



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

The Renaissance of Shi'i Islam in the 15th–17th Centuries:  
Facets of Thought and Practice

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME



3-5 OCTOBER 2018

Aga Khan Centre  
London, United Kingdom

Convener: Janis Esots

Academic Advisor: Farhad Daftary

Prospective Publication:

*The Renaissance of Shi'i Islam in the 15th–17th Centuries: Facets of Thought and Practice*

Shi'i Heritage Series, I.B. Tauris (London)

in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

Front Cover Image: 'Group of Sages in Discussion'

A folio from a manuscript, watercolour, ink, paper.

Courtesy of Aga Khan Museum (AKM186), Toronto, Canada.





The Institute of Ismaili Studies

THE RENAISSANCE OF SHI'Ī ISLAM IN THE 15TH–17TH CENTURIES:  
FACETS OF THOUGHT AND PRACTICE

PROGRAMME

3 - 5 OCTOBER 2018

Room 215

The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Aga Khan Centre

10 Handyside Street

London N1C 4DN

United Kingdom





## INTRODUCTION

The 15th century marked the renaissance of the Ismaili and Twelver Shi'ī traditions after centuries of marginalization. It was with the commencement of the imamate of Mustanşir bi'llāh II around 868/1463–1464, that the Anjudān revival of the Nizārī Ismailis began. Around the same time, several Shi'ī messianic movements emerged in Iran and spread to the neighbouring countries. One of these, the Safavids, became particularly successful: in 1500, led by the youthful Ismā'īl I, the Safavid forces defeated the army of the Aq Qoyunlu, and a year later, in the summer of 1501, took their capital Tabriz, thus establishing the Safavid state which then became an empire and the first major Shi'ī power since the fall of the Fatimids in 1171.

However, the complexities of the roles of different groups, movements and currents of thought in the complicated process which can be described as 'the Renaissance of Shi'ī Islam in the 15th and 17th centuries' remain unexplored. The aim of this conference is to investigate and evaluate these contributions, taking into account the most recent scholarship in the field.

In particular, we intend to address the following subjects:

- What were the common characteristics of Shi'ī messianic movements active in the 15th–17th centuries? Why was one of them, the Safavids or Qizilbashīs, particularly successful?
- What was the substance of the Anjudān revival of the Nizārī Ismailis?
- Which developments of kalām and Sufism in this era can be described as the 'Shi'itisation of Sunnism'?
- How did the School of Isfahan emerge? What were its principal manifestations in different fields of knowledge?
- How did the Ismailis interact with Twelver Shi'ism and Sufism?
- What were the defining characteristics of Shi'ī exegesis, theology, law and gnosis during this period?

Janis Esots



## DAY 1

3 October 2018

- 09.30-10.00 Opening remarks
- 10.00-11.00 **Keynote Speech I.** The Shi'ī Milieu of Post-Mongol Iran  
*Farhad Daftary (IIS)*
- 11.00-11.30 Coffee Break
- SESSION I** SHI'Ī-SUFI COALESCENCE IN THE POST-MONGOL PERIOD  
Chair and Discussant *Wilferd Madelung (Oxford-IIS)*
- 11.30-12.00 Prose and Poetry: A Glance into Post-Alamūt Nizārī Ismaili Literature in Iran  
*Jalal Badakhchani (IIS)*
- 12.00-12.30 From Iran to India: Ismaili Teachers and Teachings in the 11th/17th Century  
*Shafique N. Virani (Toronto)*
- 12.30-13.00 The Convergence of Shi'ism, Philosophy and Sufism in Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī's (d. between 1088 and 1095/1677 and 1684) *al-Risāla al-mithāliyya*  
*Mathieu Terrier (CNRS, Paris)*
- 13.00-14.00 Lunch
- SESSION II** SHI'Ī MESSIANISM  
Chair and Discussant *Gerhard Bowering (Yale)*
- 14.00 -14.30 Messianism and Sufism in the Construction of a 'Shi'amicate' Devotion in Early 18th Century Sindh  
*Michel Boivin (CNRS-EHESS, Paris)*
- 14.30-15.00 Shāh Ismā'īl's Resurrection in Alevī-Bektāshī Literature  
*Amelia Gallagher (Niagara)*
- 15.00 -15.30 Coffee Break



## DAY 1

3 October 2018

<b>SESSION III</b>	LETTRISM Chair and Discussant <i>Toby Mayer (IIS)</i>
<b>15.30-16.00</b>	Hurūfī Disciples versus Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī: The Ḥurūfī Khalifas' Interpretations of Faḍl Allāh's Doctrine <i>Fatih Usluer (TOBB ETU, Ankara)</i>
<b>16.00-16.30</b>	Nuḡṭavīs, Safavids and Shi'ism in the 9th to 11th/15th to 17th Centuries <i>Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (IIS)</i>
<b>16.30-17.00</b>	Shi'izing Iran—with Sunni Occult Science: 'Alī Ṣafī Kāshifī's (d. 1533) <i>Ḥirz al-Amān min Fitan al-Zamān</i> as Timurid-Safavid Manual of Lettrist Imperialism <i>Matthew Melvin-Koushki (South Carolina)</i>
<b>17.00-17.30</b>	Break
<b>17.30-18.30</b>	<b>Keynote Speech II.</b> The Confluence of Mysticism and Messianism in Islamic Theosophy ( <i>'Irfān</i> ) in the 15th–17th cc. <i>Gerhard Bowering (Yale)</i>
<b>19.00</b>	Dinner for Speakers and Chairs



## DAY 2

**4 October 2018**

<b>SESSION IV</b>	<b>INTELLECTUAL HISTORY</b> Chair and Discussant <i>Devin Stewart (Emory)</i>
<b>9.00-9.30</b>	From Philosophical Shi'ism to Rafidism: The Dashtaki Circle in Timurid and Safavid Iran <i>Ahab Bdaiwi (Leiden)</i>
<b>9.30-10.00</b>	The Concept of 'Aql in Safavid Commentaries on al-Kulaynī's <i>Uṣūl al-kāfi</i> <i>Maria Dakake (George Mason)</i>
<b>10.00-10.30</b>	Majlisī the Second: Ambiguous Scholar and Reviver of Shi'ism in Iran in the 17th c. <i>Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (Sorbonne-IIS)</i>
<b>10.30-11.00</b>	Coffee Break
<b>SESSION V</b>	<b>ḤADĪTH AND FIQH</b> Chair and Discussant <i>Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (Sorbonne-IIS)</i>
<b>11.00-11.30</b>	The Pre-Modern Renaissance in Shi'ī Ḥadīth Studies: Ḥadīth Criticism the Akhbārī Movement and Literary Production in Safavid Iran <i>Devin Stewart (Emory)</i>
<b>11.30-12.00</b>	Establishing the Canonical Text in Late Classical Shi'ī Legal Theory: the <i>Ma'ālim al-Dīn</i> and Its Commentaries <i>Robert Gleave (Exeter)</i>
<b>12.00-12.30</b>	The <i>Ijāza</i> as Polemic in Early Safavid Iran <i>Andrew J. Newman (Edinburgh)</i>
<b>12.30-13.30</b>	Lunch
<b>SESSION VI</b>	<b>ROUND TABLE</b> Keynote Speakers and Chairs of the Panels
<b>13.30-14.30</b>	
<b>14.30-15.00</b>	Coffee Break





## DAY 2

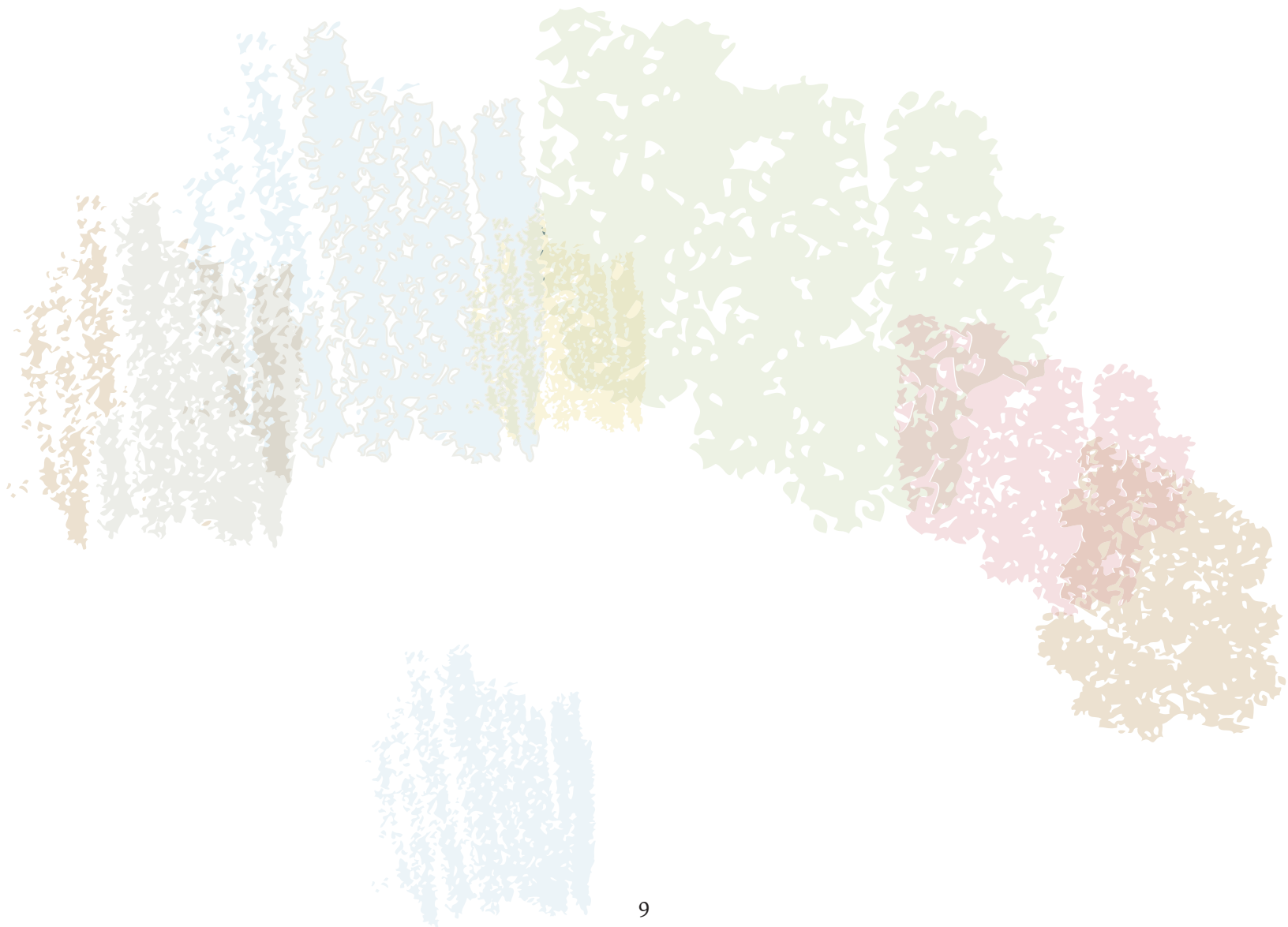
**4 October 2018**

**SESSION VII** ART  
Chair and Discussant / *Russell Harris (IIS)*

**15.00-15.30** The Outburst of Shi'i Militancy: The Evidence of Safavid and Moghul Metalwork  
*Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani (Aga Khan Trust for Culture)*

**15.30-16.00** Shāh Ṭahmāsp's View of Nature as Reflected in His *Shāhnāma*  
*Sheila Canby (Met Museum, New York)*

**19.00** Dinner for Speakers and Chairs





## DAY 3

**5 October 2018**

<b>SESSION VIII</b>	<b>PHILOSOPHY I</b> <i>Chair and Discussant Hermann Landolt (IIS)</i>
<b>09.30-10.00</b>	Mīr Dāmād's 'Yemenī Wisdom' <i>Janis Esots (IIS)</i>
<b>10.00-10.30</b>	What Was the Legacy of Mīr Dāmād in Muslim India? <i>Asad Q. Ahmed (Berkeley)</i>
<b>10.30-11.00</b>	Coffee Break
<b>SESSION IX</b>	<b>PHILOSOPHY II</b> <i>Chair and Discussant Hermann Landolt (IIS)</i>
<b>11.00-11.30</b>	Some Aspects of the Reception of Suhrawardī's Philosophy by Mullā Ṣadrā <i>Christian Jambet (Sorbonne)</i>
<b>11.30-12.00</b>	The Imam and the Greek Sage: Neoplatonic Commentaries on Shi'ī Ḥadīth in the Safavid Period <i>Sajjad Rizvi (Exeter)</i>
<b>12.00-12.30</b>	Ismaili Traces in the Works of Safavid Philosophers: The Quotations from <i>al-Risāla al-jāmi'a</i> in Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkevarī's <i>Maḥbūb al-qulūb</i> <i>Daniel De Smet (CNRS, Paris)</i>
<b>12.30-13.30</b>	Lunch
<b>13.30-14.30</b>	<b>Keynote Speech III.</b> Henry Corbin and the School of Isfahan <i>Hermann Landolt (IIS)</i> <i>Chair and Discussant Christian Jambet (Sorbonne)</i>

---

**ABSTRACTS AND ACADEMIC BIOGRAPHIES**

---



MOHAMMAD ALI AMIR-MOEZZI

(Sorbonne and The Institute of Ismaili Studies)

*Majlisī the Second: Ambiguous Scholar and Reviver of Shi'ism in Iran in the 17th Century*

Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1110/1699) is one of the most remarkable figures of Safavid Iran. As a major authority among the nascent Shi'i 'clergy' and the one who was primarily responsible for the religious policy of the state, he played a decisive role in politics. This role contradicted certain traditional Shi'i teachings found in the sayings attributed to the Imams. At the same time, Majlisī is known as the reviver of these very teachings by dint of his monumental collection of *ḥadīth*, *Bihār al-anwār*. Are we dealing with an ambiguous or perhaps even hypocritical attitude, or with an attempt to maintain a balance between safeguarding and promoting the Tradition, and establishing Twelver Imāmī Shi'ism as the state religion?

Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi is Directeur d'études at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Sorbonne) and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. His publications include *Le Guide divin dans le shi'isme originel. Aux sources de l'ésotérisme en Islam* (Paris, 1992; translated into English as *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, Albany, NY, 1994), *Qu'est-ce que le shi'isme ?* (with C. Jambet, Paris, 2004, translated into English as *What is Shi'i Islam? An Introduction*, Routledge, 2018), *La religion discrète: croyances et pratiques spirituelles dans l'islam shi'ite* (Paris, 2006, translated into English as *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam: Beliefs and Practices*, London, 2010), *Revelation and Falsification. The Kitāb al-Qirā'āt of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Sayyārī* (with E. Kohlberg, Leiden, 2009), and *Le Coran parlant et le Coran silencieux: sources scripturaires de l'islam entre histoire et ferveur* (Paris, 2011, translated into English as *The Silent Qur'an and the Speaking Qur'an: Scriptural Sources of Islam Between History and Fervor*, New York, 2016). He is the academic editor of the *Dictionnaire du Coran* (Paris, 2007) and, with M. De Cillis, D. De Smet and O. Mir-Kasimov, of the *L'ésotérisme shi'ite, ses racines et ses prolongements* (Turnhout, 2016).

ASAD Q. AHMED

(University of California, Berkeley)

*What Was the Legacy of Mīr Dāmād in Muslim India?*

Mīr Dāmād is a significant figure in the history of philosophy in Islam and the influence of his works on Iranian writers has been thoroughly established in secondary literature. This paper examines his impact on the broader Persianate world, namely, on the philosophical traditions of Muslim India. What was the range of his presence within the philosophical texts of pre-modern Muslim India? Which of his texts and doctrines were engaged? In which areas of philosophy was he relevant? How were his doctrines received? The paper examines a broad range of texts from India, biographical accounts and manuscript evidence, in order to place Mīr Dāmād in his Indian milieu.

Asad Q. Ahmed is Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *The Religious Elite of the Early Islamic Hijaz* (Oxford, 2011), *Avicenna's Deliverance: Logic* (Oxford-Karachi, 2012), and of the forthcoming volume, *Palimpsests of Themselves: Philosophical Commentaries in Postclassical Islam*. He has also written several articles and co-edited collected volumes in the fields of Islamic history, philosophy in the Islamic world, and Muslim legal theory.

---

SAYYED JALAL BADA KHCHANI

(The Institute of Ismaili Studies)

*Prose and Poetry: A Glimpse into Post-Alamūt Nizārī Ismaili Literature in Iran*

The remarkable Ismaili tradition of producing religious literature in both prose and poetry, though losing its momentum after the fall of Alamūt, continued to be a dynamic means of expressing the religious identity, the tenets of faith, the history and above all highlighting the lineage of the Nizārī Ismaili Imamate. With reference to new discoveries in the field, this study aims at producing a brief survey of the bulk of Ismaili post-Alamūt literature in the Persian language and will introduce a compendium of poetry by the 17th-century Iranian Ismaili poet known as Darwīsh Quṭb al-Dīn.

Formerly Deputy Director of the Central Library at the Firdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran, and Librarian at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, Dr Sayyed Jalal Hosseini Badakhchani is currently a Research Associate at the Institute of Ismaili Studies. He has published new editions and English translations of the following Ismaili works by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī: *Sayr wa sulūk* (London, 1998; 2nd ed. Tehran, 2018), *Rawḍa-yi taslīm* (London, 2005; 2nd ed. Tehran, 2014) and three of his short treatises under the title *Shi‘i Interpretations of Islam* (London, 2011). He has also edited two major works by Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib, namely the *Dīwān-i Qā‘imiyyāt* (Tehran, 2016) and the *Haft bāb*, published together with the English translation under the title *Spiritual Resurrection in Shi‘i Islam: An Early Ismaili Treatise on the Doctrine of Qiyāmat* (London, 2017).

---

AHAB BDAIWI  
(Leiden University)

Ahab Bdaiwi is Assistant Professor of Medieval Arabic Philosophy at Leiden University. He received his PhD in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy from the University of Exeter in 2014, and lectured in Islamic and Iranian intellectual history at the University of St Andrews from 2013 to 2016. His research revolves mainly around the disciplines of philosophy, theology, intellectual history, and oriental manuscripts in Islamicate societies.

---

MICHEL BOIVIN  
(CNRS-EHESS, Paris )  
*Messianism and Sufism in the Construction of Shi‘amicate Devotion in Early 18th-Century Sindh*

Shi‘i Studies on South Asia have predominantly focused on the imperial centres and states where Shi‘i devotion was mostly expressed in Persian or Urdu. More peripheral expressions of Shi‘ism in the vernacular languages have not really generated any great academic interest as yet. The emirate of Sindh was ruled by Shi‘i dynasties until the British conquest of 1843. Indeed the province had been under Shi‘i rule for many centuries including a period of Fatimid suze-

rainy (884–957) and in the 15th century, the career of Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī (d. 1505), who claimed to be the *mahdī*, had a great impact on the religious landscape of Sindh. Notwithstanding, at the turn of the 18th century a new era was initiated when Twelver Shi‘ism became a main component of the popular religion of the region, practiced not only by Shi‘is but Sunnis and Hindus as well. The renaissance of Shi‘ism in this part of the world was concomitant with the spread and impact of Ḥusayn Wā‘iz Kāshifī’s *Rawḍat al-shuhadā’*, not only in Persian but also in vernacular translations. The early Shi‘i devotional literature was produced both in Persian and vernacular Sindhi translations, in the genre of *marthiya*. But from the beginning, Shi‘i expression was interwoven with Sufi literature. In this paper, I shall try to disentangle the different repertoires as expressed in devotional poetry, for which I have used the neologism of ‘Shi‘amicate’ devotion, derived from Marshall Hodgson’s concept of the Islamicate.

Michel Boivin is Directeur de recherche at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), and director elect of the Centre for South Asian Studies (CNRS-EHESS). He teaches the historical anthropology of the Muslim societies of South Asia at the School of Advanced Studies for Social Sciences (EHESS). He has published many articles in academic journals, as well as fifteen books, four of which deal with Ismaili Shi‘ism. Presently, his research is mostly focused on the encounter between Islam and Hinduism in the context of South Asia, with a focus on the area of Sindh.

---

GERHARD BOWERING  
(Yale University)  
*The Confluence of Mysticism and Messianism in Islamic Theosophy (‘Irfān) in the 15th–17th cc.*

From the Arab conquest in the 7th century until the rise of the Safavids, the ancient empire of Persia was subsumed into the eastern half of an Islamic world. Emerging out of the regional turmoil that followed the Mongol invasions of the 13th century and the conquests of Tamerlane (ca. 1337–1405) the Safavid state (1501–1736) then shaped the region from Central Asia to Mesopotamia by establishing a distinctly Iranian

empire and culture, based on the Persian language and Shi'ī law and theology. Alongside great political and artistic achievements, this Iranian culture developed a philosophical vision of Islam that was not only influenced by the expectations and guidance of Shi'ī messianism but also deeply rooted in the experience and thought of Sufi mysticism. Identified as Islamic theosophy, *'irfān*, this philosophical vision reached its apogee in the works of two principal thinkers, Mīr Dāmād (d. 1630) and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640).

Mīr Dāmād achieved a remarkable synthesis between Shi'ī doctrines, Islamic metaphysics as elaborated by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, and al-Suhrawardī's illuminative wisdom (*ishrāq*). In a mystical vision (*kashf*), based on divine revelation (*shar'*) and confirmed by human intelligence (*'aql*), he perceived the privileged way to the ultimate truth, which unveils the origin (*mabda'*) of human selfhood and shows the goal of human destiny, the alpha and omega of divine wisdom (*ḥikmat-i ilāhī*).

Mullā Ṣadrā merged the Shi'ī notion of the 14 pure souls (Muḥammad, Fāṭima and the twelve imams) with the active intelligences of Ibn Sīnā's cosmology as ontological archetypes of existence; maintained the existence of an independent world of images (*'ālam-i mithāl*) between the intelligible world and the sensible world; advocated the primacy of being (*wujūd*) over quiddity (*māhiya*) as the foundation of metaphysics and defended the idea of the soul as the eternal essence of individuality while asserting that everything that exists is subject to change and perfection. Using the paradigm of the four journeys (*asfār*), Mullā Ṣadrā envisioned human cognition as penetrating the Absolute to such an extent that the theosopher ultimately subsists in and returns from God to guide humanity.

This paper examines how their theosophical vision merged the Sufi and mystic emphasis on the *azal* (eternity a parte ante), rooted in the practice and theory of the *dhikr*, with the Shi'ī and messianic thrust towards the *abad* (eternity a parte post), envisioned in the expectation and guidance of the *mahdī*, and united the two streams of *wilāya*, the mystic and the messianic one, in one intellectual synthesis of Islamic theosophy (*'irfān*).

Gerhard Bowering has been Professor of Islamic Studies at Yale University since 1984. He is a member of the American Philosophical Society (APS) and the

American Oriental Society (AOS) and a recipient of Guggenheim and Mellon Fellowships. He is the author of *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam* (Berlin, 1980) and *Sulamī's Minor Qur'ān Commentary* (Beirut, 1995 and 1997) and co-editor of the *Sufi Treatises of al-Sulami* (Beirut, 2009), *The Comfort of the Mystics* (Leiden, 2013) and *A Qur'ān Commentary by Ibn Barraḳān of Seville* (Leiden, 2016). He is also the editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (Princeton, 2012) and the editor of *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction* (Princeton, 2015). His research interests focus on Qur'anic commentary, the study of Sufism, the intellectual history of Islam, and Islamic political thought.

---

SHEILA CANBY

(The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

*Shāh Ṭahmāsp's View of Nature as Reflected in His Shāhnāma*

Many of the illustrations to Shāh Ṭahmāsp's *Shāhnāma*, executed between around 1524 and 1537, suggest a reverence for nature. Gardens and wilderness settings contain identifiable trees, bushes and plants that enliven compositions and may shed light on the environment of sixteenth-century Iran. Nonetheless, the repetition of certain flowers and trees may be attributed to artistic norms and poetic imagery rather than faithful renderings of the actual environment of early Safavid Iran. This paper will explore the repetition of artistic motifs versus the depiction of actual plants known to grow in Iran. As with other types of content in the illustrations, this discussion may shed light on the extent to which the artists of the *Shāhnāma* strove to depict their world faithfully and to what degree they depended on artistic prototypes.

As the patron of the manuscript, Ṭahmāsp, was especially interested in painting and had studied with Sultān Muḥammad, the presumed first supervisor of the manuscript project, little or nothing that appears in the paintings would have been taken for granted. Some images may refer to actual events in the life of Ṭahmāsp or his father, Shāh Ismā'īl I, while illustrating episodes from the epic poem. Others presumably reflect Ṭahmāsp's growing religiosity in the 1530s. This paper will focus on the rendering of vegetation in paintings from different periods of the manuscript's production with the aim of determining whether at-

titudes to nature that are specifically Shi'i can be detected.

In October 2009 Dr Sheila Canby was appointed Patti Cadby Birch Curator in Charge of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Department of Islamic Art, having served as Curator of Islamic Art and Antiquities at the British Museum from 1991 to 2009. Her department's new galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and Later South Asia opened in 2011. Her publications include *Shah 'Abbas: The Remaking of Iran* (2009), *Islamic Art in Detail* (2005), *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran, 1501-76*, co-editor with Jon Thompson (2003), *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722* (1999), *Persian Painting* (1993) and *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp* (2011 and 2014). In 2016 she co-curated the special exhibition, 'Court and Cosmos: the Great Age of the Seljuqs' and co-authored the catalogue with Deniz Beyazit and Martina Rugiadi. She received her PhD from Harvard University.

---

FARHAD DAFTARY

(The Institute of Ismaili Studies)  
*The Shi'i Milieu of Post-Mongol Iran*

Hulagu completed the Mongol conquests of southwestern Asia in the middle of the 13th century. This included the demise of the 'Abbasid caliphate and the destruction of the Ismaili state in Iran in 1256. Subsequently, Iran became politically fragmented while remaining predominantly Sunni. However, certain developments in the religio-political milieu of post-Mongol Iran, investigated briefly in this paper, proved conducive to the activities of a number of Shi'i and Shi'i-related movements, culminating in the extremist, eclectic Shi'ism of the early Safavids. Amongst these developments, particular attention will be given to popular types of Shi'ism and 'Alid loyalty that spread through Sufi orders which remained outwardly Sunni. It was in such a milieu that Shi'i elements were superimposed on Sunni Islam, creating a unique Shi'i-Sunni syncretism and preparing the ground for the adoption of Shi'ism as the religion of Iran under the Safavids.

Farhad Daftary received his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1971. Subsequently, he held

a number of teaching posts, and, since 1988, has been affiliated with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, where he is currently Director and Head (since 1992) of the Department of Academic Research and Publications. An authority in Shi'i studies, with special reference to the Ismaili tradition, Dr Daftary has published and lectured widely in these fields of Islamic studies. In 2011 a *Festschrift* entitled *Fortresses of the Intellect* was produced to honour Dr Daftary by a number of his colleagues and peers. As well as serving on various editorial boards, Dr Daftary is a consulting editor of the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (for Ismailism), co-editor (with W. Madelung) of the *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, and general editor of the 'Ismaili Heritage Series', the 'Ismaili Texts and Translations Series' and the 'Shi'i Heritage Series' published by the Institute of Ismaili Studies. He has written more than 200 articles and encyclopaedia entries and several acclaimed books, including *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990; 2nd ed., 2007), *The Assassin Legends* (London, 1994), *A Short History of the Ismailis* (Edinburgh, 1998), *Ismaili Literature* (London, 2004), *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies* (London, 2005), (with Z. Hirji) *The Ismailis: An Illustrated History* (London, 2008), *Historical Dictionary of the Ismailis* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth, 2012) and *A History of Shi'i Islam* (London, 2013). His edited volumes include *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London, 2000), *A Modern History of the Ismailis* (London, 2011), (with G. Miskinzoda) *The Study of Shi'i Islam* (London, 2014), *Fifty Years in the East: The Memoirs of Wladimir Ivanow* (London, 2015) and (with S. Jiwa) *The Fatimid Caliphate* (London, 2018). Dr Daftary's books have been translated into Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Uyghur, Urdu, Gujarati, Chinese, Indonesian and many European languages.

---

MARIA MASSI DAKAKE

(George Mason University)

*The Concept of 'Aql in Safavid Commentaries on al-Kulayni's Uṣūl al-kāfi*

The opening chapters of al-Kulayni's foundational collection of Imāmi *aḥādīth* suggest a constructive tension between 'aql (intellect) as salvific guide, 'proof' (*ḥujja*), guarantor of true religion, and mediator between God and his creatures, on the one hand, and the Imams who

serve the same epistemological and hierarchical function on the other. While the Imams represent a fixed and historically particular category of spiritual hierarchy, the concept of *‘aql* in its multivalent invocations in al-Kulaynī’s collection of the sayings of the Imams seems to represent a more universal, dynamic, and fluid basis of spiritual hierarchy. Various degrees of *‘aql* in different individuals correspond to their varying degrees of faith, religious understanding, and soteriological potential – qualities linked directly to devotion to the Imams in many other Imāmī *aḥādīth*. The tension latent in these early traditions is reflected in the various historical iterations of the intellectual struggle between *naqlī* and *‘aqlī*, externalist and internalist, exoteric and esoteric perspectives in Shi‘i intellectual history, including ones that emerged during the later Safavid period. This paper examines Safavid-era Shi‘i commentaries on al-Kulaynī’s *Uṣūl al-kāfi* and compares their treatment of the concept of *‘aql* in the traditions of the Imams, with a particular focus on the commentaries of Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640) and Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1699).

**Maria Massi Dakake** holds a PhD in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University (2000), and is currently Associate Professor of Religious Studies at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. She is the director of the undergraduate interdisciplinary Islamic Studies program at GMU, and a founding member and former co-director of the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies, Fairfax, VA. Her research interests and publications lie in the fields of Islamic intellectual history, with a particular interest in Qur’anic studies, Shi‘i and Sufi mystical traditions, and in women’s religious experiences. She is associate editor of *The Study Qur’an* (2015), and author of *The Charismatic Community: Shi‘ite Identity in Early Islam* (SUNY Press, 2007). She is currently completing a co-edited volume, the *Routledge Companion to the Qur’an*.

---

DANIEL DE SMET  
(CNRS, Paris)

*Ismaili Traces in the Works of Safavid philosophers: The Quotations from the Risāla al-jāmi‘a in Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkevarī’s Maḥbūb al-qulūb*

The late Safavid philosopher Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkevarī

(d. between 1088/1677 and 1095/1684) includes in his history of wisdom and philosophy entitled *Maḥbūb al-qulūb* a long chapter about the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, along with several quotes taken from their *Rasā’il*. As Mathieu Terrier has shown recently in his French translation of the first part of the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, the chapter on Adam contains long quotations from the *Risāla al-jāmi‘a*, traditionally ascribed to the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, although its contents are more overtly Ismaili than the *Rasā’il*. In my paper, I show how Ashkevarī, through these quotations, presented a typically Ismaili theory about Adam and his fall, cyclical history, prophecy and imamology. The example of Ashkevarī raises the still unanswered question about the circulation of the *Risāla al-jāmi‘a* and its influence in Safavid Iran.

**Daniel De Smet** is Directeur de recherche at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). He leads the research unit ‘Livres sacrés: Canons et hétérodoxies’ at the *Laboratoire d’Etudes sur les Monothéismes* (LEM, UMR 8584) in Villejuif, France, and teaches Arabic philosophy at the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), Belgium. His main fields of interest are Shi‘i Islam (in particular Ismailism), Arabic Neoplatonism and Islamic philosophy. He is the author of *La Quiétude de l’Intellect. Néoplatonisme et gnose ismaélienne dans l’œuvre de Ḥamīd ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī (Xe/XIe s.)* (Leuven, 1995), *Empedocles Arabus. Une lecture néoplatonicienne tardive* (Brussels, 1998), *Les Épîtres sacrées des Druzes. Rasā’il al-Ḥikma. Volumes 1 et 2. Introduction, édition critique et traduction annotée des traités attribués à Ḥamza b. ‘Alī et à Ismā‘īl at-Tamīmī* (Leuven, 2007), and *La philosophie ismaélienne: un ésotérisme chiite entre néoplatonisme et gnose* (Paris, 2012), and the editor of *Controverses sur les écritures canoniques de l’islam* (with Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Paris, 2014) and *L’ésotérisme shi‘ite, ses racines et ses prolongements* (with Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Maria De Cillis and Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, Turnhout, 2016).

---

JANIS ESOTS  
(The Institute of Ismaili Studies)  
*Mīr Dāmād’s ‘Yemenī’ Wisdom*

Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn Muḥammad Bāqir al-As-tarābādī, known as Mīr Dāmād (969–1040/1561–1631),



used to describe himself as the creator of the ‘Yemenī Wisdom’ (*al-ḥikma al-yamāniyya*) – a philosophical doctrine, which, according to its author, was more coherent than the ‘approximate’ (*takhmīnī*) Hellenistic philosophy (as transmitted to the Islamic world, and epitomised by Ibn Sīnā) and which he argued to represent a significant improvement on the latter.

At the heart of the ‘Yemenī’ wisdom lie two inter-related principles: 1) the Creator makes the essences (*māhiyyāt*) of things by simple making. Their being is then abstracted from this ‘making’, i.e., the establishment of the relation with the Maker, and, hence, is treated as a derived meaning, *ma‘nā maṣdarī*, which does not possess any instances but only portions related to different essences – the stance, which Mullā Ṣadrā and, following him, many later Iranian philosophers, not quite correctly, interpreted as the ‘primacy of the essence’ *aṣālat al-māhiyya* and 2) apart from the receptacle of time, there exist the receptacles of eternity (*sarmad*) and perpetuity (*dahr*).

In my paper, I will discuss these principles and then attempt to trace and catalogue their implications.

Janis Esots is a Research Associate at the Institute of Ismaili Studies (London, UK) and the editor of the Islamic Philosophy Yearbook *Ishraq* (2009–), published jointly by the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Iranian Academy of Philosophy. He received his PhD in Near East Languages and Cultures from Tallinn University, Estonia, and has published about 50 articles and chapters in collected volumes on Islamic philosophy, Sufism and Persian literature, and translated into Russian the works of Mullā Ṣadrā, Suhrawardī, Mīr Dāmād, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. He has also contributed articles to several encyclopaedias, including *The Qur’an: An Encyclopedia* (London, 2006), *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ, 2012), *Encyclopedia Islamica* (Leiden, 2013–) and *the Springer Encyclopedia of Indian Religions* (2018).

---

AMELIA GALLAGHER  
(Niagara University)

*Shāh Ismā‘īl’s Resurrection in Alevī-Bektāshī Literature*

Shāh Ismā‘īl is known as the first Safavid king who established Shi‘i Islam in Iran, following his ascent to

the throne in 1501. This was due in part to his strong following among the Qizilbāsh tribes, who coalesced around Ismā‘īl as a messianic, as well as a political, figure. In this paper, the role Shāh Ismā‘īl’s poetry played in this political achievement will be re-evaluated. It will further address the meaning of Shāh Ismā‘īl as a sacred figure among the Qizilbāsh as they developed into permanent sectarian communities in the Ottoman empire. We will explore the evolution of Shāh Ismā‘īl’s image and authority up to the present day through the literature his followers attributed to him.

Amelia Gallagher received her PhD from McGill University. She teaches in the Religious Studies Department of Niagara University. In addition to Shāh Ismā‘īl’s poetry, her research interests include religious architecture and religious tourism. She has published in the *Journal of Folklore Research and Iranian Studies*.

---

ROBERT GLEAVE

(University of Exeter)

*Establishing the Canonical Text in Late Classical Shi‘i Legal Theory: the Ma‘ālim al-Dīn and Its Commentaries*

The *Ma‘ālim al-Dīn* of Ḥasan b. Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmili (d. 1011/1602) is widely recognised as the most influential of late classical (15th–17th cc.) Twelver Shi‘i works in the field of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Originally it was simply an introduction to a work of law (*fiqh*), but soon was subject to separate treatment in late classical Shi‘i seminary circles. Its popularity lay partly in its brevity, making it manageable to teach; but also its style which demands commentary. In this paper I will explore the doctrinal innovations in the *Ma‘ālim al-Dīn*, and their subsequent elaboration in commentaries and marginal notes, which continued well beyond 1800. A survey of the reaction in the seminary to the *Ma‘ālim al-dīn* reveals messianic, theologically-informed *uṣūl al-fiqh*, which at times are too simple for those writing commentaries; their commentaries, intentionally I argue, attempt to complicate the text of the *Ma‘ālim*.

Robert Gleave is Professor of Arabic Studies at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. His primary research interests include herme-

neutics and scriptural exegesis in Islam; Islamic law, works of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*); violence and its justification in Islamic thought; and Shi'ism, in particular Shi'i legal and political theory. He has organised a number of funded research projects including *Islamic Reformulations: Belief, Governance and Violence and Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence in Islamic Thought*. He is the author of *Islam and Literalism: Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory* (Edinburgh, 2011) and *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shi'i School of Thought* (Leiden, 2007). His current projects are *Understanding Sharī'a: Custom, Gender, State and Violence and Law, Authority and Learning in Imami Shiite Islam* (funded by the European Research Council).

---

CHRISTIAN JAMBET

(EPHE, Sorbonne – PSL University)

*The Reception of Suhrawardī's Philosophy by Mullā Ṣadrā*

Two important philosophers and theologians erected the most famous metaphysical edifices in Islamic philosophy during the period of Safavid rule in Iran, notably during the 17th century. These scholars, Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā, applied the lessons of *ishrāqī* philosophy in their works. For instance, Mullā Ṣadrā claimed that whoever tried to acquire the science of the divine world (*ḥikma ilāhiyya*) must first study Ibn Sīnā's and Suhrawardī's works.

Nevertheless, Mullā Ṣadrā does not adopt what Suhrawardī proposed in his books without a critical examination. He emphasises his own originality and claims all the credit for the foundation of the highest and best philosophical method in his major work, the *Four Journeys*. Even though he held Suhrawardī in high esteem, Mullā Ṣadrā did not consider himself an *ishrāqī*.

Mullā Ṣadrā's commentary on *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* in reality consists of glosses (*ta'liqāt*) on the linear explanation (*sharḥ*) of the synthetic handbook by Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 1311). Unlike well-known *ishrāqī* commentators, such as Shahrazūrī or Quṭb al-Dīn, Mullā Ṣadrā expresses his own beliefs, and often moves away from the main paths of Suhrawardī's doctrine. Mullā Ṣadrā translates the *ishrāqī* theses in terms of his own ontology and eschatology.

We can observe such a means of interpretation in

the commentary on the opening of the second part of *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. Mullā Ṣadrā substitutes his doctrine of being for the *ishrāqī* metaphysics of light and darkness, dismissing the dualistic view which discriminates between the world of the lights and the enigmatic darkness of matter. He says that being taken in its totality is light, even if some of the beings are mixed with non-existences and potentialities. The substitution of the language of ontology for *ishrāqī* doctrine allowed Mullā Ṣadrā to reconcile Suhrawardī with the most important inspiration received from Ibn 'Arabī.

Mullā Ṣadrā disagreed with Suhrawardī about another important topic, the immaterial light ruling the human body. Unlike the Shaykh al-Ishrāq, he thought that the human soul had an intellectual life before that of the corporeal organism which it governs in this world. The survival of the soul, required by the divine compensation and retribution for deeds, would be inconceivable if the soul were born for the sake of governing the body. That is why Mullā Ṣadrā maintained that the human soul had one mode of existence in the world of Intellect and another in the sensible world, although the soul was one by virtue of its essence. Mullā Ṣadrā quotes many passages from the *Theology* of Pseudo-Aristotle and substitutes Plotinus and the Universal Soul for the *ishrāqī* theory of the ruling light.

Mullā Ṣadrā's commentary on the fifth discourse of the second part of *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* places an emphasis on that original interpretation. The transmigration of the soul, which Suhrawardī discusses, receives a new meaning in the theory of the imagination and the resurrection developed by Mullā Ṣadrā.

In conclusion, we can say that Mullā Ṣadrā read Suhrawardī accurately and acknowledged his debt to him. Nevertheless, he interpreted the philosophy of *ishrāq* in terms of his own thought, and he adapted *ishrāqī* philosophy so that it could be integrated in his original system, which presents a complete ontology of Shi'i Islam.

Christian Jambet is Directeur d'études émérite at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Paris, Sorbonne, PSL University), Chair: Philosophie en Islam. He is the author of several books, including *La Logique des Orientaux*. Henry Corbin et la science des formes (Paris, 1983), *La Grande résurrection d'Alamūt. Les formes de la liberté dans le shī'isme ismaélien* (Lagrasse, 1990), *L'acte d'être*.

*La philosophie de la révélation chez Mollâ Sadrâ* (Paris, 2002; translated into English by Jeff Fort as *The Act of Being. The Philosophy of Revelation in Mullâ Sadrâ* (New York, 2006)), *Le Caché et l'Apparent* (Paris 2003), *Qu'est-ce que le Shi'isme ?* (with Mohammad-Ali Amir-Moezzi, Paris, 2004), *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie islamique ?* (Paris, 2011), *Le gouvernement divin. Islam et conception politique du monde. Théologie de Mullâ Sadrâ* (Paris, 2016) and *La Fin de toute chose suivi de l'Epître du rassemblement de Mullâ Sadrâ* (Paris, 2017).

He received the Grand Prix de Philosophie de l'Académie Française for his complete works in 2017.

---

HERMANN LANDOLT

(The Institute of Ismaili Studies)

*Henry Corbin and the School of Isfahan*

There is an intimate connection between the title of this conference and the particular subject I was asked to speak about. In contrast to the famous notion of the 'Renaissance of Islam' introduced into Oriental Studies in 1922 by Adam Mez, and the traditional European approach to 'Arabic Philosophy' as being essentially a continuation of Greek philosophy up to Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in the 12th century, it was Henry Corbin's vision of an 'Islamic philosophy', a spiritual tradition which would be Shi'ite in its essence, which led him to the recognition of a 'Shi'i Renaissance' in the 17th century and its culmination in what he—as well as S. Hossein Nasr—termed 'the school of Isfahan', including as its major figures Mîr Dāmād and his by now famous disciple, Mullâ Ṣadrâ Shīrāzī, in both of whom, despite their internal differences, he saw the genuine achievement of a fresh development that had only started with Averroes' contemporary in the East, Suhrawardī. Along with this went also a new recognition of Persian and Iranian culture as a specifically 'Iranian' form of Islam. Needless to point out that Corbin's vision has itself provoked criticism, not only in the West, but also in Iran itself, especially among those who (like 'Ali Shari'ati, a student of Louis Massignon among others) protested against an identification of 'Safawid Shi'ism' (*tashayyu'ī ṣafawī*) with the 'true Shi'ism' which he called *tashayyu'ī 'alawī*.

Problematic issues to be highlighted will include the following:

1. The notion of the continuity of Shi'ism, as op-

posed to its diversity at different periods of time and in different 'schools'

2. Related problems concerning the relationship between Ismailism and Sufism
3. The 'Shi'itisation' of Sufism during and after the Mongol period, with reference to Mullâ Ṣadrâ's rather than Mîr Dāmād's Sufi (and possibly Ismaili) sources
4. The relative importance of both Averroes and Suhrawardī for the 'school of Isfahan'.

Hermann Landolt received a broad academic education at Basel University, with Fritz Meier as his teacher in Islamic Studies, and in Paris with Henry Corbin in Islamic Religious Studies. In 1964 he obtained the Diplôme EPHE (Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes) Ve Section (Sorbonne) and was awarded his Dr. Phil. from Basel University in 1978. From 1964 to 1999 he taught Islamic Studies and Persian at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. He is now Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Ismaili Studies. His main publications are: *Correspondance spirituelle échangée entre Nūrod-dīn Esfarāyenī (ob. 717/1317) et son disciple 'Alāoddawleh Semnānī (ob. 736/1336)*, texte persan publié avec une introduction (Tehran, 1972), Nūruddīn Abdurrahmān-i Isfarāyinī, *Le Révélateur des mystères* (Kāshif al-Asrār), texte persan publié avec deux annexes, traduction et étude préliminaire, (Lagrasse, 1986) [2nd revised. ed. of *Kāshif al-Asrār*, Tehran, 1980 (reprinted 2004)]; [3rd edition (paperback, French part only, Paris, 2005)], and *Recherches en spiritualité iranienne. Recueil d'articles* (Tehran, 2005). He is the editor, with Samira Sheikh and Kutub Kassam, of *An Anthology of Ismaili Literature: A Shi'i Vision of Islam* (London and New York, 2008). In 2005, a *Festschrift* in his honour was published as *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought*.

---

WILFERD MADELUNG

(Oxford and The Institute of Ismaili Studies)

Wilferd Madelung is a leading contemporary Islamic Studies scholar. He has made significant contributions to modern scholarship on medieval Islamic communities and movements, including Twelver Shi'ism, Zaydism and Ismailism. Educated at the Universities of Cairo and Hamburg, he became Professor of Islamic

Studies at the University of Chicago in 1969 and the Laudian Professor of Arabic at the University of Oxford from 1978 until his retirement in 1998. Professor Madelung is at present Senior Research Fellow with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

Among his numerous publications are *Religious Schools and Sects in Mediaeval Islam* (London, 1985), *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany, NY, 1988), *Religious and Ethnic Movements in Mediaeval Islam* (Hampshire, 1992), *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1997), and, with Paul E. Walker, *An Ismaili Heresiography* (Leiden, 1998). He has contributed extensively to *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, of which he is also a Consulting Editor, and learned journals. In 2003, a *Festschrift* in his honour was published as *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam*.

---

ASSADULLAH SOUREN MELIKIAN-CHIRVANI

(Aga Khan Trust for Culture)

*The Outburst of Shi'ite Militancy: The Evidence of Safavid and Moghul Metalwork*

**M**etalwork sheds light on a hitherto ignored aspect of Shi'ite militancy in Safavid Iran and Moghul Hindustan.

In the last third of the 9th/15th century, Shi'ite prayers began to appear on the vessels displayed at the Iranian wine banquet (*majles-e sharab*). The prayer calling for God's blessings upon the Fourteen Protected from Error and Sin (*chahardah ma'sūm*) and the versified prayer urging the orant to call for 'Alī's help (*nādi 'Alī*) were calligraphed in large friezes at the top of basins of three different models and of a drinking bowl (*bādiyeh*) that were passed around the banquet participants seated in a circle. All four models are sometimes inscribed with Persian verses that designate them as wine vessels. In some cases, Shi'ite prayers and Persian verses occur on the same vessel. This confirms that these models were indeed wine vessels.

By contrast, the Shi'ite prayers are not seen on shallow cups (*piyāleh*) for individual use. On these, the inscriptions are invariably Persian verses. Prayers were therefore reserved for vessels that were prominently displayed. This points to a militancy unparalleled in Iran prior to the intense Shi'ite proselytism of Ḥaydar and his descendants, the Safavid Shahs. Such militan-

cy may have been dictated by political expediency as much as personal conviction.

Intriguingly, the same militancy comes across on the wine vessels executed in the Safavid style in Moghul Hindustan. The discovery of a basin cover dated 1023/1614 whose patron 'Alī Qulī was a Qizilbāsh, and who was probably the poet Mīrzā 'Alī Qulī, descended from the Aq-qūyūnlū rulers of Iran, raises the possibility that the Moghul vessels in the Iranian style with Shi'ite prayers were produced for the many Iranian expatriates who belonged to the Moghul court circles.

Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani is an historian of Iranian culture and Indo-Iranian interaction. His major discoveries include demonstrating the Buddhist origin of idealised beauty (*Bot-e Mahrūy*) in early Persian poetry and Iranian art (*Le Roman de Varqe et Golšāh/Arts Asiatiques XXII*, 246p., Paris 1970) and the correlation of all shapes and motifs in Iranian art with Persian literary concepts (*Le Chant du Monde [dans] l'art de l'Iran Safavide*, 464 p., Paris 2007). In *The World of the Fatimids* (London, 2018) Dr Melikian-Chirvani describes the mocking irony aimed at the previously unidentified royal symbols of the Fatimid caliphs borrowed from Iran.

---

MATTHEW MELVIN-KOUSHKI

(University of South Carolina)

*Shi'ising Iran—with Sunni Occult Science: 'Alī Ṣafī Kāshifī's (d. 1533) Ḥīrz al-Amān min Fitan al-Zamān as a Timurid-Safavid Manual of Lettrist Imperialism*

The *ad fontes* ethos that drove Safavid imperial culture, scene to a philological-philosophical revolution directly cognate to contemporary European Renaissance developments, involved a textual return to the Imams and the ancient Greeks in equal measure. Yet this distinctive and unprecedented form of Imāmī perennialism was realised by Safavid scholars in conscious emulation of a fifteenth-century Sunni, and specifically Timurid, model. The same model, itself the culmination of Ilkhanid and Mamluk developments, combined occultism, Sufism and Alidism as its primary elements—the tripod that served as foundation of the new Safavid Shi'ite imperial culture, and those of the rival Mughal and Ottoman Sunnis, through the first half of the 17th century.

Safavidology to date, however, has focused almost exclusively on the categories of Sufism and Alidism, and have all but erased occultism as the crucial third term. Such attitude has had the effect of exaggerating the degree of rupture in the Timurid-Safavid transition and the conversion of Iran to Shi‘i Islam with respect to immediate Sunni precedent, thereby obscuring the equally remarkable continuities that made the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal empires an intellectual and cultural unit for two centuries, imperial confessionalising rhetoric notwithstanding. But it is precisely the examination of occult and experimental science, I argue, ignored in modern Safavid studies specifically and Islamic studies generally, that provides the key to understanding how Safavid society could be paradoxically Shi‘i and Sunni simultaneously, how Imāmī perennialism was first constructed and maintained well into the 17th century. For it was only by means of occult sciences that *walāya*, as a theosis-ing Alidist imperial Science, could be made common to the Imams and the ancients as ontological equals.

This rupturous Timurid-Safavid, Sunni-Shi‘i continuity is epitomised by the careers of two Herati preachers and polymaths, which together spanned the last decades of the 15th and the first of the 16th century; Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Wā‘iz Kāshifī (d. 1505) and his son Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Alī Ṣafī (d. 1533). Ḥusayn Wā‘iz is responsible for the *Rawḍat al-shuhadā’*, the masterpiece of Twelver Sunnism (*tasannun-i ithnā-‘asharī*), and the eponymous basis for Shi‘i ritual *rawḍa-khwānī* from the Safavid period to the present. Just as importantly, however, the Kāshifīs—ardent Naqshbandī Sufi imamophile occultists—also wrote several occult-scientific manuals that were to be among the most popular and influential of the high Safavid period.

As a representative case study, I present one of these, ‘Alī Ṣafī’s *Ḥirz al-amān min fitan al-zamān*. Written for a member of the Safavid ruling elite presumably during a lull between the Uzbek invasions, and based exclusively on Sunni and especially Naqshbandī sources, this manual advances an occultist-imperialist project that is distinctively, emphatically Timurid: lettrism as the scientific basis for Turko-Mongol Perso-Islamic universal empire. But the *Ḥirz al-amān*, which is structured according to a 5-5-12 pattern in honour of the five People of the Mantle and the Twelve Imams, is also the first manual in the Arabo-Persian lettrist tradition to be, in conception and execution, emphatically Twelver.

Matthew Melvin-Koushki (PhD Yale) is Assistant Professor of History at the University of South Carolina. He specialises in early modern Islamicate intellectual and imperial history, with a focus on the theory and practice of the occult sciences in Timurid and Safavid Iran and the wider Persianate world up to the 19th century. Melvin-Koushki’s several forthcoming books include *Occult Philosophers and Philosopher Kings in Early Modern Iran: The Life and Legacy of Ibn Turka*, *Timurid Lettrist* and *The Occult Science of Empire in Aqquyunlu-Safavid Iran: Two Shirazi Lettrists*, and he is editor of the recently published volume *Islamicate Occultism: New Perspectives* (*Arabica*, vol. 64 (2017), thematic issue 3-4) the first such in the field to treat post-Mongol Persianate developments.

---

ORKHAN MIR-KASIMOV

(The Institute of Ismaili Studies)

*Nuḡṭawīs, Safavids and Shi‘ism in the 9th to 11th/15th to 17th Centuries*

The mystical and messianic tendency in Iranian Islam, extremely active throughout the 8th and 9th/14th and 15th centuries, when it was represented by such groups and movements as the Sarbadārs, Ḥurūfīs, Nūrbakhshīs and Musha‘sha‘, significantly lost momentum after the foundation of the Safavid state. The Nuḡṭawīs, an offshoot of the Ḥurūfīs, were one of the few groups belonging to this tendency that remained active in Iran during the reigns of the Safavid shāhs, Tahmāsp I (r. 930–984/1524–1576) and ‘Abbās I (r. 995–1037/1587–1628). Looking at the Nuḡṭawī doctrinal positions which inspired their political activity, this paper will reflect on the relationships between, on the one hand, the mystical and messianic ideologies situated at the confluence of Sufism and Shi‘ism, of the kind that the Safavids themselves adhered to before they became a royal dynasty, and, on the other hand, the legalistic Twelver Shi‘ism, which eventually became the official religion of the Safavid state.

Orkhan Mir-Kasimov is Senior Research Associate at the Department of Academic Research and Publications, the Institute of Ismaili Studies. His research interests include the intellectual history of Shi‘i Islam, Islamic mysticism and messianism and their role in

the history and intellectual history of Muslim societies in mediaeval and early modern times. He has published monographs *Words of Power: Ḥurūfī Teachings between Shi‘ism and Sufism. The Original Ḥurūfī Doctrine of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī* (London, 2015), and *Christian Apocalyptic Texts in Islamic Messianic Discourse* (Leiden and Boston, 2017) as well as edited and co-edited several volumes, including *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam* (Leiden, 2013), *Les Nuṣayris et les Druzes, deux communautés ésotériques à la périphérie doctrinale de l’islam* (with D. De Smet, Arabica, thematic issue, 2011); and *L’ésotérisme shi‘ite, ses racines et ses prolongements* (with M. A. Amir-Moezzi, M. De Cillis and D. De Smet, Turnhout, 2016).

---

ANDREW NEWMAN

(University of Edinburgh)

*The Ijāza as Polemic in Early Safavid Iran*

The present paper will briefly address the nature and purpose of Twelver Shi‘i *ijāzas* and then examine in some detail several examples of 16th and 17th century *ijāzas* which, apparently, fell outside what would seem to have been the accepted norms of *ijāzas* as regularised in the Safavid period. The background to these will be discussed and suggestions offered as to why these texts apparently breached any of these norms.

Andrew Newman holds the Personal Chair of Islamic Studies and Persian at the University of Edinburgh. He has a PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. He came to Edinburgh in 1996, having been a Research Fellow at both the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, Oxford and Green College, Oxford, whilst researching topics in the history of Islamic medicine. Newman has published books and articles on early Twelver Shi‘ism, Shi‘i history and thought, and Shi‘ism in Safavid Iran. His most recent publication is *Twelver Shiism, Unity and Diversity in the Life of Islam, 632 to 1722* (Edinburgh, 2013). He is also the founder of *Shi‘i News and Resources*.

---

SAJJAD RIZVI

(University of Exeter)

*The Imam and the Greek Sage: Neoplatonic Commentaries on Shi‘i Ḥadīth in the Safavid Period*

Philosophy and exegesis are often considered to be discrete disciplines, divided as it were between the rival motivations to understand the nature of reality through rational argumentation and the hermeneutics of revelation. However, in practice there are many examples in the world of Islam of philosophers commenting upon and glossing texts and lemmata extracted from revelation, be they Qur’anic verses or *ḥadīth*. In particular, the Shi‘i tradition of *ḥadīth* commentary, which as a process only really began in the Safavid period, is intimately linked with the attempt of (Neoplatonising) philosophers to conceptualise the meaning of revelation and trace its accord with ontological facts that may be discerned through the exercise of reason. Thus far there has been little study on *ḥadīth* commentary so I shall begin with a consideration of this tradition and the role of philosopher-sages (*ḥukamā’*) in the production of knowledge and conceptualisation of the hermeneutics of reading *ḥadīth*, beginning with the work of Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631) in his *al-Rawāshih al-samāwiyya* designed as an introduction to *al-Kāfi* of *al-Kulaynī* (d. 941), and shall also make some preliminary observations on the method of Neoplatonic commentary in the world of Islam.

The main focus of the paper will be an examination of a controversial problem, namely what we mean by the concept of ‘*aql*, not least because in the Safavid period, Majlisī (d. 1699) and his students actively responded to the exegeses of the philosopher-sages and attempted to separate the usage of terms in scripture from their Neoplatonic ‘distortions’. More recently this debate re-emerged with ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s critique of Majlisī on this point and the *maktab-i tafkīk*’s challenge to the tradition of Mullā Ṣadrā. I will examine the ways in which three philosopher-sages understand the use of the concept of the ‘*aql* in the Shi‘i *ḥadīth* corpus: Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1636) in his commentary on *Uṣūl al-kāfi*, Qāḍī Sa‘īd Qummī (d. 1696) in his commentary on *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* of al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 991) and on *al-Kāfi* in his various treatises, and ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Tabrīzī, a little-known student of Mīr Dāmād, in his treatise *al-Bawāriq al-nūriyya* which is a philosophical and mystical meditation upon *Uṣūl al-kāfi*. From these analyses, I shall draw some conclusions about the strategies of glossing the text in search of philosophical insight which might demonstrate the harmonisation of exegesis and philosophy promoting the notion of a ho-

mology between two revelations: the scripture as book of God and nature as the book of the cosmos.

Sajjad Rizvi is Associate Professor of Islamic Intellectual History at the University of Exeter. He has published widely on philosophy in the Safavid-Mughal period and on Qur'anic exegesis. His recent publications include *The Spirit and the Letter* (with Annabel Keeler, Oxford, 2017) and *Philosophy and the Intellectual Life in Shi'ah Islam* (with Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, Barnsley, 2017). He is currently working on a monograph on Islamic philosophy in Iran and North India in the 18th century.

---

DEVIN J. STEWART  
(Emory University)

*The Pre-Modern Renaissance in Shi'ī Ḥadīth Studies: Ḥadīth Criticism, the Akhbārī Movement and Literary Production in Safavid Iran*

Safavid Iran witnessed a wide-ranging renaissance of Twelver Shi'ī scholarship, but it is important to recognise the particular ways in which it was constructed and skewed. This essay examines the revival of the focused study of *ḥadīth* on the part of Twelver Shi'ī scholars in the 16th and 17th centuries. The revival has many inter-related aspects, including the production of particular genres of technical writing related to *ḥadīth*. This scholarship both helped to create and was shaped by the Akhbārī movement. As this paper will show, it also reveals contested notions of scripture and religious authority. The genres affected were many: *ḥadīth* criticism, commentaries on the major collections of Shi'ī *ḥadīth*, super-compendia of *ḥadīth*, and works devoted to a central core of legal *ḥadīth* reports are several of the more obvious ones. I will argue, though, that genres further afield such as *ijāzas*, biographical dictionaries and even autobiographies were also profoundly affected by the revival in *ḥadīth* scholarship. For example, although Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 673/1274), al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), and Ibn Abī al-Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī (d. after 878/1479) wrote *ḥadīth* criticism, a traditional Twelver version of this genre paralleling Sunni works in the field was not established until the mid-sixteenth century, when Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 965/1558) wrote *al-Bidāya*, a work that was followed by Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad's (d. 984/1576) *Wuṣūl al-*

*akhyār ilā uṣūl al-akhbār*, and Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī's (d. 1030/1621) *al-Wajīza*. The monumental collections *al-Wāfi* by Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680-81), *Wasā'il al-shi'a* by al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104/1693), and Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī's (d. 1111/1699) *Biḥār al-anwār* represent attempts to re-assemble and present as an integral whole the entire expanse of Shi'ī *ḥadīth* literature. Ironically, the attempt to bolster the authority of the standard *ḥadīth* collections led to the rediscovery of texts that had been rejected on ideological grounds, but were now brought back into consideration, such as al-Shalmaghānī's (d. 322/934) legal work *Kitāb al-Taklīf*, which was repackaged as *Fiqh al-Riḍāʾ* during the Safavid era and reintroduced into the canon.

At the same time, the popularity of *ḥadīth* led Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) to present his philosophical theories in the form of a commentary on a *ḥadīth* work, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfi*. A number of scholars, including Rula Jurdi Abisaab and Robert Gleave, have discussed the Akhbārī movement in the 17th century in some detail, and they and other scholars, such as Rasul Jafariyan and Andrew Newman, have discussed the history of the religious sciences in the Safavid period, but the aim in this paper is to provide a broad overview of the effect radical changes in the study of *ḥadīth* had on Shi'ī intellectual history.

Devin J. Stewart received his PhD with distinction in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 1991. He now teaches in the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies at Emory University in Atlanta. The subjects of his research include Shi'ī Islam, Islamic law, legal theory and legal education, biography and autobiography, dissimulation among the Shi'a and the Moriscos of Spain. He is the author of *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy* (Salt Lake City, UT, 1998) and several studies on the Shi'ī legal tradition, including especially scholars of the Safavid period such as Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 965/1558) and Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1030/1621). Most recently, he has published *Disagreements of the Jurists* (New York, 2015), an edition and translation of *Ikhtilāf uṣūl al-madhāhib*, a refutation of Sunni legal hermeneutics by the tenth-century Ismaili jurist, al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān (d. 363/974).

MATHIEU TERRIER

(CNRS, Paris)

*The Convergence of Shi'ism, Philosophy and Sufism in Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī's (d. between 1088 and 1095/1677 and 1684) al-Risāla al-mithāliyya*

The importance of the concept of 'imaginal world' (*ālam al-mithāl*) in the history of Islamic philosophy, especially in the 'Safavid philosophical renaissance', no longer needs to be demonstrated since it was established through Henry Corbin's pioneering studies. However, the most comprehensive work of Shi'i philosophy devoted to this topic, despite its being mentioned by Corbin, remains until now unpublished and unexplored. Written by Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī or Ishkavarī (d. between 1088/1677 and 1095/1684), the *Fānūs al-khayāl*, also called *al-Risāla al-mithāliyya*, was written in both Arabic and Persian and completed in 1077/1666-1667. This paper, based on the unique manuscript preserved in the Malik Library of Tehran, aims to present the first historical and philosophical analysis of this work. Ashkiwarī's purpose is to demonstrate, by the three means of reason (*ʿaql*), transmitted tradition (*naql*) and spiritual unveiling (*kashf*), the reality of the imaginal world, defined as an intermediate world between the sensory world and the intelligible world, and identified with the Qur'anic notion of *barzakh* as an 'isthmus' between the life of this world and the great Resurrection. According to Ashkiwarī, this concept responds to crucial philosophical and theological issues. It is also the core of a doctrine shared by the 'Infallibles' (*aṣḥāb al-iṣma*), i.e. the Prophet and the Imams, the 'philosophers of the Orient of Light' (*ḥukamā' al-ishrāq*), and the 'Unitarian Sufis' (*al-ṣūfiyya al-muwaḥḥidūn*). Consequently, it might be the key to a harmonisation between Shi'i esotericism, contained in the earliest collections of Imāmī traditions, ancient and modern philosophy, from Pythagoras to the school of Suhrawardī, and the theoretical Sufism of Ibn ʿArabī. In this epistle, Ashkiwarī also intended to reactivate the Shi'i spiritual tradition by enriching it with philosophy and Sufism, both intellectual traditions commonly considered foreign to Imāmī Shi'ism. In this paper, I will try to highlight the audacity of this endeavour in its historical context and the prominent place of this work in what has been described as the post-Mongol Shi'i gnosis.

Mathieu Terrier earned his doctorate at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne) in 2014. He is currently Chargé de recherche at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), in the department of the History of the Ancient and Medieval Worlds. His work mainly focuses on the theological and philosophical ideas in Twelver Shi'ism, especially during the period between the 8th to 11th/14th to 17th centuries. His publications include *Histoire de la sagesse et philosophie shī'ite. L' Aimé des cœurs de Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkevarī* (Paris, 2016) and several articles in journals such as *Journal asiatique*, *Studia Islamica*, *MIDÉO* and *Ishraq*.

---

FATIH USLUER

(TOBB University of Economics and Technology)

*Ḥurūfī Disciples versus Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī: The Ḥurūfī Khalīfas' Interpretations of Faḍl Allāh's Doctrine*

Faḍl Allāh, the founder of Ḥurūfism, produced works such as the *Jāvidān-nāma*, *ʿArsh-nāma*, *Muḥabbat-nāma* and *Dīwān*. Of these, the *Jāvidān-nāma* and *Muḥabbat-nāma* provide the most detailed account of Ḥurūfī doctrine. Perhaps even more importantly, he left behind notable disciples who perpetuated Ḥurūfī philosophy not least through their writings: ʿAlī al-Aʿlā, Kamāl al-Dīn Qaytaḡh, Amīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn, Mīr Sharīf and Sayyid Ishāq all created masterpieces of Ḥurūfī literature. They remained loyal to the principal Ḥurūfī tenets formulated by Faḍl Allāh. However, they reinterpreted certain aspects of the doctrine slightly differently from Faḍl Allāh, thus enriching Ḥurūfī thought.

This paper will deal with later Ḥurūfī works such as the *Maḥshar-nāma*, *Tawḥīd-nāma*, *Kursī-nāma*, *Iṭāʿat-nāma*, *Istiwā-nāma*, *Turāb-nāma*, *Taḥqīq-nāma*, *Ishārat-nāma* and *Ism wa Musammā*, thereby addressing two main questions:

1. how the interpretations of the disciples differed from that of Faḍl Allāh, and
2. what innovations were brought into Ḥurūfī doctrine by Faḍl Allāh's disciples?

The discussion of these two issues will pinpoint both the developments and the problems that emerged in Ḥurūfī thought after Faḍl Allāh's death.



Fatih Usluer received his PhD in Religious Sciences from Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and currently is a tenured Associate Professor of Faculty of Arts and Sciences at TOBB University of Economics and Technology in Ankara, Turkey. His multi-disciplinary research focuses on the history of Sufism, Ottoman cultural history and classical Ottoman, Persian and Arabic literature. He has transcribed and transliterated into modern Turkish several Ottoman Turkish and Persian Ḥurūfī manuscripts, dating from the 15th to the 18th centuries, and has prepared two catalogues of manuscripts (Arabic and Ottoman Turkish manuscripts in the Hamidiye Library in Lebanon, and Alevi manuscripts collected from Anatolian villages). His most recent project was the transliteration and analysis of postscripts and notes written by Jarullah Efendi, a famous seventeenth-century Ottoman scholar, on the books of his personal library.

---

SHAFIQUE N.VIRANI  
(University of Toronto)

*From Iran to India: Ismaili Teachers and Teachings in the 11th/17th Century*

A recently edited and published Persian ode by an otherwise unknown Ismaili poet named Maḥmūd has the potential to contribute significantly to our understanding of Ismailism in the 11th/17th century. Written in the *hazaj* metre, it begins *ghulām-i shāh-i mardānam chih bāk az khārjī dāram*, ‘A servant of ‘Alī, king of men, am I. What have I to fear from his enemy?’

Maḥmūd was a contemporary of the Ismaili imam, Nūr al-Dahr ‘Alī (d. 1082/1671). In his poem, he identifies numerous Ismaili leaders living in his time. He gives their names and the places where they were active, and distinguishes them by such titles as *pīr*, *mu‘allim* and *dā‘ī*. Maḥmūd was able to list individuals stationed throughout South and Central Asia, as far away as Gujarat in India. Most of the names in the poem are previously unknown, while others are of significant Ismaili personalities who are almost completely unstudied, such as Ya‘qūb Shāh b. Ṣūfī in Iran and Pīr Fāḍil Shāh b. Raḥmatallāh Shāh in India.

Using Maḥmūd’s poem as a starting point, this paper will shed light on the Ismaili teachers of the 11th/17th century, their areas of activity and their teachings.

Shafique N. Virani (PhD, Harvard University) is Distinguished Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Toronto in Canada, founding Director of the Centre for South Asian Civilizations, and was previously chair of the Department of Historical Studies. Professor Virani’s research focuses on Islamic history, philosophy, Sufism, Shi‘ism (Twelver and Ismaili), Bhakti, as well as Islamic literature in Arabic, Persian and South Asian languages. He is the author of *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, A Search for Salvation* (Oxford–New York, 2007). His work has been translated into numerous languages, and he has received awards and recognition from UNESCO, OIC, MESA, FIS, Harvard University, and the BRISMES. The government of Iran named him the recipient of its International Book of the Year prize in 2008, and of Farabi International Award in 2009, and the American Academy of Religion awarded him its highest pedagogical honour in 2014.



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

10 Handyside Street, London, N1C 4DN, United Kingdom

[www.iis.ac.uk](http://www.iis.ac.uk)