

The Ismā'īlīs: their history and doctrines

Farhad Daftary



Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1990

First published 1990
Reprinted 1992
First paperback edition 1992
Reprinted 1994, 1995, 1999

Printed in the United Kingdom at
the University Press, Cambridge

British Library cataloguing in publication data

Daftary, Farhad
The Isma'ilis.

1. Ismailis
1. Title
297'.822

Library of Congress cataloging in publication data

Daftary, Farhad
The Ismā'īlis, their history and doctrines / Farhad Daftary.

p. cm.
Bibliography: p. 725
Includes index.
ISBN 0 521 37019 1
1. Ismailites. 1. Title
BP195.I8D33 1990
297'.822 — dc20 89-7257 CIP

ISBN 0 521 37019 1 hardback
ISBN 0 521 42974 9 paperback

Ḥasan Khān, through I'tibār al-Saltāna and other sons and daughters, are still living in Tehran and Maḥallāt.

In the meantime, in Ramaḍān 1260/October 1844, Āghā Khān I had left Sind via the port of Karachi for Bombay.¹⁶³ He passed through Cutch and Kathiawar, where he arrived in Muḥarram 1261/January 1845. He spent a year at Kathiawar and visited the Nizārī communities of the area, as he had done all along his route. He then travelled through Sūrat and Daman, and arrived in Bombay in Ṣafar 1262/February 1846. Soon after his arrival in Bombay, the Persian government, then still controlled by the chief minister Ḥājji Mīrzā Āqāsī, demanded the Āghā Khān's extradition from India, citing the Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1229/1814.¹⁶⁴ The British, however, refused to comply and only promised to transfer the Āghā Khān's residence to Calcutta, farther removed from Persia where it would be more difficult for him to launch new activities against the Persian government. Meanwhile, the British entered into a series of negotiations with the Persian government for the safe return of the Āghā Khān to Persia, which was the imām's own wish. In Ṣafar 1263/February 1847, Justin Sheil, the British minister in Tehran, forwarded yet another unsuccessful appeal to this effect on behalf of the Governor-General of India. Ḥājji Mīrzā Āqāsī now consented to the Āghā Khān's return to Persia, on the condition that he would avoid passing through Balūchistān and Kirmān, where he could start new anti-government activities. Furthermore, the Āghā Khān was to settle down peacefully in Maḥallāt.

Āghā Khān Maḥallātī was eventually obliged, in Jumādā I 1263/April 1847, to leave for Calcutta, where he remained until receiving the news of the death of Muḥammad Shāh Qājār in Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1264/November 1848, which had actually occurred two months earlier. Hoping that Muḥammad Shāh's successor Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh would be more lenient towards him, the Āghā Khān left Calcutta for Bombay in Muḥarram 1265/December 1848. On arriving in Bombay a few weeks later, the British made new efforts to win permission for his return to Persia, while the Āghā Khān himself wrote a letter on the subject to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's first chief minister, Amīr Kabīr. Amīr Kabīr proved even less responsive than his predecessor, insisting that the Āghā Khān would be arrested at the borders as a fugitive.¹⁶⁵ After the downfall and execution of Amīr Kabīr in 1268/1852, the Āghā Khān made a final plea from Bombay to return to his ancestral homeland, and sent Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh an elephant and a giraffe as gifts.¹⁶⁶ He also sent presents to Amīr Kabīr's successor Mīrzā Āqā Khān Nūrī, who was a personal friend of the Āghā Khān. Some of the imām's

family lands in Persia were now restored to the control of his relatives, but the new chief minister was unable to arrange for his return. By then, the Nizārī Imām had resigned himself to permanent residence in India, though he maintained his contacts with the Qājār court and sent Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh another gift of three elephants and a rhinoceros in 1284/1867–1868.¹⁶⁷ Still later in 1287/1870, when Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh was on pilgrimage to the Shīʿī shrines in ʿIrāq, Āghā Khān I sent one of his sons, Jalāl Shāh, with a number of presents including a hunting rifle, to the Qājār monarch in Baghdād.¹⁶⁸ As an indication of royal favour towards the Āghā Khān, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh had now consented to give one of his daughters in marriage to Jalāl Shāh who accompanied the monarch to Tehran. However, the youthful Jalāl Shāh was taken ill and died in Tehran the following year.

Āghā Khān Maḥallātī's settlement in Bombay in effect initiated the modern period in the history of Nizārī Ismāʿīlism. The Nizārī Imāmate was now transferred, after almost seven centuries, from Persia to India, and henceforth Bombay became the seat of the Qāsim-Shāhī Nizārī Imāms. Āghā Khān I was the first imām of his line to set foot in India and his presence there was greatly rejoiced by the Nizārī Khojas who gathered enthusiastically to his side to pay their homage and receive his blessings. The Nizārīs of many regions had regularly visited the Āghā Khān and given him their tributes when he was in Persia or wandering in Afghanistan and Sind. However, the Khojas had for several centuries comprised the most important section of the Nizārī community, and they often found it difficult to make the hazardous journey to Anjudān, Kahak, Shahr-i Bābak, Kirmān, or Maḥallāt, to see the imām. When the Nizārī Khojas found direct access to the imām for the first time, they more readily began to send their religious dues to his *durkhana* (Persian, *darb-i khāna*), or chief place of residence, in Bombay. As a result, the Āghā Khān was enabled to establish elaborate headquarters and residences in Bombay, Poona and Bangalore. He also supported numerous relatives, who gradually joined him in Bombay, and a large retinue of attendants and servants who were lodged in suitable living quarters. Āghā Khān I attended the *jamāʿat-khāna* in Bombay on special religious occasions, and led the public prayers of the Khojas there. Every Saturday when in Bombay, he held *darbar* (Persian, *darbār*), giving audience to his followers who received his blessings. In India, the Āghā Khān retained his close association with the British, and on a rare occasion he was visited in his Bombay home, the Aga Hall, by the Prince of Wales when the future King Edward VII (1901–