A Semiotics of Infinite Translucence: The Exoteric and Esoteric in Ismaili Muslim Hermeneutics

Karim H. Karim
Carleton University

ABSTRACT   *The complex juxtaposition of private practice and public visibility/invisibility of contemporary Ismaili Muslims has certain parallels with other religious communities, but it exhibits unique features. This community adheres to an esotericism that has shaped its hermeneutic and communication practices. In a seeming paradox, the group is also extensively engaged in the public sphere. However, its communal institutions are limiting the dissemination of texts pertaining to the religious addresses and biography of the group's leader, Aga Khan IV. He is instead increasingly turning to architecture to communicate the community's worldview by using design in a symbolic manner.*

KEYWORDS   *Islam; Hermeneutics; Semiotics; Public sphere; Private sphere; Architecture*

RÉSUMÉ   *La juxtaposition complexe entre les pratiques privées et la visibilité/invisibilité propres aux musulmans ismaéliens contemporains a certains parallèles avec d'autres communautés religieuses, mais elle comporte aussi des caractéristiques uniques. En effet, cette communauté privilégie un ésotérisme qui a formé ses pratiques herméneutiques et communicationnelles. D'autre part, dans un paradoxe apparent, ce groupe s'engage dans la sphère publique. Cependant, ses institutions communales sont en train de limiter la dissémination de textes relatifs aux discours religieux du chef du groupe, Aga Khan IV, ainsi qu'à sa biographie. De plus en plus, celui-ci se tourne plutôt vers l'architecture pour communiquer le point de vue de la communauté en utilisant le design de manière symbolique.*

MOTS CLÉS   *Islam; Herméneutique; Sémiotique; Sphère publique; Sphère privée; Architecture*

The Nizari Ismaili branch of Shia Islam is known for conducting one of the most rigorous engagements with modernity among Muslims (Daftary, 2011; Karim, 2014a; Steinberg, 2011). This relatively small transnational group, which has long-standing communities in the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa and a more recent presence in Europe, North America, and Australasia, has developed a distinct profile in the public spheres of several countries. A number of its members, particularly its leader, Aga Khan IV, have prominence in media discourses; some of its institutions, like the Aga Khan Foundation, have become familiar to many sectors of society; and structures such as the Ismaili Centres have high visibility in cities. On the other hand, the esoteric nature of the religious community's

Karim H. Karim is Professor and former director of the School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University, 4306 River Building, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6. Email: karim_karim@carleton.ca .

beliefs and a history of persecution (Virani, 2007) have produced a simultaneous orientation toward privacy. This article addresses the complex juxtaposition of Ismaili private practice and public visibility/invisibility, which has certain parallels with some other religious communities (especially those given to mysticism) but exhibits unique features of its own.

The Aga Khan is a hereditary, lineal Imam claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad (570–632 CE). Ismaili history spans a period of more than a thousand years and members of the community live in some 40 countries. This religious group of a few million is linguistically, culturally, and ethnically plural, and its structures are maintained within a highly bureaucratized setting that is characteristically modern (Karim, 2014b; Steinberg, 2011). Some individuals in the relatively small community have been successful in various countries of their residence, having distinguished themselves with notable achievements in fields such as academia, banking, business, journalism, literature, politics, the professions, public service, and the voluntary sector. However, a number of Ismailis are also in the lower socio-economic rungs of society.

The community is administered by nationally based councils that are appointed and organized translocally by the Imam, who resides in France. This transnational infrastructure of institutions was developed over the past century by Imams who sought to address the needs of their followers under colonial rule. Aga Khan IV (2008a) views his engagement with the spiritual and the material as being central to his role as Imam. In addition to the communal self-governance structure, he has established a group of organizations that are non-denominational and whose scope extends outside Ismaili communities. The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is guided by an Islamic engagement with concepts such as civil society, democracy, development, and pluralism, as articulated by its founder. Apart from establishing numerous health and educational institutions, it is also involved in sectors such as air transport, architecture, culture, energy, media, and telecommunications, with the stated objective of raising the quality of life.

Ismaili Muslim theology is shaped by the relationship between the outer, exoteric (*zahiri*) and the inner, esoteric (*batini*) dimensions of human life. These ideas are not posited against each other in a polarized manner, but as two complimentary ways of perceiving truth. Historical and contemporary Ismaili thought has expressed a similar inter-relationship of other dyadic concepts such as Qur'anic revelation (*tanzil*)/ Qur'anic hermeneutics (*tawil*); signifier (*mithal*)/signified (*mamthul*); concealment (*satr*)/unveiling (*kashf*); and material world (*dunya*)/spiritual life (*din*), which are discussed below. Even as the community's institutions have engaged intensely with modernity and with the public spheres of the Eastern and Western countries where they are located, they have generally maintained a separation between the external and the communal, the public and the private (Karim, 2013). However, these distinctions are not strictly binary and have provided for intriguing communicative expressions.

Internal and external communications are rigorously ordered by hierarchical, transnational Ismaili organizations, although contemporary media uses by individual Ismailis, like that by other Muslims (Bunt, 2009; Eickelman & Anderson, 2003; Howard & Hussain, 2013), are modulating the institutional hegemony over commu-

nication. Institutional arrangements of public and private spaces are shaped by an attention to the outer and the inner facets of life. Organizations like the Aga Khan Foundation have a very public engagement with the larger society, whereas the community maintains strictly exclusive places to which only Ismailis are admitted during times of worship. In some cases, the distinct spaces are physically located next to each other, producing complex dynamics between the public performance and private practice (Karim, 2013). For example, whereas the newly established Aga Khan Museum in Toronto has the mandate to interface with North American publics (Jodido, 2008), it is adjacent to an Ismaili Centre whose inner sanctum is reserved for the esoteric religious practice of community members. The prominent Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat building on Ottawa's premier Sussex Street, housing Aga Khan Foundation Canada's offices, is designated as a secular building. However, its design seeks to communicate interactions between the exoteric and the esoteric: the building's dome is meant to convey the visual properties of rock crystal—which, depending on one's relative position, can appear transparent, translucent, or opaque (Aga Khan IV, 2008b). Such interplay of the visible and the invisible are meant to symbolize the endeavour to understand the truth in material and spiritual life.

The various sets of conceptual dyads (public and private, exoteric and esoteric, and visible and invisible), while offering cognate parallels, do not seamlessly map onto each other. Whereas their respective interactions appear to open up modes of discovery, they do not provide for complete clarity regarding Ismaili lifeworlds. Instead, the relationships between the dyads seem to point toward a notion of gradual understanding through the metaphor of translucence, which symbolizes "the constant search for answers that leads inevitably to more questions" (Aga Khan IV, 2005b). In this resonates a fundamental religious quest: to know the *mysterium tremendum*—"that which is hidden and esoteric, that which is beyond conception or understanding, extraordinary and unfamiliar" (Otto, 1958, p. 13). Translucence permits partial illumination, but not complete enlightenment—illumination that unfolds serially in an infinite journey.

Spiritual semiotics: Reading God's signs

John Durham Peters (2000) dwells on the problem of misunderstanding that results from the imperfection of human communication. However, traditions such as Gnosticism, Sufism, and Kabbalah present angels as having a perfect model of communication: angels "provide us a lasting vision of the ideal speech situation, one without distortion or interference … They are pure bodies of meaning" (pp. 74–75). Muslims hold the Qur'an, the primary "text" of Islam, to have resulted from communication of this kind. They believe the Qur'anic revelation to have been received from God, who communicated it to the Prophet Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel. The Qur'an itself describes the revelation as imparted to Muhammad through spiritual inspiration (*wahi*) (Qur'an 53:4). Divine discourse is therefore materially signified by the linguistic signifiers that constitute the Qur'an. Whereas the words provide access to God, they can only be understood according to the intellectual and spiritual capacity of individual believers; they are translucent veils of the revelation's ultimate truth.

Muslim belief holds that Muhammad and his companions memorized and wrote down the series of revelations that were received over a period of 22 years. The material

was collected in the form of a book after the Prophet's death. Although the Qur'an has been rendered into numerous other languages, the original revelation in Arabic is considered to be technically untranslatable as no translation, no matter how rigorous, can replicate the specific discourse transmitted by divine inspiration (Pickthall, 1977), as the nuances of the layered meanings embedded in the unique revelation would be lost through translation. Replacing the specific verbal signifiers spoken by Muhammad upon receiving the revelation would break the link with its spiritual content.

The believer meditates upon the pristine words of the revelation that was bestowed upon the Prophet 14 centuries ago. This poses substantial difficulty for the vast majority of the world's Muslims who do not speak Arabic. It is even an arduous task for Arabs, as contemporary forms of Arabic spoken in their various countries are quite different from that of the Qur'an. But the mediation of another language or even modern Arabic would break the link to the source of divinely inspired speech and its meanings. The revelation frequently refers to itself and expresses a self-reflexiveness about its transmission, its language, its nature, and its meanings (e.g., Qur'an 16:103, 4:82, 39:23).

The term used in the Qur'an to refer to its verses is *ayat*: "These are the *ayat* of God that We recite to you in truth" (2:252). It is noteworthy that the same term is also utilized for God's signs. Several Qur'anic passages encourage the believer to ponder upon them. For example:

> And of His *ayat* [signs] is this that He created you from dust,
> And behold, ye are human beings ranging widely!
> And among His *ayat* is this,
> That He created for you mates from among yourselves,
> That ye may dwell in tranquility with them.
> And He has put between you love and mercy.
> Verily in that are *ayat* for those who reflect.
> And of His *ayat* is the creation of the heavens and the earth,
> And the difference of your languages and colours.
> Herein indeed are *ayat* for those who know. (30:20–21)

Kenneth Cragg (1973) notes that "This confluence of terms is interesting and suggestive, allowing as it does the conviction that the external world is a kind of 'scripture,' intimating in its own realm and within its own order that divine knowledge which, in history and prophecy, in word and action, speaks Quranically to mankind …" (p. 148). The Creation as well as its historical unfolding, like the revelation, constitute God's texts that are to be read semiotically to understand the meanings of the messages to humankind.

It is "those who reflect" (Qur'an 13:3) who are able to comprehend the signification of the signs that God has embedded in the revelation and the Creation.[1] Numerous parts of the Islamic revelation exhort the believer to reflect (*tafakkur*), to ponder (*tadabbur*), to learn (*ta'allum*), to comprehend (*tafaqquh*), and to use one's intellect (*aqila*) (Shah-Kazemi, 2011). Apprehending the divine through intellectual endeavour is a primary motif in the Qur'an. It is significant that the very first verses of revelation to be received by Muhammad began with the instruction to "read":[2]

> Read in the name of thy Lord who created
> Created the human being from a clot
> Read, and thy Lord is the Most Bounteous
> Who taught by the pen,
> Taught the human being that which s/he knew not (Qur'an 96:1–5)

What is meant exactly by "read" has been a matter of much discussion and debate for centuries among Muslim scholars. Ziauddin Sardar comments that although writing[3] was the primary means of recording speech in seventh-century Arabia, the reference to the pen in this verse more broadly "conveys the idea of communication; it is a symbol not just for the art of writing, but communication of all knowledge by means of any technology" (quoted in Inayatullah & Boxwell, 2003, p. 90). The Qur'an's emphasis on knowledge encouraged its acquisition to become a major endeavour among Muslims.[4] The Arabic word *ilm,* usually translated as "knowledge," is one of the most frequently appearing terms in the holy book.[5] Sardar states that "*Ilm* … is the pursuit of knowledge as well as the distribution and transmission of knowledge" (quoted in Inayatullah & Boxwell, 2003, p. 89) and in this incorporates broad aspects of communication.

An enormous amount of effort has been devoted over the past 14 centuries to study and understand the Qur'an. The meanings of its numerous metaphors, allegories, and parables have been sought over the ages. Philology, grammar, history, the Prophet's biography, eyewitness accounts, et cetera have been brought to bear to know the meaning of the more than 6,000 verses of the revelation. Established Muslim traditions of exegesis (*tafsir*) based on various explanatory frameworks support specific interpretations. In some cases, the differences in interpreting certain key phrases, words, and even punctuation have reflected significant doctrinal divergences among groups such as the Sunni and the Shia as well as among their subgroupings. Whereas Muslims generally agree that Qur'anic verses have surface, exoteric (*zahiri*) and inner, esoteric (*batini*) meanings, the Sufis and the Shia generally lay greater emphasis on the latter. This tendency is not unique to Islam, since anagogic interpretations of scripture are also conducted in other religions, such as by those engaged in the study of the Kabbalah in Judaism and Gnosticism in Christianity.

Among the Shia, the Ismailis have come to be known as the group that has most consistently explored the inner aspects of the Islamic revelation through their particular applications of the esoteric hermeneutics of *tawil.* Commenting on the work of Nasir-i Khusraw, a prominent eleventh-century Ismaili philosopher, Eric Ormsby (2012) notes that

> philosophy and science apply in the realm of the *zahir,* the exoteric aspect of things, while *tawil* addresses the privileged realm of the *batin,* the esoteric understanding of revelation. Neither realm is essentially separable from the other; they are complementary and constitute a whole. They are as interdependent as the bodily senses and the soul, each of which plays a fundamental role in the constitution of the human being and of the cosmos. (p. 8)

Whereas human bodies have to engage physically with the material world and the exoteric stipulations of religion belonging to the dimension of the *zahir,* the

"human soul, however, needs to know the inner meanings and significance of these acts and scriptures on which they are based" (Hunsberger, 2000, pp. 75–76). It is imperative in the context of Ismaili cosmology for the soul to become enlightened by these higher truths that only exist in the *batin* (Hunzai, 2005).

Tawil is viewed as a hermeneutic method that discloses the inner meanings of the Qur'anic revelation that would otherwise remain invisible to those conducting exegesis only by means of *tafsir*. Whereas the latter's etymology draws from the sense "to comment," the former involves the quest for the originary meaning. Ismaili hermeneutics seek to reveal to the believer the Qur'anic signifiers (*mathal*) that are "incomprehensible to an ordinary mind because of their complex implications and extraordinarily profound meanings" (Shah, 2005, p. 119). Becoming cognizant of the *mathal*'s originary signified sense (*mamthul*) involves spiritual and intellectual exertion of a high order to comprehend the "ultimate implications and aims" (p. 119) of God's signs through the hermeneutics of *tawil*.

Who, then, can carry out *tawil?* Whereas *tafsir* of the Qur'an is performed by knowledgeable members of the religious classes (*ulama*) among Sunnis and the non-Ismaili Shia, *tawil*, according to Ismaili tradition, can only be conducted by the hereditary Imam and, to a lesser extent, by members of the Imam's mission (*dawa*) (Steigerwald, 2006). Authority for this is based on the Qur'an, which states that "None knoweth its [the Qur'an's] *tawil* save Allah and those who are well-grounded in knowledge (*ilm*)" (3:7). The Shia, including Ismailis, understand "those who are well-grounded in knowledge (*ilm*)" in this verse to be the hereditary Imams descended from Ali ibn Abi Talib and Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, whereas Sunnis disagree with this reading. The status of Imams with respect to the conduct of *tawil* is also supported by the Shia with certain sayings (*hadiths*) of the Prophet Muhammd referring to Ali (Shah, 2005). Whereas the revelation (*tanzil*) denotes the descent of the divine message to humanity, the Imam enables his followers, through the *tawil* of this message, to attain spiritual ascent by enabling them to comprehend its orginary signified meanings.

According to Qadi al-Nu'man, a prominent tenth-century Ismaili scholar and close confidant of the fourteenth Imam, al-Muiz, Ali's outstanding qualities were his knowledge, nobility, and aptitude for providing proofs. As successors of Ali, the Ismaili Imams are viewed by their followers as having the ability to provide esoteric explanations of Qur'anic passages. Al-Nu'man also describes the Imams "as the bearers of the Divine illuminating substance (*nur*), and the ones who receive Divine help (*tayid*), and inspiration (*ilham*)" (quoted in Shah, 2005, p. 121).

> The traits also denote that an Imam does not require any teacher other than the preceding Imam from whom he imbibes the particular knowledge. The preceding Imam entrusts the Imama to him and thus teaches him. On the basis of all this, al-Numan refers to the knowledge of Imams as the real and true knowledge (*al-ilm al-haqiqi*) and the one which is transmitted from one Imam to another Imam (*al-ilm al-mathur*). (p. 121)

Consequently, contemporary Ismailis hold that their present Imam, Aga Khan IV, who is forty-ninth in lineage since Ali, has the authority and the ability to guide them

according to the exoteric and esoteric teachings of Islam. Allegiance to the Imam of the time (*Imam al-zaman*) and membership in the Ismaili religious community are prerequisites for receiving knowledge of the *batin* from him (Carney, 2009).

Exoteric and esoteric, public and private

A book by the tenth-century Ismaili scholar Jafar bin Mansur al-Yaman narrates a series of dialogues that narrate the initiation of an adept into the esoteric teachings of the faith (Morris, 2001). It relates the need for careful intellectual and spiritual preparation and the deeply private nature of the communication between master and disciple. The knowledge of the *batin* received in this manner is to be kept within the community. Only those who have received Ismaili teachings and comprehend the significance of esoteric knowledge can understand its value. However, the disciple's understanding of the *batin* is limited by her spiritual capacity; each person can only see the esoteric truth as far as is permitted by her hermeneutic horizon's current limit (Corbin, 1954). The truth is learnt in stages, and remains a continual process until one's physical death.

Not only will outsiders not be able to make any sense of the *batin*, it will also be harmful to them. An explication is to be found in an Indian Ismaili hymn (*ginan*), which relates several miracles of Pir Shams, a legendary thirteenth- to fourteenth-century saint. One story tells of his banishment from a city whose inhabitants did not understand the true nature of spirituality. The turn of events brought him to a situation where he and his disciple had only raw meat for food and no means to cook it. In this difficult state, he asked the sun to descend in order to cook the meat. When the sun came down it did not harm the Pir and his disciple, but its proximity set the city and its people on fire (Hooda, 1948). The account is seen as making a symbolic statement about the power of esoteric knowledge, represented by the sun:[6] it nourishes those who have been initiated into the understanding of the *batin* by enabling them to gain cognizance of its true nature but can destroy those who have not. The Imam and designated members his *dawah*[7] are the only ones who can provide such knowledge.

Since approaching the *batin* is not possible without the guidance of the Imam, according to Ismaili belief, it is imperative that there should always be a living Imam among humanity. The lineage, starting from Ali, is expected to continue to the Day of Judgment. However, there have been periods in Ismaili history when the Imam was in mortal danger and had to go into concealment (*satr*).[8] The Imams under threat from the mid-eighth to early tenth centuries and from the mid-thirteenth to late eighteenth centuries were in concealment, according to Ismaili historiography. Following the first period of *satr*, the community entered a period of *kashf* (unveiling) and rose to political power. Ismailis established the Fatimid Empire (909–1171 CE) in North Africa and built Cairo as its capital (Daftary, 2007). Their leaders ruled as Imam-Caliphs over a vast realm that stretched at various times from Morocco to Arabia and also included principalities in Italy and India. However, even at this time, the religious followers of the Ismaili Imam were a minority among a population that included a majority of Sunnis as well as Christians and Jews.

The Fatimids founded institutions of learning in their empire that catered to general instruction on religious and non-religious matters. These included Cairo's Al-Azhar University, which, a thousand years later, is still operating and is a global centre of

learning for Sunni Islam. The Dar al-Ilm (House of Knowledge) dealt with philosophy and the sciences, and was a model for similar institutions that were established in other Muslim lands (Halm, 1997). Fatimid Imam-Caliphs delivered public sermons at mosques on major festivals (Walker, 2009). However, private gatherings known as *majalis al-hikma* (sessions of wisdom) were held to provide Ismaili teachings to the Imam's religious adherents. The Imam personally authorized the materials read out at these gatherings (Halm, 1997). A document from the period provides the following directions to the instructor:

> Read the *majalis al-hikam,* which were handed to you at the court, to the faithful (i.e. the Ismailis) [Sic], male and female, and to the adepts, male and female, in the brilliant palaces of the caliphs and in the Friday mosque in al-Muiziyya al-Qahira (the Azhar Mosque of Cairo) [Sic]. But keep the secrets of the wisdom from the unauthorized, and distribute them only to those who are entitled to them! Do not reveal to the weak what they are unable to grasp, but at the same time do not look upon their understanding as too poor to absorb it! (1997, pp. 47–48)

These sessions of wisdom regarding the exoteric and esoteric aspects of faith conducted teaching according to the respective levels of understanding of the various congregations among the religious followers of the Imam-Caliph.

Whereas present-day Nizari Ismailis do not subscribe to the particular cosmological structures that underpinned Fatimid philosophy, they continue broadly to adhere to beliefs relating to the concepts such as *zahir* and *batin.* Their communities (*jamats*) hold private religious gatherings in *jamatkhanas* (congregational houses), which non-Ismailis are not permitted to attend. All those present will have given allegiance to the Imam of the time. The *jamatkhana* is therefore the preserve of the Ismaili private sphere. It is worth noting, however, that a dual approach to public and private space is expressed in the community's activities in the buildings housing *jamatkhanas,* particularly those that are designated as "Ismaili Centres": they have specific spaces for religious, educational, social, and administrative purposes. Events that include invited non-Ismaili guests are held in the public spaces of these buildings, but the prayer hall (i.e., the *jamatkhana* proper) is not made available for non-Ismaili worship. Furthermore, neither Ismaili worshippers nor non-Ismaili visitors on guided tours are permitted to take photographs or video images of the prayer hall. The Ismaili Centres in London,[9] Lisbon, Dubai, and Dushanbe (Tajikistan) are prominently located in the respective cities; however, notwithstanding their varied architectural styles, the format of discrete public and private sectioning of the buildings is replicated in all of them.

The Aga Khan Museum and the Ismaili Centre in Toronto are located on a 17-acre landscaped site that is publicly accessible. The juxtaposition of these two buildings, separated by some 80 metres**,** is particularly noteworthy. The former has an active engagement with the public while the latter contains a religious space that is kept private, in accordance with the community's esoteric traditions. Over the contemporary Muslim prayer hall is a prominent glass dome that is postmodernist in design. At its foundation ceremony, the Aga Khan noted that the "building will feature a crystalline frosted glass dome—standing like a great beacon on top of a building that is itself at the highest

Figure 1

Source: The Ismaili Centre, Toronto. *Credit:* Reproduced with permission from www.TheIsmaili.org. Photograph by Gary Otte.

point of the site—and illuminating the Prayer Hall and its Qibla wall" (Aga Khan IV, 2010). Not only is the *jamatkhana* placed on the most elevated spot in the area, its pyramid-shaped translucent cover lights up for the surrounding region, including the arterial Don Valley Parkway, along which thousands of vehicles travel daily. This statement by the current Imam appears to deepen the paradox regarding the relationship between Ismaili public and private spaces and also that between the visible and the invisible as well as between *zahir* and *batin*. The symbolic use of material culture to "speak" while text is muted, as discussed below, presents an intriguing situation.

In addition to prayers and other religious ceremonies, hymns with esoteric content are recited in *jamatkhanas*. The materials that are regularly read out to the congregation include previous communications from the Imam to his followers. Occasionally, new messages (*talikas*) from the Imam, sent usually from his residence in France, are presented. The infrequent visits by the Imam to communities in various countries and cities are considered to be particularly auspicious. These gatherings bring together thousands of adherents to whom the Imam makes an address (*farman*), which is then distributed to other Ismaili congregations around the world; it is either read out or its audio recording is played in *jamatkhanas*. On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Aga Khan IV's Imamat in 2007, a live televisual transmission of his religious address was watched by Ismailis transnationally.

Such communications pose some conundrums for a leadership that is, on the one hand, seeking privately to reach far-flung congregations, and, on the other, contending with the contemporary media's public dimensions. In the 1950s and 1960s, collections of *farmans* were marked "For Imami Ismailis Only" (Aga Khan III, 1954; Aga Khan IV, 1959), which did not necessarily prevent their circulation outside the community. The

branches of its organizations responsible for religious instruction, whose leadership is appointed by the Imam, have had authority to publish *farmans.* However, they have not issued a new *farman* collection for several decades, as the privacy pertaining to the Imam's religious addresses to his followers has intensified.

A group of Canadian Ismailis not attached to the community's formal institutions claimed that they received authorization from the Imam during his visit to Montréal in 1992 to publish his *farmans* independently. They published three volumes of his religious addresses to the *jamats* around the world (*Kalam-e Imam-e-Zaman* I; *Kalam-e Imam-e-Zaman* II; *Kalam-e Imam-e-Zaman* III). An updated collection (*Kalam-e Imam-e-Zaman, Golden Edition,* 2009) was issued following the Golden Jubilee of Aga Khan IV's Imamat. This book also had an MP3 bookmark with audio extracts of some *farmans* in the Imam's voice. In response to this, the community's leadership asked the group to withdraw the latter publication, but the group did not comply. Subsequently, court proceedings were launched in Toronto in 2010 on the basis of intellectual property violation:

> This is a claim for infringement of copyright and moral rights relating to the unauthorized reproduction of the original Literary Works and Readings authored by the Plaintiff, His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan ("the Aga Khan"). (Federal Court of Canada, 2010a, p. 4)

This was not the first time that private Ismaili matters have been brought into the public limelight of a contemporary national legal system in a disagreement between the Ismaili leadership and community members (Purohit, 2012). However, such a move drawing upon Western norms of copyright law to enforce the Ismaili leadership's authority regarding *farmans* had not occurred previously. The judge ruled in favour of the plaintiff, and the defendants subsequently appealed the judgment (Federal Court of Appeal, 2014), the outcome of which was not available at the time of writing.

As the court proceedings were unfolding, an announcement was made in *jamatkhanas* in 2010 that the Imam had given permission to the community's formal institutions to publish a volume containing a collection of *farmans* approved by him (Federal Court of Canada, 2010b). However, such a publication had not appeared at the time of writing. Whereas older official *farman* books continue to be held in the homes of Ismailis, recent religious addresses of the Imam are only made available by the community's leadership to be read out at congregational gatherings in *jamatkhanas.* This appears to be causing concern among Ismailis seeking greater and more immediate access to the *farmans,* especially given that Ismaili beliefs hold necessary the current guidance of the living Imam, who directs his followers according to changing conditions.

Disagreements in the Ismaili community about publishing *farmans* involve considerations of the respective loci of the public and the private. The community's leadership appears to prefer that the Imam's religious addresses are made available in oral form within the ambit of *jamatkhanas,* by only having their texts read out or their audio recordings played for the assembled congregation. Publishing the *farmans* in any form (i.e., making them available autonomously to the community) carries the risk of them becoming public. This is an issue that has been debated in human history

at least since Socrates' privileging of oral dialogue over written materials (Peters, 2000), although the *farmans* are not dialogic in nature. Contemporary legal and scholarly discourses about privacy have mainly been conducted in secular contexts. In a rare instance of a discussion of this issue in a religious framework, Jacques Derrida (2001) stressed the imperative of privacy with respect to communications of a spiritual nature. Giving the example of the Old Testament's account of Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son, Derrida underlines what he sees as the importance of the closed nature of God's communication with the patriarch. Following the event, Abraham

> never spoke to anyone, above all not to Sarah [his wife], not to his family, to no one in the domestic or public arena. This silence seems in a certain manner to be more decisive than the terrible story of the son to be put to death by his father. As though the essential test was the test of secrecy. This is true a priori, it needs no interpretation. The interpretations come *afterward*. God told him the following, whether explicitly or not: I want to see if, even in the most extreme ordeal, the possible (demanded) death of your favourite son, you will be able to keep secret the absolutely invisible, singular, unique relation that you are to have with me … So, no mediator between us …, no media between us. (2001, pp. 56–57, italics in original)

Referring to Judaic and Islamic views, Derrida emphasized that spiritual secrets are not for public display. Adherents' religious lives are to be private: communications received in religious sessions are not for broadcast in the public sphere. The Ismaili leadership also appears to hold such a view. However, this position is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain in a time when *farmans* and other Ismaili religious materials are being circulated with the use of the Internet and other technologies.

The esoteric in public discourse

Esotericism is generally conceptualized in the contexts of closed circles. Esoteric discourse and meanings tend not to be shared with the public. Ismaili hermeneutics seek to bring back potent words to their hidden originary meanings, which have spiritual resonance with all human beings. Whereas this cannot be done without initiation into the privacy of the Ismaili fold, the community seeks alternatively to articulate its worldview publicly through institutional work, through appeals to universal values and symbolic discourses using material culture.

Aga Khan IV frequently delivers speeches at public venues, dealing with topics that include architecture, civil society, democracy, development, good governance, meritocracy, pluralism, public ethics, and Western-Muslim relations. These discourses are ostensibly in the realm of *dunya* (matter), not *din* (spirit). He addresses international organizations, parliamentarians, senior government officials, civil society associations, business leaders, and graduating students. Most of his recent speeches have been placed on the website of the Aga Khan Development Network. They are also available on several non-institutional websites operated by Ismailis.[10] A two-volume printed publication of Aga Khan III's (1998) public addresses appeared with the support of the Imamat institutions. There have been some small compilations of Aga Khan IV's various speeches, but a plan to put together in book form a comprehensive collection

of the current Imam's speeches for his Golden Jubilee in 2007 did not materialize. Instead, a small volume of 14 addresses was published at the initiative of Aga Khan Foundation Canada (Aga Khan IV, 2008a).

Aga Khan I and Aga Khan III published autobiographies during their respective Imamats. A biography of the current Imam sponsored by Ismaili institutions titled *The Children of Time: The Aga Khan and the Ismailis*, "which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the present Aga Khan's succession as Imam" (I.B. Tauris, 2014), was to have been issued in 2008. Early announcements listed Malise Ruthven as the sole author; Gerald Wilkinson, who had worked for the Aga Khan for three decades, was later added as co-author. Ruthven was given broad access to members of the worldwide community and to its institutions. He indicated in a lecture in 2009 that his work on the book was complete (Ruthven, 2009). However, it had not appeared by the end of 2014. It is not clear why the publication has been delayed. Earlier work toward another biography of Aga Khan IV had also been institutionally sponsored with a view to it appearing at the time of his Silver Jubilee in 1982. Hella Pick, a journalist with the Guardian newspaper in London, like Ruthven, had been given extensive access in the early 1980s to the Ismaili community and its institutions. However, the publication did not take place. Pick (2001–2002) stated in an interview that she had submitted the manuscript to the Imam and that members of the Ismaili leadership had expressed concern about some of its contents. Whereas the community is interested in speaking about itself to the public sphere, there appears to be uncertainty regarding how to go about it—especially in textual form.

The Ismaili Imamat receives varying types of media coverage in different countries. Journalists in most places are interested in the innovations of the Aga Khan Development Network**,** but there has been a long-standing tendency in the British tabloid press to focus on the Aga Khans' private lives. This largely consists of society gossip with a likely view to generate scandals, which is characteristic of that form of journalism. Aga Khan IV is closely aware of the workings of the media as the founder and chairman of the Nation Media Group in East Africa (Loughran, 2010). The Aga Khan University and the Central Asian University, both of which he has founded, are developing departments of media and communication. He frequently speaks about the importance of journalistic ethics and "responsible reporting" (e.g., Aga Khan IV, 2005a). The Imam appears interested in receiving coverage for his ideas and institutions, and has given interviews to some leading media outlets around the world. Nevertheless, he also seems to be cautious in his interactions with them—apparently seeking to ensure that erroneous or malicious representations do not harm himself and his community. The esoteric leanings of the Ismailis and their historical persecution by other groups have most probably been factors in determining this approach; the community's members remain vulnerable to attack from militant groups and autocratic authorities in parts of the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and Africa (Al-Akhbar, 2014; Canadian Press, 2014; Dawn, 2013; Kucera, 2013).

Quite apart from the topic of farmans, the growing reluctance of the Ismaili Imamat to publish certain kinds of materials about itself is also reflected internally within the Ismaili community. Constraints on publications by its institutions have be-

come stricter in recent decades as a tighter form of oversight has been developed in the Ismaili bureaucracy, with editorial guidelines coming from officials at the Imam's secretariat (Aiglemont) in France. Each national council has members with responsibility for communications and editing local periodicals. Several national and multinational versions of the print-based magazine The Ismaili are produced, with core content provided by Aiglemont. Local versions of the weekly Al-Akhbar electronic newsletters are distributed to Ismaili subscribers by the community's regional councils. TheIsmaili.org, an online vehicle, is also institutionally produced and is transnational due to the nature of the Internet. Very rarely will the content of these publications address religious issues, which were previously to be found in a variety of Ismaili magazines until the early1990s (e.g., Hikmat in Canada, Ilm in the UK, and Africa Ismaili in Kenya). On the other hand, numerous publicly distributed books funded since that time by the Institute of Ismaili Studies, whose founder and chairman of the board is the Aga Khan, contain extensive discussions of batin matters from Ismaili history (e.g., Halm, 1997; Morris, 2001; Ormsby 2012).

In contrast to these issues relating to textual material, an interesting development has become apparent in the past few years with the Ismaili Imam increasingly turning to architecture to express his thoughts publicly on the exoteric and the esoteric. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture is extensively involved in the study, preservation, and renovation of Muslim architecture and gives out prizes under the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. It has also established the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto and is building a major cultural centre in London, England. The Imam commissions some of the world's leading architects to design the buildings that house his institutions. The delegation of the Ismaili Imamat's building in Ottawa is illustrative of the Aga Khan's expression of Ismaili perspectives in architecture, even that meant for secular purposes. This is what he stated at its inauguration:

> It will be a site for robust dialogue, intellectual exchange, and the forging of new partnerships—with government, and with the institutions of civil society and the private sector of Canada and so many other countries. To be able to site this building on Confederation Boulevard, in close proximity to your major national institutions as well as representations from abroad, is itself a symbol of the outgoing, interactive spirit which must guide our response to global challenges. (Aga Khan IV, 2008a)

While referring to the "outgoing, interactive spirit" in the secular engagement with the public sphere, the Aga Khan was keen to embed the building, which is representative of the Ismaili Imamat, with symbols that speak to the interaction between the z*ahir* and the *batin*.[11] In a letter to the building's Japanese architect, Fumihiko Maki, he indicated that it had to reflect metaphorically the properties of rock crystal, in which "the cuts and angles permit both transparency as well as translucency … It pleases and confuses the eye by its internal planes running at different angles, creating a sense of visual mystery" (quoted in Cook, 2008). The Aga Khan said that the challenges facing the architect called for

> translating concepts that have a context in our faith and our history, yet stride boldly and confidently ahead, into modernity; for expressing both

the exoteric and the esoteric, and our awe and humility towards the mys-
teries of Nature, Time and beyond. The outcome is an inter-play of multiple
facets, like rock crystal. In it are platforms of pure but translucent horizont-
ality. Light's full spectrum comes alive and disappears as the eye moves.
In Islam the divine is reflected in Nature's creation. (Aga Khan IV, 2005b)

Rock crystal was also prized by the current Imam's Fatimid ancestors, whose crafts-
men carved beautiful *objets d'art* from this material (Bloom, 2007). Aga Khan IV finds
in this pure quartz crystal a symbolic expression of the mysteries of the esoteric, which
he asked his architect to explore. "What we observed is complete transparency in some
areas and complete opacity in others. Then there are infinite numbers of translucency"
(quoted in Cook, 2008), said an associate of Fumihiko. In the alternating of transparency,
translucency, and opacity, rock crystal seems materially to mimic glimpses of the mys-
tery of the *batin*—which is initially invisible, unclear, or confusing but begins to become
more visible and clearer when the disciple learns to orient herself toward it. However,
this remains a never-ending process that involves a continuing search through multiple
levels of truth in accordance with one's growing spiritual horizon (Corbin, 1954). The
hermeneutic unveiling of religious signifiers is not direct but mediated through infinite
gradations of translucence, which appears to symbolize "the constant search for answers
that leads inevitably to more questions" (Aga Khan IV, 2005b).

Conclusion

The term *esoteric* sometimes connotes a tendency to withdraw from public life, as was
the case with the Gnostics. Whereas Ismailis went into concealment in certain periods
to continue practising their esoteric faith in safety, they are vigorously interacting with
the public sphere in contemporary times. This creates some intriguing situations for
them in a world where secular norms have lessened the value of religious perspectives
in shaping public discourse. However, this relatively small community appears to be
working to develop a common discourse based on the broader values it shares with
other people. Issues such as ethics, education, good governance, quality of life, plural-
ism, service, et cetera have provided for productive discursive bridges with others. The
relative success of Ismaili institutions has also enhanced external confidence in them.

However, the community remains challenged in determining the forms of privacy
that it wants to maintain with respect to public materials such as the Imam's biography
as well as communal communications such as *farmans*. In the latter context, the
conundrum facing Ismaili leadership relates, on the one hand, to the religious belief in
the need for ongoing guidance from a living Imam and, on the other, to the accessibility
of this guidance. A particular issue with the nature of the Imam's advice, which covers
both worldly and religious issues, is that certain aspects of his worldly directions become
redundant with changing times. Regarding spiritual matters, there may occur some shifts
in the way an Imam may choose to emphasize certain aspects over others during an
Imamat of several decades. These factors may make the Ismaili leadership reluctant to
publish materials that give the impression of permanency to older *farmans*. Even with
Socrates the key issue was maintenance of the integrity of oral discourse in relation to
its decontextualized written versions. The tendency of Ismaili institutions has been to
limit the locus of the Imam's religious addresses to oral renditions within the ambit of

the *jamatkhana.* They have used the contemporary forms of bureaucratic organization and the law of the land to seek to ensure adherence to these communal arrangements. Maintaining control over the distribution of the *farmans* is also an expression of institutional authority. However, the Ismaili leadership is facing resistance through the assertion of autonomy by certain members of the community who are using present-day technologies to circumvent institutional restrictions.

While seeking to ensure privacy about his community's religious practice, the Imam appears to be engaging in a symbolic discourse through the media of design and architecture to express exoteric and esoteric concepts publicly. Placing an Ismaili *jamatkhana* on an elevated location and designing its dome as a bright lamp in the Toronto cityscape appears to draw aesthetically from a sense of mystery reminiscent of the highly symbolic Qur'anic verse of light (24:35) and a *ginan*'s metaphoric reference to "When the Lord's light shines in the north[ern] continent" (Peer Sadardeen, n.d.). Outsiders can see the brightly illuminated translucent shell of the pyramidal dome but its inner realm remains invisible and private. Where the dissemination of text has come to be seen as problematic, symbolism using material culture appears to have become the preferred means in which to communicate with the public about the community's most deeply held values.

Notes

1. This appears analogous to the New Testament's command: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15).

2. The first word was *iqra;* it is interpreted variantly as both "read" and "recite."

3. The importance of writing is also emphasized in another verse: "be not averse to writing down be it small or great …" (Qur'an 2:282).

4. The early Muslims quickly absorbed the sciences and the humanities of the various civilizations to whom they had access. (This coincided with Europe's Middle Ages, when the Church was generally proscribing the copying of manuscripts that were in contradiction with its teachings, thus leading to a decline in scholarship on that continent.) Muslims were eager to learn from Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, and others. The introduction of paper in Muslim lands in the mid-eighth century proved to be a major factor in enhancing education and the transmission of knowledge, as Europe continued to rely on papyrus and parchment. Major philosophical, scientific, and technological advances were made by Muslims and others living in their realm. These achievements were shared with Europeans (and other peoples), laying the foundations for the Renaissance and the Enlightenment (Hobson, 2014). However, around the time that Europeans began to rediscover scholarship, the Sunni Muslim religious establishment was initiating restrictions to the access to knowledge. It discouraged the use of independent reasoning and prohibited the use of printing presses (Inayatullah & Boxwell, 2003), leading to a steady decay of Muslim civilizations and, eventually, to colonization by Western powers.

5. It occurs 856 times (Shah-Kazemi, 2011, p. 4).

6. The sun has symbolized the Imam in Nizari Ismaili literature (e.g., Ivanow, 1947, p. 18).

7. This was the historical Ismaili proselytizing mission and is distinct from the contemporary structure of *jamati* institutions.

8. This concept is distinct from the concept of concealment (*ghayba*) among the majority Shia group, the Ithna Asharis (Twelvers).

9. The Ismaili Centre in London housed the publicly accessible Zamana art gallery in the 1980s.

10. *NanoWisdoms: Archiving Knowledge from the Imamat* (www.nanowisdoms.org) is a comprehensive site of the Aga Khan IV's public speeches delivered since his accession to the Ismaili Imamat in 1957.

11. Valérie Gonzalez (2001) discusses "a double semiotic structure signifying at both the manifest and the hidden level" (p. 33) in the context of a relationship between Qur'anic text and Muslim architectural aesthetics.

References

Aga Khan III. (1954). *Precious pearls: Farman mubarak of Hazrat Imam Mowlana Sultan Mohammad Shah.* Karachi, Pakistan: Ismailia Association Pakistan.

Aga Khan III. (1998). *Aga Khan III: Selected speeches and writings of Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah* (K.K. Aziz, Ed.). 2 vols. New York: Kegan Paul International.

Aga Khan IV. (1959). *Precious gems: Firman mubarak of Noor Mowlana Shah Karim Hazar Imam.* Karachi, Pakistan: Ismailia Association Pakistan.

Aga Khan IV. (2005a, May 22). Speech by His Highness the Aga Khan opening ceremony of the IPI World Congress and 54th General Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya). *Press Centre.* URL: http://www.akdn.org/Content/186 [February 9, 2014].

Aga Khan IV. (2005b, June 6). Address by His Highness the Aga Khan at the foundation ceremony of the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat (Ottawa, Canada). *Press Centre.* URL: http://www.akdn.org/Content/121 [February 12, 2014].

Aga Khan IV. (2008a). *Where hope takes root: Democracy and pluralism in an interdependent world.* Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre.

Aga Khan IV. (2008b, December 6). Inaugural ceremony of the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat (Ottawa, Canada). *Press Centre.* URL: http://www.akdn.org/Content/699/ [January 31, 2014].

Aga Khan IV. (2010, May 28). Speech by His Highness the Aga Khan at the foundation ceremony of the Ismaili Centre, Toronto, the Aga Khan Museum and their Park. *Press Centre.* URL: http://www.akdn.org/Content/993 [February 9, 2014].

Al-Akhbar. (2014, October 31). IS closes in on Ismaili minority in Hama countryside. *Albawaba.* URL: http://www.albawaba.com/news/is-closes-in-on-hama-countryside—617583 [November 16, 2014].

Bloom, Jonathan M. (2007). *Arts of the city victorious: Islamic art and architecture in Fatimid North Africa and Egypt.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Bunt, Gary. (2009). *iMuslims: Rewiring the house of Islam.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Canadian Press. (2014, March 21). Roshan Thomas of Vancouver, Zeenab Kassam of Calgary die in Kabul hotel attack. *CBC News.* URL: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/roshan-thomas-of-vancouver-zeenab-kassam-of-calgary-die-in-kabul-hotel-attack-1.2581894 [November 16, 2014].

Carney, Abd al-Hakeem. (2009). Esoteric interpretation in Ismailism. *Sacred Web, 22,* 119–133.

Cook, Maria. (2008, December 6). An essay in glass. *The Ottawa Citizen.* URL: http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/observer/story.html?id=62eba74e-c926-4291-9d69-a863f011e5ae [February 11, 2014].

Corbin, Henry. (1954). Divine epiphany and spiritual birth in Ismailian gnosis. In Joseph Campbell (Ed.), *Man and transformation: Papers from the Eranos yearbooks* (pp. 69–160). Princeton, NJ: Bollingen.

Cragg, Kenneth. (1973). *The mind of the Qur'an.* London: George Allen & Unwin.

Daftary, Farhad. (2007). *The Ismailis: Their history and doctrines.* Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press.

Daftary, Farhad (Ed.). (2011). A *modern history of the Ismailis: Continuity and change in a Muslim community.* London: I. B. Tauris.

Dawn. (2013, August 15). The list expands: Ismailis attacked. *Dawn.com.* URL: http://www.dawn.com/news/1035976 [February 11, 2014].

Derrida, Jacques. (2001). "Above all, no journalists!" In H. de Vries & S. Weber (Eds.), *Religion and media* (pp. 56–93). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Eickelman, Dale F., & Anderson, Jon W. (Eds.). (2003). *New media in the Muslim world: The emerging public sphere.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Federal Court of Appeal, Canada. (2014, February 8). *Proceedings Queries: T-514-10.* His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan v. Nagib Tajdin et al. URL: http://cas-ncr-nter03.cas-satj.gc.ca/IndexingQueries/infp_RE_info_e.php?court_no=T-514-10 [Nov. 16, 2014].

Federal Court of Canada. (2010a). His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan v. Nagib Tajdin, Alnaz Jiwa, John Doe and Doe Co. and all other persons or entities unknown to the Plaintiff who are reproducing, publishing, promoting and/or authorizing the reproduction and promotion of the infringing materials. *Court file T-514-10.* Toronto, ON.

Federal Court of Canada. (2010b, August 9). Cross-examinations: Transcript for summary judgement motions. *Court file T-514-10.* Toronto, ON.

Gonzalez, Valérie. (2001). *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic art and architecture.* London: I.B. Tauris.

Halm, Heinz. (1997). *The Fatimids and their traditions of learning.* London: I.B. Tauris.

Hobson, John M. (2014). The clash of civilizations 2.0: Race and eurocentrism, imperialism, and anti-imperialism. In M. Eid & K. H. Karim (Eds.), *Re-imagining the Other: Culture, media, and Western-Muslim intersections* (pp. 75–97). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Hooda, Vali Mohamed. (1948). Some specimens of Satpanth literature. In Wladamir Ivanow (Ed.), *Collectanea* (pp. 55–145). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

Howard, Philip N., & Hussain, Muzammil M. (2013). *Democracy's fourth wave: Digital media and the Arab Spring.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hunsberger, Alice C. (2003). *Nasir Khusraw, the ruby of Badakhshan: A portrait of the Persian poet, traveller and philosopher.* London: I.B. Tauris.

Hunzai, Faquir Muhammad. (2005). The concept of knowledge according to al-Kirmani. In T. Lawson (Ed.), *Reason and inspiration in Islam: Theology, philosophy and mysticism in Muslim thought—Essays in honour of Hermann Landolt* (pp. 127–141). London: I. B. Tauris.

I.B. Tauris. (2014). *Islam.* Online catalogue. URL: http://www.ibtauris.com/Religion/Islam.aspx [November 16, 2014].

Inayatullah, Sohail, & Boxwell, Gail (Eds.). (2003). *Islam, postmodernism and other futures: A Ziauddin Sardar reader.* London: Pluto Press.

Ivanow, Wladamir. (1947). *On the recognition of the Imam.* Bombay: Thacker & Co.

Jodido, Philip. (2008). *The Aga Khan Museum, Toronto.* Munich, Germany: Prestel.

Kalam-e Imam-e-Zaman: Farmans 1957–2009, Golden Edition. (2009). N.p.

Kalam-e Imam-e-Zaman: Farmans to the Western world (1957–1991): Vol. 1. (N.d.). N.p.

Kalam-e Imam-e-Zaman: Farmans to Asia and the Middle East (1957–1993): Vol. 2. (N.d.). N.p.

Kalam-e Imam-e-Zaman: Farmans to Africa (1957–1993): Vol. 3. (N.d.). N.p.

Karim, Karim H. (2013). Pluralism, migration, space and song: Ismaili arrangements of public and private spheres. In Susan Ashley (Ed.), *Diverse spaces: Identity, heritage and community in Canadian public culture* (pp. 148–169). Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Karim, Karim H. (2014a). A Muslim modernity: Ismaili engagement with western societies. In Roberto Tottoli (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of Islam in the West* (pp. 244–258). London: Routledge.

Karim, Karim H. (2014b). The Aga Khan Development Network: Shia Ismaili Islam. In Stephen M. Cherry & Helen Rose Ebaugh (Eds.), *Global religious movements across borders* (pp. 143–160). London: Ashgate Publishers.

Kucera, Joshua. (2013, August 31). The Aga Khan's tightrope walk in Tajikistan. *Al Jazeera.com.* URL: http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/08/2013828121815583542.html [November 16, 2014].

Loughran, Gerard. (2010). *Birth of a nation: The story of a newspaper in Kenya.* London: I.B. Tauris.

Morris, James. (2001). *The master and the disciple: An early Islamic spiritual dialogue.* London: I.B. Tauris.

Ormsby, Eric. (2012). *Between reason and revelation: Twin wisdoms reconciled.* London: I.B. Tauris.

Otto, Rudolph. (1958). *The idea of the holy* (John W. Harvey, Trans.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Peer Sadardeen. (N.d.). Utar kha(n)dd maa(n)he shah nee [Webpage]. *Ismaili.net—Heritage FIELD* [First Ismaili Electronic Library and Database]. URL: http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/23196 [November 16, 2014].

Peters, John Durham. (2000). *Speaking into the air: A history of the idea of communication.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Pick, Hella. (2001–2002). *Interview. Cat. no. 21095. London: Imperial War Museums.* URL: http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80020148 [February 9, 2014].

Pickthall, Muhammad Marmaduke. (1977). *The glorious Qur'an.* New York, NY: Muslim World League.

Purohit, Teena. (2012). *The Aga Khan case: Religion and identity in colonial India.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ruthven, Malise. (2009, October 7). *Children of time: The Aga Khan and the Ismailis.* Unpublished lecture. London, UK.

Shah, Bulbul. (2005). Al-Qadi a-Numan and the concept of batin. In T. Lawson (Ed.), *Reason and inspiration in Islam: Theology, philosophy and mysticism in Muslim thought—Essays in honour of Hermann Landolt* (pp. 117–126). London: I.B. Tauris.

Shah-Kazemi, Reza. (2011). *Spiritual quest: Reflections on Quranic prayer according to the teachings of Imam Ali.* London: I.B. Tauris.

Steigerwald, D. (2006). Ismaili tawil. In A. Rippin (Ed.), *The Blackwell companion to the* Qur'an (pp. 386–400). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Steinberg, Jonah. (2011). *Ismaili modern: Globalization and identity in a Muslim community.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Virani, Shafique. (2007). *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A history of survival, a search for salvation.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Walker, Paul E. (2009). *Orations of the Fatimid caliphs: Festival sermons of the Ismaili Imams.* London: I.B. Tauris.