.

Being here also provides an opportunity to liaise and interact with outstanding colleagues who are involved with similar projects, to share ideas and to work together on research of mutual interest.

How do you think scholarship and research can have a wider social impact?

There is a critical shortage of scholars of Islam in the West. While Muslims make up close to a quarter of the world's population and Islam often dominates news headlines, academic expertise of this global faith is severely lacking. Just over ten percent of religion and theology departments at North American colleges and universities, for example, can claim to have faculty trained in Islamic studies.

Even leaving aside the insufficient number of academics in this field, the staid opinions of scholars are often at a distinct disadvantage in the public sphere, particularly in the free-for-all known as the Internet. Reliable, staid, and sober comment of scholars is often lost in a sea of uninformed, hateful and frequently hysterical suppositions, trotted out by self- or media-styled "experts."

As the proper functioning of civil society is premised on the existence of a well-informed populace, members of the *American Academy of Religion* have tried to address this situation and to educate the general public about Islam

through their writings, public lectures, media appearances and forays into the world of cyberspace, realising that they have responsibilities that extend far beyond the Ivory Tower.

As part of this initiative, I edited a number of papers on the topic, *Speaking Truth beyond the Tower: Academics of Islam Engaging in the Public Sphere* for a special section of the *Review of Middle East Studies*. One of the aims of the papers was to make scholarly research and the methods employed have the widest possible social impact and reach the broadest possible public, with the hope that these methods may prove useful and replicable to others. This is why we decided to publish the papers online.

In his contribution, Daniel Varisco referred to the Qur'anic tale of the famous Yemeni dam of ancient Saba (Sheba). This was said to have been destroyed by a divinely sent flood on the unbelievers of the time. However, some commentators have opined that the real damage was caused by a little mouse, gnawing away at the base. Varisco asks playfully, "How much of the Islamophobia prevalent in the media and popular culture could be destroyed by scholars today with a simple click of a different kind of mouse?"

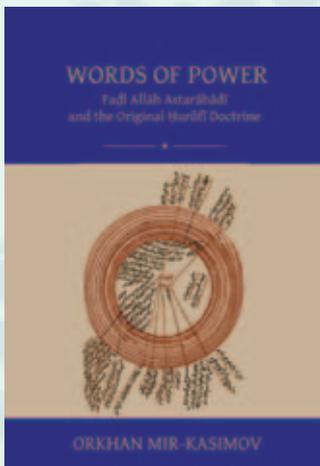
To read the interview in full, please visit www.iis.ac.uk

New Publications

The Shi'i Heritage Series

Shi'i Islam, with its rich and extensive history, has played a crucial role in the evolution of Islam as both a major world religion and civilisation. The prolific achievements of Shi'i theologians, philosophers and others are testament to the spiritual and intellectual wealth of this community. Yet Shi'i Studies has unjustly remained a long-neglected field, despite the important contributions that Shi'ism has made to Islamic traditions. Only in recent decades, partially spurred by global interest in political events of the Middle East, have scholars made some significant contributions in this area.

The principal objective of the Shi'i Heritage Series, launched by The Institute of Ismaili Studies, is to enhance general knowledge of Shi'i Islam and promote a better understanding of its history, doctrines and practices in their historical and contemporary manifestations.



Words of Power: The Original Hurūfī Doctrine according to the Jāwidān-n ma-yi kabir of Fadl Allāh Astarābādī **Shi'i Heritage Series** *By Orkhan Mir-Kasimov*

Fadl Allāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394) was a prolific writer and founder of one of the most influential mystico-messianic movements of the eastern Islamic world, known under the name of Hurūfiyya (from Arabic *harf*, pl. *hurūf*, 'letter'). Fadl Allāh's doctrine, allegedly inspired by his personal enlightenment, freely and creatively combines elements from various currents of Islamic religious thought, with the predominant input of Shi'i and Sufi esotericism. Fadl Allāh's ideas had a wide and lasting influence. Together with other similar doctrines, his works contributed to elaboration of the messianic and charismatic paradigm of religious authority, which arguably played a significant role, albeit in very different ways and proportions, in legitimisation of the Ottoman, Safawid and Mughal dynasties.

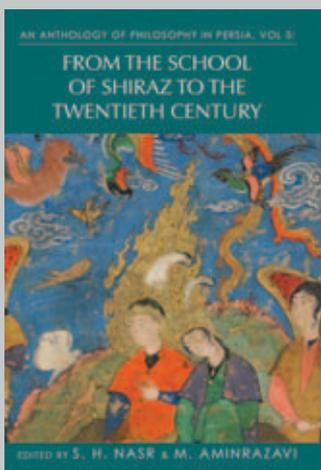
The *Hurūfīs* left a rich cultural heritage, particularly visible in the Turkic world. Hurūfī literature and doctrines were integrated into Alevi and Bektāshī milieus in the Ottoman empire, and probably also influenced some calligraphic representations produced in these circles. The poetry of some authors related to the Hurūfī movement played an important role in the development of the literary Azeri and Ottoman Turkish languages. In modern Turkish literature, the Hurūfī motifs are present, for example, in the novels of Orhan Pamuk.

Words of Power is the first comprehensive study of *Fadl Allāh's* opus magnum, the *Jāwidān-nāma-yi kabīr* (the 'Great Book of Eternity'). Parts One to Three include an analytical presentation of the *Jāwidān-nāma's* contents. The Conclusion is a reflection on the place of the *Jāwidān-nāma's* doctrine in the broader context of Islamic intellectual history as a significant piece of textual evidence for the study of post-Mongol Iranian messianism and Sufi/Shi'i confluence.

Previous publications in the Shi'i Heritage Series include:

A History Of Shi'i Islam by *Dr Farhad Daftary*

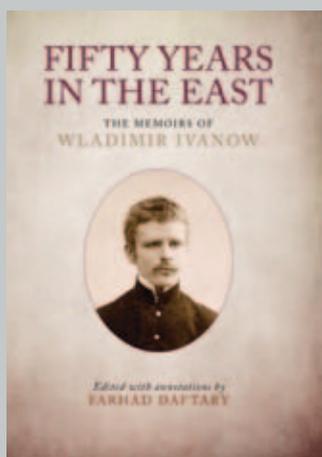
The Study of Shi'i Islam by *Dr Farhad Daftary & Dr Gurdofarid Miskinzoda*



An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia, Vol 5: From the School of Shiraz to the Twentieth Century

Edited by S. H. Nasr & M. Aminrazavi

The fifth and final volume of *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* deals with some seven centuries of Islamic thought stretching from the era following the Mongol invasion to the end of the Qajar period. Organised around the cities which became the main centres of philosophical activity during this long period, the volume is divided into three parts: 'The School of Shiraz', whose importance not only for Persia but also Ottoman Turkey and Muslim India is only now being recognised; 'The School of Isfahan', which marks the integration of some eight centuries of Islamic thought, and culminates with Mullā Sadrā; and finally 'The School of Tehran', where traditional philosophy first encountered modern thought in Persia, bringing this series into present times. This volume is of the utmost significance for understanding the Islamic intellectual tradition, not only in Persia but also in Ottoman Turkey and Muslim India.



Fifty Years in the East: The Memoirs of Wladimir Ivanow

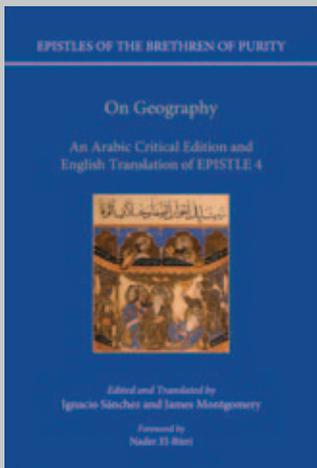
Edited with annotations by Farhad Daftary

Few fields of Islamic Studies have witnessed as much progress in modern times as Ismaili Studies, and in even fewer instances has the role of a single individual been as pivotal in initiating progress as that of Wladimir Ivanow (1886–1970), whose Memoirs are published now for the first time. The breakthrough in modern Ismaili Studies occurred mainly as a result of the recovery and study of a large number of genuine Ismaili texts, which had not been available to the earlier generations of orientalists. The Persian and Arabic manuscripts, many edited and published by Ivanow, reflect a rich diversity of intellectual and literary traditions.

Ivanow left his native Russia soon after the October Revolution of 1917 and settled in India where he was formally commissioned in 1931 by His Highness Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan III, the 48th Imam of the Nizari Ismailis, to investigate the history and teachings of the Ismailis. Henceforth, Ivanow began the systematic recovery and study of Ismaili texts from India, the Middle East and Central Asia, amongst other regions. He also played a key role in the establishment of the Ismaili Society – the first research institution of its kind with a major collection of Ismaili manuscripts. Ivanow made these manuscripts available to other scholars, thereby contributing to further progress in the field.

Ivanow completed his Memoirs, entitled "50 Years in the East", in 1968, shortly before his death. This work, originally written in Russian, is comprised of an autobiography and vivid accounts from his travels. These convey his ethnological interest in 'the archaeology of the way of life' and profound curiosity for regional customs and languages. The Memoirs have now been edited with substantial annotations by F. Daftary. They reveal for the first time the circumstances under which modern Ismaili Studies were initiated and an eyewitness account of several regions during the early decades of the twentieth century before the rapid onset of modernisation.

New Publications



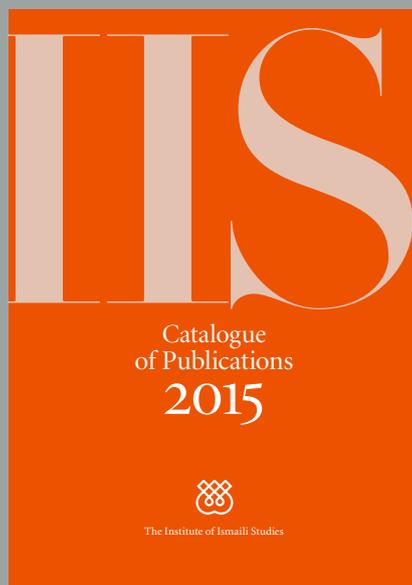
Epistle 4: On Geography Epistles of the Brethren of Purity

Edited and translated by Ignacio Sánchez and James Montgomery

Ikhwān al-safā' (the Brethren of Purity) are the anonymous authors, believed to be of Ismaili Shi'i origin, of the *Rasā'il al-Ikhwān al-safā'* (*Treatises of the Brethren of Purity*), an Islamic encyclopedia consisting of fifty-two treatises and an additional comprehensive treatise (*Risālat al-jāmi'a*) on various philosophical sciences interpreted by Ismaili Shi'i scholars. It covers the mathematical, natural, psychological/rational, and theological sciences and was written in the tenth or eleventh century C.E.

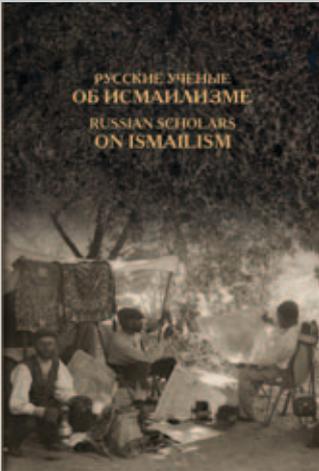
This compendium contains fifty-two epistles offering synoptic accounts of the classical sciences and philosophies of the age; divided into four classificatory parts, it deals with themes in mathematics, logic, natural philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, and theology, in addition to didactic fables. The present volume contains the first critical edition of the fourth epistle of this compendium and an annotated English translation.

Epistle 4: *On Geography* contains a description of the Earth and its climes. It is of great significance for our understanding of both the Islamic geographical tradition and the thought-world of the *Ikhwān al-Safā'*. It clearly shows that its authors were familiar with the Ptolemaic tradition, and the main sources used in its composition can be traced. This epistle epitomises many of the central themes in the conceptual universe of the *Ikhwān al-Safā'*, such as the notion of science as a path to superior knowledge of God, and the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm as part of the divine design.



The IIS publishes works by its own scholars as well as from the academic community outside the Institute.

For a complete listing of current and forthcoming publications of the Institute's Department of Academic Research and Publications (DARP), its faculty and other academic staff, download the Catalogue of Publications from the IIS Website.



Russian scholars on Ismailism Central Asian Studies

Edited by Stanislav Prozorov and Hakim Elnazarov

This publication presents the proceedings of the conference, *Ismailism and the Spiritual World of the People of the Pamirs in the Works of Russian Scholars*, organised by The Institute of the Ismaili Studies and the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) in St. Petersburg, in December 2011. The conference was devoted to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Vladimir Ivanov, the pioneer of modern Ismaili Studies. The papers describe the evolution of Ismaili Studies in Russia and highlight the contributions, achievements and challenges of Russian scholarship in exploring the traditions of the Ismailis of Central Asia, and Shi'ism in general. The contributors of the volume represent academic institutions from Russia, Tajikistan, Canada and the United Kingdom. The papers in this volume are presented in their original languages, that is, Russian and English.

Русские ученые об исмаилизме, редакторы Станислав Прозоров и Хаким Элнazarov

Сборник *Русские ученые об исмаилизме* посвящен вкладу русских ученых в исследование исмаилизма и духовной жизни народов Памира. В неё входят статьи представленные на конференции 'Исмаилизм и духовный мир народов Памира в работах русских ученых' проведенная Институтом Исмаилитских Исследований Лондона и Институтом Восточных Рукописей, РАН в декабре 2011 г. в г. Санкт Петербурге. Статьи освящают вклад русских ученых в изучение Исмаилизма и в частности культуры исмаилитской общины Горного Бадахшана. Авторы статей представляют научных учреждений России, Таджикистана и западных стран, включая Канаду и Великобританию. Статьи представлены на рабочих языках конференции, русском и английском языках. Конференция была приуроченно 125 летию Владимира Иванова, основоположника современного изучения исмаилизма. Сборник рассчитан на широкий круг читателей интересующихся исламскими течениями и в частности исмаилизмом и ее освещением в русской науке.

Forthcoming Publications

People of the Prophet's House: Artistic and Ritual Expressions of Shi'i Islam
Edited by Fahmida Suleman

The Shi'i World: Pathways in Tradition and Modernity
Edited by F. Daftary, S. Jiwa and A. Sajoo

The Age of the Fatimids: An Islamic Empire *By Shainool Jiwa*

Avicenna's Allegory on the Soul: An Ismaili Interpretation. An Arabic edition and English translation of Ibn b. al-Walid's al-Risala al-mufida. *Ed. and tr. W. Madelung & T. Mayer*

Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. On Astronomy; An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 3. *Edited and translated by Jamil Ragep and Taro Mimura*



Dr Walid Ghali

Head of Joint Library of IIS and ISMC

“

I would like to see the Library become a leading library in London providing a niche collection of resources, in order to build intellectual leadership...

”

Where were you before you joined the IIS?

Before joining the IIS, I worked as the Head Librarian at The Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (ISMC). Before that, I worked for the American University in Cairo for more than fourteen years as a Librarian and Cataloguing Manager. Also, I have been involved in many manuscript-related projects and academic libraries' consultations for different libraries in and outside Egypt.

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

I joined IIS in February 2014; the last few months have been a very challenging period as I was working with the library team to merge the two libraries into one. The library users indicated their delight at seeing all the changes that have taken place during this period; such as merging the

library collections, revamping the library entrance to make it a more welcoming space, creating a new reading area, receiving regular updates about the library services and collections and recently updating the library pages on the new IIS Website.

What do you think the future direction of the IIS-ISMC Library should be?

I believe the IIS-ISMC Library should be ranked amongst the top academic and research libraries in the UK. I would like to see the Library become a leading library in London, providing a niche collection of resources, in order to build intellectual leadership and offering access to invaluable information and knowledge, broadly in the field of Islamic Studies, while focusing on Muslim civilisations, Shi'i Studies and Ismaili Studies.

What can library users expect to see in the coming months?

At the moment, we are working on developing a strategic plan for the future of the library, in anticipation of a move to new premises at Kings cross.

However, in the short term, we are working on merging the general collections of the two institutions together which will be happening in the next few months. Also, we have a plan to develop the library catalogue to make it more attractive, accessible and user-friendly.

Some new services will be provided such as library instruction sessions for students, in which we will be providing classes on using libraries' resources, searching electronic databases and an introduction to some essential references in Islamic Studies.

Other Appointments

Academic Research & Publications

Dr Omar Ali-de-Unzaga
Deputy Head of Academic Research & Publications

Dr Janis Esots
Research Associate

Dr Isabel Miller
Editor

Dr Gurdofarid Miskinzoda
Co-ordinator, Shi'i Studies Unit

Naushin Shariff
Qur'anic Studies Administrator

Dr Shafique Virani
Visiting Research Fellow

Community Relations

Nemat Alifbekov
Senior Education Officer

Feydya Bentayeb
Programme Co-ordinator

Milosh Marinovich
Senior Education Officer

Nysa Pradhan
STEP International Liaison Coordinator

Curriculum Studies

Laura Callaghan
Education Officer

Dipli Saikia
Assistant Editor

Graduate Studies

Dr Laila Halani
Head of Graduate Studies

Pritpal Attalia
Student Services Officer

Eva Ballesteros
Teacher Educator – STEP

Rosa Barugh
Academic Support Programmes Coordinator

Safina Lakha
Student Services Manager

Dr Tullio Lobetti
Special Projects Manager

Sandra Rugea
Administrator

Ismaili Special Collections Unit

Naureen Ali
Cataloguing Assistant

Karim Javan
Manuscript Cataloguer & Researcher

Dr Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev
Research & Administrative Assistant

Special Projects

Nasim Mohamed
Administrator



IIS.ac.uk... Be inspired



Coming soon



Mobile



Tablet



Online