

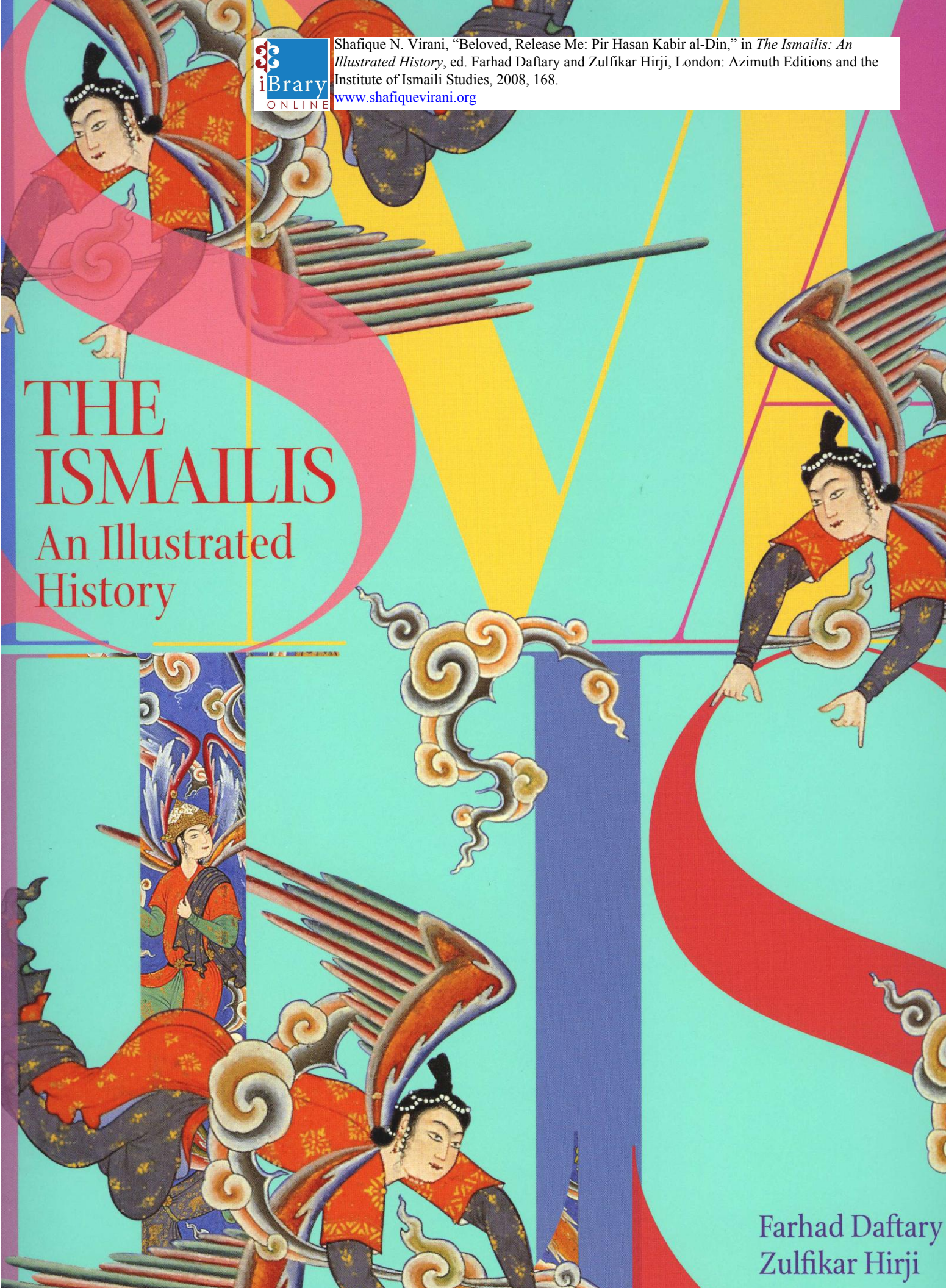


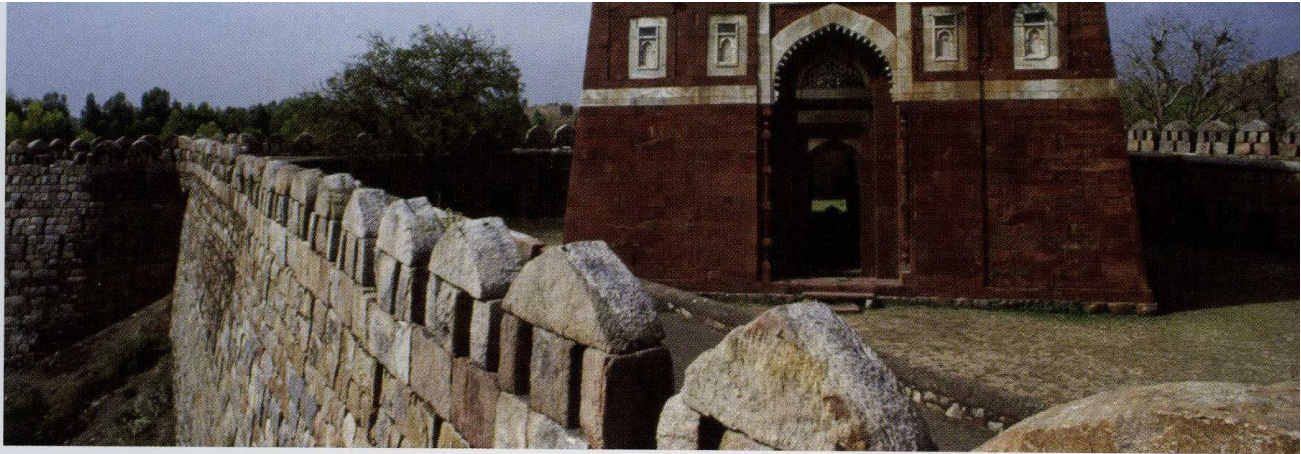
Shafique N. Virani, "Beloved, Release Me: Pir Hasan Kabir al-Din," in *The Ismailis: An Illustrated History*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Zulfikar Hirji, London: Azimuth Editions and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008, 168.
www.shafiquevirani.org

THE ISMAILIS

An Illustrated History

Farhad Daftary
Zulfikar Hirji





In a sense, Satpanth Ismailism did represent a complex form of dissimulation and acculturation adapted to the religious, social, cultural and political realities of the Indian subcontinent. A striking example of this is found in *The Colloquy of Pir Hasan Kabir al-Din and the Yogi Kanipha*, which mirrors the dramatic dialogue form found in Ja'far b. Mansur al-Yaman's *Book of the Master and the Disciple*, but combines both prose and poetry. Here, however, the seeker, Kanipha, is an aged man, while the teacher, Pir Hasan Kabir al-Din, is a nine-year-old child. His tender age serves to further highlight his statement that the source of his wisdom is the Imam. He demonstrates that in every age and time there was a guide to lead the adepts to wisdom. Kanipha is taught to seek out the Imam, described as the man of gnosis, and is told:

*O ascetic, when you meet the Guide he will explain the mysteries to you
And all your misgivings will be dispelled
Certainly, a lotus cannot flourish without water.*

The symbolism in the verse draws on motifs long established in the literary and religious traditions of the subcontinent. The lotus with its delicate white petals flowers in the swamp. Despite its sordid habitat, it is the epiphany of purity and unsullied beauty. It awaits the nourishing rain from the heavens. The true seekers' circumstances are similar. They live in the world but are not of the world. Uninterested in the mundane temptations of their environment, they long for the life-giving waters of gnosis that only the true guide can bring from the heavens:

*O ascetic, the night is dark, your companions are treacherous
And the perilous mountain path before you must be traversed
Without a leader how will you negotiate the way?
Take heed while you can . . .*

*O ascetic, within your heart are the earth's nine continents
Indeed, within your heart is paradise itself
The seven seas dwell within your heart
But without the guide you will die thirsty!*

Although in this instance the subject of a devotional work, during his life Pir Hasan Kabir al-Din wrote much devotional poetry in the form of the *ginan*:

*I await
In a little room
Fashioned of fragrant aloes and scented sandalwood
The door, produced of the fruits of good deeds
The lock, wrought of love
Beloved, release me!*

*My love, come home
My love, come home
Though I have neglected my devotions
Beloved, show me your face
For without your vision, I am bereft
[SV]*