The Ismāʿīlīs and Their Traditions

Farhad Daftary

1 Introduction

A major Shīʿī Muslim community, the Ismāʿīlīs have had a complex history dating back to the formative period of Islam. In the course of their history, the Ismāʿīlīs became subdivided into a number of major branches and minor groups. However, since the end of the fifth/eleventh century, they have existed in terms of two main branches, the Nizārīs and the Mustaʿlians, respectively designated as Khojas and Bohras in South Asia. Currently, the Ismāʿīlīs are scattered as religious minorities in more than thirty countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and North America. Numbering several millions, they also represent a diversity of ethnic groups and literary traditions and speak a variety of languages.

Both Ismāʿīlī historiography and the perceptions of outsiders of the Ismāʿīlīs in pre-modern times, in both Muslim and Christian milieus, have had a fascinating trajectory. In the course of their long history, the Ismāʿīlīs were persistently misrepresented with a variety of myths and legends circulating about their teachings and practices. This state of affairs reflected mainly the fact that until the twentieth century the Ismāʿīlīs were almost exclusively studied and evaluated on the basis of evidence collected, or often fabricated, by their detractors. As the most politically active wing of Shīʿī Islam, with a religious-political agenda that aimed to uproot the ʿAbbāsids and restore the caliphate to a line of ʿAlid *imāms*, from early on the Ismāʿīlīs aroused the hostility of the Sunnī establishment that led the Muslim majority.

With the foundation of the Fāṭimid caliphate in 297/909, ruled by the Ismāʿīlī *imām*-caliph, the potential challenge of the Ismāʿīlīs to the established Sunnī order was actualised, and thereupon the ʿAbbāsids and the Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* or religious scholars launched what amounted to an official anti-Ismāʿīlī propaganda campaign. The overall aim of this prolonged literary campaign was to discredit the Ismāʿīlī movement from its origins, so that the Ismāʿīlīs could be readily condemned as *mulhids*, heretics or deviators from the true religious path. In particular, Sunnī polemicists fabricated the necessary evidence that would lend support to the refutation of the Ismāʿīlīs on specific doctrinal grounds. Muslim heresiographers, theologians, jurists, and historians also

participated variously in the campaign. Through their forged accounts and misrepresentations of the Ismā'īlīs, the anti-Ismā'īlī authors in fact produced a 'black legend' in the course of the fourth/tenth century. Accordingly, Ismā'īlism was portrayed as the arch-heresy of Islam, carefully designed by mischievous impostors to destroy Islam from within (Ivanow 1946). By the fifth/eleventh century, this 'black legend', with its elaborate details and stages of initiation, had been accepted as an accurate description of Ismā'īlī motives, beliefs, and practices, leading to further accusations against the community.

The revolt of the Persian Ismā'īlīs, led initially by Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ (d. 518/1124), against the Seljuq (or Seljuk) Turks, the new Sunnī overlords of the 'Abbāsids, called forth another round of Sunnī reaction against the Ismā'īlīs in general and the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs in particular. The new literary campaign was initiated by the all-powerful Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), who devoted a long chapter in his *Sīyāsat-nāma* (1978: 208–231) to the condemnation of the Ismā'īlīs. At the same time, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), the most renowned contemporary Sunnī theologian, was commissioned by the 'Abbāsid caliph al-Mustaẓhir to write a major treatise against the Ismā'īlīs, or Bāṭinīs (esotericists), another designation coined in reference to the Ismā'īlīs by their enemies.

Around the same time, the Crusader circles and their occidental chroniclers began to fabricate and disseminate, in both the Latin Orient and Europe, a number of tales, rooted in their 'imaginative ignorance', about the secret practice of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs of Syria, who were thus made famous in medieval Europe as 'the Assassins'. These so-called assassin legends finally culminated in a synthesis popularised by Marco Polo (Daftary 1994: 88–127). Henceforth, the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs were depicted in medieval European sources as a sinister order of drugged killers bent on senseless murder. The orientalist of the nineteenth century correctly identified the Ismā'īlīs as a Shī'ī Muslim community, but they were still obliged to study them exclusively on the basis of hostile Sunnī sources and the fanciful tales of the Crusaders. Consequently, the orientalist, too, unwittingly lent their seal of approval to the medieval myths and misrepresentations of the Ismā'īlīs.

The breakthrough in Ismā'īlī studies occurred with the recovery and study of genuine Ismā'īlī texts on a relatively large scale; manuscript sources which had been preserved secretly in private collections in Yemen, Syria, Persia, Central Asia, and South Asia. Modern scholarship in Ismā'īlī studies was actually initiated in India, where significant collections of Ismā'īlī manuscripts have been preserved by the Ismā'īlī Bohra community. The breakthrough resulted mainly from the pioneering efforts of Wladimir Ivanow (1886–1970), a Russian orientalist, and a few Bohra scholars, who were educated in Europe

and based their original studies on their family collections of manuscripts. In fact, Ivanow compiled the first detailed catalogue of Ismāʿīlī works, attesting to the, hitherto unknown, richness and diversity of Ismāʿīlī literature and intellectual traditions (Ivanow 1933). Subsequently, numerous Ismāʿīlī texts were critically edited and studied, laying a solid foundation for further progress in the field (see Ivanow 1963; Poonawala 1977; Daftary 2004: 106–173).

2 Origins and Early History

The origins of Islam's two main divisions, Sunnī and Shīʿī, may be traced to the crisis of succession to the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632). A successor was needed to assume his functions not as a prophet, but as leader of the nascent Islamic community (*umma*). In practice, this choice was resolved by a group of Muslim notables, leading to the historical caliphate. However, it is the fundamental belief of the Shīʿī Muslims that the Prophet himself had designated his cousin and son-in-law, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), married to his daughter Fāṭima, as his successor, a designation believed to have been instituted under divine command. A minority group originally holding to this view gradually expanded and became generally designated as the *Shīʿat ʿAlī*, party of ʿAlī, or simply as the Shīʿa.

In time, the Shīʿa themselves split into a number of major communities, notably the Ismāʿīlīs, the Ithnā ʿAsharī or Twelvers, and the Zaydīs. However, initially Shīʿism represented a unified community. The Shīʿa then recognised successively ʿAlī and his sons al-Ḥasan (d. 49/669) and al-Ḥusayn (d. 61/680) as their *imāms* or spiritual leaders. The martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson al-Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ, Iraq, infused a religious fervour in the Shīʿa, also leading to radical trends in Shīʿism. The situation of the early unified Shīʿa changed soon after the Umayyads established their rule. Henceforth, different Shīʿī communities and lesser groups came to coexist, each with its own line of ʿAlid *imāms*, descendants of ʿAlī, and elaborating its own ideas. Under the circumstances, the Shīʿism of the later Umayyad period developed mainly in terms of two branches, the radical Kaysānīs and the quiescent Imāmīs. The Kaysānī Shīʿīs were mainly absorbed into the ʿAbbāsīd movement and they disintegrated after the ʿAbbāsīd victory of 132/750 over the Umayyads.

Meanwhile, Imāmī Shīʿism had continued to develop under the leadership of a particular line of ʿAlid *imāms*, descendants of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī. By contrast to the Kaysānīs, the Imāmīs remained completely removed from any political activity. It was with Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. ca. 114/732), their fifth *imām*, that the Imāmīs branch of Shīʿism began to acquire prominence among the early

Shī'a. It was, however, during the long and eventful *imāmate* of al-Bāqir's son and successors, Ja'far al-Šādiq, that Imāmis Shī'ism expanded significantly and became a major religious community with a distinct identity. Above all, Ja'far al-Šādiq and his circle of prominent scholars now elaborated the basic conception of the doctrine of the *imāmate* (*imāma*), which was essentially retained by the later Ismā'īlis and Twelver Shī'is. Ja'far al-Šādiq, the last *imām* to be recognised by both the Ismā'īlis and the Twelvers, died in 148/765. The dispute over his succession led to historic divisions in Imāmis Shī'ism, marking the emergence of the earliest Ismā'īlis (al-Nawbakhtī: 34, 53–55; al-Qummī: 76–78).

Imām al-Šādiq had originally designated his second son Ismā'īl, the eponym of the Ismā'īliyya, as his successor to the *imāmate*. As related in the majority of the sources, however, Ismā'īl apparently predeceased his father. At any rate, Ismā'īl was not present in Medina or Kufa, the centre of Imāmi Shī'ism, on al-Šādiq's death, when three of Ismā'īl's brothers laid claim openly to the *imāmate*. Be that as it may, al-Šādiq's Imāmi Shī'ī followers now split into six groups, two of which may be identified as the earliest Ismā'īlis. One of these two splinter groups, based in Kufa, denied the death of Ismā'īl and awaited his return as the *mahdī*. The members of this group are designated as the "Pure Ismā'īliyya" by the earliest Imāmi heresiographers, al-Nawbakhtī (57–61) and al-Qummī (80–81, 83), who are our main sources for the opening phase of Ismā'īlism. A second group, designated as the Mubarakīyya, affirmed Ismā'īl's death in the lifetime of his father and now acknowledged his eldest son Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl as their *imām*. It is certain that both these groups, as well as the extremist Khattabi Shī'is, were politically active against the 'Abbāsids and they represented the radical fringes of Imāmi Shī'ism in Kufa.

On the death of Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, not long after 179/795, the Mubarakīyya themselves split into two groups. A majority, identified by Imāmis heresiographers as the immediate predecessors of the dissident Qarmaṭis, refused to accept his death; they recognised Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl as their seventh and last *imām*, and awaited his return as the *mahdī* or *qā'im* (riser), terms which were synonymous in their early usage by the Ismā'īlis and other Shī'is. A second, small and obscure group, acknowledged Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl's death and now began to trace the *imāmate* in his progeny. Almost nothing is known with certainty regarding the subsequent history of these earliest Ismā'īlī groups until shortly after the middle of the third/ninth century, when a unified Ismā'īlī movement appeared on the historical stage (al-Nawbakhtī: 61; al-Qummī: 83; Daftary 2007: 95–96).

It is certain that for almost a century after Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, a group of his descendants worked secretly for the creation of a unified, revolutionary Shī'ī movement against the 'Abbāsids. These leaders did not openly claim

the Ismāʿīlī *imāmate* for three generations. They had, in fact, hidden their true identity in order to escape ʿAbbāsīd persecution. ʿAbd Allāh al-Akbar, the first of these hidden leaders, had organised his campaign around the central doctrine of the majority of the earliest Ismāʿīlīs, namely, the Mahdism of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl. At any rate, ʿAbd Allāh al-Akbar eventually settled in Salamiyya, in central Syria, which served as the secret headquarters of the Ismāʿīlī movement for several decades. The early Ismāʿīlīs now referred to their movement as the *daʿwa*, the mission, or the *daʿwa al-hādiya*, the rightly guiding mission. The religio-political message of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* was disseminated by a network of *dāʿīs*, summoners or missionaries (Daftary 2007: 98–116).

The efforts of ʿAbd Allāh al-Akbar, and his next two successors, began to bear fruit in the 260s/870s, when numerous *dāʿīs* appeared in southern Iraq and other regions. In 261/874, Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ was converted to Ismāʿīlism. He organised the *daʿwa* in Kūfa and other districts of southern Iraq. The Ismāʿīlīs of southern Iraq became generally known as Qarmaṭī, after their first local leader. Ḥamdān's chief assistant was his brother-in-law ʿAbdān, a learned theologian. ʿAbdān was responsible for training and appointing numerous *dāʿīs*, including Abū Saʿīd Ḥasan ibn Bahrām al-Jannābī, who later founded the Qarmaṭī state of Bahrayn. In the meantime, the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* had appeared in many other regions. Centred on the expectation of the imminent return of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl as the *Mahdī* who would establish justice in the world, the revolutionary and messianic Ismāʿīlī movement appealed to underprivileged groups of different social strata. It achieved particular success among those Imāmi Shīʿīs (later designated as Twelvers) who were disillusioned with the quietist policies of their *imāms* and were left without a manifest *imām* after the death of their eleventh *imām* in 260/874.

The *daʿwa* in Yemen was initiated by Ibn Ḥawshab, later known as Manṣūr al-Yaman, where he arrived in 268/881, accompanied by his collaborator ʿAlī ibn al-Faḍl. By 293/905, the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿīs* were in control of almost all of Yemen. South Arabia also served as a base for the extension of the *daʿwa* to other regions, such as Egypt and Sind. By 280/893, on Ibn Ḥawshab's instructions, the *dāʿī* Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī was already active among the Kutāma Berbers of the Lesser Kabylia mountains in North Africa. It was in the same decade of 260s/870s that the *daʿwa* was taken to the region of the Jibāl in Persia. Later, the *daʿwa* spread to Qumm, Kāshān, Iṣfahān, and other towns of that region. Somewhat later, the *daʿwa* was formally established in Khurāsān and Transoxania (Stern 1960: 56–90; Daftary 2007: 98–116).

By the early 280s/890s, a unified Ismāʿīlī movement had replaced the earlier Ismāʿīlī splinter groups. However, in 286/899, soon after ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī, the future Fāṭimid caliph, had succeeded to the central leadership of the *daʿwa*

in Salamiyya, Ismāʿīlism was rent by a major schism (Daftary 1993: 123–139; Daftary 2007: 116–126). ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī now claimed the Ismāʿīlī *imāmate* openly for himself and his ancestors, the same leaders who had organised and led the early Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa*. Later, he explained that as a form of *taqiyya*, or precautionary dissimulation, the central leaders of the *daʿwa* had adopted different pseudonyms, also assuming the rank of *hujja*, proof or full representative, of the absent *mahdī*, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl. He further explained that the earlier propagation of the Mahdism of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl was itself another dissimulating tactic, and that this was in reality another collective code-name for every true *imām* in the progeny of Jaʿfar al-Šādiq (Hamdani and de Blois 1983: 173–207).

ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī's doctrinal reform, which allowed for continuity in the Ismāʿīlī *imāmate* after Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl, split the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* and community into two rival factions. One faction remained loyal to the central leadership and now acknowledged ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī and his ʿAlid ancestors as their *imāms*, which in due course became the official Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī doctrine of the *imāmate*. This loyalist faction included the bulk of the Ismāʿīlīs of Yemen and those communities in Egypt, North Africa and Sind founded by the *dāʿīs* dispatched by Ibn Ḥawshab. On the other hand, a dissident faction, originally led by Ḥamdān and ʿAbdān, rejected ʿAbd Allāh's reform and maintained their belief in the Mahdism of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl. Henceforth, the term Qarmaṭī came to be applied more specifically to the dissidents who did not acknowledge ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī, as well as his predecessors and successors in the Fāṭimid dynasty, as their *imāms*. The dissident Qarmaṭīs soon acquired their most important stronghold in Bahrayn, in eastern Arabia, where a Qarmaṭī state was founded in the same eventful year, 286/899, by al-Jannābī. The Qarmaṭī state of Bahrayn survived until 470/1077. There were also Qarmaṭī communities in Iraq, Yemen, Persia, and Central Asia (Daftary 1993: 129–139).

The early Ismāʿīlīs elaborated the basic framework of a system of religious thought, which was further developed or modified in the Fāṭimid period of Ismāʿīlī history. Central to this system was a fundamental distinction between the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and the esoteric (*bāṭin*) aspects of the sacred scriptures and the religious commandments and prohibitions. Accordingly, the Ismāʿīlīs held that the Qurʾān and other revealed scriptures, and their laws (*sharīʿa*), had their apparent or literal meaning, which had to be distinguished from their inner meaning hidden in the *bāṭin*. They further held that the *ẓāhir*, or the religious laws enunciated by the prophets, underwent periodical changes while the *bāṭin*, containing the spiritual truths (*ḥaqāʾiq*), remained immutable and eternal. The hidden truths, representing the message common to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, were explained through the methodology of *taʾwīl* or

esoteric exegesis, which often relied on the mystical significance of letters and numbers.

The esoteric truths or *ḥaqāʾiq* formed a gnostic system of thought for the early Ismāʿīlīs, representing a distinct worldview. The two main components of this system were a cyclical history of revelations or prophetic eras (*dawrs*), each one inaugurated by a speaker or enunciator (*nāṭiq*) of a divinely revealed message which in its exoteric (*ẓāhir*) aspect contained a religious law (*sharʿa*). The *nāṭiqs* of the first six eras were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad. Each *nāṭiq* was, in turn, succeeded by a spiritual legatee (*waṣī*), who explained to the elite the esoteric truths (*ḥaqāʾiq*) contained in the *bāṭin* dimension of that era's message. Each *waṣī* was succeeded by seven *imāms*, who guarded the true meaning of the sacred scriptures and laws in their *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* aspects. The seventh *imām* of every era would rise in rank to become the *nāṭiq* of the following era. This pattern would change only in the seventh and final era of history; the eschatological era of the *qāʾim* when the esoteric truths of all the preceding revelations would be made apparent before the consummation of the physical world (Corbin 1983: 30–58; Daftary 2007: 128–136).

3 The Fāṭimid Period

The Fāṭimid period in Ismāʿīlī history represents the 'golden age' of Ismāʿīlism, when the Ismāʿīlīs possessed an important state of their own and Ismāʿīlī thought and literature attained their summit. It was during this period that the learned Ismāʿīlī *dāʾīs*, who were at the same time the scholars and authors of their community, produced what were to become the classical texts of Ismāʿīlī literature dealing with a variety of exoteric and esoteric subjects, as well as *taʾwīl* which became the hallmark of Ismāʿīlī thought.

The early success of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* culminated in the foundation of an Ismāʿīlī state or *dawla*, the Fāṭimid caliphate, in 297/909. The new dynasty was named Fāṭimid after the Prophet Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima, to whom the Fāṭimid *imām*-caliphs traced their 'Alid ancestry. The ground for the establishment of the Fāṭimid caliphate in Ifrīqiya, in North Africa, was meticulously prepared by the *dāʾī* Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shīʿī (d. 298/911), who had been active among the Kutāma Berbers of the region for almost twenty years. Meanwhile, 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī had been obliged to flee from Salamiyya in 289/902. After spending some time in Egypt and southern Morocco, he was brought to Qayrawān, the former Aghlabid capital in Ifrīqiya, by Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shīʿī who had successfully uprooted the Aghlabids shortly before. On 20 Rabi' 11 297/4 January 910, 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī (d. 322/934) was acclaimed as caliph,

also marking the end of the *dawr al-satr*, or period of concealment, in early Ismā'īlī history.

The Fāṭimids did not abandon their Ismā'īlī *da'wa* on assuming power, as they aimed to extend their rule over the entire Muslim community and beyond. However, the early Fāṭimid *imām*-caliphs, ruling from Ifrīqiya in North Africa, encountered numerous difficulties while consolidating their power with the help of the Kutama Berbers, who were converts to Ismā'īlism and now provided the backbone of the Fāṭimid armies. In particular, they confronted the hostility of the Khariji Berbers and the Sunnī inhabitants of the cities of Ifrīqiya, in addition to conflicts with the Umayyads of Spain, the 'Abbāsids and the Byzantines. Fāṭimid rule was firmly established in North Africa only under the fourth Fāṭimid *imām*-caliph, Abū Tamīm Ma'add al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh (341–365/953–975), who succeeded in transforming the Fāṭimid caliphate from a regional state into a great empire. He was also the first member of the Fāṭimid dynasty to concern himself significantly with the propagation of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* outside the Fāṭimid dominions, especially after the transference of the seat of the Fāṭimid caliphate in 362/973 to Egypt, where he founded Cairo as his new capital city.

The *imām*-caliph al-Mu'izz also permitted the assimilation of the Neoplatonic cosmology elaborated by the *dā'īs* of the Iranian lands into the teachings of the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī *da'wa*. In the course of the fourth/tenth century, Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943), Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (322/934), and al-Sijistānī (d. after 361/971) had set about harmonising their Ismā'īlī Shī'ī theology, revolving around the central Shī'ī doctrine of the *imāmate*, with Neoplatonic philosophy. This led to the development of a unique intellectual tradition of philosophical theology in Ismā'īlism. The last major proponent of philosophical Ismā'īlism was the eminent Persian poet and traveller Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. after 462/1070), who successfully propagated Ismā'īlism throughout the region of Badakhshān, now divided between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. These Iranian *dā'īs* elaborated complex metaphysical systems of thought with a distinct Neoplatonised emanational cosmology (Walker 1993: 67–142). It was also in al-Mu'izz's time that Ismā'īlī law was finally codified and its precepts began to be observed by the judiciary throughout the Fāṭimid state. The promulgation of an Ismā'īlī *madhhab*, or school of jurisprudence, resulted mainly from the efforts of al-Qāḍī Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad (d. 363/974), the foremost jurist of the Fāṭimid period (Poonawala 1996: 117–143).

The Ismā'īlīs had high esteem for learning and under the Fāṭimids they elaborated distinctive traditions of learning. The Fāṭimid *da'wa* was particularly concerned with educating the Ismā'īlī converts in the esoteric doctrine known as the *ḥikma* or 'wisdom'. As a result, a variety of lectures or 'teaching

sessions', generally designated as *majālis*, were organised. The private lectures on Ismāʿīlī esoteric doctrine, known as *majālis al-ḥikma*, or 'sessions of wisdom', were reserved exclusively for the Ismāʿīlī initiates who had already taken the oath of allegiance and secrecy (Halm 1996: 91–115). The lectures delivered by the *dāʿī al-duʿāt* or chief *dāʿī*, were approved beforehand by the *imām*. Many of these *majālis* were in due course collected and committed to writing. This Fāṭimid tradition of learning culminated in the 800 lectures of the *dāʿī al-Muʿayyad fī l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī* (d. 470/1078), who served as the chief *dāʿī* for twenty years. Another main institution of learning founded by the Fāṭimids was the *Dār al-ʿIlm*, the House of Knowledge, sometimes also called the *Dār al-Ḥikma*. Established in 395/1005 by the *imām*-caliph al-Ḥākim (386–411/996–1021), a variety of religious and non-religious subjects were taught at this academy which was also equipped with a major library. Many Ismāʿīlī *dāʿīs* received at least part of their training at the *Dār al-ʿIlm* (Halm 1997: 71–77).

The Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* organisation developed over time. The *dāʿīs* were active both within the Fāṭimid dominions as well as in other regions referred to as the *jazāʾir* or islands. Organised in a strictly hierarchical fashion, the Fāṭimid *daʿwa* was under the overall supervision of the *imām* and the *dāʿī al-duʿāt*, also known as the *bāb*, who acted as its administrative head. All in all, it was in non-Fāṭimid regions, the *jazāʾir*, especially Yemen, Persia, and Central Asia, that the Fāṭimid *daʿwa* achieved lasting success. The *daʿwa* was particularly intensified in Iraq and Persia under al-Ḥākim. Foremost among the *dāʿīs* of this period was Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020), who elaborated his own unique tradition within the Iranian school of philosophical Ismāʿilism (Walker 1999: 80–124). Al-Ḥākim's reign also coincided with the opening phase of what was to become known as the Druze religion, founded by a number of *dāʿīs* who proclaimed the end of the era of Islam and advocated the divinity of al-Ḥākim.

The Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* activities outside the Fāṭimid state reached their peak in the long reign of al-Mustanʿir (427–487/1036–1094), continuing even after the Sunnī Seljuqs replaced the Shīʿī Būyids as overlords of the ʿAbbāsids in 447/1055. Meanwhile, the leadership of the *daʿwa* in Yemen had come into the hands of ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣulayḥī, an important chieftain of the Banu Hamdān. The *dāʿī* ʿAlī al-Ṣulayḥī rose in the mountainous region of Ḥarāz in 439/1047, marking the effective foundation of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty ruling over different parts of Yemen as vassals of the Fāṭimids until 532/1138. The Ṣulayḥids also played an active part in the renewed efforts of the Fāṭimids to spread the *daʿwa* on the Indian subcontinent. The Ismāʿīlī community founded in Gujarāt by *dāʿīs* sent from Yemen evolved into the modern Ṭayyibī Bohra community.

Meanwhile, the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* had continued to spread in many parts of the Iranian world, now incorporated into the Seljuq sultanate. By the early 460s/1070s, the Persian Ismā'īlīs were under the leadership of 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Aṭṭāsh, who had his secret *da'wa* headquarters in Iṣfahān, the main Seljuq capital. He was also responsible for launching the career of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, who in due course led the Ismā'īlī cause in Persia. In Badakhshān and other eastern parts of the Iranian world, too, the *da'wa* had continued to spread after the downfall of the Sāmānids in 395/1005. As noted, Nāṣir-i Khusraw played a key role in propagating Ismā'īlism in Central Asia, while maintaining his contacts with the chief *dā'i* al-Mu'ayyad and the central *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo (Hunsberger 2000: 220–254). By the time the Qarmaṭī state of Bahrayn was finally uprooted in 470/1077 by some local tribes, other Qarmaṭī groups in Persia, Iraq, and elsewhere too, had either disintegrated or switched their allegiance to the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* of the Fāṭimids. There was now, once again, only one unified Ismā'īlī *da'wa* under the supreme leadership of the Fāṭimid *imām*-caliph.

In the course of al-Mustanṣir's long reign the Fāṭimid caliphate had already embarked on a decline resulting from factional fighting in the Fāṭimid armies and various political and economic problems (Thompson 2016: 40–72). Under the circumstances, al-Mustanṣir appealed to Badr al-Jamālī, an Armenian commander in the service of the Fāṭimids, who succeeded to restore peace and stability to the state. Badr soon assumed leadership of civil, judicial, and religious administrations in addition to being the 'commander of the armies' (*amir al-jūyūsh*), his main source of power. Badr died in 487/1094 after having arranged for his son al-Afḍal to succeed him in the vizierate. Henceforth, real power in the Fāṭimid state remained in the hands of the viziers who also commanded the armies, and were often in charge of the *da'wa* organisation and activities as well.

Al-Mustanṣir, the eighth Fāṭimid caliph and the eighteenth Ismā'īlī *imām*, died in Dhu'l-Ḥijja 487/December 1094, a few months after Badr al-Jamālī. Thereupon, the unified Ismā'īlī *da'wa* and community split into two rival factions, as al-Mustanṣir's son and original heir-designate Nizār was deprived of his succession rights by al-Afḍal, who installed Nizār's younger half-brother on the Fāṭimid throne with the title of al-Musta'li bi-llāh (487–495/1094–1101). The two factions were later designated as Musta'lian and Nizārī, after al-Mustanṣir's sons who had claimed his heritage. Nizār refused to pay homage to al-Musta'li and rose in revolt, but was defeated and killed in 488/1095. The *imāmate* of al-Musta'li was recognised by the Ismā'īlī communities of Egypt, Yemen, and western India. These Ismā'īlīs, who were dependent on the Fāṭimid regime, later traced the *imāmate* in the progeny of al-Musta'li. On the other hand, the

Ismāʿīlīs of Persia, who were already led by Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ, supported the succession rights of Nizār. The Central Asian Ismāʿīlīs remained uninvolved for quite some time in the Nizārī-Mustaʿlī schism.

4 Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlīs

The Fāṭimid state survived for another seventy-seven years after the Nizārī-Mustaʿlī schism of 487/1094. These decades witnessed the rapid decline of the Fāṭimid caliphate. Al-Mustaʿlī and his successors on the Fāṭimid throne continued to be recognised as *imāms* by the Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlīs who themselves soon split into Ḥāfiẓī and Ṭayyibī branches. After al-Mustaʿlī, the all-powerful vizier al-Afdal placed his minor son on the Fāṭimid throne with the caliphal title of al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh. On al-Āmir's assassination in 524/1130, the Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlīs were confronted with a major crisis of succession. A son, named al-Ṭayyib, had been born to al-Āmir a few months before his death; and, he had been designated as al-Āmir's heir-apparent. But after al-Āmir, power was assumed initially as regent, by his cousin, who later proclaimed himself as caliph and *imām* with the title of al-Ḥāfiẓ li-Dīn Allāh (526–544/1132–1149).

The irregular succession of al-Ḥāfiẓ to the Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlī *imāmate* led to a major split in the Mustaʿlian community. Similar to the earlier case of the Nizārī-Mustaʿlī schism, the Mustaʿlian *daʿwa* headquarters in Cairo endorsed the *imāmate* of al-Ḥāfiẓ, which was also acknowledged by the Mustaʿlians of Egypt and Syria as well as a portion of the Mustaʿlians of Yemen. These Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlīs, who recognised al-Ḥāfiẓ and the later Fāṭimid caliphs as their *imāms*, became known as Ḥāfiẓī. Ḥāfiẓī Ismāʿīlism disappeared completely soon after the collapse of the Fāṭimid dynasty in 567/1171. On the other hand, Sayyida Arwā (d. 532/1138), then the effective ruler of Ṣulayḥid Yemen, upheld al-Ṭayyib's cause and recognised him as al-Āmir's successor to the *imāmate*. As a result, the Mustaʿlians of Ṣulayḥid Yemen as well as those of Gujarāt also acknowledged al-Ṭayyib's *imāmate*; they became known as the Ṭayyibīs (Stern 1951: 193–255). Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlism has survived only in its Ṭayyibī form.

Ṭayyibī Ismāʿīlism found its permanent stronghold in Yemen, with the initial support of the Ṣulayḥid queen. It was soon after 526/1132 that she broke off relations with Cairo and declared Dhuʿayb ibn Mūsā al-Wādīʿī (d. 546/1151) as the *dāʿī al-muṭlaq*, or *dāʿī* with supreme authority, to lead the affairs of the Ṭayyibī Mustaʿlian *daʿwa* on behalf of al-Ṭayyib, who was thought to be in hiding. This marked the foundation of the Ṭayyibī *daʿwa* independently of the Fāṭimid regime as well as the Ṣulayḥid state. The Ṭayyibīs are of the opinion

that since the time of al-Ṭayyib, their *imāmate* has continued in his progeny to the present time. However, all these Ṭayyibī *imāms* have remained in concealment, and in their absence the *dā'ī muṭlaqs* have led the affairs of the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* and community. As in the case of *imāms*, every *dā'ī muṭlaq* has appointed his successor. In the doctrinal field, the Ṭayyibīs maintained the Fāṭimid traditions, also preserving a good portion of the Ismā'īlī texts of the Fāṭimid period (Daftary 2007: 269–276).

Meanwhile, the Ṭayyibī *dā'īs* in Yemen maintained close relations with the rapidly growing Ṭayyibī community in western India, where these Ismā'īlīs became designated as Bohras. Towards the end of the tenth/sixteenth century, the succession to Dā'ūd ibn 'Ajab Shāh (d. 997/1589), the twenty-sixth *dā'ī*, was disputed, leading to the Dā'ūdī-Sulaymānī schism in the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* and community. Henceforth, the Dā'ūdī and Sulaymānī Ṭayyibīs followed separate lines of *dā'īs*. The Dā'ūdī *dā'īs* continued to reside in India, where the bulk of the Ṭayyibī Dā'ūdī Bohras were located. On the other hand, the Sulaymānīs, accounting for a minority of the Ṭayyibīs, remained concentrated in Yemen, where their *dā'īs* resided until recent times. In time, the Dā'ūdī Bohras were further subdivided in India due to periodical challenges to the authority of their *dā'ī muṭlaq*. The total Dā'ūdī population of the world is currently estimated at around one million. Since the 1920s, Bombay (Mumbai), with the largest single concentration of Dā'ūdī Bohras, has served as the permanent administrative seat of the Dā'ūdīs (Daftary 2007: 282–295; Qutbuddin 2011: 331–354).

In Yemen, the leadership of the Sulaymānī Ṭayyibīs has remained hereditary in the same Makrami family. The Sulaymānī *dā'īs* established their headquarters in Najrān, in northeastern Yemen, and ruled over that region with the military support of the local Banū Yām. In the twentieth century, the political prominence of the Sulaymānī *dā'īs*, checked earlier by the Zaydīs and the Ottomans, was further curtailed by the Saudi family, adherents of austere Wahhābī Sunnism. Najrān was, in fact, annexed to Saudi Arabia in 1934. Thereafter, the Sulaymānī *dā'īs* and many of their followers have been persecuted intermittently by the Saudis, who persecute Shī'ī Muslims generally as 'heretics'. The total Sulaymānī Ṭayyibī population is currently estimated officially at around 200,000 persons (Daftary 2007: 295–300). Similar to the Dā'ūdīs, the Sulaymānīs withhold their religious literature from outsiders.

5 Nizārī Ismā'īlīs

By the time of the Nizārī-Musta'li succession dispute of 487/1094, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, who preached the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* on behalf of the Fāṭimids within the

Seljuq dominions in Persia, had emerged as the leader of the Persian Ismāʿīlīs. He had already been following an independent policy, and his seizure of the mountain fortress of Alamūt in 483/1090 signalled the commencement of the Persian Ismāʿīlīs' open revolt against the Seljuq Turks as well as the foundation of what would become the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī state. The Nizārī state, centred at Alamūt, with its territories and network of fortresses scattered in different parts of Persia and Syria, lasted some 166 years until its destruction by the Mongols in 654/1256.

As an Ismāʿīlī, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ could not tolerate the anti-Shīʿī policies of the Seljuqs, who being the new champions of Sunnī Islam aimed to uproot the Fāṭimids. Ḥasan's revolt was also an expression of Persian 'national' sentiments, as the alien rule of the Seljuq Turks was intensely detested by the Persians of different social classes. This may explain why he substituted Persian for Arabic as the religious language of the Persian Ismāʿīlīs, also accounting for the early popular success of his movement (Daftary 1996: 181–204). It was under such circumstances that in al-Mustaṣhīr's succession dispute Ḥasan supported Nizār's cause and severed his relations with the Fāṭimid regime and the *daʿwa* headquarters in Cairo which had supported al-Mustaʿlī. By this decision, Ḥasan had founded the independent Nizārī Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* on behalf of the Nizārī *imāms*, who remained in concealment for several generations after Nizār. In fact, numismatic evidence shows that Nizār's own name appeared on coins minted at Alamūt for about seventy years after his death in 488/1095, while his progeny was blessed anonymously (Miles 1972: 155–162).

The early Nizārīs were thus left without an accessible *imām* in another *dawr al-satr*, or period of concealment; and, as in the pre-Fāṭimid period of concealment, the absent *imām* was represented in the community by a *ḥujja*, his chief representative. Ḥasan and his next two successors as heads of the Nizārī *daʿwa* and state were, indeed, recognised as such *ḥujjas*. It seems that already in Ḥasan's time many Nizārīs believed that a son or grandson of Nizār had been secretly brought from Egypt to Persia, and he became the progenitor of the line of the Nizārī *imāms* who later emerged at Alamūt.

The early Nizārīs were also active in the doctrinal field. Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ himself is credited with having reformulated the old Shīʿī doctrine of *taʿlīm*, or authoritative teaching by the *imām* of the time. This doctrine, emphasising the autonomous teaching authority of each *imām* in his own time, became the central doctrine of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs. The intellectual challenge posed to Sunnī Islam by the doctrine of *taʿlīm*, which also refuted the legitimacy of the ʿAbbāsīd caliph as the spiritual spokesman of all Muslims, called forth the reaction of the Sunnī establishment. Many Sunnī scholars, led by al-Ghazālī, attacked the Ismāʿīlī doctrine of *taʿlīm*. Soon the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs possessed

networks of fortresses in several regions of Persia, including Daylamān and Quhistān (Willey 2005: 103–203); and, in the opening decade of the sixth/tenth century, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ also extended his activities to Syria by sending *dā'īs* there from Alamūt. Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ died in 518/1124 and was succeeded by the *dā'ī* Kiyā Buzurg-Umīd (518–532/1124–1138). However, by the final years of Ḥasan's life, the anti-Seljuq revolt of the Persian Nizārīs had already lost its momentum, much in the same way that the Seljuqs had failed in their prolonged military campaigns to dislodge the Persian Nizārīs from their fortress communities. Ismā'īlī-Seljuq relations had now entered a new phase of 'stale-mate' (Hillenbrand 1996: 205–220; Daftary 2015: 41–57).

Meanwhile, the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs had been eagerly expecting the appearance of their *imām*. The fourth lord of Alamūt, Ḥasan II, succeeded to the leadership in 557/1162, and soon after, in 559/1164, declared the *qiyāma* or resurrection, initiating a new phase in the religious history of the Nizārī community. Ḥasan II relied heavily on Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* and earlier traditions, interpreting *qiyāma* symbolically and spiritually for the Nizārīs. Accordingly, *qiyāma* meant nothing more than the manifestation of unveiled truth (*ḥaqīqa*) in the person of the Nizārī *imām*. It was a spiritual resurrection only for the Nizārīs who acknowledged the rightful *imām* of the time, and were now capable of understanding the truth, the esoteric essence of Islam. It was in this sense that Paradise was actualised for the Nizārīs in this world. The Nizārīs, like the Sufis, were now to rise to a spiritual level of existence, transcending from *ẓāhir* to *bāṭin*, from *sharī'a* to *ḥaqīqa*, or from the literal interpretation of the law to an understanding of its spiritual essence and the eternal truths of religion. On the other hand, the 'outsiders', the non-Nizārīs who were incapable of recognising the truth, were rendered spiritually non-existent (Daftary 2007: 358–367). The *imām* proclaiming the *qiyāma* would be the *qā'im al-qiyāma*, or 'lord of resurrection', a rank which in Ismā'īlī religious hierarchy was always higher than that of an ordinary *imām*.

Ḥasan II's son and successor Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad devoted his long reign (561–607/1166–1210) to a systematic doctrinal elaboration of the *qiyāma*. The exaltation of the autonomous teaching authority of the present Nizārī *imām* now became the central feature of Nizārī thought. Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad also made every Nizārī *imām* potentially a *qā'im*, capable of inaugurating an era of *qiyāma*. Furthermore, he explicitly affirmed the Fāṭimid descent of his father and, therefore, of himself. He explained that Ḥasan II was, in fact, an *imām* and the son of a descendant of Nizār ibn al-Mustanṣir, who had earlier found refuge in Alamūt. Henceforth, the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs recognised the lords of Alamūt, beginning with Ḥasan II, as their *imāms* (Hodgson 1955: 160–184, 210–217).

Meanwhile, the Syrian Nizārīs had entered into an important phase of their own history under the leadership of Rāshid al-Dīn Sinān, their most famous chief *dāʿī* and the original 'Old Man of the Mountain' of the Crusader sources. He reorganised and strengthened the Syrian Nizārī *daʿwa*, also consolidating the Nizārī network of castles (Willey 2005: 216–245). Aiming to safeguard his community, Sinān entered into intricate and shifting alliances with the major neighbouring powers, notably the Crusaders, the Zangids and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin of the Crusader sources). Sinān led the Syrian Nizārīs for almost three decades, when they attained the peak of their power and fame, until his death in 589/1193 (Hodgson 1955: 185–209; Daftary 2007: 367–374).

Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad's son and successor Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan (607–618/1210–1221), who had become concerned with the isolation of the Nizārīs from the larger world of Sunnī Islam, successfully attempted a daring rapprochement with the ʿAbbāsīd caliph. He ordered his followers to observe the *sharīʿa* in its Sunnī form; this was interpreted by the Nizārīs as a dissimulating tactic. Be that as it may, the rights of Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan to Nizārī territories were now officially recognised by the Sunnī establishment. The Nizārī *imām* had achieved much-needed peace and security for his community and state.

Nizārī fortunes in Persia were rapidly reversed after the collapse of the Khwārazmian empire which brought them into direct conflict with the invading Mongols. Indeed, the Mongols had assigned a high priority to the destruction of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī state, a task completed with much difficulty by Hūlāgū who led the main Mongol expedition into Persia. Rukn al-Dīn Khurshāh, the last lord of Alamūt who reigned for only one year, entered into a complex and ultimately futile series of negotiations with Hūlāgū. The fall of Alamūt in the autumn of 654/1256 marked the end of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī state. Along with many other fortresses it was demolished by the Mongols, who also massacred countless Nizārīs. In the spring of 655/1257, Khurshāh himself was killed by his Mongol guards in Mongolia, where he had gone to see the Great Khan. Shortly afterwards, the Nizārī castles in Syria submitted to the Mamlūks. Having lost their political prominence, the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs henceforth lived secretly as religious minorities in numerous scattered communities in Syria, Persia, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent.

In the aftermath of the Mongol debacle the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs survived the downfall of their state centered at Alamūt; and the Nizārī *imāmate* continued in the progeny of Rukn al-Dīn Khurshāh. However, the Nizārī *imāms* remained in hiding for several generations, and their centralised *daʿwa* organisation had also disappeared. Under the circumstances, various Nizārī communities developed independently under the local leadership of dynasties of *dāʿīs*, *pīrs*, and

mīrs. They also resorted to the strict observance of *taqīyya* and adopted different external guises. In Persia, many Nizārī groups disguised themselves under the cover of Sufism. Thus, the *imāms* appeared to outsiders as Sufi masters or *pīrs*, while their followers adopted the typically Sufi guise of disciples or *murīds* (Daftary 1999: 275–289). This practice gained wide currency among the Nizārīs of Central Asia and Sind as well. By the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century, in fact, a type of coalescence had emerged between Persian Sufism and Nizārī Ismāʿīlism, as these two independent esoteric traditions in Islam shared common doctrinal grounds. All in all, the first two post-Alamūt centuries in Nizārī history are shrouded in obscurity, mainly due to *taqīyya* practices and lack of sources of information.

By the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century, the Nizārī *imāms* had emerged in the village of Anjudān, in central Persia, still dissimulating as Sufi *pīrs*, initiating the so-called Anjudān revival in Nizārī Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* and literary activities that lasted some two centuries (Daftary 2007: 422–442). With the advent of the Ṣafavids, who proclaimed Twelver Shīʿism as their state religion in 907/1501, the Nizārī *imāms* and their followers in Persia and adjacent lands also adopted Twelver Shīʿism in addition to Sufism as a *taqīyya* measure. By the end of the eleventh/seventeenth century, the revived Nizārī *daʿwa* had been particularly successful in Central Asia and several regions of the Indian subcontinent. In South Asia, the Hindu converts, who became known as Khojas, developed an indigenous religious tradition known as Satpanth or the ‘true path’ (to salvation), as well as a devotional literature, the *gīnāns*, containing a diversity of mystical, mythological, eschatological, and ethical themes (Nanji 1978: 50–83; Asani 2011: 95–128; Daftary 2007: 442–451).

With the fortieth Nizārī *imām*, Shāh Nizār (d. 1134/1722), the seat of the Nizārī *daʿwa* was transferred from Anjudān to the nearby village of Kahak, near Maḥallāt. By the middle of the twelfth-eighteenth century, the Nizārī *imāms* had moved to the Persian province of Kirmān, where they acquired political prominence. The modern period in Nizārī Ismāʿīlī history commenced with the long *imāmate* of Ḥasan ʿAlī Shāh (1232–1298/1817–1881), the forty-sixth *imām*, who received the honorific title of Aga Khan (*Āghā Khān*), meaning lord and master, from the Qājār monarch of Persia; this title has remained hereditary among his successors to the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī *imāmate*. After some prolonged confrontations between this Nizārī *imām* and the Qājār establishment, Aga Khan I permanently left Persia in 1257/1841. He finally settled in Bombay in 1265/1848, and received the protection of the British in India (Daftary 2007: 463–476).

Aga Khan I’s grandson, Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh, Aga Khan III (1302–1376/1885–1957), who led the Nizārīs for seventy-two years as their forty-eighth

imām, established his residence in Europe. He made systematic efforts to set the religious identity of the Nizārīs apart from other religious communities, especially that of the Twelver Shīʿīs, which for centuries had provided dissimulating covers for the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs. Large numbers of Nizārīs had, in fact, been assimilated into the dominant Twelver Shīʿī community. Known as a Muslim reformer, Aga Khan III worked vigorously to reorganise the Nizārīs into a modern community with high standards of education, health, and social well-being, also developing a new network of councils for administering the affairs of his community. The education of women and their full participation in communal affairs received high priority in Aga Khan III's reforms.

In 1957, Aga Khan III was succeeded by his grandson Shah Karim al-Husayni, Aga Khan IV, the present Harvard-educated forty-ninth Nizārī Ismāʿīlī *imām*. He has substantially expanded the modernisation policies of his predecessor, also initiating numerous programmes and institutions of his own. Aga Khan IV has created a complex institutional network generally referred to as the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), which implements projects in a variety of social, economic, and cultural areas. In the field of higher education, his major initiatives include The Institute of Ismaili Studies, the Aga Khan University, and the University of Central Asia (Ruthven 2011: 189–220). Numbering several millions, the global Nizārī Ismāʿīlī community, with significant groups in Europe and North America, has emerged as a progressive Shīʿī Muslim minority with high standards of living.

6 Conclusion

As this chapter has touched on, the Ismāʿīlīs have had a very eventful history stretching back to the formative period of Islam when a diversity of communities of interpretation and schools of thought were articulating their doctrinal positions. Due to their revolutionary anti-establishment stances, the Ismāʿīlīs were from early on targeted for persecution and defamation. As a result, a host of myths and legends were fabricated and disseminated by their numerous adversaries, including the Crusaders who made the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs famous in medieval Europe as Assassins. The misrepresentations of the Ismāʿīlīs have been largely corrected by modern scholarship in Ismāʿīlī studies based on the study of a large number of primary Ismāʿīlī manuscript resources.

After the downfall of their Fāṭimid caliphate and the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī state of Persia, the Ismāʿīlīs lost forever their political prominence, surviving precariously in many lands merely as religious minorities. However, their earlier contributions to Islamic thought and culture had proved enduring. In this context,

particular mention should be made of two examples. In the Fāṭimid period of their history, the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿīs* of the Iranian lands elaborated an original intellectual tradition of philosophical theology, the earliest such tradition in a Shīʿī community, anticipating the contributions of Twelver Shīʿī scholars, notably Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1630) and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640), belonging to the so-called 'school of Iṣfahān'. Meanwhile, a distinctive Ismāʿīlī school of jurisprudence (*madhhab*) was founded through the efforts of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, the foremost jurist of the Fāṭimid period.

All in all, despite numerous odds and rampant persecution, the Ismāʿīlīs have indeed stood the test of time. They have closely guarded their distinctive religious identity. The majoritarian Nizārī branch of Ismāʿīlism is the only current Shīʿī community with a continuous line of present *imāms*. As enlightened Muslim leaders, the last two Ismāʿīlī *imāms*, Aga Khans III and his grandson Aga Khan IV, have devoted much time and resources to promoting a better understanding of Islam, not merely as a major religion but as a world civilisation with its plurality of social, intellectual and cultural traditions. Under the circumstances, the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs have emerged as a progressive global community of Shīʿī Muslims. In every country where the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs live as indigenous religious minorities, they enjoy good standards of living with full emancipation of their women, and those who have migrated to Western countries have successfully adapted to their new environments.

References

- Asani, A.S. 2011. "From Satpanthi to Ismaili Muslim: The Articulation of Khoja Identity in South Asia." In F. Daftary ed., *A Modern History of the Ismailis*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 95–128.
- Corbin, H. 1983. *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*. London: K. Paul International.
- Daftary, F. 1993. "A Major Schism in the Early Ismāʿīlī Movement." *Studia Islamica*. 77, 123–139.
- Daftary, F. 1994. *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Ismāʿīlīs*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Daftary, F. 1996. "Ḥasan-i Sabbāh and the Origins of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī Movement." In F. Daftary ed., *Mediaeval Ismāʿīlī History and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 181–204.
- Daftary, F. 1999. "Ismāʿīlī-Sufi Relations in Early Post-Alamūt and Safavid Persia." In L. Lewisohn and D. Morgan eds, *The Heritage of Sufism. Vol. III: Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501–1750)*. Oxford: Oneworld, 275–289.
- Daftary, F. 2004. *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

- Daftary, F. 2007. *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines*. 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Daftary, F. 2012. *Historical Dictionary of the Ismailis*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.
- Daftary, F. 2015. "Ismaili-Seljuq Relations: Conflict and Stalemate." In E. Herzig and S. Stewart, eds, *The Age of the Seljuqs: The Idea of Iran VI*. London: I.B. Tauris, 41–57.
- Halm, H. 1996. "The Ismaʿili Oath of Allegiance (*ʿahd*) and the 'Sessions of Wisdom' (*majālīs al-ḥikma*) in Fatimid Times." In F. Daftary ed., *Mediaeval Ismaʿili History and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 91–115.
- Halm, H. 1997. *The Fatimids and their Traditions of Learning*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.
- Ḥamdāni, A. and F. de Blois 1983. "A Re-examination of al-Mahdī's Letter to the Yemenites on the Genealogy of the Fatimid Caliphs." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. 173–207.
- Hillenbrand, C. 1996. "The Power Struggle Between the Saljuqs and the Ismaʿilis of Alamut, 487–518/1094–1124: The Saljuq Perspective." In F. Daftary ed., *Mediaeval Ismaʿili History and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 205–220.
- Hodgson, M.G.S. 1955. *The Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs against the Islamic World*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Hunsberger, A.C. 2000. *Nasir Khusraw, The Ruby of Badakhshan: A Portrait of the Persian Poet, Traveller and Philosopher*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.
- Ivanow, W. 1933. *A Guide to Ismaili Literature*. London: Royal Asiatic Society.
- Ivanow, W. 1946. *The Alleged Founder of Ismailism*. Bombay: Published for the Ismaili Society by Thacker and Co.
- Ivanow, W. 1963. *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliographical Survey*. Tehran: Ismaili Society.
- Miles, G.C. 1972. "Coins of the Assassins of Alamūt." *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*. 3, 155–162.
- Nanji, A. 1978. *The Nizārī Ismāʿīlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books.
- al-Nawbakhtī, A. 1931. *Kitāb firaq al-Shīʿa*, ed. H. Ritter. Istanbul: Deutsche Morgenlaendische Gesellschaft.
- Nizām al-Mulk, A. 1978. *The Book of Government, or, Rules for Kings. The Siyar al-Muluk or Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk*, 2nd ed., trans. H. Darke. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Poonawala, I.K. 1977. *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature*. Malibu, CA: Undena Publications.
- Poonawala, I.K. 1996. "Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿman and Ismaʿili Jurisprudence." In F. Daftary ed., *Mediaeval Ismaʿili History and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 117–143.

- al-Qummī, S. 1963. *Kitāb al-maqālāt wa'l-fīraq*, ed. M.J. Mashkūr. Tehran: 'Aṭāi.
- Qutbuddin, T. 2011. "The Da'udi Bohra Tayyibis: Ideology, Literature, Learning and Social Practice." In F. Daftary ed., *A Modern History of the Ismailis*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 331–354.
- Ruthven, M. 2011. "The Aga Khan Development Network and Institutions." In F. Daftary ed., *A Modern History of the Ismailis*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 189–220.
- Stern, S.M. 1951. "The Succession to the Fatimid Imam al-Āmir, the Claims of the later Fatimids to the *Imamate*, and the Rise of Ṭayyibī Ismailism." *Oriens*. 4, 193–255.
- Stern, S.M. 1960. "The Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurāsān and Transoxania." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. 23, 56–90.
- Stern, S.M. 1983. *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*. Jerusalem and Leiden: Magness Press.
- Walker, P.E. 1993. *Early Philosophical Shīism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Walker, P.E. 1999. *Ḥamīd Al-Dīn Al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Ḥākīm*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.
- Wiley, P. 2005. *Eagle's Nest: Ismaili Castles in Iran and Syria*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.