GINĀN AS *TAFSĪR* LITERATURE

The Exegetical Dimensions of a Tradition

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The *Ginān* tradition holds a special place in devotional and religious life in the Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah. *Ginān* recitations are ubiquitous in Isma'ili devotional life; they are played in homes, cars, and recited on auspicious religious occasions. *Ginān* recitation likewise comprises a central element of the congregational life of the Shia Imami Ismaili community within the *jamā'at-khāna* (congregation house). The vast corpus of the *Ginān* literature has long formed part of the spiritual heritage of the South Asian Isma'ili community, especially in Sindhi, Khoja, and Gujarati South Asian communities. This study uses the genre of the *Ginān* to critically engage the boundary frameworks that can be considered *tafsīr* literature and argues that the *ginānic* narrative provides not only liturgical but theologically complex examples of a Subcontinent vernacular Shi'i exegetical tradition.

KEYWORDS: Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah, Qur'an, *tafsīr*, *ta'wīl*, *Ginān*, Satpanth

> 'In the Ginans that Pir Sadradin has given you, he has explained to you the essence of the Qur'an in Indian languages.'
>
> — Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, Zanzibar Farman, 5 July 1899

THE *GINĀN* TRADITION: SITUATING THE VERNACULAR WITHIN A GLOBAL DISCOURSE

The *Ginān* tradition holds a special place in the devotional religious life of the Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah.[1] *Ginān* recitation likewise comprises a central element of the congregational life of the Shia Imami Ismaili community within the *jamā'at-khāna*.[2] The vast corpus of the *Ginān* literature has long formed part of the spiritual heritage of the South Asian Isma'ili community, especially in different Sindhi, Khoja, and Gujarati South Asian communities.

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The advent of projects to disseminate printed *Ginān* in printed books following textual standardization was concomitant with the encouragement of Hazar Imam H. H. Prince Shah Karim al-Husayni[3] for all the spiritual children of the Imam (irrespective of their ethno-cultural background), to cultivate a relationship with the *Ginān* tradition[4]. This has resulted in the *Ginān* becoming more familiar to Ismaʿili communities coming from outside South Asia. Scholarship on the centrality of the *Ginān* to the devotional life of the transnational Ismaʿili community of faith is well-represented in the academic literature on the subject. The pioneering works of Azim Nanji on the Satpanth tradition and Ali Asani on their specifically liturgical and 'performance text' dimensions are excellent contributions to that discourse.

When compared to these devotional elements, however, comparatively less attention has been paid to engaging the *Ginān* tradition as a commentarial or exegetical tradition. Apart from the excellent treatment of the subject of the intersection of the *Ginān* tradition and *taʾwīl* of the Qurʾan by Aziz Talbani and Parveen Hasanali,[5] scholarship within the academy has enjoyed relatively few dedicated engagements with the *exegetical* dimensions of the *Ginān* tradition.

One of the most compelling aspects of situating the *Ginān* narrative tradition as a facet within the broader Islamic intellectual *tafsīr* projects is how it can facilitate reappraisals of the boundary demarcations imposed on the categories of *tafsīr* and *taʾwīl*. While in some places these demarcations are wholly appropriate, in others there is an artificiality inherent in the imposition of these conceptual boundaries. This present study seeks to move forward the discourse on both the necessity to move past arbitrary boundary demarcations of what is, and is not, properly considered *tafsīr*, as well as how the *Ginān* narratives can be seen as exemplifications of the commentarial tradition.

Before proceeding further, a small discussion of the utilization of the terms *tafsīr* and *taʾwīl vis à vis* the present discussion is warranted. When delineating *tafsīr* (which stems from the root ف-س-ر 'to detect') and *taʾwīl* (likely from the root ء-و-ل 'turn back to'), Aziz Talbani and Parveen Hasanali note that '*taʾwīl* is generally understood as a hermeneutic exegesis of the Qurʾānic text. Ismaili *taʾwīl* seeks to explore what is understood as the inner (*bāṭin*) meaning…*Taʾwīl* is a return to the origin…to the original meaning of the revelation, hidden beneath the apparent text.'[6]

For the purposes of the present work, *taʾwīl* is intended to convey the meaning of a mystical or esoteric commentary, or one that provides elucidations upon the complexity and subtlety of the exegetical subject beyond a surface level explanatory mode. *Taʾwīl*, then, is ultimately a form of *tafsīr*. Simultaneous plurality of meaning was acknowledged by the classical Islamic *mufassirūn* and by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. The discursive multivalence of interpretive to which narratives such as the Qurʾan are amenable is discussed in the *tafsīr* attributed to the Shiʿi Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. It is narrated from him that 'the Book of God has four things: literal expression (*ʿibārah*), allusion (*ishārah),* subtleties (*laṭāʾif*), and the deepest realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*).'[7]

Seeing the *Ginān* tradition within the framework of an exegetical vernacular communal discourse has implications for widening the rather narrow boundaries of what much scholarship has historically considered a legitimate example of a *tafsīr* project. Johanna Pink and

JOURNAL OF THE CONTEMPORARY STUDY OF ISLAM | VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 2 | 2020
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Andreas Görke correctly note in the introduction to their recent compilation on the subject of *tafsīr*:

> Any discussion of *tafsīr*, its structure, methods, and function, will invariably come to the point where the very definition of the term is under debate. One option would be to adopt the original Arabic meaning of the term *tafsīr*, namely, 'explanation' and to consider any activity that tries to explain or interpret the Qur'an or parts of it as *tafsīr*. Following this option has the merit of including exegetical discourses that might not be part of any formal genre of Qur'an interpretation but are nonetheless highly relevant for achieving an overall assessment of Muslim exegesis of the Qur'an and might also be influential for Qur'anic commentaries of in a narrower sense...[including] works of legal, theological, or hadith scholarship.[8]

Aziz Talbani and Parveen Hasanali further observe, '*Ginān*s serve as ideal modes for *ta'wīlī* interpretation both in form and function. In form, the *Ginān* generally presents *a mythos* a story using metaphors and imagery from the indigenous Indian culture integrated with Ismaili concepts by its creators, Persian and Arab *dā'ī*s and preachers of the Imām, known as Pīrs.'[9]

However, this mythos should be seen not as the mobilization of fictitious cultural themes utilized in service of merely crafting a palatable communal folk-narrative. Rather, it is the conscious utilization of the typologies inherent within previously existing vernacular mythography to convey Isma'ili theological propositions. By employing terms to which their audience had previous exposure, structurally and thematically, as well as integrating Qur'anic themes, this mythos reveals the situatedness of the *Ginān* firmly within both the Qur'an narrative and vernacular South Asian devotional contexts. Its Qur'anic vernacularity is demonstrable not solely from narrative or literary elements, however; even linguistic study attests to this point. Approximately 14 percent of the words encountered in the *Ginān* in one study conducted were found to be Arabic, and nearly one quarter, Gujarati.[10]

There have been many different explanatory models offered to outline this vernacular liminality inherent within the *Ginān* tradition. These various paradigms have usually granted explanatory priority from which to attribute the production of the vast corpus of the *Ginān* tradition to a specific teleology. What may be termed the 'conversion model' thesis was largely championed by the earliest meaningful European academic treatments of the *Ginān* literature and the Isma'ili tradition, such as those of Wilfred Madelung[11] and Vladimir Ivanow. Ivanow was perhaps *the* first western academician to offer meaningful, substantive engagement with the rich history of the Isma'ili tradition, including a prolific translation project which resulted in the translation of some of Nasir Khusraw's works such as the *Rawshana-yi Namih*. Such was his profundity and scope of influence that very few scholars of the Shi'i tradition have neglected him within European academic circles in the twentieth century.[12]

In her excellent work on the *Ginān* literature attributed to Pir Shamsuddin, Tazim R. Kassam calls him 'the pacesetter of Isma'ili studies in this century'.[13] To Ivanow, the *Ginān* narrative functioned as a pedagogical tool to facilitate conversion, and he saw in those hymns the 'bridge between Ismailism and Hinduism, which permitted the new ideas to enter the entirely different world of Hindu mentality'.[14] In concert with Ivanow and Azim Nanji,

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Gulshan Khakee, in her incredibly detailed study on the multiple recensions of the work *Dasa-Avatara*,[15] records how many of the various Satpanth communities narrate their identity in a process of proselytization, usually in the context of a missionary campaign by a *pīr*.

One of the leading Ismaʿili studies scholars, Farhad Daftary, rightly cognizant of the necessity to situate the Satpanth tradition within the broader Indo-Persian Nizari Ismaʿili milieu, has nuanced this idea somewhat, and sees the formation of the *Ginān* tradition as necessitated by issues of both proselytization as well as the general need for *taqiyya* (the self-protective dissimulation of theological identity). Daftary's assessment of the *Ginān* literature amongst the Satpanth community sees both this process of conversion and *taqīyyah* at work, noting 'the widespread practice of taqiyya by Nizārīs of different regions...Nizārīs were obliged to dissimulate...resorting to Sunni, Sufi, Twelver Shiʿi and Hindu disguises.'[16] He further observes:

> The Nizārī Khojas of the Indian subcontinent, as noted, elaborated their own literary tradition in the form of *gināns,* containing a diversity of mystical, mythological, didactic, cosmological, and eschatological themes.[17]

This diverse fluidity of both inter- and intra-cultural exchange was not unique to the variegated Satpanth communities, however, and it was quite normative during the time in which the *Ginān* tradition emerged. Vernacularism permeated much of Subcontinent and Indo-Persian religious discourse, from bhakti Hindu devotional vernacularism to Persian apocalyptic material in late antiquity.[18] As John Hawley observes, commenting on this phenomenon (using the example of the twelfth-century work, the *Bhagavata Mahatmya),* the depth of engagement and cultural exchange within the North Indian and Persian context were profound.[19]

The formative period of the *Ginān* narrative and the Satpanth community exists within the framework of the rise and development of other vernacular devotional communities in South Asia like the proto-Bhakti movements and the *pānth* traditions. It likewise parallels the development of other expressive forms of theologically and devotionally-centred traditions in South Asian religious discourse, such as *grānths* and *qawwālī*. These liturgical elements of the *Ginān* tradition incorporated various Indian ragas and Persian folk musicality.[20]

What Teena Purohit has offered in considering the *Ginān* and Satpanthi traditions as 'Qurʾanic refractions' has tremendous explanatory power. Commenting on the multivocality of the *Ginān* tradition and its textual resonances with Qurʾanic themes, Purohit observes:

> Verses of the Qurʾan recited globally in the daily prayer are part of the opening Surah known as the al-Fatiha. The subject of this Surah is the Sirat al-Mustaqim, what can be translated as the 'true path'...The...paradigm I offer is to read the Satpanth as a refraction of Qurʾanic ideas in the local Indian context...The *gināns* offer specific insights into how Islam indigenized in the Indic milieu, a process I describe as Qurʾanic refraction. While Sirat-al-Mustaqim and Satpanth can both be translated as 'true path,' the latter is not simply the Gujarati version of the former. The *gināns* are part of the body of diverse literary forms that emerged in Indian vernacular languages.[21]

The multivocality of the Satpanthi communities of faith and the multivalence of the *Ginān* allowed the *ginānic* narratives to be vehicles for both the transmission of liturgical devotional experiences, and as Purohit notes, Qurʾanic commentarial tradition. This discursive liminality has resulted in very strong contestations for and against the sectarian boundary frameworks[22] which many modern polities have imposed upon the various 'Ginān community' movements.

When the narrative content of the *Ginān* tradition is engaged, however, it must be admitted these are thoroughly Shiʿi in the sense of allegiance to the divine person of ʿAli. However, they are theologically and cosmologically grounded in a multifocal vernacularism that draws heavily on Qurʾanic, Vaishnava, and Ismaʿili theosophical discourse equally comfortably.

One facet of this multifocality was shaped by the Ismaʿili Tariqah being a truly global movement from relatively early on within its history. Ismaʿili theology and its exponents were present in North Africa far earlier than the advent of the official establishment of the Fatimid state. There was a demonstrable presence of the Ismaʿili *daʿwah* from 883 CE under the supervision of Ibn Hawshab Mansur al-Yaman in Sindh.[23] The movement was perhaps active in those regions of South Asia as early as the time of the sixth and seventh Imams.[24] Likewise, there has been demonstrated to have been the presence of 'an Ismaili principality…established in Sindh, with its seat in Multan…[which] had established their influence in Gujarat by 1067.'[25] This wide geographic proliferation of Ismaʿili *daʿī*s necessitated fluid and accommodating presentations of the cosmology and theological truth claims of the Ismaʿili movement. Azim Nanji extensively documents this heterogenous trans-nationality in the pioneering doctoral dissertation *The Nizari Ismaili Tradition in Hind and Sind*:

> The tenth and eleventh centuries saw the Fatimid dynasty reach its zenith, and the *khutba* was recited in the name of the Fatimid caliph in almost half the Islamic territories, in places extending from the Maghrib in the west to Sind in the east, including Yemen…by the eleventh century internal weaknesses and external pressures in the form of a Sunni resurgence…the Ismailis split over the issue of succession…one giving allegiance to…Nizar…in Iran meanwhile one of the leaders, Hasan-i-Sabbah, having already established his headquarters in the fort of Alamut in the province of Daylaman, threw in his lot in favor of Nizar and thus began the organization of an independent Nizari daʾwa…with this background in mind we now turn to an area which had been a theatre of the Ismaili daʾwa's activity before the establishment of the Fatimid dynasty – namely Hind and Sind.[26]

There was also direct Shiʿi Imami Ismaʿili rule in the Sind from 1005 CE.[27] Not simply the Sindh region, however, but *all* of South Asia, since before the common era, and the Subcontinent specifically, was a place of incredible proliferation of inter and intra-cultural exchange (especially after the Byzantine Empire and the 'Islamic Expansion' South Asia in general). This was assisted by a sophisticated collection of trade networks, connecting Arab, Gujarati, Persian, Chinese, and European trade goods. With this trade network, there likewise came an equally prolific diffusion of political, philosophical, and religious ideas and texts; this was especially true from the1200s to the 1600s. This period was during the height of the bhakti poetic and scriptural/theological diffusion into wider Indic society.[28] We see

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this intertextuality played out in many of the delightfully picturesque polemical narratives from the hagiography of Ćaitanya, wherein he utilized Qurʾanic exegesis in disputation with his Muslim interlocutors.[29]

While there may have been periods of lapse of direct contact, the connection between Indic and Persianate Islamic cultures remained strong. The Ismaʿili tradition was no exception, even during periods of intense persecution. As Shafique Virani documents, Subcontinent and Central Asian contact with Persian Ismaʿili *dāʿīs* went on well into the post-Mongol period of Alamut.[30]

THE DISCURSIVE MULTIVOCALITY OF THE *GINĀN* TRADITION: PURANIC DIVERGENCES, ʿALID RE-INTEGRATIONS, AND QURʾANIC REFRACTIONS

The *Ginān* narrative not only intones in traditional South Asian melodies (*raga*), as previously noted, but likewise invokes multiple Indo-Persian thematic elements. The way these thematic and recitational elements integrate themselves with Qurʾanic thematic material can be understood through ideas proposed by Tony Stewart, describing a similar reality as that which occurs with the Qurʾanic vernacularity of the *Ginān* within a Bengali literary context.[31] Stewart's 'translation theory' paradigm, when applied to the *Ginān* tradition, convincingly situates the necessity for seeing the variegated fluidity of themes one encounters in the *Gināns* as exegetical in nature.

This trans-confessional theological framework in which these variegated exemplifications of a devotionalism are situated is attestation to the fluidity of the boundaries in the Subcontinent religious sphere at the time. The articulators of the *Ginān* and their composers, in employing the medium of vernacularity to translate Qurʾanic and Shiʿi theological content, were no exception to this pattern of shared vernacular religio-social intercourse. The *Gināns* routinely condemn the various Hindu *pānths* and *dharmas*, yet never directly reject their (transcendent) deities, scriptures like the Vedas or Puranas, nor the idea that these *dhārma*s contain scriptural truths. One example of this is found in the So Kiria *Ginān* of Pir Sadruddin, which reflects a condemnation of Hindu exegetical understanding of scripture and the concomitant cultic religious systems that followed that understanding.

However, it simultaneously is possessed of a much more ecumenical spirit regarding the scriptures of those traditions themselves. The *pīr* admonishes his listeners that *khat darasan puje nahin pāme mokh, ved sāsatar kahe na karavo dokh* ('the religious worship systems cannot liberate, [but] the holy revealed scriptures are not to be abandoned').[32] A clear delineation is made between the *puja* and the *ved* therein. While the Hindu *darshana* and *puja* may not lead to liberation (*moksha*), Vedic scriptures (and by necessary extension, the Qurʾan) are to be accepted.

The classic Ismaʿili work *Anant Akahado*, attributed to the fifteenth century Pir Hasan Kabirdin, is very telling of how Indo-Persian and Hindu thematic material could be interwoven into the exegetical framework of the *Ginān*. The narrative of this *grānth*[33] expounds extensively upon core Ismaʿili cosmological and onto-theological ideas, woven around the mythography of well-known Subcontinent *theologemes*.[34] This is mythos in multiple senses,

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both as communal narrative identity framing, and as utilization and reintegration of previously articulated ideas in fluid ways that accommodate the new religious elements the narrative presents. For instance, a line in *Anant Akahado* says:

> *Āshāji Ketā kalap ne ketā jug tis mā(n) hae gur tu(n) hi huāji....*
> O Lord! In many ages and eras, you were guide (teacher, liberator)....[35]

This intentionally echoes a well-known refrain in the Gita: 'For the protection of the virtuous, for the extirpation of evil doers...I manifest myself from age to age.'[36]

This form of discursive exchange was normative for much of Levantine and South Asian socio-religious and literary practice, as Farina Mir notes, regarding the decidedly vernacular literary phenomena of Punjabi popular *qisse* folk narrative tradition. This tradition in turn borrows heavily from the Arabic and Persian *qiṣaṣ* story genre. Specifically, Mir highlights the exemplification of this vernacularism by Amir Khusraw, noting:

> Khusro is best remembered in Indian literary circles as one of the earliest exponents of Hindvi...
> an Indian vernacular language...Khusro composed renditions of the romances Laila-Majnun
> and Khusro-Shirin in Persian and in *masnavi* forms which illustrates that Arab and Persian
> tales, in Persian literary forms, were incorporated in South Asian literary products.[37]

Mir convincingly argues in her work for the normativity of an intercultural exchange between the Arab and the Indo-Persian literary cultures and their ideas. Such exchange is documented in her other works as well, wherein she observes that 'the *qisse* genre was adopted by India's Persian literati as early as the late thirteenth century. In the following centuries it was taken up by Punjabi poets, and poets in other vernacular languages' and that it 'retained certain elements of the Persian *qisse* tradition....'[38] The vernacularizing synthesis resulting from the dyadic exchange of these poetics finds a similar reality in *Ginān.* Ismaʿili theological concepts become married with bhakti devotional terms in a highly sophisticated form of vernacular commentarial tradition. This exemplifies what Timothy Dobe in a very helpful recent work has termed 'shared idioms of piety'.[39]

The *Ginān* narrative cannot be excluded from being seen as a legitimate form of *tafsīr* because of the utilization of such vernacularism. Rather, *it is on account of such facets* that *Ginān* literature and tradition are well within the milieu of a cross-cultural, accessibly democratized Shiʿi Qurʾanic homiletic.

TAʾWĪL, TAFSĪR, AND *TAʿLĪM*: THE QURʾANIC VERNACULAR EXEGESIS OF THE *GINĀN* STREAMS OF COMMENTARIAL TRADITION

The *Ginān* tradition is not only amenable to being framed as interpretive, but it self-referentially asserts that it is bringing Qurʾanic material to its audience. Perhaps the strongest attestation to the necessity to frame the *ginānic* discourse in many respects as primarily exegetical comes in the form of the direct exegetical and pedagogical references made

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within many *Gināns* to the Qur'an. These examples in the voluminous *ginānic* corpus are exhaustive.

Kamalludin Muḥammad Ali notes the following such illustrative examples:

> *Pir Shams paḍe ilam Kuran, Moman so jo jaṇe bharam ginan.*
> Pir Shams narrates the knowledge of the Qur'an. A believer is one who knows the divine knowledge.[40]

> *Gur nache garbimaṅhe, te gae Kuranne re lol.*
> The spiritual guide danced to the Garbi and related the teachings of the Qur'an.[41]

> S*atgur kahere Pir Shams Kuran ja bhakhiya, Ane bhakhiya char ved ja jaṇ; Te gat gangamanhe besi kari, Kīdhi sachi sankh nirvaṇ re.*
> The Satgur says: 'Pir Shams has preached the Qur'an and preached the four Vedas. Sitting among the Gat Jamat, he has narrated the true signs.'[42]

> *Eji Pir Sadardin yara paḍe re Kurana, Bahar jave taku andar lana, Shahne sujaṇo apṇa pirne pichhaṇo, bhi Saiyan.*
> O brother! Pir Sadruddin is giving you the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Bring back those who have turned away from your religion. Recognize the Imam and know the Pir.[43]

> *Eji Ali Nabithi e satpanth chaliya, Tene sirevie gubat apar; Athar vedi a satpanth kahie, Te to khojiya Kuran minjar; cheto.*
> Light manifested from light; its abode is in the light. He created this true path (Satpanth) and searched it out from the Holy Qur'an. That Satpanth continued from Hazrat Ali and the Prophet; follow it most discreetly. This Satpanth is according to Athar Veda [the last Veda] that has been searched out from the Holy Qur'an.[44]

One can also see an illustration of this in the *Aash Punee Ham Shaah Dar Paaya* attributed to the fourteenth century Isma'ili Pir Hasan Kabir Din: 'Peer Sadardeen recites the Qur'aan. He brings back to the fold those who leave it.'[45] As Chhotu Lakhani records in a monograph on the subject of the *Ginān* tradition, specifically when commenting on the *Gināns* of 'Abd al-Nabi and Pir Sadruddin:

> Ginan contains a number of terms which are exclusively Indian, particularly of the vaishnavites... they believed in Das Avataars...According to them, ever since the creation of the world, the Jyot i.e. the Light or Noor passed through several creations to convey the Divine Guidance. Pir Sadruddin, while teaching Islam in keeping with Allah's Guidance in the Holy Quran, showed them the Sirat-ul-Mustaqeem (Sat Panth) from their own point of view.[46]

The *Gīnān* narrative at times functions as a kind of homolytic. This can be observed in the following material attributed to alternatively to both Shams Tabriz[47] and Pir Sadruddin:

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The secret of the two worlds, the shadow of Allah's Noor, Which came down from the heaven to the land and became manifest, was Ali...As there is oil in the wick of the lamp...Why do you consider its visible form? Throughout the day Ali does exist in it.[48]

Here the homily is on the ontology of the Imam, in the context of one of the most powerful and moving verses in the Qur'an, *āyah al-nūr* in Sura al-Nur. As Gerhard Bowering notes in his seminal occasional paper on the subject: 'Throughout the ages, light has been valued as the most beautiful phenomenon of creation... in the Qur'an...the theme of light, God's light, is...directly addressed in the famous "light verse".'[49]

As the prolific Ahmadi Qur'an translator and author Muhammad Ali has recognized, *ḍaw'* or *ḍiyā'* signifies 'that light which subsists by itself', and *nūr* 'that which subsists through some other thing.'[50] He is by no means idiosyncratic in this definition. Lane records that the word *nūr* connotes the lunar, rather than solar light, that *ḍiyā'* is more intense, and that *ḍiyā'* is essential whereas *nūr* is accidental light.[51]

On this ontological consubstantiality of *nūr Allāh* and *nūr al-Imām*, Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad observes:

Another key term in the Qur'an which alludes to the concept of Imamat is Nūr (light), which is sent down by Allah, and the believers are required to believe in it, as the Qur'an says: 'so believe in Allah and His messenger and the Light in which We have revealed. And Allah is informed of what ye do' (64:8)...The Imams are the manifested Nūr and they guide people on the Straight Path...Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir also points to this concept in the following verse 'is he who was dead and We raised him unto life, and set for him a light wherein he walks...as him whose similitude is in utter darkness?'...According to Hazrat Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir, the dead man in the above verse symbolizes ignorant people and the Nūr walking among the people is the Imam of the time.[52]

The *Ginān* tradition nuances these points, offering a mystical interpretation of how the light of God is essentially 'borrowed' light. The exegetical dimension of this assertion is nuanced to explain that the *nūr Allāh* is met with in the *tajallī* of the person of the Imam (Imam 'Ali, being the prototypical Imam, and also the present, living Isma'ili Imam). This is just as commentarial as it is credal. The *Ginān* abound in rich presentations of such highly abstract theological ideas of immense profundity, yet the *Ginān* narrative not only masterfully communicates this profundity, but its poetic nature does so in a devotional way accessible to all within the community of faith.

By nuancing the modalities in which the divine light and its process of indwelling the locus of manifestation for that divine light (which is either in mankind in general, or in special exemplars of divine perfection, the saints, the friends of God, or members of the Ahl al-Bayt such as Fatima, 'Ali, and the Imams), the *Ginān* provides commentarial observation. This commentary elucidates how the light of God can be spoken of as 'reflected' or 'borrowed' in essence in the Qur'an through asserting the manner in which this light is manifested through the conduit of the *panj-i pāk* and Imam-i Zaman.

Kammaludin Ali Muhammad observes on this point the directly referential exegetical glossing by Sayyid Imam Shah of the Qur'anic theologeme of *nūr Allāh*:

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Light manifested from light; its abode is in the light. He created this true path (Satpanth) and searched it out from the Holy Qurʾan. That Satpanth continued from Hazrat Ali and the Prophet; follow it most discreetly. This Satpanth is according to Athar Veda (the last Veda) that has been searched out from the Holy Qurʾan.[53]

Henry Corbin has characterized this lucent theophany, to which the *Ginān* refer, as the:

…Pillar of Light that constitutes the divinity (*lāhūt*) of the Imām…the archangelic Forms of the Celestial Pleroma (*dār al-ibdāʾ*) have human form…this refers to Man in the true and absolute sense, that is to the Imāms, and most particularly to him who completes their line, the 'Perfect Child', the Resurrector (*Qāʾim*)…perfect divine humanity, that of the Imām…the Imām is the *maẓhar*, the Epiphanic Form.[54]

The Satpanth tradition(s) have in the *Ginān* a form of *taʿlīm*, a method of communal pedagogical discursive. This instruction, articulated in a vernacular homolytic form of exegesis, demonstrates a unique stream of tradition that is simultaneously in continuity with the broader global Ismaʿili and generally Shiʿi cosmological framework. These narratives are likewise in concert with the broader Indo-Persian theological bricolage from which they emerge. This results in several core devotional concepts being the hallmark of this vernacular Shiʿi Satpanth tradition. The Imam as the light of God, the soteriological efficacy of the *Shāh-jo Dīdar* or 'vision of the Lord', and Heaven (*Vaikuntha*) as a gift of the Imam as divinized lucent theophany of God are central *ginānic* themes, evidencing the manner in which the rich tapestry of this tradition abounds in both Qurʾanic and Indic theological paradigms.

Another relevant exegetical inter-textual resonance between Qurʾanic and Puranic themes can be found in the emphasis upon the invocation/repetition of divine names in *Ginān* traditions. This onto-theological assertion of 'name theophany' concurs with both Qurʾanic and Puranic possibilities of *real* divine presence in speech.[55] This can by extension include the 'name of the Lord' or the *kalām Allāh* as well as those individuals and entities indwelt by divine presence or articulating divine utterance (*mantra, śruti*, etc.). The exemplification of this modality of theophany in the Puranic context and the *Ginān* literature is striking. In the *Navroz Ginān* of Sayyid Fatih ʿAli Shah, we read:

In Love, I was attached to the Lord in rapture, and I gained enduring delight from the Master. With my mind thus fixed on the ever-living Lord, the treasury of truth was filled with pearls.[56]

The centrality of divine names is emphasized in the Navroz *Ginān* and is also found in the *Ginān* of Pir Shams who beautifully extolls the unicity of the divinity in a poetic brilliance ever cognizant of the Lord's supreme indivisible, irresistible divine unicity (*tawḥīd*):

Eji Kāem dāyam tun sāmi tere name bi koi koi
You are the everlasting, O Lord, though your names are many.[57]

This echoes the narrative within the Qur'an found in Q. 17:110: 'Say: Supplicate to Allah or supplicate to the Beneficent, by whatever [name] you call unto him by, then for him are the Greatest Names.'

In many examples from the *Ginān* tradition, the Qur'anic idea of the *asmā' al-ḥusnā*, or God having the 'best names', is commented on, with the *ism-i a'ẓam*, or the supreme name, being that of 'Ali. The *Ginān* of Pir Sadrain *Haq tun paak tun baadashaah* states:

> O Most High ('Ali)! It is You only. You are the Maintainer, you are the Merciful, you are The First, The Last, the Judge, O Most High ('Ali). It is only You. You have created. You have produced. You are the Creator O Most High ('Ali)! It is only You.[58]

On this Lokhani says, '[O]ur great Pirs and Dais, including Pir Shams, the Author of this Ginan…see everything in Ali and through Ali. For them Ali is none else but Allah's Ali i.e. Aliyullah.'[59] This is exegetical, not merely poetic or pietistic excess. Rather, it presents *ta'wīl* of the nature of the divine names, illustrating their manifestation (*tajallī*) through the Imam.

This feature of the *Ginān* tradition's concept of the *Imām* as divine immanence exegetes much notable Qur'anic material. There is an abundance of Qur'anic verses that are equally suggestive of either a 'plain-text' reading (*ẓāhir*) or an esoteric, metaphorical (*bāṭin*), or which are even explicit assertions of the concept of divine immanence. These include:

> And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, surely, I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls me. (Q. 286)

> And certainly We created man, and We know what his mind suggests to him – and We are nearer to him than his life vein. (Q. 50:16)

> The Hand of Allah is over their hands. (Q. 48:10)

Likewise, Q. 8:17 ('then it was not you who cut them down, but Allah struck them, and it was not you who cast [at the enemy], but it was Allah who performed the act of casting]') is strongly indicative of a divine-human consubstantiality, or at least agentive synonymy. In that synonymy, mankind functions as a *tajallī* or manifestation of divine attributes, and the Prophet or the Imam expresses the highest expression of manifestation for these divine characteristics.

This notion of divine immanence is presented in the *Ginān* tradition as exemplified by the person of the Imam, who is the *maẓhar* or locus of divine manifestation. The *tajallī* by the Imam functions in the *ginānic* narrative as the self-disclosure of the otherwise wholly transcendent God. The modality by which this is achieved is the *nūr Allāh,* the light of God, as the light of imamate (and especially in the divine personage of Imam 'Ali) is concomitant with the very fabric of *Ginān* narrative cosmology. This is again quite in keeping with the broader tradition of mystical Shi'i thought. It would be hard to consider the above words and not be reminded of Khutba al-Iftikhar (the well-known 'sermon of glorification') and the Khutba al-Tajiyah attributed to Imam 'Ali. These works, which can be found for example in

the collection *Mashariq Anwar al-Yaqin fi Asrar Amir al-Mu'minin* by Hafiz Rajab al-Bursi, can themselves be considered forms of mystical exegetical literature.[60]

Often the *Ginān* see fulfilment in the Nizari stream of Isma'ili tradition of Qur'anic thematic material. Rashida Noormuhammad-Hunzai comments on this in her occasional paper, observing:

> In the Ginan 'Dur deshthi ayo vanjaro', Pir Sadardin states: 'Eji sute bethe bhai rah chalanteji Naant Sahebjiko lijiyeji.' In his composition Pir Hasan Kabiridin says, 'O my brother! Standing, or lying down, reclining of sitting, remember Mawla all the time.' Let us look at the Qur'anic verse 190-191 in Chapter 3...which reads, 'The men of intellect are those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and reclining'...The similarity in the words is obvious...This is a recurring theme of the Ginans and many will instantly recall Imam Begum's 'Har dam zikr karna' and 'Har dam Jampo Pir Shah nun jaap Japanta Rahiye'.[61]

The *Ginān* present *ta'wīl* and *ta'līm* of Qur'anic and extra-Qur'anic material, with the Imam always in view. They offer interpretive engagement with themes such as proper modalities of worship, the ontological nature of the Imam and the office of *imāma,* the metaphysical realities of the *nūr al-imām* and the Imam as *tajallī al-nūr*, the final judgement of *qīyāmat,* the light of God (*nūr Allāh)* and subtleties of divine onto-theology.

GINĀNIC INVOCATION OF QUR'ANIC TYPOLOGIES: THE *MUKHĪ* AS EMBODIMENT OF Q. 3:45-51 IN THE *GINĀN* OF IMAM SHAH AND NUR SATGUR AS 'IBRAHIM TYPOLOGY' IN THE PUTALA *GINĀN*

The nature of the Qur'anic refraction within the *Ginān* tradition forms a vernacular mythos, and it is no doubt a didactic mythos *par excellence.* The didactical nature of this mythography is an ontological concomitant with the exegetical model employed by the *Ginān,* as argues Ali Asani:

> These poetic compositions provided the faithful with an understanding of the 'true meaning' of the Qur'an serving to penetrate its...inner signification...the *gināns* were, in effect, 'secondary' texts generated to transmit the teachings of a 'primary' scripture – the Qur'an.[62]

These themes are interspersed throughout the variety of different *Ginān* traditions through utilization of various narratological devices. Sometimes the *Ginān* will highlight a Qur'anic theological point through mythographic reintegration of Qur'anic material. This is highlighted in the poetic hagiography of the Putala *Ginān,* which presents a story of the *da'wa* campaign of Pir Nur Satgur in Gujarat and describes a miraculous encounter with Nur Satgur and the priests of Gujarat.

This encounter nuances the Qur'anic typological frame narrative of the prophet Ibrahim's disputation with his folk over idolatry. The Qur'an describes this disputation in Sura al-Anbiyā'. Ibrahim, after breaking the objects of the idolatrous worship of his people, emphasizes that the act was a catalyst for rhetorical argumentation against their ineffectu-

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ality by enquiring if they can speak (Q. 21:62-32). The people of Ibrahim, cognizant of the inability of their gods to be communicative, respond that they cannot speak or respond. This highlights the prophetic argumentation, and the prophet chastises his people for their folly. 'He said, "Do you all serve in worship from amongst those who cannot provide you benefit or harm, in contraposition to Allah?"' (Q. 21:66)

The *Ginān* narrative relates a conversation between Pir Nur Satgur and the king of Gujarat and his priests. This is much akin to the discourse between Ibrahim and the chiefs of his clan. For example, we read:

> [T]he priest stood beside the Guide…the priest said: 'How can you place your feet on the image of a god? This image is worshiped by King Jai Singh'. Then Nur Satgur uttered these well-known words: 'Listen, priest, to what I have to say. If these gods of yours are real, why do they not speak?'[63]

This is a direct thematic reintegration of the hallmark of the Qurʾanic narration of the smashing of the idols by Ibrahim in his disputations with the Babylonian chiefs. Namely, they are not worthy of worship as they are neither able to protect themselves from assault nor inform their devotees of who committed that assault. This is thematically juxtaposed against the transcendent God who is supremely efficacious and sustains both idol and idol-maker's very existence.

Not only are the words of the *pīr* well-known to the community, but those words are *famous words* highlighting the extra-*ginānic* inter-textual resonance they evoke. They are Qurʾanic words, they are Ibrahim's words, and the *ginānic* narrative is self-referentially cognizant of this material. In a deft illustration of exegetical manoeuvring, it highlights that theological significance and repurposing to the reader or listener. This intra-textual utilization of extra-*ginānic* material provides scaffolding for a vernacular exegesis of both their content and theological significance in a broader condemnation of idolatry.

The priest answers Pir Nur Satgur in a manner directly evocative of the answer that the chiefs of Ibrahim gave him in the Qurʾan. However, it should be carefully noted that in what we consider to be a '*midrashic*' and therefore highly divergent exegetical flourish, there is a significant departure from the consciously referenced Qurʾanic material. In fact, what we read is a direct example, semiotically speaking, of a literary inversion. Whereas Ibrahim inquires as to the communicative abilities of the gods after he has destroyed them, here the *pīr* first enquires of the people if the gods can speak. When told that they are stones and cannot speak, Pir Nur Satgur proceeds to enliven them. By divine command, through which the *pīr* is a vessel, the stones not only speak but dance, sing, and play musical instruments.

This too is highly exegetical and harkens to anther Qurʾanic story, where the prophet ʿIsa in Sura Al-i ʿImran (Q. 3:49), by means of the permission and power of God, gives life to clay birds that fly away. The *ginānic* narrative here functions on multiple levels. The text is narrative hagiography and devotional and liturgical poetry but also thoroughly exegetical vernacular Qurʾanic commentary that highlights the transcendent divine power of the Lord of all the worlds. What we encounter in these narratives is the same phenomenology at play that Teena Purohit recognizes in the *Dasavatara Granth*:

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Even though the content is Indian, the essential message and form remain Qur'anic. One of my central arguments about Dasavatār is that it too replicates the particular dialectic of Qur'anic theology, whereby the Qur'an is deemed wholly dependent on its theological antecedents while at the same time abrogating the ultimate authority of those antecedents… Dasavatār adopts the literary genre of the puranas…to deliver a message of messianic Imami Shi'ism…in Dasavatār the central Shi'i movement out of occultation transpires between two geographic spaces – Arab and Indian lands…Imamate ideology is localized, concretized, and given meaning in the Indic space. This Imamate perspective creates a shift in epicenter: from the Arab to the Indian context. The Imamate teaching in Dasavatār thereby illustrates how a foundational idea of the Qur'an – the centrality of prophecy – takes on a distinctive form in its new context. This process of refraction of Qur'anic ideas into the Indic Satpanth worldview is not only conceptual; it has historical and cultural implications for the study of communities as well.[64]

What the Putala *Ginān* presents is a similar reutilization of the rhetorical argumentation that Ibrahim articulates that repurposes the Qur'anic story within a devotional and hagiographical context. Layer upon layer of narrative homolytic is discernible when the narrative is carefully read. Here in the Putala *Ginān*, the charisma of the living saint (as opposed to the dead idols of the priests) functions on a semiotic level as an 'indexicality' of the efficacious felicity of the one true God being argued for in the narrative, and the ineffectual futility of idolatrous pagan worship. Even the wording of the *Ginān* is also highly significant at this point:

> *tare nur sat-gur boleā vikhiyāt suno pujārā hamāri-vāt. Jo e dev tamārā hove sahi to tam sāthe kāne kun bole nahi.*
> If these gods of yours are real, why do they not speak?[65]

Within the various parallel narratives of the Abrahamic disputation (such as Q. 21:63–65), both times the assertion is made regarding the nature of idols: *mā hāʾulāʾi yanṭiqūn* ('these things cannot speak'). From a narrative standpoint, this exemplifies the most profound intertextual resonance cueing the audience receiving this *Ginān* to the words of the prophet Ibrahim in the Qur'anic text occurring during the Abrahamic disputation over the futility of idolatry and the incommunicative nature of the idols, wherein he poses the question to his folk why they do not enquire of the 'big idol' who smashed the smaller idols. The *Ginān* here functions as the 'response' to the 'call' of the Qur'an.

While there are no doubt many parallelisms to the *mise en scène* met within the Putala *Ginān* to various other South Asian hagiographical narratives, it is the linguistic, thematic, and semiotic parallels, displaying a point for point agreement with the Qur'anic story of Abrahamic contestations against idolatry, that attest to the function of the Putala *Ginān* as a form of Qur'anic reintegration. It is this form of reintegration that make the narratives in works like the *Dasavatara* and many other *Ginān* narratives interconnected with other parallel bodies of South Asian bodies of literature, but likewise rather unique. This is correctly observed by Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir in their study of *Ginān*; they note, 'It is doubtful if much is to be gained from comparing the austered ginanic idiom…to

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the Vaisnava poetic tradition…contrasts here are more profitably to be pursued than any real parallels.'[66]

It is the totality of the Qur'anic thematic witness that stands as powerful attestation to the inculcation of Qur'anic themes, and while this is by no means identicality, identicality is not a prerequisite for indexicality. This pattern of the reintegration of Qur'anic and Indic themes appertaining to prophetic attributes, being applied within the framework of the *ginānic* narrative on the divine figures featured in the Satpanth, is a rather normative feature of that tradition. Dominique Sila-Khan has done excellent work demonstrating this *ginānic* proclivity for didactic integration of reimagined motifs.[67] At times it is not the *pīr* himself but rather the *mukhī* who exemplifies the prophetic attributes.

In an Imam Shahi *Ginān*[68] extolling the virtues of the *mukhī*,[69] the *Ginān* here integrates and repurposes some seminal Qur'anic themes. As part of the enumeration of duties incumbent upon the one who been worthy to occupy the sacrality of the office, and how he should conduct himself in the pastoral care of the *jamā'at*, the *mukhī* is extolled as possessing a litany of felicities. Most notably for the present discussion, '*Mukhi te je muvā mānvi kare jinkā dil hove tenā kāj sare* (Mukhi is the one who breathes life into the non-living [or brings to life the dead] and grants the wishes of the heart).'[70] Another example is: 'Mukhi is he who has the knowledge…and the information of each house.'[71] There are parallels, both linguistic and typological, with the prophet 'Isa in the Qur'an (Q. 3:45-51).

The prophet 'Isa is extolled as the one who instructs the people in the scriptures (Q. 3:48), heals the infirmities of people and even *raises the dead* (Q. 3:49), and perhaps in what can be seen as the catena of the parallelism, he *knows what is in their houses and what they store up* (Q. 3:49). The *mukhī* at the close of the *ginānic* narrative in question, like the prophet at the culmination of these verses, is likewise exalted to heaven. Such a specific list of attributes, including such peculiarities as knowing what people have in their homes, elucidates the *ginānic* proclivity for reintegration of Qur'anic material.

Reading this corollary between prophets from among the previous nations of the People of the Book and the *mukhī* or the *pīr* is reinforced all the more strongly when it is remembered that the Shi'i Imams are often portrayed as the inheritors of the attributes, or even the superiors of the Israelite prophets in Shi'i theological works, both Ithna 'Ashari and Isma'ili.[72] Both the *pīr* and the *mukhī*, as the designated legate and caretaker on behalf of the Isma'ili Imam for the *jamā'at* and his deputized pastoral agents, are portrayed at times in Satpanth narratives as a *wasīla*, as it were, of the Imam, insofar as they are serving on his behalf. This can be seen in the variegation in the *ginānic* term *satguru* at times being applied to the Imam himself and at times to the *pīr*.

This consciously multiform narrative structure, repurposing Persian, Arab, and Indian material in its vernacularism, demonstrates the variegated liminality of boundary space which is perhaps the defining hallmark of the *Gināns*. The vast corpus of *Ginān* literature fulfils multiple roles simultaneously, and its narrative multifocality and multivocality treat a diverse plurality of theological, political, and cosmological issues, wholly vernacular, yet affirming the fundamental truth content of the cosmological and theological tenets of the Isma'ili tradition. Namely, these are the cosmic eternal personality of the manifest Imam, the salvific promise of the resurrection, and the echoing refrain of 'Ali as accessible through the guidance of the imamate and those he has deputized.

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CONCLUSION

The imposition of overly rigid boundaries upon *tafsīr* as a kind of well-defined genre has been counterproductive within Islamic studies. Viewing the *Ginān* as partly commentarial tradition allows scholarship to engage both *ginānic* articulations and *tafsīr* projects in a manner appropriately cognizant of the fluidity of boundary space within both discourses.

Ultimately, what is argued for here is to seek for a more expansive and accommodating framework from which to view the *Ginān* tradition and *tafsīr*. This framework conceives the *Ginān* as functioning as a form of vernacular scriptural exegesis and esoteric hermeneutic offered to the *ginānic* community. The *Gināns* form a repository of multiple streams of tradition, culminating in a richly religious, musical, and literary vernacular tradition attesting to the fluidity and liminality of South Asian religious discourse.

NOTES

1. I here retain here the spelling utilized by the Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board.

2. From the Arabic word for congregation and the Persian word for a dwelling space; lit. the 'congregation house'. It is the traditional religious and social sacred and communal space for Isma'ili prayers and other gatherings.

3. The fourth Aga Khan and the 49th hereditary Imam of the Ismaili Tariqah.

4. 'Many times, I have recommended to my spiritual children that they should remember Ginans...it is most important that my spiritual children from wherever they may come should...hold to this tradition which is so special." Karachi Farman, 16 December 1964; see *Ginan-e-Sharif: Our Wonderful Tradition* (Vancouver: Shia Imami Ismailia Association for Canada, 1977), i.

5. Aziz Talbani and Parveen Hasanali, 'Ta'wīl and Ginānic Literature: Knowledge Discourse and Spiritual Experience', in *Gināns: Text and Contexts*, ed. Tazim R. Kassam and Françoise Mallison (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), 197–212. There is also the article by Rashida Noormohamed-Hunzai, 'The Holy Qur'an in the Ginanic Literature-An Initial Exploration', in *Ismailimail*, published 14 November 2011 <https://ismailimail.blog/2011/11/14/the-holy-quran-in-the-ginanic-literature-an-initial-exploration-by-rashida-noormohamed-hunzai/>.

It is also worth noting the works of Alwảiz (the term here meaning a deputized religious instructor, teacher, and preacher for the community) Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad, a prolific author who has written and lectured extensively for the Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board and autonomously in both a personal and professional capacity. Some of these works include 'Ismaili Tariqah', 'Qur'an and Ginan', and 'Practices and Ceremonies: Essays on Rites and Rituals'. Alwảiz Kamaluddin also makes available multi-volume editions of much of the canon of *Ginān* literature, including *grānth*s (long-form *ginānic* texts). His wife Alwảiza Zarina Kamaluddin has done extensive work collecting, standardizing, documenting, and recording, various ragas and *maqām* (tunes and melodies) that accompany the singing and reciting of *Ginān*. It should be noted however that many *ginān* variant melodies may exist for a single *Ginān*. Their works can be found at < Most of these works are available in Urdu and English; some even enjoy a Persian translation.

6. Aziz Talbani and Parveen Hasanali, 'Ta'wīl and Ginānic Literature', 197.

7. Farhana Mayer, *Spiritual Gems: The Mystical Qur'an Commentary Ascribed by the Sufis to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2011), 1.

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8. See Andreas Görke and Johann Pink (eds.), *Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre* (New York: Oxford University Press and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2014), 3–4.

9. Aziz Talbani and Parveen Hasanali, 'Ta'wīl and Ginānic Literature', 198.

10. Zawahir Moir and Christopher Shackle, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia* (New York: Routledge 1995), 43.

11. A discussion of these views is found within Tazim R. Kassam's noted work on the *Ginān* works of Pir Shams. See Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom, Circles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Ismāʿili Muslim Saint Pir Shams* (Albany: SUNY Press 1995). See also Daniel Beben's excellent treatment of the use of vernacular esotericism as a pathway to proselytization. Daniel Beben, 'Islamisation on the Iranian Periphery: Nasir Khusraw and Ismailism in Badkhashan', in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 317–335.

12. Ivanov, 'Satpanth', in *Collectanea,* vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1948), cited in Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom,* 11.

13. Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom*, 11

14. Ivanov, 'Satpanth', *Collectanea*, vol. 1, 22, cited in Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom*, 11.

15. Gulshan Khakee, '*The Dasa Avatāra* of the Satpanthi Ismailis and the Imam Shahis of Indo-Pakistan' (PhD thesis, Harvard University 1972), 5. Interestingly, Khakee notes this at one point within a discussion of the ubiquity of Pir Shams and Shams-i Tabriz connection/conflation. Khalkee contends that Pir Shams was buried in Multan and was called ShamsTabriz (the mentor of Jalal al-Din Rumi, the great Sufi poet buried in Konya) not only by the Ismailis of Indo-Pakistan but also by other Muslims. Guloshan Khakee, '*The Dasa Avatāra*', 5.

16. Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature* (I.B. Taurus and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, New York, NY: 2006), 59–60.

17. Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature*, 64.

18. For a discussion of how Arab cultural contact shaped late Persian apocalyptic literature, see Ander Hultgard, 'Persian Apocalypticism', in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 1, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2000), 41.

19. John Hawley, *A Storm of Songs India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 91.

20. Karim Nooruddin Gillani notes that the *Ginān* hymns are rooted in north Indian light classical and folk music, and that each *ginān* has a set composition *raga* or melodic mode. Karim Nooruddin Gillani, 'Ginān: A Musical Heritage of Ismāʾīlī Muslims', 2005 (MA thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 2005), 2. He adds elsewhere that, interestingly, 'the same system can be found in other regional and religious communities such as Gujarat's devotional music of *dhal*, and Sikh's *Shabad*, as they both contain hymns, mainly based on their ritual performances and liturgical context.' Karim Nooruddin Gillani, 'Sound and Recitation of Khojah Ismaili Ginans: Tradition and Transformation' (PhD thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 2012), 51.

21. Teena Purohit, *The Aga Khan Case* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 9–10.

22. Much of it surrounds the Pirana Dargah (shrine complex). Specifically, these contestations revolve around contested boundary space and the enforced lack of access for various Satpanth communities to the shrine of Imam Shah. For an excellent discussion of this, see Zawahir Moir and Dominique Sila-Khan, 'New Light on the Satpanthi Imamshahis of Pirana', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 33 no. 2, (2010): 210–234; Zawahir Moir and *Dominique* Sila-Khan, 'Coexistence and Communalism: The Shrine of *Pirana* in Gujarat', *Journal of South Asian Studies* 22 (1999): 133–54.

23. Farhad Daftary notes that the 'ground for the establishment of the Fatimid state was meticulously laid by the *daʿī* Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī'. Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature* (New York: I.B. Taurus and the Institute

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of Ismaili Studies: 2006), 26, 27. Daftary notes that ʿAbd Allah al-Shiʿi had a very robust missionary program amongst the Iktaman (Kutama) Tamazight tribe as early as 280 AH. This culminated in the overthrow of the Aghlabid polity and well-known establishment of the Fatimid Maghribi state in 296 AH. This fact was recorded by the Ismaʿili Qadi al-Nuʿmān in his *Iftitah al-Daʿwa*. Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature*, 26–27, 76.

24. It is very likely that Muhammad ibn Ismaʿil himself had visited the Sindh and established a *daʿwa* program there. As Yahia Bazia observes in his 2015 article, al-Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq was highly active in establishing alternative methods of challenging ʿAbbasid political hegemony through indirect engagement methods, including a network of *dāʿī*s from Kufa to Khurasan. See Yahia Bazia, 'The Shiʿa Ismaʿili *Daʿwat* in Khurasan: From its Early Beginning to the Ghaznawid Era', *Journal of Shiʿa Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2015) 37-59. See also, Karim Gillani, 'The Ismaili "Ginan" Tradition from the Indian Subcontinent', *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 38, no. 2 (December 2004): 176, 177.

25. Farhad Daftary and Azim Nanji, 'Ismaili Communities – South Asia', in *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*, ed. David Levinson and Karen Christensen, vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 2002): 185–187.

26. Azim Nanji, 'The Nizari Ismaili Tradition in Hind and Sind' (Phd thesis, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1974), 3–4. This work was later revised and published as a monograph. See Azim Nanji, *The Nizari Ismaili Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1978).

27. See Farhad Daftary and Azim Nanji, 'Ismaili Communities – South Asia'; Samira Sheikh, 'Religious Traditions and early Ismaʿili History in Western India', in *Ginans: Texts and Context, Essays on Ismaili Hymns from South Asia*, ed. Tazim R. Kassam and Françoise Mallison (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2011), 149–168.

28. See Muzaffar Alam, 'A View from Mecca: Notes of Gujarat, the Red Sea and Ottomans, 1517-39/923-964 AH', *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 2 (2017): 268–318; Ali Anooshahr, 'Dialogism and Territoriality in a Mughal History of the Islamic Millennium', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55 (2012): 220–254; Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography up to the Thirteenth Century* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010).

29. These events are outlined in the hagiographical work *Sri Ćaitanya Caritamrita.* For a discussion of these events and that text, see Ravi M. Gupta, *Caitanya Vaisnava Philosophy* (Abingdon, UK: 2016).

30. Shafique Virani, 'The Eagle Returns: Evidence of Continued Ismaʿili Activity at Alamut and in the South. Caspian Region following the Mongol Conquests', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123, no. 2 (2003): 351–370.

31. '[T]he premodern Sufi or Muslim writer working within the constraints of a Bengali language whose extant technical vocabulary was conditioned largely by Hindu ideational constructs, attempted to imagine an Islamic idea in a new literary environment. These texts become, then, historical witness to the earliest attempts to think Islamic thoughts in local language.' Tony K. Stewart, 'In Search of Equivalence: Conceiving Muslim-Hindu encounters through Translation theory', *History of Religions* 40 no. 3 (2001), 273. Stewart observes that 'all of translation is a search for equivalence, but obviously, the kind of equivalence that is sought is mediated by the nature of the concept being translated from the source language (SL) and the desired result in the target or received language (TL)'. Ibid, 273.

32. Zawahir Moir and Christopher Shackle, *Ismaili Hymns*, 66–67. Moir and Shackle render it as: 'He who reveres Hindu teachings does not find salvation. Do not condemn the sayings of scriptures.'

33. In the Ismaʿili context, a *grānth* is a long form *Ginān*.

34. A term borrowed from Ian Netton, a theological 'logeme' with all the semiotic importations of that word intended. Netton's introduction of that term appears in his work *Allāh Transcendent*. Ian Richard Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology* (Abingdon: Routledge,1994), 79.

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35. *Anant Akahado: English Translation and Transliteration*, trans. Nazim Daredia. (Houston: Noor Prakashan, n.d.).

36. *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* (Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 2005), 49.

37. Farina Mir, 'Genre and Devotion in Punjabi Popular Narratives: Rethinking Cultural and Religious Syncretism', *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History* 48, no. 3 (2006), 735.

38. See Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 151; Laetitia Zecchini, 'Contemporary Bakhti Recastings', *Interventions* 16, no. 2 (2014): 257–276; Karen G. Ruffle, 'May Fatimah Gather our Tears: The Mystical and Intercessory Powers of Fatimah al-Zahra in Indo-Persian, Shiʻi Devotional Literature and Performance', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 30, no. 3 (2010): 386–397; Véronique Bouillier and Dominique Sila-Khan, 'Hājji Ratan or Bābā Ratan's Multiple Identities', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37, no. 6 (2009): 559–595; Dominique Sila-Khan and Zawahir Moir, 'The Lord Will Marry the Virgin Earth: Songs of the Times to Come', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28 (2000): 99–115.

39. Timothy S. Dobe, 'Vernacular Vedānta: Autobiographical Fragments of Rāma Tīrtha's Indo-Persian Diglossic Mysticism', *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 18, no. 2 (2014): 195.

40. Pir Shams, *grānth* 'Man Samjaṇi', *paaṭ* no. 258, cited in Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad, 'Qur'an and Ginan', in *Simerg*, published 12 May 2014 <https://simerg.com/literary-readings/quran-and-ginan-quranic-teachings-in-the-ginan/>.

41. Pir Shams, *ginān* 'Sat marag Shams Pir', *paaṭ* no. 5, cited in Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad, 'Qur'an and Ginan'.

42. Pir Shams, *grānth* 'Saloko Moṭo', *paaṭ* no. 202. cited in Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad, 'Qur'an and Ginan'.

43. Pir Hasan Kabir Din, *ginān* 'Ash puni ham', *paaṭ* no. 6, cited in Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad, 'Qur'an and Ginan'.

44. Sayyid Imam Shah, *grānth* 'Moman Chetamṇi', paaṭ no. 7, cited in Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad, 'Qur'an and Ginan'.

45. 'Aash Punee Ham Shah Dar Paayaa', in *Ismaili.net*, accessed 9 March 2020 <http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/22783>.

46. Chhotu Lakhani, *Our Wonderful Tradition Ginan-Ash-Sharif Vol. I Simple English Rendering and Deep-Insights 25 Ginans and 2 Qasidas* (n.l.: np, nd.), 107.

47. Western academic objections to the historicity of this hagiographical identification (or conflation) met with in Ismaʻili hagiography notwithstanding, Pir Shams is routinely identified with the Shams who the teacher of Rumi within much of the hagiographical material. However, not all Ismaʻili communities adopt this position, and in addition to Shams-i-Tabriz multiple identities have been posited for Pir Shāms. For a discussion of this, see Tazzam R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: Hymns from the Satpānth Ismāʻili Muslim Saint, Pir Shams* (Albany: SUNY press, 1995), especially pages 75-125, which directly treat this question.

48. Chhotu Lakhani, *Our Wonderful Tradition*, 117, 174.

49. Gerhard Böwering, 'The Light Verse: Qur'ānic Text and Sūfī Interpretation', *Oriens* 36 (2001): 113.

50. Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur'an with English Translation and Commentary* (Columbus: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 2002), 707.

51. Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2003), s.v. '*nūr*'.

52. Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad, *Ismaili Tariqah* (Karachi: Z.A. Printer, 2011), 56.

53. Sayyid Imam Shah, *granth* 'Moman Chetamṇi', *paaṭ* no. 7, cited in Kamaluddin Ali Muhammd, 'Qur'an and Ginan'.

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54. Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis* (New York: Routledge 2010), 113.

55. For a discussion on 'name theophany' within and Islamic Context, see William C. Chittick, 'The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī', *Studia Islamica* 49 (1979): 135–157; Juan R. Cole, 'The World as Text: Cosmologies of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i', *Studia Islamica* 80 (1994): 145–163; Qaiser Shahzad, 'Ibn ʿArabī's Metaphysics of the Human Body', *Islamic Studies* 46, no. 4 (2007): 499–525.

56. Zawahir Moir and Christopher Shackle, *Ismaili Hymns*, 86–87.

57. Ibid., 113.

58. Lakhani, *Our Wonderful Tradition*, 83.

59. Ibid., 85 (translation lightly edited).

60. Such as the famous 'I Am' sayings of the Imam, e.g. *anā kalimat Allāh* ('I am the word of Allah'), *anā al-mutakallim bil-waḥī* ('I am the speaker of divine inspiration'), *anā shahr Ramaḍān* ('I am the month of Ramadan'), *anā laylat al-qadr* ('I am the Night of Destiny'), and *anā umm al-kitāb* ('I am the mother of the Book'). In these succinct aphorisms, ʿAli is offering commentary on the nature of revelation, what is God's Speech, and more esoteric questions like the nature of *umm al-kitāb* mentioned in Q. 43:4. See al-Hafiz Rajab al-Bursi, *Mashariq Anwar al-Yaqin fi Asrar Amar al-Muʾminīn* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-ʿAlami, 2017), 260–261.

61. Rashida Noormohamed-Hunzai, 'The Holy Qur'an in the Ginanic Literature', 5 <https://www.monoreality. org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Internaitonal_Ginan_Conf_Paper.pdf>.

62. Ali Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2002), 84.

63. Zawahir Moir and Christopher Shackle, *Ismaili Hymns*, 125.

64. Teena Purohit, *The Aga Khan Case*, 11.

65. Zawahir Moir and Christopher Shackle, *Ismaili Hymns*, 124–125.

66. Zawahir Moir and Christopher Shackle, *Ismaili Hymns*, 30.

67. See Dominique Sila-Khan, 'Reimagining the Buddha', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 3 (June 2005): 321–342; Véronique Bouillier and Dominique Sila-Khan, 'Hājji Ratan or Bābā Ratan's Multiple Identities', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37 (2009): 559–595.

68. *Partham āth lākh karan pāth* 12-24, cited in Kamalludin Ali Muhammad, *Practices and Ceremonies: Essays on Rites and Rituals* (Karachi: Kamalazar publications, 2011), 27–34.

69. The deputized officiary of the *jamāʿat-khāna*. The meaning linguistically is very much like the word *raʾis* in Arabic (meaning 'head' or 'chief'). A *mukhī* can be either male, or female (*mukhiani ṣāḥiba)* and can also be applied to a person of greater authority than the official presiding on behalf of the Imam over a *jamāʿat-khānai*, depending on the context.

70. Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad, *Practices and Ceremonies*, 33. Translation mine.

71. Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad, *Practices and Ceremonies*, 33.

72. For an exhaustive list of hadith that discuss this in detail, see Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Tihrani, *Knowing the Imams: The Virtues of Ali, the Master of the Faithful*, trans. Rahim Dawlati and Salim Rossier (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2016), 17–25.

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