

# Lexicon

*abjadpad'dhati* (n.)<sup>1</sup> An alphanumerical system that assigns numerical values to each letter of the Arabic alphabet. Commonly referred to as *abjad*, its name is derived from “the first of the eight mnemotechnical terms into which the twenty-eight consonants of the Arabic alphabet were divided” (Weil and Colin 2012). Among the Khōjā, the Indic version of the system, which makes use of the Persian character system, is used within the *naksō* (‘sacred maps’) in a variety of contexts, including auguring good fortune, mitigating against the evil eye, helping to cure an individual, and so on.

*alam* (n.) A ceremonial battle standard commemorating the Battle of Karbala, which is kept in the Khōjā *imāmvādō* and once yearly is publically displayed during the Ashura procession.

*amaldārī* (n.) An officer of a local Khōjā *jamāt*. Historically, Khōjā councils were organized locally, and major decisions involving the community were made by a council of five officers—president, vice-president, *mukhī* (‘chief’), *kamāḍiyā* (‘treasurer’), and secretary. These top posts within the community have generally been held by well-known and wealthy merchants. As Khōjā communities began to develop locally, organize regionally, and progress internationally, the position of Khōjā council officer expanded in terms of both scope and power. The power and authority of the Āgākhānī Khōjā officers were eventually muted in deference to their ‘manifest and present imam,’ whereas officers in leadership among the Ithnā ‘Asharī and Sunnī Khōjā communities retained their autonomy and continue to be democratically elected for constitutionally appointed terms. Due to dialectical variation among the Kacchī and Kāṭhiyāvāḍī Khōjā communities in the subcontinent, the term used to refer to the entire leadership council evolved a variant pronunciation: *amaldāvī*. In eastern, central, and southern Africa, this term fell out of use and was substituted by the catch-all term-*jamāt* officers.

*amuldavi* See *amaldārī*.

*arijhā* (n.) A tradition of Hajarat Īmām Jāphrē Sādik in which supplicants write their wishes on chits of paper in the form of a ‘divine petition’ on the evening of the fifteenth of the Islamic month of Sha‘bān. At sunrise the next day, the petitions are wrapped in clay and placed in a papier-mâché replica of the imam’s tomb, which is then sent out to sea. This tradition of petitions can be observed any time of the year

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1 The parts of speech are abbreviated as follows: *n.* (noun), *v.* (verb), *adj.* (adjective), and *adv.* (adverb).

- by community members by writing the petition, covering it in clay or a flour-and-water paste, and then it placing into a body of water (e.g., a river, the sea, or a well).
- banyani* (n.) The Swahili term for a Hindu merchant, chiefly male. This term probably originates in the initial interactions of Zanzibaris with Hindu merchants of the Baniya caste in the early nineteenth century. Among contemporary Muslim Asian communities in Dar es Salaam, the term refers to anyone who is Hindu, irrespective of gender and occupation.
- cādar* (n.) In the term's most general sense, a piece of cloth that covers or obscures someone or something. With regard to female attire, *cādar* generally refers to a scarf that covers the hair. The meaning of the term has evolved over time and is reflected in its use among the African Khōjā. During the 1950s in central Dar es Salaam, *cādar* referred to the Indic cultural use of the *pachēḍī* in religious settings. In the 1980s, it referred to the *hijab*, and from the 1990s up until now it has referred to the Near Eastern abaya and headscarf worn in the peninsular Arab style. It has come to define Khōjā identity and religious observance, as it has in many parts of the Muslim world; it is as much a political symbol as a religious one.
- chotara* (n. or adj.) A pejorative Swahili term, originating in the kiUnguja dialect, meaning 'half-caste' or 'half-breed.' See *chōṭārā*.
- chōṭārā* (n. or adj.) This term's documented origin can be traced to the Khōjā community in mid-nineteenth-century Zanzibar (*Nasur Jesa v. Hirbayee, widow of Jesa Damani*). Etymologically, it is a diminutive that infers caste impurity. The word is a pejorative Swahili term of Gujarati origin that means 'half-caste' in reference to a person of mixed racial ancestry, particularly African and Asian. The predominant genealogy of such individuals is generally traced to an Asian father and an African mother. An important question for nineteenth-century Asian communities in eastern, central, and southern Africa was whether people of this mixed ancestry should be able to obtain the caste membership of the Asian parent and the rights that accompanied it. In contemporary Tanzanian modern standard Swahili, the term has expanded in meaning to refer to a crossbreed of seeds or animals. One example is *mbwa chotara* ('mutt') (Taasisi Ya Uchunguzi Wa Kiswahili 2001, 49).
- chungānī* (n.) This term, which means 'cemetery,' probably evolved from the original function of the space that later became the Khōjā cemetery in Zanzibar. It was first employed by the Zanzibari Khōjā in reference to the Khōjā cemetery on the outskirts of Stone Town, Zanzibar. This cemetery became the principal graveyard for the Khōjā after the 1907 case in which the Āgākhānī Khōjā prevented the Sunnī and Khōjā from observing the rites of the dead in the original Mnzai Moja all-Khōjā caste cemetery (Phrāmṛōj pē. dākṭar, rējīstrār 1907). In the aftermath of the Zanzibar Revolution, President Karume's revolutionary government destroyed all Khōjā cemeteries, save the private Khōjā cemetery of Bustani in Vuga, established in the

nineteenth century by Khōjā Dewji Jamal. With the diaspora of the Zanzibari Khōjā, the term has come to be used in reference to any local Khōjā cemetery, such as the cemetery in Dar es Salaam. The term is used interchangeably with the Gujarati term for cemetery, *kabrastān*.

*dhu'ā* (n.) The Kacchī variant of *du'ā*; see *du'ā*.

*dōrā* (n.) A piece of string that is usually worn around the wrist of the right hand and that is believed to protect the wearer from evil. This tradition is observed by many Asian communities. In Dar es Salaam, string colors distinguish communities; for example, dark green and black are used by the Khōjā, whereas red and saffron are used by the Svāminārāyaṇ. The Khōjā usually obtain these strings from shrines, in which they are tied to the tomb replicas contained within.

*duka* (n.) The Swahili term for a shop (e.g., *duka la dawa* 'pharmacy'). In the context of Asian merchantry in East Africa, this refers to the general store model of commerce pioneered by Asian merchants in the nineteenth century. So successful was its introduction that it spread throughout the region and is now the primary form of economic interchange in even the most rural locales in East Africa. The creation of networks and the organization of caravans financed by Asian merchants were instrumental in opening the lowlands and densely forested parts of the Great Lakes region to further infrastructure and economic development, at a time when European entrepreneurs focused, almost exclusively, on the highlands.

*du'ā* (n.) Commonly understood as supplications in the Islamic tradition, for the Khōjā, the *du'ā* formed a major constituent part of caste religious services, and they have evolved substantially in the twentieth century. The Khōjā transitioned from Indic Gujarati prayers invoking the Khōjā avatars to exclusively Arabic Islamic prayers. For the Khōjā, this took place in the late nineteenth century, primarily through the efforts of Gulāmālī Ismā'il and his publications. For the Āgākhānī Khōjā, this took place in the mid-twentieth century (Dēvarāj 1965/1919; Shia Imami Ismailia Association for Madagascar 1957).

*dukawala* (n.) The Swahili term for a shopkeeper, primarily used in reference to male, Asian shopkeepers and traders.

*hājat* (n., adj., or v.) Any need or wish as kept by a supplicant to the divine; also, to make a supplication. This can be expressed in multiple ways, such as through an *arījhā* or simply as a personal supplication after the recitation of a prayer.

*imāmē jhamānā* (n.) The imam of the age. Currently, for the Āgākhānī Khōjā, this refers to the forty-ninth imam of their lineage; today this role is filled by Karim Al-Husseini. For the Khōjā, this refers to the messianic twelfth imam, who remains in occultation, the Mahdī.

*imāmavāḍō* (n.) The caste hall of the Khōjā, wherein observances commemorating the imam as well as caste rituals and rites are observed.

- istēkhārō* (n.) Divination rites employed to resolve a decision through divine inspiration. The most popular forms of divination include *phāl* (bibliomancy) and *svapn* (oneiromancy), which are forms of divination through the Quran.
- jamañ* (n.) The caste meal of the Khōjā that is periodically observed in the *imāmvādō* or shrine throughout the liturgical year or as necessitated by commemorative events, such as a death or birth commemoration of the Infallibles.
- jamāt* (n.) This multifaceted term can refer to the Khōjā leadership council, the Khōjā caste as a collective, the Khōjā community in a particular locale, and/or the city-state organization parallel to the nation-state pioneered by the Khōjā polis in Africa.
- jamātī'āī* (n.) A Kacchī term that refers to the ancient Khōjā tradition of communal right. According to this tradition, any member of the Khōjā caste has the right to enter the caste hall and to partake in the communal feast and has a share in the corporate body of the community. It is a concept of inalienable right based on birth and caste membership that cannot be denied by the community's governing body. This traditional notion is in conflict with the idea of membership developed at the turn of the twentieth century, according to which the community is a voluntary organization founded on rules and orthodoxy, the breaking of which can lead to a denial of communal access or even banishment.
- jamātkhānū* (n.) The caste hall of the Āgākhānī Khōjā community.
- jañgbār* (n.) The Gujarati name for the island and archipelago of Zanzibar. It chiefly refers to the main port of the capital city on Unguja Island. A possible theory as to its evolution is that the initial interaction of Kāṭhiyāvādī and Kacchī merchants with the Arabic name of the sultanate would have likely led to a modification in which the phoneme /z/ (z) in Arabic was pronounced as a /dʒə/ (jha) in their Indic languages, creating the initial term *jañjabār*. In later interaction with the local non-Arab population, the name 'Unguja' would have been heard as well. It is possible that the conjunct /ŋg/ (ng) from the term 'Unguja' changed the modified Gujarati term via a hardening of the consonant /dʒə/ (ja) to a /g/ (g), with the extant nasalization *ja* providing the /əŋ/ for the final proper noun of the archipelago in Gujarati: /dʒəŋg-bar/ (Jañgbār).
- jhākir(ā)* (n.) A lay member who recites religious traditions, poetry, and stories and who may also preach to the community across various venues. It is a continuation of the nineteenth-century tradition of lay leadership in religious worship, which is in decline in Dar es Salaam with the rise of a professional clerical class.
- jhāñjīr mātām* See *mātām*.
- jhārī* (n.) Technically referring to the actual tomb of an imam or saint within the Shia tradition, for the Khōjā this term more regularly refers to the tomb replicas that are located in shrines and in the *imāmvādō*, displayed publically during Muharram processions.

- jhiyārat* (*n.* or *v.*) Either the pilgrimage prayers to the imams and saints that are recited by the Shia as part of daily religious observances or the act of pilgrimage to Near Eastern shrines; also, to undertake such a pilgrimage.
- jñāti bahār* (*n., adj.,* or *v.*) To enact the Indic practice of outcasting a member for violating the rules or customs of his or her particular community; also, having been outcasted. This could range from a complete shunning of the individual and his family to limiting community members' interaction with him to religious observances only. This concept is complex in practice, as it can be both explicit and implicit and can last for a period of time or for one's lifetime. It is still observed by Gujarati Muslim castes—such as the Bōhrā—in both the subcontinent and Africa.
- julūs* (*n.*) The Muharram procession, particularly on the tenth night ('Āshūra'); also, to participate in such a procession. In central Dar es Salaam, the evening procession on Ashura begins after the Maghrib *namājh*; it departs from Mēhphilē Asgharī and concludes at the Khōjā *imāmvādō*.
- kahanī* (*n.*) A form of narrative prayer used until the late twentieth century among the African Khōjā; also, to make such a prayer. These narratives in Gujarati and Urdu in Gujarati script were widely used as popular devotional literature among the Khōjā of Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. Each of the tales was specified and related to particular customs and supplications. The *kahanī* literature was primarily employed by Khōjā women and generally features a female protagonist who comes to a point in her predicament at which there appears to be no hope or clear answer. The solution is revealed to the protagonist in a physical encounter or night dream, which entails pilgrimage to the shrine of or a meeting with the saint corporeal.
- khōjā* (*n.* or *adj.*) A South Asian Muslim caste that ostensibly 'converted' to Islam in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the regions known today as Kashmir and Punjab. The original community was composed of two major Hindu castes—Cakk and Lōhāṇā—and was expanded through the incorporation of various tribes on the centuries-long trek from their homeland down the Indus valley, until permanent settlement was established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Sindh-Kathiawar corridor. Today, this ethnic community is primarily divided among three Islamic creeds: Āgākhānī, Ithnā 'Asharī, and Sunnī. The term can be used to refer to the caste as a collective, a particular community, or an individual member.
- khōjāpanth* (*n.*) The original religious complex of the Khōjā peoples; an amalgamation of various religious traditions, including Vaishnava philosophy and Tantric rites in observance of the Goddess, Buddhism, Sufism, Sunnism, and Shiism.
- kuśālī* (*n.*) The observance of a birth anniversary, particularly that of an imam or saint, which entails specific rites in the caste hall; also, to enact such an observance. Within the context of the dominant Sunni Islamic culture of Dar es Salaam, the birth anniversary of the Prophet is a particularly noteworthy event that is

- celebrated over a two-day period, during which lights and decorations festoon the Khōjā mosque complex.
- lavājam* (n.) The yearly subscription fee that all Khōjā members pay to the community to maintain current membership. Members whose monthly income falls below the poverty line of the community (approximately USD 300 per month) are exempt from payment.
- lavānī* (n.) A Zanzibari Khōjā term meaning ‘balcony’ or ‘courtyard.’ Traditionally, these were semipublic spaces where women would communicate and interact with one another while performing household chores.
- majlis* (n.) In South Asian Shia usage, the observances in honor of the martyrs of Karbala and the Shia Infallibles; also, to enact such observances. In the Khōjā context, this is refined to refer to a specifically evolved form of Shia communion, composed of seven principal parts, concluding with communal sacrament.
- majmū’ō* (n.) An abbreviation of the title of a late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century text published by Gulāmālī Ismā’īl, the full title of which is *Dō’ānō majmū’ō*, the Khōjā *vade mecum*. It was the primary religious manual for the Khōjā of eastern, central, and southern Africa for almost a century, until the decline of the Gujarati language among these communities in the twenty-first century.
- mandazi* (n.) The term for a Swahili beignet, which, with milk tea, is popular as a form of Khōjā sacrament after a *majlis*.
- mātām* (n.) Shia lamentation rituals that chiefly commemorate the martyrs of the Battle of Karbala; also, to partake in such rituals. The most common form is the striking of the chest with one’s hand during the recitation of dirges and elegiac poetry. *Jhañjūr mātām*, a rare form of this lamentation among the Khōjā, is a more intense lamentation ritual that entails ‘sacred pain’ through the use of chains and razors to lash the back and chest.
- mēhphīl* (n.) A Khōjā shrine that is dedicated to a particular martyr of Karbala or a Shia saint. Shrines are somewhat specialized and are selected by congregants based on historical relationships with the shrine, on its patrons, and on particular miracles associated with the shrine.
- mōhr* (n.) A stamped, unbaked clay seal made from the soil of Karbala (*turba*) and used in ritual prayers as a forehead marker during prostration. The soil is believed to have miraculous qualities when consumed or applied, particularly for the sick.
- mōjyha* (n.) Miracles attributed to a Shia imam or saint; also, having the quality of such a miracle. These can take various forms, such as the ‘miraculous’ recovery of a patient in the hospital or the spontaneous appearance of blood on an *alam* in a shrine. The period of 1944–1945 in Zanzibar was a particularly spiritually charged time for the Khōjā, as Khōjā members eyewitnessed various miracles in relation to the sacred spaces and the religious leadership of the Khōjā. For the Khōjā com-

munity during this period, this demonstrated their spiritual dominance within the island's religious landscape.

*mukhī* (n.) The historical title of the chief religious functionary of the Khōjā caste.

Within the Āgākhānī community, the position has limited power, and the *mukhī* functions as the leader of religious services and connects a particular community to the bureaucracy of the organization. Within the Khōjā community, this appointed position focuses on internal religious issues and the logistics of communal rites. The holder of the post primarily deals with the organization of religious functions within shrines and the *imāmvāḍō*, whereas the administrative power and functioning of the *jamāt* is executed by the elected presidency.

*mulyānī* (n.) A well-regarded female lay religious leader who recites the oral traditions of the Khōjā and also leads the *majlis* and delivers lectures to assemblies of Khōjā women. In addition to her religious duties, her pious reputation would engender other opportunities for her to serve the community, in capacities such as counselor or spiritual healer.

*najhar* (1) (n.) The concept of the evil eye, which exists in many human civilizations, including Indic *kudṛṣṭi* and Islamic *ʿayn*. For the Khōjā, the causes of the evil eye are desire, envy, and hatred, the result of which can be obstacles, injury, failure, and loss. Young women and children are particularly vulnerable, so their public exposure is circumscribed; thus opportunities to be inflicted by the evil eye are believed to be reduced. Talismans, such as sacred maps and the hand of Fāṭima, are placed at entry points in order to ward off the evil eye. The curing of one afflicted with the evil eye is complex and involves various rituals, potions, and prayers; some of these are detailed in the *Majmūʿō*. For the Zanzibari Khōjā, the concept of the evil eye merged with local traditions of the *jinn*, such as spirit possession.

*najhar* (2) (n.) A vow. Various forms of *vrat* ('religious vows') exist among the African Khōjā through their Indic heritage. The most basic is the supplication vow. An individual will make a vow that if a supplication is fulfilled, a particular action will be carried out. For example, if a woman's child is sick, she will give the child medication and make a vow that when he gets better, she will fast for a week as a thanksgiving. Historically, the shrines have played an integral role in this process. The use of other forms of vows has declined with the influence of Near Eastern Shiism in Dar es Salaam. One such example is the *maunvrat* ('vow of silence'), which was historically observed in honor of the dead.

*nakśō* (n.) Sacred maps of letters and numbers presented in a matrix within Khōjā texts as a means of achieving divine succor. They are placed in the entryways of shops and houses as a way to augur auspicious tidings for the inhabitants and to repel evil forces. In private meditation, the maps are used in visualization, with the supplicant repeating and performing particular rituals as prescribed.

*namājh* (*n.*) The five daily ritual prayers proscribed in Islam, performed by the Khōjā Shia at three daily intervals.

*navhā* (*n.*) A dirge or form of elegiac poetry recited during a *majlis* commemorating a death anniversary, as on Ashura.

*n'yājh* (*n.*) The Khōjā sacrament that follows the conclusion of a *majlis*. It is consecrated by the recitation of the opening chapter of the Quran over the sacrament. For example, in early twenty-first-century Dar es Salaam, following the cemetery *majlis* on Thursday afternoons, chai and *mandazi* are served as sacrament.

*pāknajis* (*adj.*) The theological concepts of ritual purity and pollution among the Khōjā. In the subcontinent, ritual pollution among the Khōjā was historically caste based. In East Africa, the Khōjā inverted the Hindu taboo against eating the prepared food of Muslims by declaring Hindus to be idolaters and identifying their food and sacred spaces as sources of ritual pollution. This was eventually extended to all non-Muslims, such as Christians, on the basis that they are all *mus'rik* ('polytheists').

Places for female prayer are one illustration of ritual purity in actual practice: traditionally, within the Khōjā home, the place for female prayer was considered a place of ritual purity. This space would be contaminated if an unrelated man entered into it. This Indic Khōjā concept of ritual purity and pollution was a complex set of evolving rules, with each living being or form of organic matter having the potentiality of impurity and the ability to spread the 'contagion' to ritually pure spaces. These shared boundaries helped to define a unique Khōjā identity shaped to the particularities of the African context while reinforcing caste consciousness. These historic notions of ritual purity and pollution among the African Khōjā have been increasingly replaced with legally based definitions of purity and pollution from Near Eastern Shia traditions.

*pañjā* (*n.*) A stylized metallic hand that is placed above the *alam*, symbolizing either Ḥusayn's refusal to submit to the forces of Yazid at the Battle of Karbala or his cousin 'Abbās's aid during the course of the battle.

*pañjatanpāk* (*n.*) The Sacred Five central to the Shia tradition, which places the family of the prophet at the center of the Shia conception of religious authority; the Sacred Five are Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn.

*phātīyā* (*n.*) See *n'yājh*.

*sāhēbajhamān* (*n.*) 'Master of the age'; see *imāmē jhamānā*.

*saph* (*n.*) A form of *mātam* historically practiced by the Khōjā of Zanzibar that entailed congregants forming a circle by interlocking their left hands, with the reciter standing in the center. Moving counterclockwise, congregants would perform the *mātam* with their free right hands while repeating the particular dirge or elegiac poetry proclaimed by the reciter.

*śarīyatī* (*adj.*) Of or relating to the observance of Islamic law.

*sēvā* (*n.*, or *v.*) Public service; also, to participate in public service. This concept is central to Khōjā communalism. It is understood as regular volunteerism that is either sustained, as in community leadership positions, or sporadic, as during communal functions like the caste feast. It is service both to the community and, for the Shia Khōjā, to the imam. The term can be used as an honorific for an elder in the Khōjā community who has dedicated a lifetime of service to the community, for example, Sēvā Hājī.

*tablīg* (*v.*) Religious propagation of the Imami Shia message to both non-Muslims and non-Shia Muslims through a variety of media and initiatives. In East Africa, the most famous initiative is the Bilal Muslim Mission, which was formed in 1964 by Saeed Akhtar Rizvi to bring the message to Africans.

*tājhiyā* (*n.*) The relics that are placed within, around, or on the tomb replicas within shrines and in the *imāmvādō*. The relics are specific to the narrative of the personality to whom a particular shrine has been dedicated.

*tājhiyākhanā* (*n.*) A reliquary, within which relics are housed. Once yearly, relics are removed from the reliquary and are carried in the annual Ashura processional.

*vakāph* (*n.*) A perpetual religious endowment that is vested in the Khōjā community and is managed by the communal leadership as trustees. Unlike traditional *waqf* arrangements in the Near East, the Khōjā create endowments chiefly by the incorporation of a property through a corporate trust deed or through bequests.

*vaphāt* (*n.*) The observance of a death anniversary, particularly of an imam or saint, which entails specific rites in the caste hall. In defining themselves against their Āgākhanī cousins and as a result of an increasing conservatism from the importation of Near Eastern Shia traditions, the Khōjā of Dar es Salaam have come to celebrate both birth and death anniversaries in a similar, somber fashion.

*vrat* See *najhar* (2).