

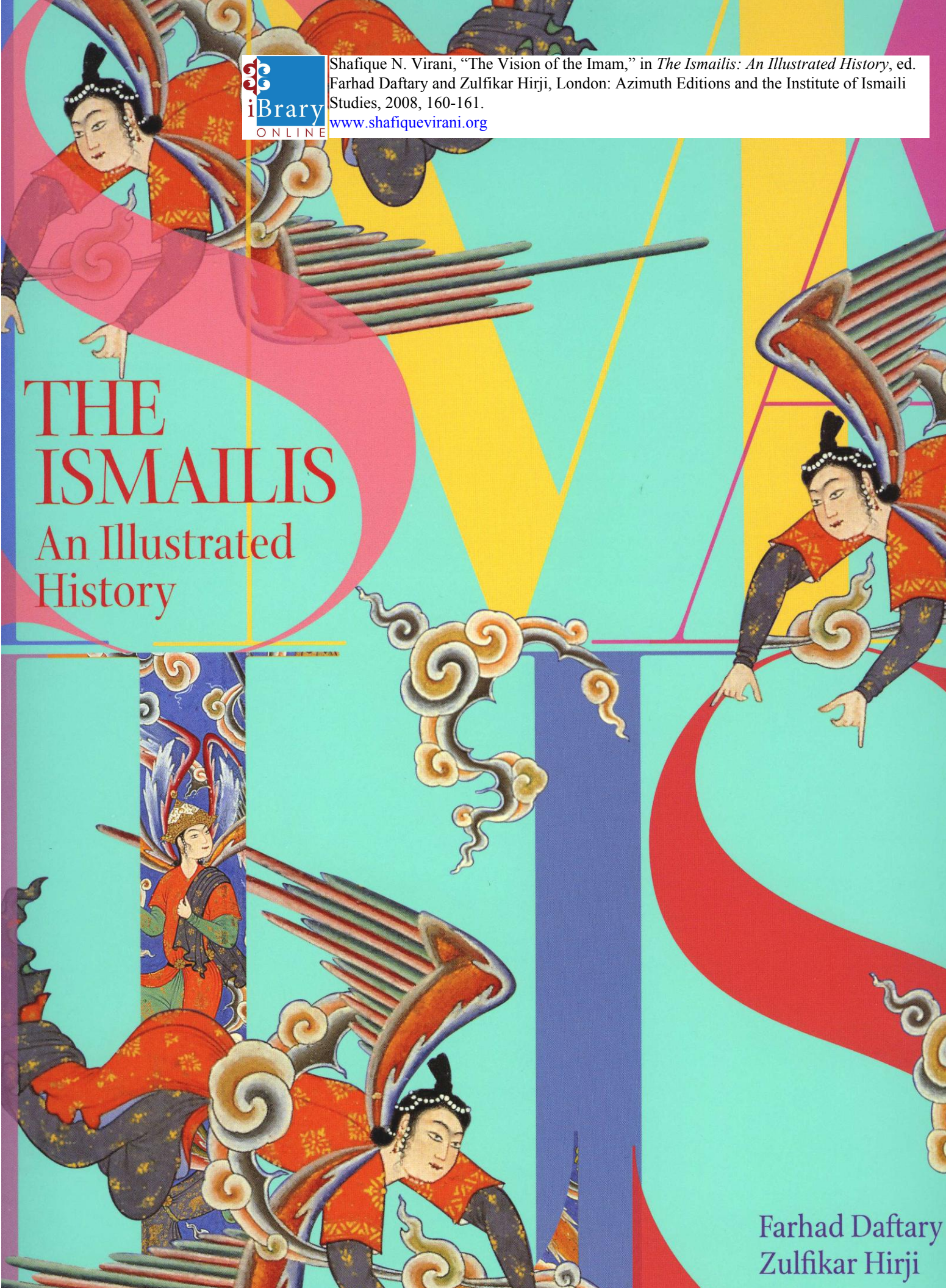


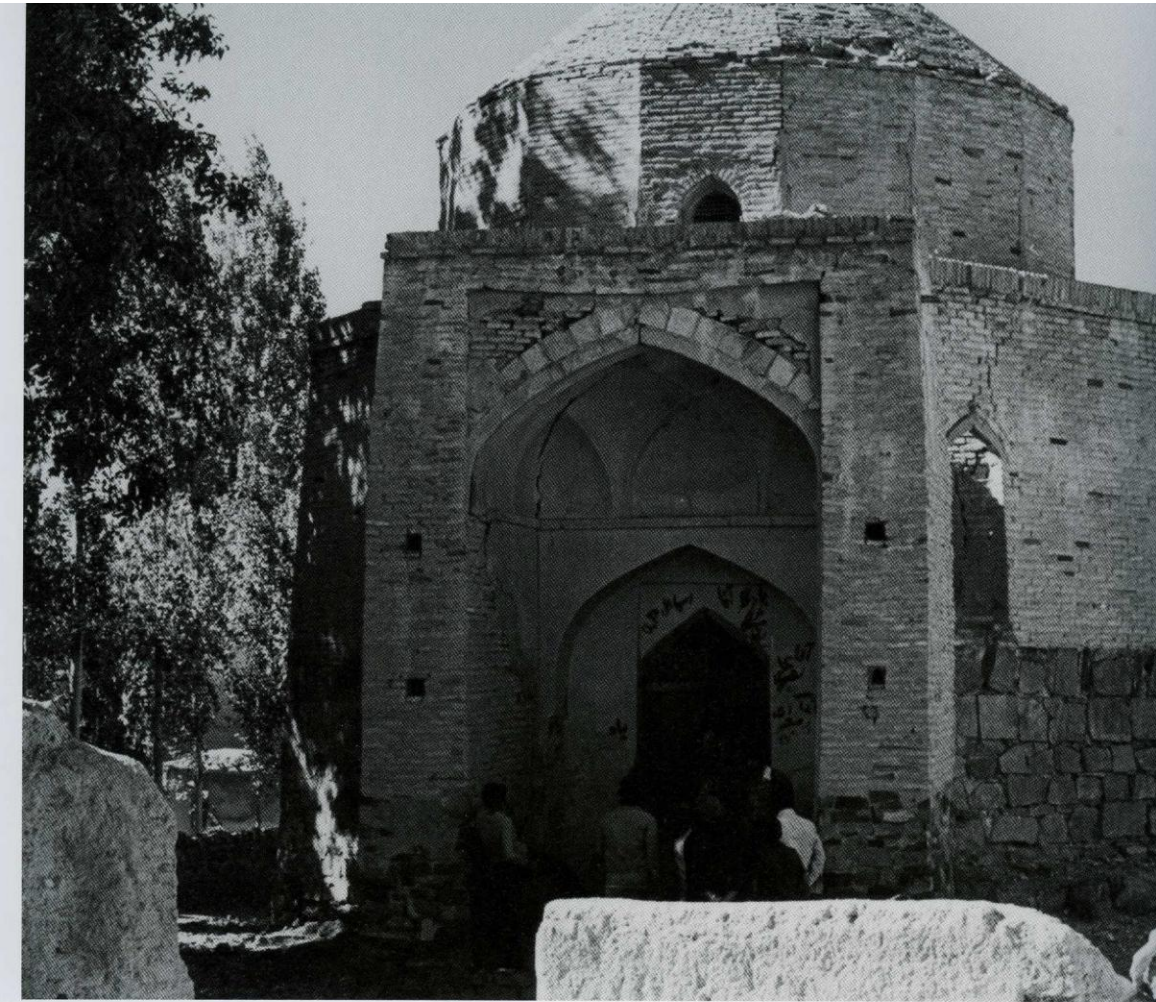
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THE ISMAILIS

An Illustrated History

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necessary, in a predominantly Sunni Persia, to practise *taqiyya* in the guise of Sufism, with the Imams also adopting Sufi-sounding names. For all practical purposes, the Persian Nizaris now appeared as a Sufi *tariqa*, using the master – disciple (*murshid–murid*) terminology of the Sufis.

On the subject of the context of Ismaili – Sufi relations during the early Anjudan period, there are valuable details preserved in a book entitled *Pandiyat-i javanmardi* (*Admonitions on Spiritual Chivalry*), which contains the religious admonitions of Imam Mustansir bi'llah II. In this book, later translated into Gujarati (Khojki) for the benefit of the Nizari Khojas, the Nizaris are referred to by common Sufi expressions such as *ahl-i haqq* and *ahl-i haqiqat*, or the 'people of the truth', while the Imam is designated as *pir* or *murshid*. Permeated with ideas widely associated with Sufism and written in Persian, the Imam's admonitions start with the *shari'at–tariqat–haqiqat* categorization of the Sufis, describing *haqiqat* as the *batin* of *shari'at* which could be attained only by the true believer (*mu'min*) who followed the spiritual path or *tariqat*. In

line with earlier Nizari teachings of the *qiyama* times, the *Pandiyat* further explains that *haqiqat* essentially consists of recognizing the spiritual reality of the Imam of the time. The *Pandiyat* explains that patience is a virtue in all but two instances. The first exception is that the believers must always be impatient to fulfil the commands of God and never tarry in discharging His orders, while the second is to be impatient for the beatific vision, which is the most urgent of all matters. On this point there is a story, which concludes one section of the *Admonitions*:

O believers, listen to the story of the Prophet Yahya. He shed tears day and night, never relenting. One day the angel Gabriel descended from the presence of the majestic Lord, saying, 'O Prophet Yahya, the lord of the two worlds has asked: "Why do you weep so much? I feel immense pity for you. If you weep for paradise, it is granted to you. If you sob from fear of hell, I forbid it to touch you."' The Prophet Yahya replied, 'I weep neither desiring paradise nor fearing hell, but to behold you, to receive



Opposite page
Mausoleum of Imam Mustansir bi'llah II (Shah Qalandar) at Anjudan.

left
The initial sojourn of the Nizari Ismaili Imams at Anjudan lasted for almost a century, from the time of Imam Mustansir bi'llah II (d.885/1480) until the time of Imam Murad Mirza (d.981/1574). While Ismailis were still obliged to utilize the guise of Sufism, Anjudan saw the revival of *da'wa* and literary activities. This Timurid painting on silk from Persia or Central Asia, dated to second quarter of the 9th/15th century, shows a princely couple with attendants in a pastoral setting of spring blossom.

left below
Manuscript page of the *da'i* Khayrkhwah-i Harati's work, *Tasnifat*, dated 1307/1890. One of the main authors of the Anjudan period, Khayrkhwah-i Harati (d. after 960/1553) adopted the pen-name (*takhallus*) 'Gharibi' in his poetry. He apparently became a Nizari *pir* at the age of nineteen.

اللهم
اللهم
رض از بحر بر اینز کلمه
نیز اوقات پرده بر روزه
لا یسئو ان نبودند که با این
فطرت خداوند جلت قدر
و در در فسیف بر بوسنده کا
روی کار کت نه بر و اش
عوت بر بزم کینه نموده بن
بشارت رفیقان هر موف

your beatific vision!' At that moment the Lord said, 'If you weep to behold me, then weep much that you may attain your purpose! May you remain safe in this mortal world and weep much.' [SV]

The acknowledgement of the current Imam and obeying his instructions and commands are stressed throughout the *Pandiyat*, manuscripts of which are preserved by the Nizaris of Badakhshan, and in Hunza and other northern areas of Pakistan. The Nizaris now essentially retained the teachings of the Alamut period, especially as elaborated after the declaration of the *qiyama* which brought them closer to Sufi traditions. It should also be added that by the 10th/16th century, the term *pir*, the Persian equivalent of the Arabic *shaykh*, had acquired widespread currency among Nizari Ismailis; it was applied to *da'is* of different ranks as well as the Imam himself. Subsequently, this term fell into disuse in Persia, but it was retained by the Nizari communities of Central Asia and South Asia.

Surviving literature demonstrates that the journey to Anjudan was undertaken by Ismailis

despite the uncertain conditions of travel. Indeed the experience gave a sense of certainty to those who undertook the pilgrimage. Supplicatory verses composed by the 9th/15th-century Persian Ismaili poet Khwaja 'Abd Allah Ansari describe his pilgrimage to Anjudan for the beatific vision of the Imam, perhaps on the occasion of his succession to the Imamate:

Those who caught the scent of wisdom divine, with heart and soul became slaves of Mustansir bi'llah. In love, those who became dust at this threshold surpass even the portico of the throne on the basis of their eminence. I became the slave of a sovereign so magnificent and glorious that all who become his slaves become kings of both worlds. I became a slave so fortunate that all who beheld me declared: 'What a lucky slave is he whose name is 'Abd Allah, "the slave of God"'. The longing of this forlorn one was but to behold the face of the friend. Praise be to God – the heart gained what it desired! [SV]