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The Da'udi Bohra Tayyibis: Ideology, Literature, Learning and Social Practice

Tahera Qutbuddin

The Da'udi Bohra Tayyibis are a community of Shi'i Muslims who belong to the Musta'lian branch of the Ismailis and trace their religious and literary heritage to the Fatimid Imam-Caliphs of North Africa and Egypt. They are mostly indigenous Indians who converted to Islam in the 5th/11th century at the hands of missionaries initially sent by the Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Mustansir. At some point they came to be known as 'Bohra' (and sometimes 'Bohri', used both in the collective and singular forms); in the Gujarati language this word means 'honest or trustworthy man in dealings and social intercourse', or simply, 'trader'.[1] The 'Da'udi' in their name refers to Da'ud b. Qutb Shah, one of their spiritual leaders.[2]

The Tayyibi Bohra have an intricate spiritual lineage. When al-Mustansir died in 487/1094, the Indian Bohra, together with the Egyptian and Yemeni Ismailis, supported his son al-Musta'li, who became the next Fatimid Imam-Caliph; the Persian and Syrian Ismailis supported his brother Nizar. Upon the death of al-Musta'li's son al-Amir in 524/1130, the Indian Bohra, along with the Yemeni Musta'lian Ismailis, broke away from the overlordship of the succeeding Hafizi Musta'lian regime in Fatimid Egypt. They professed allegiance to al-Amir's infant son al-Tayyib (hence the name 'Tayyibis'). Al-Tayyib, they believe, went into physical 'concealment' and in his line the Imamate continues, father to son, the Imams being represented during their absence by *da'i*s. Over the centuries, schisms occurred within the Bohra community over the question of legitimate leadership. Today there are a number of branches of the Tayyibi Bohra, based on the line of *da'i*s they accept as legitimate, of which the largest is the Da'udi Bohra one (henceforth, 'Bohra' in this chapter refers to the Da'udi Bohra).

The earliest Tayyibi *daʿi*s were Yemenis and the number of Indian Tayyibi Bohra grew during their time. It increased further after the transfer of their headquarters to India in 946/1539. Currently they number approximately 1 million adherents. They are concentrated in South Asia (mostly India and Pakistan), with a 13,000-strong indigenous Yemeni community and immigrant communities worldwide.

Despite their rich heritage and complex history, very little academic study of the Bohra has been forthcoming. This deficiency is largely due to the fact that most of their texts remain in manuscript form and are relatively inaccessible, and also because few academics master the languages necessary for such a study. The few earlier publications on the subject in English have mostly been polemical treatises written by members of dissident groups.[3] Fortunately the scholarly void has recently begun to be filled. Robert Serjeant's article titled 'The Fatimi-Taiyebi (Ismaili) Daʿwah. Ideologies and Community'[4] touches upon some important aspects of Bohra belief and history, and Jonah Blank's book-length anthropological work discusses in detail their utilization of modernity as a tool to facilitate religious practice.[5]

My own work here engages two fields of Tayyibi studies that have not been the subject of prior academic scrutiny: the strong tradition of text-focused Tayyibi learning, and the rich body of Tayyibi literature, in Arabic and in the Bohra Gujarati dialect called Lisan al-Daʿwat[6] (more on this dialect later). Furthermore this article presents new aspects of two other domains of study (engaged partially earlier, with a different approach, by Serjeant and Blank): the distinctive Tayyibi ideology and Indo-Islamic social practice (with some remarks on *daʿwat* administration). This study synthesizes data obtained from the following three sources: (1) perusal of a large number of previously unutilized primary texts in five languages – mainly Arabic and Lisan al-Daʿwat, also some Urdu, Persian, and Hindi – through a first-hand examination of Tayyibi Daʿwat manuscript libraries in Mumbai and Surat; (2) direct observation of religious assemblies and teaching sessions; and (3) personal interviews conducted with Bohra in India and Yemen concerning their beliefs and practices. Focusing on the 19th and 20th centuries, the following pages present a systematic description and analysis of these four key aspects of the Daʾudi Bohra Tayyibi world: ideology, literature, learning and social practice.

Ideology

The Bohra call their religious organization the *daʿwat hadiya* (the 'rightly guiding mission'), and themselves *muminin*, believers (singular, *mumin*). The following beliefs constitute the fundamental tenets of their ideology. Their first precept is the profession (also held by all Muslims) of the unity (*tawhid*) of God. The Bohra believe Him to be the Creator who is beyond imagination or thought. Another primary doctrine is the belief (held by all Shiʿa) in the existence of a spiritual leader (Imam) in every age, who is divinely guided, sinless and perfect, and who is the link between God and humankind, receiving His light and disseminating it to the people. This spiritual leadership (Imamate) commenced from the time the first human being walked the earth, and continues without interruption till the time the heavens and earth are annihilated. Further, it is in a single line of descent, passing from father to son, each Imam appointing his successor before his death. In this line came the Prophet Muhammad and his legatee (*wasi*) ʿAli b. Abi Talib, followed by a line of Imams who were descendants of Muhammad and ʿAli (the link being their mother Fatima, daughter of Muhammad and wife of ʿAli). References to these doctrines regarding the Imamate are present in almost all Fatimid texts.[7]

In addition to the spiritual authority of the Imam, he is the supreme temporal leader, whether or not his terrestrial leadership is manifest at any given time.[8] The first ten Imams of the Muhammadan era did not wield worldly power. The next ten Imams held political dominion, its materialization coming in 296/909 with the founding of the Fatimid caliphate in North Africa by the 11th Imam-Caliph ʿAbd Allah al-Mahdi (d. 322/934). In 358/969 Fatimid rule extended to Egypt and the seat of the caliphate moved to Cairo. In 524/1130, upon the death of the 20th Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Amir, his six-month-old son al-Tayyib succeeded him as the 21st Imam.[9] As mentioned earlier, al-Tayyib went into physical concealment (*satr*) and in his line the Imamate continues. The present Imam is the *imam al-zaman* (the Imam of the Time), and, since his identity is veiled, the Bohra know him by the name of his forefather, al-Tayyib.

Al-Tayyib's role of divine leadership is fulfilled during the period of his concealment by the *daʿi al-mutlaq*, an Arabic phrase meaning 'one who calls' (to God and the Imam), and is given 'absolute (authority)'. He is also identified as the *daʿi al-satr* (*daʿi* during the Imam's concealment). The *daʿi* is the Imam's representative and vicegerent (*naʾib*). Belief in his spiritual and temporal authority is a cardinal doctrine, and deemed essentially equivalent to belief in the spiritual and temporal authority of the Imam. The *daʿi*-ship, like the Imamate say the Bohra, continues in an unbroken

line – albeit without the condition of biological affiliation – each *daʿi*, like the Imam, appointing his successor before his death.[10] It will endure until such time as the Imam makes himself manifest (*zuhur*), or until the last Imam appears, proclaiming the Last Day. The Fatimid *hujjat* and Sulayhid queen, al-Malika al-Hurra (d. 532/1138), upon the instructions of the 20th Imam, appointed the first *daʿi*, Dhu'ayb b. Musa (r. 524–546/1130–1151). The *daʿi*-ship has continued uninterruptedly since then for nine centuries, and the present *daʿi* (*daʿi al-zaman*) is Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din (b. 1333/1915), the 52nd in the line.[11]

In Fatimid religious hierarchy, the rank of *daʿi al-mutlaq* is one of the nine ranks (*hudud* or *maratib*, singular, *rutba*) under the Imam. During the period of the Imam's concealment, the *daʿi al-mutlaq* has a special status because he represents the concealed Imam absolutely. The *maratib* ranked higher than the *daʿi al-mutlaq* are with the Imam in concealment. The two ranked below him are manifest, and aid the *daʿi* in his work of guidance. Thus the Bohra pledge allegiance to three *maratib* who conduct the *daʿwat* in the absence of the Imam: first and foremost, the *daʿi al-mutlaq*, and, subordinate to him and appointed by him, the *ma'dhun al-mutlaq* (the one granted absolute permission), followed by the *mukasir* (the breaker of 'false arguments'). The present *ma'dhun* is Sayyidi Khuzayma Qutb al-Din (b. 1359/1940), and the present *mukasir* is Sayyidi Husayn Husam al-Din (b. 1338/1920). All three are sons of the 51st *daʿi*.

The institution of *daʿwat* is embodied in the person of the Imam and, during his concealment, in the person of the *daʿi*. This doctrine stems from the belief that if the Imam and the *daʿi* were not present to carry out the mission of the *daʿwat*, there would be no *daʿwat*. Allegiance (*walayat*) to them is believed to be incumbent upon each follower, as is obedience to them in all matters. The authority of the *daʿi*, stemming from the authority of the Imam, is thus in principle absolute, encompassing both the spiritual and temporal realms. The permission (*raza*)[12] of the *daʿi* is, in theory, required in every matter. In matters pertaining directly to the *daʿwat*, this mandate is strictly enforced: religious matters such as leading the congregation in prayer, collecting the *zakat*, performing marriages, disseminating *daʿwat* learning and perusing *daʿwat* books are all believed to be subject to authorization by the *daʿi*.[13] With regard to civic issues, and in the absence of political jurisdiction, the *daʿi*, like the Imam historically, yields to the law of the land.

Allegiance to the Imam and *daʿi*, together with love (*mahabbat*) for them forms the primary criterion for salvation. Another important principle is that of service (*khidmat*): serving the *daʿwat* in every capacity,

physical, intellectual and financial, is incumbent upon the Bohra and a significant way of earning religious merit. The obverse side of the coin of allegiance is *bara'at* (disassociation), and every Bohra is required to disengage categorically from anyone who harbours malicious designs towards the *da'wat* or *da'i*. Expositions on these doctrines of the *da'i* and the *da'wat al-satr* are found in writings about the cycles of time from the early Fatimid period, and in theological and poetic texts from the initial Yemeni period of the Tayyibi *da'wat*.[14]

The Islamic *shari'at* is an intrinsic part of Bohra religion, and the dual aspects of knowledge (*'ilm*) and practice (*'amal*) are complementary, each reinforcing and necessitating the other. Adhering to Islamic canon law, the Bohra uphold seven 'pillars' (*da'a'im*) of Islam (compared to five prescribed in other legal schools). These are (1) allegiance to the Imam and *da'i* (*walayat*); (2) ritual purification (*taharat*); (3) ritual prayer (*salat*); (4) almsgiving (*zakat*, to be collected and distributed by the *da'i*);[15] (5) fasting (*sawm*); (6) pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*); and (7) struggle against evil (*jihad*).[16] Bohra doctrine also espouses the social injunctions of the *shari'at*, including both personal and civic laws. It expects women to veil in public, encourages men to grow beards and preserves *shari'at* codes pertaining to marriage, divorce, custody, death rites and inheritance. It urges compliance with the Islamic financial canon, including a proscription of interest (*riba*). It enjoins adherence to humane values such as kindness and compassion, and sound moral and ethical behaviour such as truthfulness, integrity and loyalty to one's country.

The Bohra canonical legal text is the *Da'a'im al-Islam*, written by the 10th-century Fatimid jurist al-Qadi al-Nu'man, and authorized by the Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Mu'izz.[17] This work is in two volumes. The first volume explicates the seven pillars or worship rites, and the second expounds upon other *shari'at*-related issues, including family law and regulations about mundane things such as food, dress, personal hygiene, gifts and oaths. The Bohra creed asserts that all aspects of existence fall under the aegis of religion, and in this sense the *shari'at* governs all segments of a believer's life.

Bohra doctrine requires an oath to be sworn, promising fealty and obedience to the Imam and *da'i*, and an undertaking to conform to the belief and practice outlined in it, by anyone who would be a *mumin* – each Bohra child upon attaining puberty, any non-Bohra adult wishing to convert and any dissident wishing to be received back into the fold. This is the *mithaq* (covenant), also known by its synonyms *bay'at* (pledge of allegiance), and *'ahd'* or *'ahd al-awliya'* (compact of (God's) elect). The Bohra

believe this practice dates back through the ages to the first Imam who took the *mithaq* of those who accepted his daʿwat, and that the *mithaq* was administered by all the earlier prophets, by Muhammad, ʿAli, the Imams and the *daʿi*s to their adherents.[18] The text of the *mithaq* forms the blueprint for Bohra belief, delineating the key elements of Bohra ideology and practice.[19] All the articles of faith discussed earlier in this section are outlined in it. The introductory section of the text emphasizes that the oath can only be administered if the initiate accepts the covenant willingly and without coercion; if doubts exist, commitment should be postponed until such time as certainty is achieved. In the *mithaq* ceremony, the *daʿi* or his representative reads the text, outlining the conditions for becoming a Bohra, and the initiate responds by saying *naʿam* (Arabic, 'yes', I swear an oath to the effect that I accept these conditions). Engagement in the *mithaq* constitutes formal acceptance of the doctrines of the *daʿwat* and the authority of the Imam and *daʿi*.

In addition to these fundamental concepts and practices, Bohra piety has some unique features, such as distinctive supererogatory rites of worship. On nights of special sanctity, they perform the *washshiq* and *wasila*. The *washshiq* is a ritual prayer after the mandatory *'isha'* prayer, usually consisting of 24 *rakʿat*s (prayer cycles). The *wasila* follows the *washshiq*. It is a ritualized but spontaneous entreaty to God in Lisan al-Daʿwat by the prayer-leader, appended to a liturgical recitation in Arabic.

Bohra religious assemblies for everything other than ritual prayer are called *majalis* (singular, *majlis*, literally 'sitting'). The individual presiding over a *majlis* is termed the *sadr*. He sits in a central space surrounded by male members of the congregation; women usually sit in concealed enclaves or in the main space with a divider between them and the men, from where they can view the proceedings without being seen themselves. In women-only *majalis*, a female *sadr* presides. In every *majlis*, the congregation chants religious poems and the *sadr* frequently delivers a sermon of varying length (ranging from half an hour to two hours called *bayan*, literally 'clear exposition'). On occasions of celebration, the *sadr* and community elders ceremonially taste a sweet drink called *sherbet* (Arabic, 'drink'). This is followed by *vadhavanu*,[20] in which a member of the congregation circumlocutes over the *sadr* a small tray holding some sweets and two coconuts, these fruits being considered auspicious in the Indian tradition. In certain *majalis*, such as the *majlis* for the first of the month, the assembly comes forward one by one to kiss the hand of the *sadr*, a custom reinforced by Fatimid tradition as well as Indian princely etiquette. This practice is called *salam*, probably taking the name from its

original Arabic sense of greeting.

Majalis devoted exclusively to a long sermon, usually lasting two to four hours, are called *majalis al-waʿz* (Arabic 'advice, counsel') or simply, *waʿz*. These are held during the first ten days of Muharram (in this case, also called *majalis al-ʿaza'*), and at other times of commemoration or celebration during the year. The origins of both the concept and format of the *majalis al-waʿz* can be traced to the Fatimid *majalis al-hikma* ('sessions of wisdom'), particularly to the *majalis* delivered by al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi.[21] The Bohra *waʿz* addresses topics that range from theology, ethics and philosophy to literature, history and moral counsel. Its climax comes with the recounting of the story of the martyrdom of Husayn, and this narrative is interspersed with the recitation of elegies (*marthiya*).

The *daʿi* personally presides on a regular basis at religious gatherings, leading worship, delivering *waʿz* and officiating at *majalis*. In Ramadan he leads the Bohra in ritual prayer. Annually during Muharram his *waʿz* is held every year in different cities throughout the world. Up to 100,000 to 200,000 Bohra men, women and children gather to hear him speak. Some of his *waʿz* are relayed in audio and video format via the Internet or satellite, often live, to Bohra congregations worldwide.

The anniversaries of the births and deaths of figures prominent in the *daʿwat* spiritual hierarchy are days of *barakat* (divine grace), which the Bohra celebrate or commemorate with a *majlis*. Birth anniversaries are called *milad* or *salgirah*, and celebrated with a '*khushi ni majlis*' (*majlis* of celebration). Death anniversaries are called *ʿurs*, or, in the case of a martyr, *shahadat*, commemorated with a *majlis* of Qur'an recitation, where all attendees simultaneously and inaudibly recite separate chapters of the Qur'an for the benefit of the soul of the deceased. The Qur'an recitation is followed by the '*sadaqallah*' ('God spoke Truth'), a prayer in Arabic beginning with those words for the deceased, recited aloud by the *sadr*. Next comes a recitation of elegies for the deceased, followed by elegies for Imam Husayn.

Visiting the shrines of deceased saints, called *ziyarat*, is a meritorious act.[22] The shrine visitor kisses the tomb of the saint, places rose petals or sweet basil leaves on the grave and recites the Qur'an *surat*s of *al-Fatiha* and *Yasin* for the benefit of the soul of the deceased. On the eve of *ʿurs* – a particularly propitious time for *ziyarat* – visitors ceremonially spread upon the tomb a fragrant paste of sandalwood and rosewater called *sandal*.

In keeping with Fatimid tradition, the Bohra follow the fixed astronomical version of the Islamic Hijri lunar calendar; at times their feast days occur before or after those of other Muslim denominations. For example,

they always fast the full 30 days during Ramadan each year, rather than varying it according to the sighting of the moon.[23] Many Bohra religious events are identical to those followed by Sunnis and the Twelver Shiʿa. A celebration shared with other Shiʿis is ʿId-i Ghadir, which according to all Shiʿis marks the day the Prophet Muhammad publicly appointed ʿAli as his successor at the spring of Ghadir Khumm; this celebration is an affirmation of the fundamental Bohra doctrine of *walayat*.

Literature

The Tayyibis believe the entire corpus of their scholarly canon possesses a sacred nature as well as authoritative force. They assert that it derives directly from the Qur'an, the source of all knowledge. In this vein, they strictly discourage speculative writing. Any religious opinion must be backed by a *sanad*, a report from a person in a position of spiritual authority, one who has the right to practise *istinbat*, the derivation of interpretations and rulings. By virtue of the *daʿi*'s reception of the Imam's direct spiritual guidance (*ta'id*), he is automatically recognized as the highest spiritual and scholarly authority in the community. Because of this supreme authority, and in view of the fact that the most learned person in the community is to be appointed *daʿi*, the principal works of Tayyibi literature have mostly been produced by the *daʿi*s and to a lesser extent by their *ma'dhun*s, *mukasir*s and other *hudud*.

Most Tayyibi scholarship is in Arabic, the sacred language of the Qur'an, even today in India. However, there are some works that have been composed in Lisan al-Daʿwat, like *nasihat*s (poems of history and moral counsel), the historical work *Mawsim-i bahar*, and translations of key Arabic texts.[24] The use of Urdu is visible in elegies for Imam Husayn and in some panegyric poetry. Persian has also influenced Tayyibi literature to a certain extent through the incorporation of vocabulary into the vernacular and, more rarely, through the composition of Persian panegyrics.

In Tayyibi literature there are ascending levels of texts corresponding to ascending levels of learning. The beginning level is that of *zahir* (exoteric knowledge), which includes jurisprudence, history, belles-lettres, instruction in proper behaviour and texts of exhortation and edification. The next level is that of *tawil*, the deeper, allegorical meaning of the Qur'an, the Prophetic *hadith* and the *shariʿat*. Much of the material in *tawil* works is explained as a symbolization of, or metaphor for, the stations of the spiritual hierarchy. The third and highest level of knowledge is that of

haqiqat (literally, reality or actuality, often denoted by its plural *haqa'iq*). This term indicates metaphysical works expounding a philosophy of life that focuses on the nature of God's oneness (*tawhid*), the origin (*mabda'*) of creation and the return (*ma'ad*) to eternal life. The second and third levels, *tawil* and *haqiqat*, are collectively termed *batin* (literally, 'hidden', 'interior').

All Tayyibi writings are based on mother texts produced in the Fatimid period (10th to early 12th centuries) in the esoteric fields of *haqiqat* and *tawil*, and the exoteric domains of jurisprudence, history, literature and theology, by such celebrated scholars as Ja'far b. Mansur al-Yaman, al-Qadi al-Nu'man, Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani, and al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi.[25] Upon the concealment of the Imam, the attention of the Yemeni Da'wat scholars focused largely on the field of *haqiqat*.[26] Da'wat scholars began to record, in written treatises, doctrines that had been expounded earlier in great secrecy and exclusively by oral means. In large part this mode of writing served the need of the hour, which was to prove to the community, in the physical absence of the Imam, the theological and metaphysical necessity for his existence. This task accomplished, the literature of the Tayyibi Da'wat saw a shift in orientation to history and heresiography; after the move of its headquarters to India four centuries later, a large number of the works produced were historical studies or refutations of seceding groups.[27] There are no *haqiqat* works from this period. Throughout its different periods, a consistently important component of Tayyibi literature was Arabic poetry. Major *diwan*s of poetry were composed in the tradition of al-Mu'ayyad's devotional poetry,[28] which used Tayyibi theological motifs to praise the Imam or *da'i*. The following are some of the most important *diwan*s in the Tayyibi Da'wat up to the 19th century: the *Diwan*s of the Tayyibi Da'is 'Ali b. Muhammad,[29] and Idris 'Imad al-Din in Yemen, and the *Diwan* of Sayyidi 'Abd al-Qadir Hakim al-Din in India (all mss).

The 19th and 20th centuries – our period of focus for this study – witnessed a veritable renaissance of Tayyibi literature. Two literary giants, both titled Sayf al-Din, succeeded to the leadership of the Tayyibi Da'wat as the 43rd and 51st incumbents. They made significant personal contributions to the *da'wat* library and fostered an atmosphere of learning in which a large number of intellectuals flourished and substantial scholarly works were produced. The reign of the first Sayf al-Din, named 'Abd-i 'Ali, was one of renewal in many ways. Since the overwhelming majority of *da'wat* texts were in Arabic, an important aspect of this revitalization was his emphasis on the mastery of its grammar and rhetoric as

prerequisites to *daʿwat* learning. He himself produced a *Diwan* of poetry that scholars of his age acknowledged as a masterpiece of Arabic literature.[30] In deference to his immense learning and erudition, they titled him 'Muʾayyad-i Asghar' (the Younger Muʾayyad) and 'Nuʿman-i Thani (the Second Nuʿman). This *daʿi* also composed a poem of counsel (*nasihat*) in Lisan al-Daʿwat for his six-year-old son, the future 46th *daʿi* Muhammad Badr al-Din, beginning with the affectionate charge 'Encrust pearls of knowledge in your heart' (*'Ilm na moti jaro*).

Additionally Sayf al-Din directed the production of short prose treatises (*risalat*, plural *rasaʾil*), which various scholars wrote in his name.[31] The *risalat*s of the *daʿi*s were originally composed either as annual epistles giving news of *daʿwat* activities to the community in Yemen and exhorting them to worship God, thus often composed in the month of Ramadan or Rajab, or elegiac epistles giving news of the demise (*naʿy*) of the former *daʿi*. The earlier ones were usually quite brief (characteristic of epistles), later ones were longer and contained academic material (characteristic of treatises). These *risalat*s, too, have the formal characteristics of epistles.

Several of the scholars of Sayyidna 'Abd-i 'Ali Sayf al-Din's reign wrote works encompassing the fields of *haqiqat*, history, jurisprudence, administration and poetry. The most important was another 'Abd-i 'Ali, titled 'Imad al-Din (popularly known as 'Imad al-Din Sahib), who rose to prominence in the reign of this *daʿi* and lived into the reign of the 47th *daʿi*. 'Imad al-Din Sahib came from a lay Bohra family, but by dint of his remarkable scholastic efforts rose to great heights in the *daʿwat*. He studied under the *daʿi* 'Abd-i 'Ali Sayf al-Din and achieved such mastery over *daʿwat* learning that the *daʿi* entrusted him with the training of three scions from the ruling family who all later became *daʿi*s themselves.[32] The second of these – the 47th *daʿi* Najm al-Din – bestowed the *rutba* of *mukasir* upon him and appointed him his heir-designate. Before 'Imad al-Din Sahib could assume the helm of the *daʿwat*, however, he died in 1271/1854. He left an indelible mark on the literary constitution of the *daʿwat*, having composed one of the highest-level *haqiqat* texts of the *daʿwat*, the *Lubb al-lubab* (The Quintessence of the Essence), and a large number of lyrical poems in Arabic, Lisan al-Daʿwat, and Urdu, mostly in praise of Sayyidna 'Abd-i 'Ali Sayf al-Din, along with some *nasihat*s. These have been collected in a *Diwan* and are immensely popular. Another well-known work from 'Abd-i 'Ali Sayf al-Din's period is the *Muntazaʿ al-akhbar fi akhbar al-duʿat al-akhyar*, a two-volume work on the history of the Tayyibi Daʿwat since the concealment of the Imam in 524/1130, up to the author's time in 1240/1824, by Shaykh Qutb al-Din b. Sulaymanji Burhanpuri (d.

1241/1826).[33] Yet another scholar, named Sayfi Sahib (d. 1236/1820), wrote a detailed commentary on the chapter on marriage from the *Daʿa'im al-Islam* titled *Kitab al-najah fi ahkam al-nikah*, and four other *fiqh* works (mss). The most prolific Tayyibi Lisan al-Daʿwat poet, Sayyidi Sadiq ʿAli Sahib (1233/1818), composed a large number of historical, theological and ethical *nasihat* poems during Sayyidna Sayf al-Din's reign that are recited in *daʿwat majalis* to this day.[34]

The literary renaissance sparked by Sayyidna ʿAbd-i ʿAli Sayf al-Din continued after him. In the reign of his successor, Muhammad ʿIzz al-Din, an anonymous author began the first work dedicated to Qur'an *tawil* to be composed since Fatimid times, with a verse-by-verse explanation based on the Fatimid *tawil* works, the two-volume *Tafsir ʿIzzi*. Unfortunately the author does not appear to have completed the work, leaving sporadic gaps in the text and going only up to part of the second *sura*, *al-Baqara*. Other *daʿwat* scholars wrote texts on history, jurisprudence and esoteric Qur'anic interpretation. They composed refutations of the doctrines of seceding groups including the Sulaymaniyya and the Mahdibaghwalla.

Two *daʿi*s and two decades later there began another notably productive literary period, coinciding with the reign of the 47th *daʿi*, ʿAbd al-Qadir Najm al-Din. He himself composed numerous Arabic poems of high literary style that were collected in his *Diwan*, including an Arabic poem in an Indian metre (with the opening line: *Hal mazharu Dhi'l-ʿArshi siwa sinwi al-Rasuli – fi kulli zuhuri*). A distinctive feature of his reign was the emphasis on Lisan al-Daʿwat, manifested in original works and translations. Al-Qadi al-Nuʿman's *Kitab al-taharat* was translated from Arabic to Lisan al-Daʿwat.[35] One of the most valuable historical works of the later Tayyibi Daʿwat, the *Mawsim-i bahar* of Muhammad ʿAli Rampuri b. Mulla Jiwabhai (d. 1315 or 1316/1897–1899), was composed in Lisan al-Daʿwat. This was a three-volume history of the *daʿwat* in India from its inception to the date of publication of the work.[36] Because it was written in Lisan al-Daʿwat, it made Bohra history directly accessible – for the first time – to the full Bohra community, rather than just to the scholars within it. It also provided the first systematic historical record of the period between the reigns of Sayyidna Sayf al-Din and Sayyidna Najm al-Din, from the publication date of the *Muntazaʿ* in 1240/1824 to that of the *Mawsim* in 1299/1882.

A little later, in the reigns of the 49th and 50th *daʿi*s, another important scholar flourished. This was a third ʿAbd-i ʿAli, Sayyidi ʿAbd-i ʿAli Muhyi al-Din (d. 1326/1908), son of Sayyidna Husam al-Din, who composed poems of praise for the Imams and *daʿi*s and some moving elegies for

Imam Husayn. He is remembered as a wise and learned man, and the teacher and mentor of the *daʿi* who was to become the most prolific scholar of the Tayyibi Daʿwat, Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din.

Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din became *daʿi* in 1333/1915 at the age of 27. Two years later he composed his first treatise (*risalat*), *Daw' nur al-haqq al-mubin* (The Glow of the Light of Clear Truth). The focus of this work was the establishment of the validity of the *daʿi*-ship of the 47th *daʿi* – about which a group of dissenters had raised doubts – and consequently all the *daʿi*s following him. This *risalat* played a large part in the regeneration of the prestige of the *daʿi*'s office. Simultaneously it laid out the doctrinal basis for a clear demarcation of what had earlier been a somewhat fuzzy line between the two opposing factions, of believers in the validity of the *daʿi*-ship and doubters therein, prescribing the ideological backing for Tahir Sayf al-Din's policy of dealing with dissidents. Those who disbelieved or doubted could either choose to regain belief in the spiritual authority of the *daʿi* or they could leave his fold; they would not be permitted to stay within it and hold that the *daʿi* was not legitimate.

In 1337/1919 Tahir Sayf al-Din wrote a second treatise, and for the next 47 years of his *daʿi*-ship until his death in 1385/1965, he went on to write one almost every year. Forty-four *risalat*s have been published, all written in Ramadan – following the tradition of the earlier *daʿi*s – and characterized as *Rasa'il Ramadaniyya*.[37] About a third of their material – mostly in lengthy *tahmid* form – is from the pen of Tahir Sayf al-Din himself, and the rest consists of eclectic selections from a vast number of *daʿwat* works, with prefaces written by the *daʿi*. Their contents include history, philosophy, jurisprudence, ethics, literature and allusions to *haqiqat*. Although expounding on assorted topics, each *risalat* usually has one primary theme, referred to in its title. For example, the second *risalat*, titled *Thamarat ʿulum al-huda* (Fruits of Rightly Guiding Knowledge, 1337), treats the subject of knowledge. The 18th *risalat*, titled *Masarrat al-fath al-mubin* (Felicities of the Clear Victory, 1353), chronicles victories of the *daʿwat*. This *daʿi* also composed an abridgement of the *haqiqat* work *Lubb al-lubab*, titled *Thamarat al-lubb al-latifa*, along with a lengthy introduction.

In addition to his prose-writing skills, Tahir Sayf al-Din was a distinguished poet. He composed a large number of Arabic poems (over 10,000 verses) mostly in praise of the Imams and *daʿi*s which have been collected in a two-volume *Diwan*.[38] These poems are a summa for the beliefs (called *tasawwurat*) of the Tayyibis, expressed in beautiful Arabic verse. Among his poems is a moving elegy on Imam Husayn that is recited by the Bohra

regularly, beginning *Ya sayyida al-shuhada'i* (O prince of martyrs!), and a poem on the Tayyibi philosophy of the intellect (*al-ʿaqlu fi'l-insani aʿla'l-jawhari*). He also composed in Lisan al-Daʿwat two *nasihat* and two *marthiya*s. Moreover many of his *waʿz* have also been recorded in writing and on audio tape, as have a large number of his Urdu and Arabic speeches.[39] In recognition of Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din's vast scholarship, Aligarh Muslim University bestowed an honorary doctorate upon him, and later its nominating committee unanimously appointed him chancellor for three consecutive terms till he died in 1965. Tahir Sayf al-Din's scholarly works have become comprehensive repositories of *daʿwat* learning.

Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din personally trained his son and successor, the present *daʿi* Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din (b. 1333/1915). The year after becoming *daʿi*, Sayyidna Burhan al-Din composed a *risalat* in the tradition of his father, titled *Istiftah zubad al-maʿarif* (1385/1966). Since his early youth, he has continued to deliver *waʿz* expositions several times annually, and to compose panegyrics in praise of the 51st *daʿi* and of the Imams, recently collected in a *Diwan*.[40] In recognition of Burhan al-Din's scholarship, al-Azhar University in Cairo bestowed an honorary doctorate upon him in 1966.

Miscellaneous Bohra works published in the last 200 years include several prayer manuals.[41] These are named '*hafti*', perhaps from the Gujarati word '*hafta*' (week) and the Persian word '*haft*' (seven), because of the weekly *duʿa*'s contained therein. Some popular historical works and educational textbooks have also been published.

The Bohra libraries in Mumbai and Surat contain the largest collection of Fatimid and Tayyibi manuscripts in the world (approximately 524 titles, 10,000 manuscripts, in Mumbai and several thousand more in Surat). The Mumbai library is under the direct control of the *daʿi* and is considered his personal archive; it is not accessible to the public. It houses the most valuable manuscripts of Tayyibi Ismaili literature, including manuscripts that are up to 600 years old. Quite a few autograph copies are housed in this library. The Surat library is affiliated to the Bohra seminary Jamiʿa Sayfiyya (discussed in the next section) and has been modernized in the last decade, with an online database. There is also a department for manuscript conservation, and many of the valuable works housed at the two libraries are being digitally preserved.

The Bohra literary culture is focused on manuscripts. Rather than printed books, students chiefly read and study from manuscripts, which continue to be copied regularly by hand. Each Jamiʿa student, for example,

is required to copy a manuscript and present it to the Jamiʿa library before graduation. Private manuscript collections also exist in the Bohra community. Members of the *daʿi*'s family and other scholars own a fair number of manuscripts, although these are usually not more that a couple of hundred years old. Individuals belonging to the Tayyibi community in Yemen are said to own secret caches of early manuscripts, even including some titles that are considered lost, but these, as yet, remain undisclosed.

Learning

Religious learning (*ʿilm*) and religious practice (*ʿamal*) are the two principal criteria for advancement in the Tayyibi Daʿwat. This being so, religious education is most rigorous in the *daʿi*'s household, where secular education is considered valuable but secondary. The *daʿi* himself often teaches his children and other relatives. He also imparts knowledge to the community at large through *waʿz*, *bayan* and periodic less formal expositions called *sabaq*. All *daʿwat* knowledge, but most especially *haqiqat*, is believed to pass 'from mouth to ear' (*min famin ila udhun*) – the text is but a notation, while actual knowledge is inscribed in the student's heart by the teacher. The *daʿi*'s permission is required for the study of all *daʿwat* texts, especially the *batin* texts, and, within the *batin*, most especially the *haqiqat* texts.

Religious learning is available to the general Bohra community in several formats. One of these is the Jamiʿa Sayfiyya, an important academy of Bohra religious studies. In the 17th century, the 34th *daʿi*, Ismaʿil Badr al-Din, founded it as an institution that provided free board and lodging to students who came to study with the *daʿi* in Jamnagar. It remained a peripatetic kind of *madrasa*, moving with the *daʿi* until, in the early 19th century, the 43rd *daʿi* Sayyidna ʿAbd-i ʿAli Sayf al-Din expanded it along more formal lines in Surat. In the early 20th century the 51st *daʿi* Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din further developed it along the lines of a modern seminary. The present *daʿi* added a branch in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1983. In 1998 he founded under the Surat Jamiʿa aegis a new institute named Maʿhad al-Zahra' for the memorization and study of the Qur'an. The *daʿwat* funds the Jamiʿa and provides free tuition and board to students. The number of applicants has increased steadily over the years, and many more applications are received than there are spaces. In 2006 the Surat Jamiʿa had 149 professors and 717 students (440 male, 277 female). The Karachi Jamiʿa had 60 professors and 452 students (231 male, 221 female).

In most towns with a Bohra population, there are religious schools

(called *madrasa*s) for children. To allow children to attend secular school on weekdays, *madrasa*s hold classes either in the evenings or on weekends. Outside India and Pakistan, the Dubai *madrasa* is one of the best-attended, with two hours of classes on religion every afternoon, five days a week. Religion classes are also held in Bohra-administered secular schools. A large number of religious teachers are Jamiʿa-trained professionals. Others are volunteers, some of whom are trained at the Zaynabiyya institute in Sidhpur. This institute has been operational since 1979, and by 2006 had 760 trainees (599 male, 161 female).

Many adults attend regular religious classes (*sabaq*). The local *ʿamil* or *madrasa* head teacher (*muʿallim*) teaches these, usually on a weekly basis. In Mumbai, members of the *daʿi*'s family, the *Qasr-i ʿAli*, teach many of these classes. The Jamiʿa conducts an optional annual examination for *sabaq* attendees. The first texts taught in these classes are from the *zahir* category, often the *fiqh* works, particularly the *Daʿa'im al-Islam*, along with a *risalat* by Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din. After some years of training, a *tawil* text is taught, and after several more years and only to a select few, permission is granted to study *haqiqat*.

The *daʿwat* administering body for schools, *madrasa*s and all religious education structures is the Da'irat al-Tarbiyyat wa al-Taʿlim (popularly called Attalim) which supervises religious study curricula used in Bohra *madrasa*s worldwide and publishes and distributes elementary religious study manuals and prayer books. According to recent studies, the Bohra have significantly higher educational levels than the Indian norm, for the *daʿwat* leadership encourages women as well as men to pursue both religious and secular education.[42] In addition to institutions of religious learning, the *daʿwat* also owns and runs several secular educational institutions. Bohra schools and colleges exist today in most cities with a Bohra population, and are most numerous in India; in Greater Mumbai itself there are 30 Bohra secular schools. Worldwide, there are 470 Bohra schools. These are open to non-Bohra as well, but require the Bohra children to take religious classes in addition to the regular secular curriculum.

Social Practice and Administration

Although influenced in a limited fashion by Arab and Persian social norms, Bohra social practice is above all a blend of Islamic 'orthopraxy' and Mughal–Rajput Indian culture. An example of this amalgamation is the Bohra language mentioned earlier, named Lisan al-Daʿwat or '*Daʿwat ni zaban*' (literally, 'the language of the *daʿwat*'). Its substructure is the

Indo-Aryan language Gujarati, a derivative of Sanskrit, spoken mostly in the Indian province of Gujarat. The grammar and sentence structure of Lisan al-Da'wat appear to have remained in accord with Gujarati without any perceptible change. (A close parallel to the evolution of Lisan al-Da'wat might be that of Urdu, currently the national language of Pakistan, which is a blend of the Sanskrit-based Hindustani with Arabic and Persian.)

The vocabulary and script of Lisan al-Da'wat have become progressively more Islamized. Arabic and Persian vocabulary is gradually displacing the Gujarati Sanskrit-based lexicon; this is especially true of vocabulary related to religious matters, such as the use of the Arabic *din* (religion) rather than the Gujarati *dharam*, and the use of the Persian *ruza* (fast) rather than the Gujarati *vrat*. The Bohra *nasihat*s provide a clear illustration of this gradual absorption: *nasihat*s composed by Sayyidi Luqman-ji b. Shaykh Da'ud in the 12th/18th century have a much smaller Arabic Persian lexical content and a much larger Sanskrit-derived Gujarati one than *nasihat*s composed by Sayyidi Sadiq 'Ali Sahib in the 19th century; these latter, in turn, are less Arabicized than *nasihat*s composed by Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din in the 20th century. The script in which Lisan al-Da'wat is currently written is Arabic-Persian *naskh* rather than Gujarati Devanagari. But some Bohra publications even today are written in the Devanagari script (e.g. the weekly magazine *Nasim-i sahar*), and significant numbers of lay Bohra use the Devanagari rather than the Arabic script. The shift in script, too, has been gradual and remains an ongoing one.

The Bohra mode of attire is similarly a mélange of the Islamic and the Indian. Women wear the Islamically mandated veil (which they call *rida'*) outside the home, comprised of a full-length skirt (*lenga* or *ghaghra*) and a triangular garment (*parr* or *pardi*) covering the head and bosom down to the hips; the *parr* has a flap that is sometimes used to cover the face. The *rida'* has evolved into its present form in the last 30 years or so; earlier, Bohra women wore different versions of the veil. Bohra men wear plain white calf-length robes (*kurta-saya*), with loose cotton trousers (also called *idhar*), and a white crocheted thread cap (*topi*) with some gold and black. Business attire is often Western-style trousers and shirt, with many choosing to include the *topi* as head covering. On ceremonial occasions the clergy wear a more elaborate costume, a full-length white muslin robe with a gathered waist (*jama*), folds of white muslin arranged over the shoulder (*dupatta*), and a white turban (*paghri*). Many of these garments – the *jama*, for example – are similar to those worn earlier in the Mughal court. Others, such as the *kurta*, are commonly worn in a shorter version

by a large number of Indians today.

The wearing of traditional community dress (called *qawmi libas* or *libas-i anwar*) is *de rigueur* at Bohra religious and social gatherings and is encouraged at all times. This emphasis is of a dual nature: observation of Islamic law and preservation of Bohra cultural identity. According to the legal or cultural nature of the directive, there are gradations in the required dress code. The veil, as mentioned earlier, is required for women since it is considered mandated by Islamic law. The wearing of the Bohra cap by men, on the other hand, is encouraged rather than required, since it is a religio-cultural stipulation rather than a legal prescription.

Most Bohra social gatherings have a meal component, inspired by the promise of divine reward for those who feed the hungry. Very often the invitees are many in number, 500 guests being quite common for a wedding feast. In the event of a large religious gathering, all attendees are invited to a meal called *niyaz* (Persian, literally 'supplication'), which is offered by individuals or organizations. Since Muharram 1423/2002, Sayyidna Burhan al-Din has hosted a *niyaz* meal for all those attending his *waʿz* worldwide on the same day, virtually all the 1 million members of the Bohra community. Large communal *iftar* meals are also common during the fast of Ramadan. Like the *niyaz*, banquets for specific celebrations are given specific names. A meal to which all the Bohra living in a particular city are invited is called a *jamaʿat*. A banquet to which the *daʿi* or a high-ranking *daʿwat* personage is invited is termed a *ziyafat*.

A central administration headed by the *daʿi* oversees the administration of all Bohra affairs. All personnel are answerable to the *daʿi*, who lays out the broad parameters for their performance and inspects specific matters from time to time. The central offices of all the administrative departments are in the Badri Mahal complex in Mumbai, which also contains the offices of the senior administrators, including the brothers and sons of the *daʿi*. One of the important departments is al-Wazarat al-Sayfiyya, which appoints and supervises local representatives (called *ʿamil*, plural *ʿummal*) in cities, towns and villages. In 2006 there were 340 *ʿamil*s worldwide. Each *ʿamil* is the head of the Bohra council in his city (called the *jamaʿat* committee), which is made up of people from the local community. Most *ʿamil*s are graduates of Jamiʿa Sayfiyya, and combine religious knowledge with administrative skills. Under the *ʿamil* is a local man – called the *wali mulla* – who is appointed to lead the ritual prayer in the former's absence. Additionally, each *jamaʿat* is divided into sectors named *muhalla*, and each of these is locally administered by a governing body (called a *tanzim* committee). *Jamaʿat*s from the same district are

grouped together for administrative purposes and are collectively called a *jamʿiyyat*. In towns where the number of Bohra is small, an *ʿamil* is generally not appointed, and instead a *wali mulla* leads the ritual prayer.

There are numerous Bohra social organizations that undertake a range of activities including the maintenance of *masjid*s and communal areas, charity schemes and the organization of trips to pilgrimage sites, social gatherings and athletic events. Bohra charity organizations are numerous and include giving free medical facilities, scholarships, interest-free loan schemes, orphanages, free food and clothing, and subsidized or free housing. The larger charities are funded and overseen by the *daʿwat*, under whose auspices many are administered by local Bohra communities. Community members often contribute funds to these charities, especially at the initial set-up stage. Branches of many of these organizations exist in most cities of the world which have a substantial Bohra population.

All in all, and despite their relatively small numbers, the Tayyibi Da'udi Bohras are a remarkable Indian Muslim community. Their unique and stable interpretation of the Islamic belief system, their rich and ongoing tradition of written Arabic exposition, their valuable manuscript collections, their focused attention on, and singular mechanisms for, providing religious and secular education to the entire community, and their amalgam of the Islamic-religious and the Indian-cultural in social practice, makes them occupants of a special niche among the Muslims of the world.

Notes

1. From the Gujarati word *vehvar* meaning 'dealings' or 'honest dealings'. See the Gujarati lexicon by L. R. Gala and P. L. Soda, *Gala Vishal Shabdkosh* (Mumbai, 2000), p. 637, *vahevaru*. This etymology seems the most plausible one, as the majority of the early Bohra were, in fact, traders, and as the Bohra are also called 'Vohra' ('b' and 'v' being interchangeable at the beginning of words in Gujarati). Another etymology of 'many sects or paths' derived from the Hindi phrase *bahu rah* is proposed by S. T. Lokhandwalla, 'The Bohras, A Muslim Community of Gujarat', *Studia Islamica*, 3 (1955), p. 120 n. 1. This etymology seems less convincing since converts to all religions are usually from different sects and paths that is not a feature novel enough to affect nomenclature.
2. The 'Da'udi' (popularly transcribed 'Dawoodi') in 'Da'udi Bohra' refers to their recognition of the *daʿi*-ship of Sayyidna Da'ud b. Qutb Shah who reigned from 999/1591 to 1021/1612 and was opposed by Sulayman b. Hasan, the first *daʿi* of the Sulaymani Bohra. A third group is the ʿAlavi Bohra. Doctrinal differences among all groups appear to be minimal. Historical

details for the Sulaymanis and ʿAlavis are provided in the following chapter.

3. See 'Bibliographic Discussion' in Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity among the Daudi Bohras* (Chicago, 2001), pp. 301–307.
4. In Dominique Chevallier, ed., *Les Arabes et l'histoire créatrice* (Paris, 1995), pp. 59–77.
5. Blank's *Mullahs on the Mainframe* also contains a glossary, the most up-to-date bibliography on the Bohra, and a useful bibliographical discussion. An earlier, informative study on the Bohra of Udaipur is by Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras: An Anthropological Perspective* (Delhi, 1984).
6. I have followed in this chapter the Bohra pronunciation of words, including the word '*daʿwat*' (with a final *t*, rather than *daʿwa*). Like many other words borrowed from Arabic with the feminine ending *–a(t)*, *daʿwa* in Bohra Gujarati usage takes the Persianized form with final *–t*, thus *daʿwat* (cf. in this paper *khidmat*, *baraʾat*, *walayat*, *taʿat*, *mahabbat*, *hujjat*, *taharat*, *rakʿat*, *shahadat*, *barakat*, *ziyarat*, *surat*, *haqiqat*, *nasihat*, *risalat*, *jamaʿat*, *jamʿiyyat*, *diyafat*). Those with masculine gender are pronounced with a final *–a* (cf. *rutba*, *madrasa*, *mahalla*). For a classification and analysis of the *–at* ending in Bohra Gujarati's sister languages of Urdu and Hindi, see John Perry, *Form and Meaning in Persian Vocabulary: The Arabic Feminine Ending* (Costa Mesa, CA, 1991), pp. 158–163.
7. See Fatimid Imamate doctrines in al-Qadi al-Nuʿman's chapter on *walayat* in his *Daʿaʾim al-Islam*, ed. Asaf A. A. Fyzee (Cairo, 1951), vol. 1, pp. 3–120; trans. A. A. A. Fyzee, revised by Ismail K. Poonawala as *The Pillars of Islam* (New Delhi, 2002–2004), vol. 1, pp. 17–122; and Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani's *al-Masabih*, ed. and English trans. Paul E. Walker as *Master of the Age*: *An Islamic Treatise on the Necessity of the Imamate* (London, 2007), pp. 71–127.
8. A concise explanation of the historical blending of these spiritual and temporal authoritative roles is an article by Paul E. Walker, 'The Ismaʿili Daʿwa and the Fatimid Caliphate', in M. W. Daly, ed., *The Cambridge History of Egypt:* Volume I, *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 120–150. See also Paula Sanders, 'The Fatimid State, 969–1171', in Petry, ed., *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1, pp. 151–174.
9. References to the birth of al-Tayyib, his appointment (*nass*) to the Imamate by his father al-Amir and his subsequent disappearance are found in a 6th/12th-century Syrian chronicle titled *al-Bustan al-jamiʿ liʾjamiʿ tawarikh ahl al-zaman* by ʿImad al-Din Abu Hamid al-Isfahani (ed. Cl. Cahen, in his 'Une chronique Syrienne du VIe/XIIe siècle', *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, 7–8 (1937–1938), pp. 121–122), and in Ibn Muyassar's *Akhbar Misr*, ed. A. F. Sayyid (Cairo, 1981), pp. 109–110, probably from the lost chronicle of Ibn Muhannak (d. 549/1154). Two sources for this data from Yemen are Muhammad b. Tahir (d. 584/1188), *Majmuʿ al-tarbiyya* (ms), and Idris ʿImad al-Din (d. 872/1468), *ʿUyun al-akhbar wa-funun al-athar*, vol. 7, ed. Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid as *The Fatimids and their Successors in Yaman* (London, 2002), pp. 254–257.

10. During the *daʿi*-ship of the 47th *daʿi* ʿAbd al-Qadir Najm al-Din, a group of dissenters claimed that his appointment (*nass*) was invalid, and that he was merely an administrator they termed '*nazim daʿi*' (caretaker *daʿi*), without spiritual authority, accountable to the community. In 1921, after Ibrahim and Karim, sons of Adamji Pirbhoy, filed a suit against the 51st *daʿi* Tahir Sayf al-Din, the British High Court in Bombay ruled for the validity of the *nass* conferred on Sayyidna Najm al-Din (*Record of Proceedings in the High Court of Judicature at Bombay*, Suit no. 941 of 1917, 'Conclusion *re* Dai-ul Mutlac', pp. 984–985). In 1947, the Privy Council in London upheld the judgement in favour of the *nass* (*Privy Council Appeal No. 79 of 1945*, pp. 12–13). For details of the *nass* and the establishment position on this matter, see the treatise *Daw' nur al-haqq al-mubin* by Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din. For the anti-establishment position refuting the *nass*, see Ismail K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismaʿili Literature* (Malibu, CA, 1977), pp. 14, 224, 237–238; Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Bohras* (New Delhi, 1980), p. 135.
11. A brief overview of Sayyidna Burhan al-Din's life and work is contained in Mustafa Abdulhussein, 'Burhanuddin, Sayyidna Muhammad', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. J. L. Esposito (Oxford, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 237–238. A Daʿwat publication about him by the same author is *al-Dai al-Fatimi, Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin: An Illustrated Biography* (Oxford, 2001).
12. *Raza* is the Bohra pronunciation. The Arabic is *rida*, the more common meaning of which is 'being well-pleased', but which also means 'permission' or 'consent'.
13. All Tayyibi *haqiqat* texts contain a pledge at the beginning which mandates that without the permission of the *daʿi*, the reader may not read the text, nor transcribe a word of it, nor impart any part of the knowledge contained therein.
14. A Fatimid reference to these doctrines regarding the *daʿi*-ship (from the beginning of the Fatimid caliphate, two centuries before the concealment of the 21st Imam) is Jaʿfar b. Mansur al-Yaman (contemporary of al-Qadi al-Nuʿman who died in 363/974), *Sirat Mansur al-Yaman* (lost), excerpts cited by *daʿwat* scholars through the centuries, and most recently by the 51st *daʿi* Tahir Sayf al-Din in his treatise *Daw' nur al-haqq al-mubin* (Mumbai, 1333/1915, pp. 80–81). References to these doctrines are found in almost all Tayyibi sources. See, for example, the poems of the 5th *daʿi*, ʿAli b. Muhammad (*Diwan*, ms, see in this context the Ph.D. thesis by Rabab Hamiduddin titled *The Qasidah of the Tayyibi Daʿwah and the Diwan of Syedna ʿAli b. Muhammad al-Walid, d. 612/1215*, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2000). Works refuting the positions of seceding groups also contain expositions of these doctrines, an important source being a treatise by Sayyidi Luqmanji b. Habib Allah (d. 1173/1760), ms, quoted by Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din in his treatise, *Salsabil hikam ghadaq* (Mumbai, 1364/1945), p. 124.

15. See al-Qadi al-Nuʿman, *Daʿa'im*, vol. 1, ch. '*zakat: dhikr dafʿ al-sadaqat*', pp. 257–258.
16. The struggle against evildoers may be by the sword, the tongue and the heart (see al-Nuʿman, *Daʿa'im*, vol. 1, ch. '*jihad: dhikr al-ragha'ib fi al-jihad*', pp. 343–344). The greatest *jihad*, however, is the struggle against one's own base soul; cf. exposition by al-Kirmani cited by Tahir Sayf al-Din in his *Amthal sidrat al-muntaha* (1377/1958), pp. 176–177.
17. Some other Bohra sources of law are al-Nuʿman's *Kitab al-iqtisar*, ed. Muhammad Wahid Mirza (Damascus, 1957); *Kitab al-Hawashi* and *masa'il* works such as the *Masa'il Aminji b. Jalal*, ms. A useful work in this context is A. A. A. Fyzee's *Compendium of Fatimid Law* (Simla, 1969).
18. A partial text of the Fatimid *mithaq* is preserved in the works of the Mamluk historians al-Nuwayri, *Nihayat al-arab*, vol. 25, ed. M. J. ʿA. al-Hini and ʿA. al-Ahwani (Cairo, 1984), pp. 217–20, and al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat* (Bulaq, 1270/1853–1854), vol. 1, pp. 396–397. Heinz Halm, in his article, 'The Ismaʿili Oath of Allegiance (*ʿahd*) and the "Sessions of Wisdom" (*majalis al-hikma*) in Fatimid Times', in Farhad Daftary, ed., *Mediaeval Ismaʿili History and Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 91–115, argues that 'the close correspondence between the *ʿahd* of the Fatimid period and the one used today by the Bohra serves as further evidence for the assumption that the form of the oath has remained essentially the same throughout the centuries, and that there existed only *one* form, which the *daʿi*s used all over the world. The Bohra as the heirs of the Fatimid tradition and literature have preserved this form' (p. 98).
19. See al-Qadi al-Nuʿman's statement in his *Asas al-ta'wil*, ed. ʿArif Tamir (Beirut, 1960), chapter on the Prophet Solomon, pp. 278–279, stating that the key elements of Fatimid belief are embodied in the *mithaq*.
20. Probably from the Gujarati *vadhave* (to increase), and/or *badha'i or vadhaʿi* (felicitations or welcome, also implying *barakat* or increase through grace, and from the same root; 'b' and 'v', as mentioned earlier, being interchangeably used); perhaps indicating a prayer for an increase in the life, happiness, well-being, wealth, and so on for the person who is the object of the *vadhavanu*.
21. Al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi (d. 470/1078) was the *bab al-abwab* ('Gate of Gates', highest rank after the Imam in the spiritual hierarchy) and *daʿi al-duʿat* (chief missionary) under Imam al-Mustansir. His magnum opus is the *Majalis al-Mu'ayyadiyya* in 8 vols.: vols. 1–3, ed. Hatim Hamid al-Din (Oxford, 1986; Bombay, 1987 and 2005); vols. 1 and 3, ed. Mustafa Ghalib (Beirut, 1974 and 1984). The *Majalis* were originally delivered as weekly sermons to the Ismailis in Cairo and later collected in book form.
22. For details of Bohra shrines with brief historical notes on the saints buried there, see *Tuhfat la'ali akhbar al-hudat*, ed. Hudhayfa Muhyi al-Din (Mumbai, 1414/1993). See also www.mazaraat.com.
23. See Daniel de Smet, 'Comment déterminer le début et la fin du jeûne de

Ramadan? Un point de discorde entre Sunnites et Ismaéliens en Égypte Fatimide', in U. Vermeulen and D. de Smet, ed., *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras* (Leuven, 1995), pp. 71–84.

24. For details of Arabic composition in India see Tahera Qutbuddin, 'Arabic in India: A Survey and Classification of its Uses, Compared with Persian', *JAOS*, 127, 3 (2007), pp. 315–338.
25. Relevant bibliographical works are: Ismail K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismaʿili Literature*, Wladimir Ivanow, *Ismaili Literature* (Tehran, 1963), first published as *A Guide to Ismaili Literature* (London, 1933), a pioneering work based on an incomplete manuscript of al-Majduʿ (d. 1183 or 1184/1769 or 1771), *Fahrasat al-kutub wa al-rasaʾil*, popularly known as *Fihrist al-Majduʿ*, ed. ʿAli N. Munzavi (Tehran, 1966), an older work, but still useful for its summaries of contents (not provided by the later bibliographies).
26. Significant works in other genres were also produced, albeit less copiously, including: the historical writings of Idris ʿImad al-Din, ethical works and a hagiography of ʿAli by Hatim Muhyi al-Din, several *Diwan*s of poetry, *taʾwil* books, treatises on contemporary *hudud*, and refutations of the Zaydiyya (all manuscripts, except ʿImad al-Din's *ʿUyun al-akhbar*).
27. Works produced in India from the mid-16th to 18th century include juridic *masaʾil* such as the writings of Aminji b. Jalal, *taʾwil* treatises, history works such as the *Sitt rasaʾil* of Khawj b. Malak (see entry on him by Abdeali Qutbuddin in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*) and the *Tadhkirat* by Sayyidi Hasanji Badshah (second half of 11th/17th century) on the martyrdom of Sayyidna Qutb al-Din, biographies of *daʿwat* luminaries, refutation of seceding denominations (especially the Sulaymanis and the Hujumiyya) by Luqmanji b. Habib Allah and other scholars, correspondence, ethical works and poetic *diwan*s (all manuscripts).
28. See my book *Al-Muʾayyad al-Shirazi and Fatimid Daʿwa Poetry: A Case of Commitment in Classical Arabic Literature* (Leiden, 2005).
29. Cf. Rabab Hamiduddin, *The Qasidah of the Tayyibi Daʿwah and the Diwan of Syedna ʿAli b. Muhammad al-Walid*.
30. See Abdeali Qutbuddin, *The Meaning of Love in the Poetry of Syedna Abdeali Sayfuddin* (MA thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1995).
31. Among the short *risalat*s published in Sayyidna Sayf al-Din's name are the following brief treatises: (a) four composed in the month of Ramadan and characterized as *Rasaʾil Ramadaniyya*, (b) two elegiac (*naʿy*) treatises, one for his brother and predecessor in office, Sayyidna Yusuf Najm al-Din, the other for another brother and *mukasir* Sayyidi ʿAbd al-Qadir Hakim al-Din, (c) two on administrative matters, one titled *Risala fi taqlid al-ʿummal*, a code of conduct and guidance for local Daʿwat administrators or *ʿamil*s, and the second titled *al-Risala al-Sayfiyya fi tartib al-hudud*, about changes in the hierarchy of his *hudud*. Other prose works include three epistles (*sijill*, two to his representative in Yemen), an abridgement of the biography of

Sayyidi Luqman-ji Sahib, and a *fiqh masa'il* work titled *al-Masa'il al-Sayfiyya* (all mss).

32. These students were Sayyidna Sayf al-Din's son Muhammad Badr al-Din (46th *daʿi*), Badr al-Din's successor ʿAbd al-Qadir Najm al-Din (47th *daʿi*), and the latter's brother and successor ʿAbd al-Husayn Husam al-Din (48th *daʿi*).
33. Partial ed., covering 1st to 27th *daʿi*, by Samer F. Traboulsi (Beirut, 1999); full text in ms. Shaykh Qutb was 9th in ranking of Sayyidna Sayf al-Din's *hudud*, and is buried in Pune in the cemetery named after him. The history he transcribes up to the time of the 19th *daʿi* Idris ʿImad al-Din is obtained almost entirely from the latter's *Nuzhat al-afkar* (ms); later history is culled from various unnamed sources.
34. Shaykh Sadiq ʿAli b. Mulla Sultan ʿAli Surti was 12th in the ranking of Sayyidna Sayf al-Din's *hudud* and is buried in the cemetery known by his name in Surat. His *nasihat*s have been published in a lithographed collection titled *Zahr rawd al-nasa'ih* (Mumbai, 1399/1979). For a thematic analysis, see Balvant Jani, 'The Devotional Element in the Nasihats of the Bohra Writings in Gujarat', in A. W. Entwistle and F. Mallison, ed., *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature* (Paris and New Delhi, 1988–1991), pp. 224–238.
35. The translation is entitled *Miftah al-taharat*, translator not named (lithograph, Madras, 1290/1873).
36. Volume 3 was completed first and lithographed in 1299/1882, vols. 1 and 2 appeared in 1301/1884.
37. An index volume with the tables of contents for volumes 1 to 30 has been published under the title *Miftah khaza'in al-ʿulum* ed. ʿImran b. Shaykh Hasan bhai (Surat, 1365/1946); the last five *risalat*s have not yet been published.
38. *Jawahir al-balagha al-ladunniyya* ([Dubai], 1414/1993).
39. Fifty-seven Urdu speeches by Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din have been collected in *Kalim al-fasaha wa al-balagha*, ed. Shaykh Ibrahim al-Yamani ([Bombay], 1380/1960), and nine Arabic ones in *Kunuz al-fasaha wa al-balagha*, ed. Shaykh Ibrahim al-Yamani ([Bombay], 1372/1953).
40. Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din, *Abha zuhur riyad al-ʿilm*, ed. Hudhayfa Muhyi al-Din (Mumbai, 1418/1997 and 1421/2000).
41. The most important *hafti*s are the following: (1) *Sahifat al-salat* (most comprehensive manual, contains instructions for all the important prayer rituals and *duʿa*s for the year, and other important information related to prayer rituals associated with the life of each Bohra, such as birth and death rituals), (2) *Bihori ni hafti* (special Ramadan prayers and *duʿa*'s, and prayers for Laylat al-Qadr, printed as *Khaza'in barakat al-duʿa*), (3) *Roz parwani hafti* (commonly known as just '*hafti*,' *duʿa*s to be prayed every morning, printed with the title *Ghamam al-rahma*), (4) *Shehrullah ni hafti* (*duʿa*s for after *fajr* and *zuhr* prayer during Ramadan, printed as *Sahifat adʿiya*

ramadaniyya), (5) *Mansak al-hajj* (Hajj rites), (6) *Al-Barakat wa al-qurubat* (*ziyarat hafti*, Qur'an verses, *salam*s, *duʿa*s and verses of poetry to be recited at shrines of Imam Husayn and *daʿwat* luminaries), (7) *Azhar kanz al-maghani* (poems to be recited at various occasions during the year, such as *ʿurs* and *milad*).

42. Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe*, pp. 207–228, which also provides statistics.