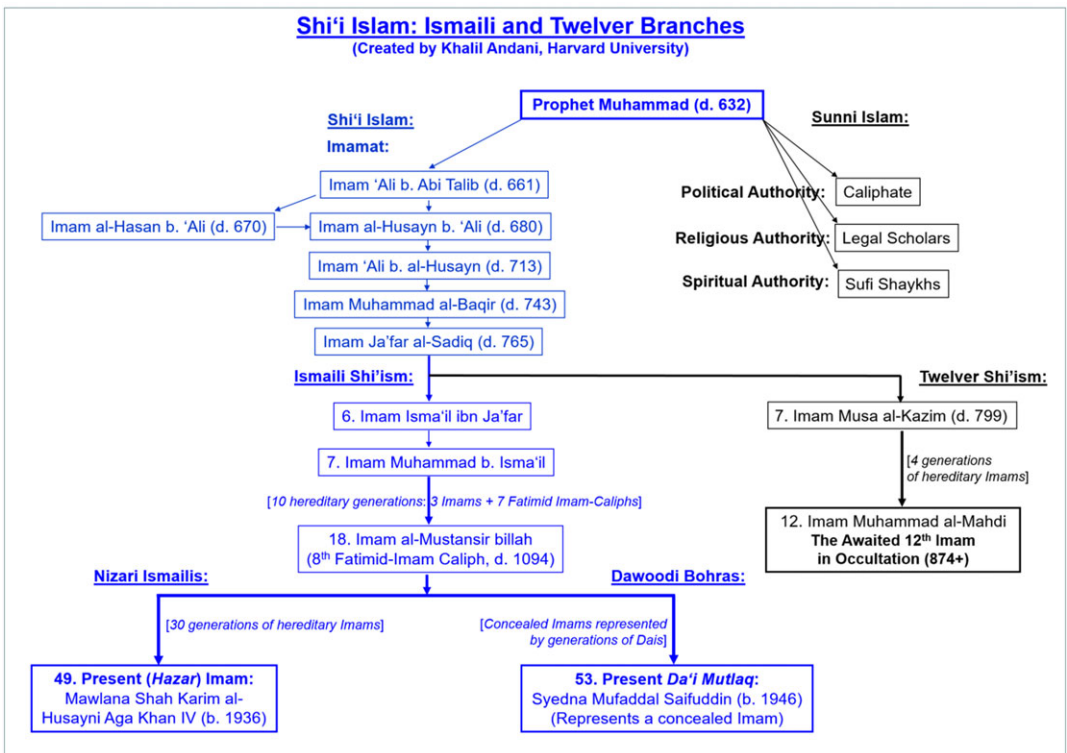WILEY

TEACHING & LEARNING GUIDE

A teaching and learning guide for: "A survey of Ismaili studies Part 1" and "A survey of Ismaili studies Part 2"

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The world's 1.6 billion Muslims are culturally and theologically diverse, encompassing a number of distinct communities of interpretation, each displaying a myriad of spiritual affiliations, theological leanings, and devotional expressions. The two largest branches of the Islamic world are the **Sunni** and the **Shiʻi**, each of whom is divided into numerous sub-branches with respect to law, theology, and spiritual allegiances. The **Shiʻi Ismaili Muslims**, better known today as the

Shiʻi Islam: Ismaili and Twelver Branches
(Created by Khalil Andani, Harvard University)

Ismailis, make up the second largest branch of Shi'i Islam after the Twelvers (Ithna 'Ashariyyah). While all Muslims recognize **Prophet Muhammad** as the last in a long line of Prophets and Messengers of God and the Qur'an as the revelation of God's Word, there are differences of interpretation concerning the scope and locus of religious authority after the death of Muhammad. Sunni Muslims vest religious authority in the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the interpretations of these sources by the religious scholars ('ulama) of the community; Shi'i Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad's divinely-ordained spiritual authority, divinely-inspired knowledge, and role in interpreting revelation continues in members of his family, beginning with his cousin and son-in-law **'Ali b. Abi Talib**, and a specific lineage of his descendants. This office of religious authority and leadership is called the **Imamat (Imamah)** and forms the core doctrinal principle of the major branches of the Shi'a—the **Twelvers (Ithna Asharis)**, the **Ismailis**, and the **Zaydis**.

The divisions among the Shi'a all revolve around the rightful holders of the Imamat. The Ismailis trace the Imamat through a particular lineage of Imams descended from **Isma'il** (d. after 755), the son and heir-designate of the Shi'i Imam **Ja'far al-Sadiq** (d. 765); meanwhile, the Twelvers trace the Imamat through **Musa al-Kazim** (d. 799), a younger son of Ja'far al-Sadiq, and await the messianic reappearance of the 12th Imam of this lineage. The Ismailis later divided over the question of the successor to the 18th hereditary **Imam al-Mustansir** (d. 1094). The group known as the **Nizari Ismailis** recognized the Imamat of al-Mustansir's elder son and original heir-designate **Nizar** (d. 1095) and traced the Imamat in his progeny; another group, known as the **Musta'lian Tayyibi Ismailis**, recognized the Imamat of a younger son **al-Musta'li** (d. 1101) and his descendants. The contemporary Tayyibi Ismailis are divided into three major branches —the **Da'udi Bohras**, the **Sulaymani Bohras**, and the **Alavi Bohras**—each of whom recognizes a different *da'i al-mutlaq* **(absolute missionary)** as the chief representative of the **Tayyibi Ismaili Imamat**, whose lineage is believed to have gone into concealment with its 21st Imam **al-Tayyib** in 1230. The Da'udi Bohras led by **Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin** (b. 1946) make up the largest Bohra community today. Meanwhile, the Nizari Ismailis are the only Shi'a Muslim community led by a visible hereditary Imam, **His Highness Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV** (b. 1936), the 49th Imam in the series, whose extensive international development work has earned a high profile for the **Nizari Ismaili Imamat** today.

Throughout their 1200-year history, the Ismailis have made major contributions to Islamic thought, civilization and culture. In the words of Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1977), "there is hardly an aspect of the Islamic community, especially in its earlier period, which was not touched in one way or another by the presence of Isma'ilism." The **Fatimid Caliphate** (909–1171) was founded by the **Ismaili** *da'wah* and ruled by the Ismaili Imamat. In the field of theology and philosophy, the Ismailis were distinguished for their **apophatic** approach to the nature of God, their integration of **Neoplatonic** cosmology, and their emphasis on the distinction between the **exoteric (***zahir***)** and **esoteric (***batin***)** dimensions of reality. With their distinctive interpretation of Islam, the Ismailis challenged the political and religious institutions of Sunni Islam and provoked an intense reaction from the 'Abbasids, the Saljuqs, and the Sunni *'ulama* under their wing. The influence of Ismaili thought upon the development of Islamic theology, philosophy, and mysticism still remains to be assessed.

Annotated Reading List (Books):

1. Dakake, Maria M. (2007). *The Charismatic Community*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

This is a study of early Shi'i history, doctrine and identity; the book demonstrates how the origins of the Shi'a lie in the concept of *walayah*—a deep and all-encompassing devotion or spiritual allegiance to 'Ali and the later Imams.

2. Lalani, Arzina R. (2000). *Early Shi'i Thought*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

An introduction to the life and teachings and historical context of the Shi'i Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir, using Sunni, Twelver, and Ismaili sources. Also contains a historical summary of the first few Shi'i Imams from 'Ali.

3. Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali. (1994). *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

    The first monograph exploring the esoteric dimensions of early Shiʻi doctrine based on early Twelver sources; focuses on the concepts of intellect (*ʻaql*), cosmology, esotericism and messianism.

4. Daftary, Farhad. (1998). *A Short History of the Ismailis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

    A short history of the Shi'a Ismaili Muslims from the origins of Shiʻi Islam to the modern period; written for the non-academic reader.

5. Daftary, Farhad. (2007). *The Ismaʻilis: Their History and Doctrines*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

    A long and detailed history and analysis of the Shiʻa Ismaili Muslims and the Ismaili Imamat from the origins of Shiʻi Islam to the modern period; this is an academic reference work written for the specialist with extensive notes.

6. Halm, Heinz. (1996). *The Empire of the Mahdi*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

    The most up to date account of the origins and the history of the Fatimid Imam-Caliphs up to the reign of al-Hakim (d. 1021); valuable historical analysis on the otherwise obscure pre-Fatimid era of the Ismailis.

7. Walker, Paul E. (1996). *Abu Yaʻqub al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.

    An accessible study of Ismaili philosophy in the late tenth century—looking at the life and works of Abu Yaʻqub al-Sijistani (d. after 971), one of the earliest Ismaili Neoplatonic thinkers; this book provides an accessible introduction to Ismaili philosophy and theology.

8. Hollenberg, David. (2016). *Beyond the Qur'an: Early Ismaʻili Ta'wil and the Secrets of the Prophets*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

    The first book-length study of Ismaili spiritual hermeneutics—called *ta'wil*; focuses on tenth century Ismaili *ta'wil* literature and offers an argument as to the concept and purpose of Ismaili esoteric interpretations in the Fatimid era.

9. Qutbuddin, Tahera. (2005). *al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi and Fatimid Da'wa Poetry*. Leiden: Brill.

    A major study of the life and thought of al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi, the highest ranking Fatimid *daʻi* and his role in creating a new genre of Fatimid *daʻwah* poetry; the section on al-Mu'ayyad's political career sheds considerable light on 11th century Fatimid internal and external politics.

10. Halm, Heinz. (2001). *The Fatimids and their Traditions of Learning*. 2nd ed. London: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

    An accessible account of the Fatimid institutions of knowledge transmission and scientific endeavor, accompanied by an introduction to the early history of the Fatimid Caliphate.

11. Abu Izzeddin, Nelja. (1993). *The Druzes*. 2nd ed. Leiden: E.J. Brill

An accessible study of the origins, history, and doctrines of the Druze faith up to modern times; includes coverage of early and Fatimid Ismailism and the relations between the early Druze and the Fatimids.

12. Willey, Peter. (2005). *Eagle's Nest*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

A study of the Nizari Ismaili fortress state in Persia during the post-Fatimid period; special focus on the author's archeological investigations of Nizari fortresses and coins.

13. Tusi, Nasir al-Din., and Badakhchani, Seyyed Jalal. (1998). *Contemplation and Action*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

An English translation of the autobiography of Nasir al-Din Tusi, a prominent Muslim theologian, philosopher and scientists who joined the Nizari Ismailis in the first half of the 13th century.

14. Virani, Shafique N. (2007). *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A ground breaking and pioneering study of the Nizari Ismailis and the survival of the community after the Mongol conquest of 1256; this book incorporates newly discovered primary sources from this otherwise obscure historical period of the Nizari Ismailis.

15. Asani, Ali. (2002). *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

An accessible introduction to the Ismaili devotional literature of South Asia with a collection of essays on the Ismaili *ginans*; a multitude of issues and currents are covered including Indo-Muslim literature, notions of religious identity, and religious authority.

16. Blank, Jonah. (2001). *Mullahs on the Mainframe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The first and only ethnographic study of the modern Dawoodi Bohra Ismaili community; the book focuses on how the Bohra leadership exercises ritual authority using modern technology and aspects of daily Bohra ritual life.

17. Steinberg, Jonah. (2011). *Isma'ili Modern*. Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press.

This study uses theories of transnationalism and globalization, and firsthand ethnographic fieldwork to investigate the Ismaili Muslims as a global community as maintained through its institutional structures.

18. Daftary, Farhad. (2008). *A Modern History of the Ismailis*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

A collection of chapters focused on modern Nizari Ismaili and Tayyibi communities in Africa, Asia, Middle East, and the West.

19. Mohammad Poor, Daryoush. (2014). *Authority without Territory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

The first study of the modern Ismaili Imamat, informed by Max Weber's ideal types, focusing on how the authority of the Ismaili Imamat is institutionalized through the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

Internet Resources:

1. Institute of Ismaili Studies

http://www.iis.ac.uk

The Institute of Ismaili Studies is the main research centre for Ismaili studies today. Their website republishes a number of online academic and accessible articles on Ismaili history and philosophy from various books and journals. Republished Academic Articles for Student Learning:

http://instituteofismailistudies.deployview.co.uk/iis.ac.uk/view_sorted_articlesd3d8.html?catid=6&orderby=DateofArticle&ordertype=date&dir=descending&l=en

Republished Academic Articles:

http://instituteofismailistudies.deployview.co.uk/iis.ac.uk/view_sorted_articlesb20b.html?catid=94&orderby=DateofArticle&ordertype=date&dir=descending&l=en

2. The Aga Khan Development Network:

www.akdn.org

Official Website of the Aga Khan Development Network—a global network of development agencies established by the current Nizari Ismaili Imam, His Highness Mawlana Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV. The website also presents the latest updates on the Aga Khan's speeches, activities and visits to various nations.

3. NanoWisdoms Archive of the Imamat's Speeches, Interviews and Writings

http://www.nanowisdoms.org

Nanowisdoms is the online archive of the Ismaili Imamat speeches, writings and interviews with special permission to republish the Aga Khan's speeches; the entire database is searchable and a very useful tool for researchers on contemporary Ismaili history and thought. The website also includes compilations (Extended Quotes) of the Aga Khan's discourses organized by topic.

4. Ismaili Gnosis: Contemporary Nizari Ismaili Theology, Philosophy and History

http://www.ismailignosis.com

Ismaili Gnosis is private research organization focusing on contemporary Nizari Ismaili Muslim thought, with a website featuring contemporary Ismaili theology and philosophy; the articles published on this website incorporate material from primary Ismaili Muslim sources and contemporary theology and philosophy.

5. Official Website of the Dawoodi Bohra Community:

http://thedawoodibohras.com/

Official Website of the majority Da'udi Bohras (branch of Tayyibi Ismailis) led by His Holiness Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin; contains information on latest news and events in the Bohra community including the activities of the current *da'i mutlaq*.

6. Mumineen: Dawoodi Bohra Theology and History:

http://www.mumineen.org/

Private Website of the Da'udi Bohras (branch of Tayyibi Ismailis) led by Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin; contains information on latest news and events in the Bohra community including the activities of the current *da'i mutlaq*.

7. Official Website of the Dawoodi Bohra Branch led by Syedna Khuzaima Qutbuddin:

http://www.fatemidawat.com/

Official Website of the minority branch of Daudi Bohras led by Syedna Khuzaima Qutbuddin and his successor Syedna Taher Fakhruddin; contains information on latest news and events in the Bohra community including the activities of the current *da'i mutlaq*.

8. Progressive Dawoodi Bohras:

http://www.dawoodi-bohras.com/

The website of the Progressive Dawoodi Bohra reform movement; this website hosts some academic articles by Ismail K. Poonawala, several Bohra primary sources, and the largest online Dawoodi Bohra discussion forum.

9. Official Website of the Alavi Bohras:

http://www.alavibohra.org/

Official Website of the Alavi Bohras (branch of Tayyibi Ismailis) led by His Holiness Syedna Abu Sa'eed il-Khayr Haatim Zakiyuddin; contains information on latest news and events in the Alavi Bohra community including the activities of the current *da'i mutlaq*.

13 Week Sample Syllabus (undergraduates and graduates):

Week 1: History – Early Imami Shi'ism

William Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (De Gruyter, 1977), 1–39.
Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Reflections on the Expression *din 'Ali*: The Origins of the Shi'i Faith," in *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2011), 3–44.
Mohammed Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 5–55.
Arzina Lalani, *Early Shi'i Thought*, 20–95.

Week 2: History – Early Ismailis

Khalil Andani, "A Survey of Ismaili Studies (Part 1): Early Ismailism and Fatimid Ismailism." *Religion Compass* Vol. 10, Issue 8, August 2016, 191–206.
Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis*, 28–62.
Azim Nanji, "Ismailism", *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Routledge & Keegan Paul Ltd., London) pp. 179–198.
http://instituteofismailistudies.deployview.co.uk/iis.ac.uk/view_articlec909.html?type=cont&id=101017
Farhad Daftary, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Ismailis*, 88–130.

Week 3: History – Fatimid Period

Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis*, 63–108.

Shainool Jiwa, "Inclusive Governance: A Fatimid Illustration," in *A Companion to the Muslim World*, ed. Dr Amyn Sajoo. I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2009).

https://www.academia.edu/6711860/Inclusive_Governance_A_Fatimid_Illustration

Heinz Halm, *The Fatimids and Their Traditions of Learning*, 17–93.

Week 4: History – Post-Fatimid Period

Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis*, 108–153.

Shafique Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages*, 19–70, 86–126.

Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis*, 175–209.

Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity among the Daudi Bohras*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 33–52.

Week 5: History – Modern Period

Khalil Andani, "A Survey of Ismaili Studies (Part 2): Post-Fatimid Ismailism and Modern Ismailism." *Religion Compass* Vol. 10, Issue 11, November 2016.

Ali S. Asani, "From Satpanthi to Ismaili Muslim: The Articulation of Ismaili Khoja Identity in South Asia," in *Modern History of the Ismailis*, ed. Farhad Daftary (London, New York: IB Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili studies, 2010), 95–128.

http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic980619.../Khojahidentity2.doc

Tahira Qutbuddin, "The Da'udi Bohra Tayyibis: Ideology, Literature, Learning and Social Practice," in Farhad Daftary, ed., *A Modern History of the Ismailis*, 1st ed. (London, New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010), 331–54.

Tahira Qutbuddin, "A Brief Note on Other Tayyibi Communities: Sulaymanis and ʿAlavis," in Farhad Daftary, *Modern History of the Ismailis* (2010), 355–59.

Week 6: The Doctrine of Imamah – Pre-Fatimid and Fatimid Periods

James W. Morris, "Revisiting Religious Shiʿism and Early Sufism: The Fourth/Tenth-Century Dialogue of 'The Sage and the Young Disciple'" in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought*, ed. Todd Lawson, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 102–116.

Qadi al-Nuʻman, *Daʻa'im al-Islam*, tr. and ed. A.A.A. Fyzee and Ismail K.H. Poonwala, *The Pillars of Islam*, 18–50.

Tahira Qutbuddin, "Fatimid Aspirations of Conquest and Doctrinal Underpinnings in the Poetry of al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allāh, Ibn Hani' al-Andalusi, Amir Tamim b. al-Muʻizz, and al-Muʾayyad al-Shirazi" in R. Balbaaki, S. S. Agha, and T. Khalidi, *Poetry and History* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011), 195–237.

http://nelc.uchicago.edu/sites/nelc.uchicago.edu/files/BTQ,%20Fatimid%20Aspirations%20of%20Conquest%20and %20Doctrinal%20Underpinnings%20in%20the%20Poetry%20of%20Qaim,%20Ibn%20Hani,%20Tamim%20and% 20Muayyad%20AUB%20Press%202011.pdf

Week 7: The Doctrine of Imamah – Nizari Ismailism

Nasir al-Din Tusi and Hasan-i Mahmud, *Rawda-yi Taslim*, tr. and ed. S.J. Badakhchani, *The Paradise of Submission*, 109–142.

Shafique Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages*, 116–126; 136–185.

Week 8: The Doctrine of Imamah – South Asian Nizari Ismailism and Tayyibi Ismailism

Ali S. Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia*, 1–70.
Samer F. Traboulsi, *The Formation of an Islamic Sect: The Tayyibi Ismailis in Medieval Yemen*, Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 2005, 116–171.

Week 9: The Doctrine of Imamah in Modern Times

Daryoush Mohammad Poor, *Authority without Territory* (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014), 107–223.
Safiyah Qutbuddin, "History of the Daudi Bohra Tayyibis in Modern Times: The Da'is, The Da'wat and the Community," Farhad Daftary, *Modern History of the Ismailis* (2010), 297–330.

Week 10: Classical Ismaili Theology and Philosophy

Daniel De Smet, "Ismaʻili Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. S. Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) Available at: http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199696703-e-010
Khalil Andani, "Reconciling Religion and Philosophy: Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *Jāmiʿ al-ḥikmatayn*", in Khaled El-Rouayheb, Sabine Schmidtke, *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 169–189.
Tatsuya Kikuchi, "The Resurrection of Ismāʿīlī Myth in Twelfth Century Yemen," *Ishraq* 4, 345–359.

Week 11: Ismaili Approaches to the Qur'an

James W. Morris, "Revisiting Religious Shiʾism and Early Sufism: The Fourth/Tenth-Century Dialogue of 'The Sage and the Young Disciple," in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought*, ed. Todd Lawson, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 102–116.
Khalil Andani, "Shiʻi Ismaili Ta'wil of the Qur'an: The Cycles of Prophecy and Imamat" (10 pp.)
https://www.academia.edu/26605457/Shi_i_Ismaili_Ta_wil_Spiritual_Interpretation_of_the_Qur_an_The_Cycles_of_Prophecy_and_Imamat
David Hollenberg, *Beyond the Qur'an: Early Ismaʻili Ta'wil and the Secrets of the Prophets* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016), 36–78.

Week 12: Contemporary Ismaili Theology and Philosophy

A Philosophical Discourse by His Holiness Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin, 1–45.
The Faith of the Alavi Bohras
http://www.alavibohra.org/introduction%20files/intro%20-%20Ismaili-Taiyebi%20Faith.htm
Remarks by Aga Khan III and Aga Khan IV on Various Religious and Intellectual Issues in Islam:http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/wp-content/uploads/documents/nanowidsoms-er-remarks-by-the-aga-khans-iii-iv-on-various-religious-and-intellectual-issues-in-islam.pdf
Allamah Nasir al-Din Hunzai, *The Recognition of the Imam Part 1*, 1–18.
https://www.scribd.com/document/80964683/Allamah-Hunzai-Imam-Shinasi
Ismaili Gnosis, "From Pandeism to Ismaili Muslim Neoplatonism," in *Pandeism: An Anthology*, ed. Knujon Mapson (Alresford, UK: John Hunt Publishing, 2017), 374–425.
https://www.academia.edu/28990495/From_Pandeism_to_Ismaili_Muslim_Neoplatonism_Book_Chapter_in_Pandeism_An_Anthology

Week 13: Contemporary Ismaili Rituals

Blank, Jonah. *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity among the Daudi Bohras* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 53–63; 82–110.

Tazim Kassam, "The Daily Prayer (*Du'a*) of Shi'a Isma'ili Muslims" in *The Columbia Sourcebook of Muslims in the United States*, ed. Edward E. Curtis IV (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 359–368.