SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE ISMAILI SOCIETY OF EAST AFRICA WITH REFERENCE TO THE IMAMAT OF FOUR SUCCESSIVE AGA KHANS

Z A R I N A G. B H A T I A

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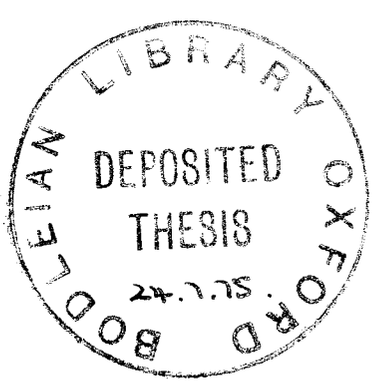

MICHAELMAS, 1974.

SYNOPSIS

This thesis is an attempt to describe a society from an anthropological angle. Unlike many societies that anthropologists have undertaken to study over the years, it is far from an 'exotic' community that lives in a remote corner of the world, which had suddenly been discovered; nor is it a tribal group that has persisted to observe its own traditional life style in spite of one or other colonial powers, or conquering nations or even a neighbouring groups' repeated effort to break it down.

In a way it is an exclusive community which does not extend itself to incorporate new members; it is quite content to follow its own life style without wanting to give up its basic tenets. In spite of several dominant cultures having surrounded it over a vast period, it has managed to survive and retain a major part of its fundamental substance. Finally it is far from a small-scale society and cannot be easily contained within a territorial framework.

Naturally, for a society of such a nature and dimension, a straightforward anthropological analysis is hardly possible. Therefore, in this short thesis, the primary question which has been raised in the Introductory Chapter is a methodological one, discussing various limitations in a discipline like social anthropology. It shows that bound by the limits of social anthropology alone, many important aspects of this society are necessarily omitted. Without the aid of other sources such as history, geography and sociology and to some extent psychology and philosophy, little would be said about this almost unique society. Were all these related disciplines to be altogether ignored, many distortions would result.

As the title of this thesis suggests, I have chosen to confine myself within a selected unit of time. It has become necessary to devote the Second Chapter almost entirely to an historical examination of the concept of leadership called the 'Imamat'. In other words, the scope of the second chapter encompasses the leadership of altogether forty-nine 'Imams', whereas the thesis as a whole focuses on the

latest four Imams who are the four successive Aga Khans. The Imamat of the four Aga Khans covers approximately a hundred and fifty years. I have tried to show the relativity of this period to the history of all the Imams spread over thirteen hundred years. The era of the Aga Khans has thus to be viewed as a period encapsulated within the whole structure of traditional leadership based on the hereditary principle of the Imamat, which is the essential feature of the Ismaili society.

The next important point in the thesis concerns the geographical distribution of Ismaili society today. Although I have concentrated mainly on the Ismailis of East Africa, which includes Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, I have given a general survey of the community in over thirty-two different countries in the third chapter. This feature has often been overlooked by many writers of various specialised interests. I have also discussed the complex character of the East African Ismailis by considering the question of 'social field', as I have called it for want of a better term.

In the fourth chapter I have described the dynamics of migration and settlement of Ismailis in East Africa. On the whole, Ismailis have lived in the sub-continent of India as a consolidated religiously-based community for over six hundred years. Here they were first converted from their Hindu culture by various Persian ascetics during the Age of Sufism. Some migrated to East Africa and various other countries during the recent phase of the Imamat, which coincides with the leadership of the four Aga Khans. I have discussed the various stages in this migration and settlement process, namely those of 'de-Indianisation', 'Islamisation' and 'modernisation'. I have again considered the question of 'social field' in this chapter, comparing it with the concept of plural societies, in which sociologists have recently involved themselves. The East African Ismailis belong to three different 'social fields' simultaneously. Firstly, they are part of a vast religious community, which, as already mentioned, has spread itself over several countries of the world. Secondly, they are part of the 'Asian' community, and, like other Asians, are migrants and

do not therefore form part of the indigenous population of Africa. Thirdly, because they are adherents of Islam, and are thus members of the 'Muslim community' they are automatically subject to Islamic ideology and doctrines. In fact, they have been known as the vanguards of social progress of this community, which, the reader must note, includes the African population.

The fifth chapter discusses the above points in detail and also describes their social structure from within. At this stage, both aspects of social life, namely, the domestic or kinship, and the politico-jural domains are fully discussed. I have taken a specific case-study of a typical Ismaili family to illustrate how it differs from the rest of the Asian family patterns, which have largely remained of the traditional type.

The sixth chapter is devoted to the current situation in East Africa. During the last decade all three independent East African countries have experienced major political changes, which have directly or indirectly affected the 'Asians' as a whole. To enumerate these briefly:

The Tanzanian Government passed the famous Arusha Declaration protecting the rights of every citizen living there. In particular, it safeguarded the interests of the indigenous community, which had a comparatively lower standard of living than the immigrant population.

In 1968 Kenya expelled those Asians who held non-Kenyan passports. This event is known as the Asian Exodus.

Finally, Uganda's expulsion of the Asians en masse in 1972 under General Idi Amin's decree, highlighted all these other events mentioned above. This single event defied the Ismaili community's continuous struggle to settle permanently in East Africa where some had lived for over six or seven generations.

In the seventh, concluding chapter, I have discussed the results of the thesis. In particular, it is stressed that the work can only be seen as an introduction to a study of the multifarious and complex Ismaili community. I make no methodological suggestions, although the

thesis ends with a question, which concerns the extent to which the discipline of social anthropology alone can give clear or exhaustive answers in the task of studying a society such as the Ismailis.

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C H A P T E R I

RANGE AND LIMITS OF AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE ISMAILI SOCIETY WITH REFERENCE TO SPECIFIC THEORIES

Any consideration of an anthropological description of Ismaili Society raises the fundamental question of the range and limits of such a description. This indeed is a question which is relevant to and ought to accompany the anthropological study of any society, but this particular case, i.e. the Ismaili society in East Africa, is one where it may be more helpful to begin by considering what such a study leaves out rather than what is accomplished. This is so because no schematic description which uses categories of description and analysis (which anthropology, by the very reason of its nature, is bound to do), can claim to elucidate and bring under its particular array of titles and subtitles, all the complexities of a society. The Ismaili society is just such a society with multifarious dimensions. Nor can an analysis conducted on the basis of the particular requirements of a discipline such as anthropology carry over the vision and feeling belonging to the individual member of the society that has been described. In other words, there is a host of feelings, a particular world-view, a specific mode of perceiving and of reacting to events which identifies an individual as a member of a particular society, that anthropology can seek to describe, but it cannot claim to describe these adequately; least of all, can it claim to 'explain away' or even translate into its own language these complexities of social participation.

It may seem that this reservation amounts to nothing more than harping on the obvious, but this can obscure its importance. What I am saying here in effect is that when an individual says he is an Ismaili there are more meanings to it than an anthropological one. Unlike a society like the Nuer and many non-literate societies, the Ismailis have a recorded history and historical intricacies and problems; an elaborately structured philosophy and a detailed doctrinal system; it also has structured organisation and social dynamics as the inevitable result of organisation. For a wider-ranging critical exposition of as many of these features as can be tackled, one needs the help of a

number of disciplines - in this case history, philosophy, theology, social psychology, sociology and social anthropology, being the chief ones. Naturally anthropology cannot carry out the functions of all these disciplines. It can only carry out its own function. My task in this thesis is to attempt an anthropological description of the Ismailis. Once again, I admit that it may seem needless emphasising of the obvious to say that this thesis, being confined to anthropological analysis, will never effect a description that belongs properly to one or more of the other disciplines. But I am merely stating these precautions as essential in order to forestall the danger of producing a thesis which, though purely anthropological, proceeds as if it were carrying out the functions of other disciplines as well; as if, in other words, it had a wider and superior claim to truth than other forms of study. This thesis, therefore, being confined to anthropology, will give a particular picture of the Ismaili society in East Africa. But it will be a picture with its own relativity and limitations, for it will take into account only those aspects of the Ismaili society that are amenable to an anthropological analysis. By thus eliminating what this thesis is not going to seek to effect, I hope:

1. to lay the ground for the final conclusions to be seen in a wider perspective and thus be helpful to anyone describing the society from within another discipline, although it will by no means be my task to do this, and
2. to emphasise implicitly the relativity of this study and therefore to preserve a basic attitude of academic humility necessary for studying a complex society such as this.

I will proceed now to consider those features of the Ismaili society which are anthropologically relevant and which introduce problems and force modifications in such a description of the society. Firstly, there is the problem of method. I submit that Ismaili society in general, including the Ismaili society in East Africa, has intricacies which defy a complacent approach and which compel anthropology to be more self-searching and less complacent in regard to method. Connected

with this, there is the problem of time as being, Max Gluckman says, 'critical for all studies of social and cultural systems' [1]. Furthermore, in the same article he describes four different modes of time in social life: 1. there is a "'real' history of events that have constituted the past of personality or culture or society" [2]; 2. there is "an encapsulation of past events within the present pattern of society" [3]; 3. there is what he calls "certain standardised ideas about time and history in varying social contexts, held by members and sections of a society" [4]; 4. "a social institution also has its own time-scale 'built into' it" which Gluckman calls "structural duration", and which is crucial to the thesis [5]. Now Ismaili society offers a fascinatingly complex challenge because of certain features that call for all these four modes of time to be taken into account and which introduce intricacies into the application of them. First of all, it has a 'real' history that has been dealt with by scholars like Wladimir Ivanow, Marshal Hodgson, J.N. Hollister, Bernard Lewis, A.S. Picklay etc. Although not strictly relevant to this thesis, it assumes an undeniable importance when we consider the second 'mode' of time, i.e. the 'encapsulation' of historical events within the contemporary structure of such a society. Psychology, and especially Dynamic Psychology, emphasises the crucial bearing of an individual's past on his present reactions, attitudes and patterns of behaviour. Furthermore, his capacity for dealing with crises, the depth of his resilience, and the agility with which he improvises solutions all have a certain relevance to the accumulated tradition of past experience, good or bad. An equivalent of this on an institutional scale ought to be taken into account with regard to a society. I do not wish to draw lengthy instances of this in regard to the Ismailis in this short thesis, but as passing examples, I may cite the 'taqiyya' or the 'principle of concealment' which has been an important feature of social behaviour of the Ismailis in the past, and only recently and gradually discarded, as the result of historical persecution which, therefore, is one of the historical facts to be taken into account. Appellations such as 'ghulāt' (extremists)

'heretics', etc. used by those Muslims who claimed orthodoxy during the pre-Fatimid and later eras and carried over with particular vehemence during the Nizari period, had an inevitable effect of making the Ismailis wary and triggering a momentum towards sharper consolidation of social identity whose results can be observed today. The Fatimid rule in Egypt and North Africa, and later, the government established at Alamut, show traditional flair for organisation whose relationship to an entirely non-political and social organisation much later has to be investigated. Finally, the fact that the 'Khoja' Ismailis of the sub-continent of India who were converted to Ismailism from about the twelfth century onwards by '_Pīrs_' or special missionaries sent from Persia, came from certain sections of the Hindu community and thus carried over important relics and effects of their ethnic past into their new religious identity, has special significance, for against this background, the attempts to undo what were pronounced by the '_Imam_' as extraneous elements as well as the efforts to establish a new identity that would at the same time be closer to pristine tradition can be viewed in a way that offers a fascinating insight into social dynamics. The relevance of history to an anthropological study of contemporary Ismaili society is thus of much more than peripheral importance; it is, in fact, crucial to the shape that such a study should take.

The third 'mode' of time described by Gluckman, viz. that which is a subjective idea of the people in regard to their own history, is what constitutes their 'myth'. This leads immediately, however, to the fourth mode of time Gluckman describes, viz. the 'structural duration'. The assumption of such a scale of time as a model for analysis of the Ismaili society may prove considerably helpful, and is therefore worth experimenting with. Even in the strictly historical sense, various phases in Ismaili history can be seen as segments or sub-segments that are part of a much larger whole. The contemporary phase in the history of the Khoja Ismailis in India, Pakistan and East Africa is part of the history of the Khoja Ismailis in general and thus goes back to the conversion carried out by the Nizari _Pīrs_. What the _Pīrs_ brought with them from

Persia, however, was Nizari Ismailism, and thus one is compelled to acknowledge the relevance of this phase in the history of Ismailism. This phase has strong links with the Fatimid phase in Ismaili history, which in turn points out to the origins of Shi'ite ideological movement. Since, however, the present study is confined to the relatively very recent phase in Ismaili history, it raises the problem of the time-scale which would be most appropriate and have the least distorting effect. Since the exclusive use of a definite line of demarcation within 'historical time' here would have the effect of shutting out the previous past which, however, has to be acknowledged because it is relevant, as we have seen, and since the whole stretch of time right from the beginnings of Ismailism up to the present phase in their history cannot possibly be made the central object of our focus, the concept of 'structural duration' offers an alternative time-scale whose utility in this case has to be investigated. Moreover, this concept involves, subsequently, the concept of 'equilibrium', which is centrally relevant to Ismailis, as we shall see later.

The doctrine of the 'Imamat' is the life-blood of the Ismailis, and it is so in their theology, i.e. in their ideological teachings, as well as their social existence. Its primary and most immediately practical effect is a sense of continuity. Basically, the doctrine of Imamat is mystical. Imamat, says the Ismaili philosopher, is nothing other than the 'nūr' of God, a term which means 'light'. More specifically, books which have a fundamental bearing on the evolution of Ismaili ideology, such as the Rawshnāi-Nāma and other books by Nāsir-i Khusraw, the Rawdat al-taslīm or Tasawwurāt of Nasīr al-Din Tūsī, the 'Kalāmi-Pir', the Ginans or mystical poems of the Pīrs, as well as the Firmāns of the Imams invariably explain the 'nūr' as an aspect of Divine Essence which emerges from the Absoluteness of the Divine and reaches out towards humanity. This, however, has an immediate effect on the Ismailis viewed as a 'social fact', as an 'institution'. It creates a cohesiveness whose cement is the sense of continuity of the Imamat, which is concretely embodied in the unceasing succession of Imams in linear descent, a

succession which Ismailis believe is permanent. Irrespective of the varying personalities of the individual Imams who succeed to the office, the principle of Imamat has the effect of lifting the Ismailis from an obsessive consciousness of the present and giving them a sense of continuity and timelessness. In practical terms, this means durability under stress. Here the function of the Imam is essentially redressive. He corrects imbalance by his very nature, for he represents a tradition that stretches back over many hundreds of years and which in fact is conceived of as an endlessly expanding mystical moment. The Imamat is greater than him, and in keeping this 'greater than now' awareness constantly in the foreground of the attention of the Ismailis through his very presence and existence, he inevitably lends them without direct contrivance, a sturdy pivot around which they can explore new avenues of social change and adapt themselves to the demands of a changing environment. Even when the environment keeps on changing at a giddy pace, with unpredictable twists and turns, as has been the case with most of the post-independence phases in the countries where the Ismailis live, the institution of the Imamat maintains an unmoving base on which movement can occur, for the latter is then more secure. It has thus a dual function: on one hand it has a corrective mechanism for it prevents change from losing its own pace and toppling over into indirection, into change for the sake of change, which can no more be restrained once it has been triggered off. Gluckman's statement: 'In so far as there is continuity, it is in the roles, not in the people' [6] is most apt in this context, for if the concept of Imamat was to be translated into the sociological concept of 'role' (no matter how inadequate this translation would be), this is roughly what actually does happen here. Even more important than this function of the Imamat, and opposed to it, is its catalytic function. Once this base exists, in the form of the Imamat-concept reflected in the presence of the living Imam, there is greater security for change to occur at a level which rests above and on top of this deeper and more fundamental level. In this respect, the Imamat is a constant source of momentum. What is more is that change with

this underlying, 'subliminal' level as its basis is likely to be faster, more ordered, and less haphazard. I quote a passage from H.S. Morris which reinforces my argument: "The living Imam in the persons of the ... Aga Khans was a symbol of the permanent, changeless aspects of the sect, in a period of rapid and confusing transition" [7]. Further, " ... it was a symbol in no way equalled by the concealed and silent imams of other Shi'a sects or the learned men of the Sunni Muslims" [8]. The equilibrium model thus seems to be potentially very valuable in this study. Though it would not describe reality, it would furnish a standard which would help us to 'map reality' in Gluckman's words. It provides an ideal which is fundamental to Ismaili ideology, and against which we can ascertain the direction and implication of social change amongst the Ismailis under the last four Imams.

Max Weber's model consisting of the three types of authority (viz. legal, traditional and charismatic) [9] is also as crucially relevant to the Ismaili society as is Gluckman's, although in this case its applicability is further limited owing to distinctive features which seriously threaten the validity of any attempts to interpret the nature of authority among the Ismailis as conforming entirely to any one of Weber's ideal constructs. Here again is a case of complexity in the structure and dynamics of the society posing a serious challenge to any straightforward analysis in terms of a rigid or closed model, and so directing attention in turn towards the model itself, perhaps inviting a re-examination. It is important to note in this connection that Weber was not wholly unaware of such a difficulty arising out of any attempt at applying one or other of his constructs faithfully to a specific society. Nevertheless, he formulated his model of types of authority with such elaborate detail that one cannot help becoming conscious of a certain narrowness as a result. At any rate, it becomes fairly obvious when it comes to analysing the Ismaili society and the nature of the authority found in it in terms of his model. For instance, the simple antithesis of rational-legal authority and traditional authority on grounds that the former involves obedience to a more or less

impersonal order while the latter is based primarily on loyalty to the person of the chief, is insufficient for one to be able to ascribe the Imamat to either one or the other of these models. For the Imam does command authority on the basis of an unmistakably personal loyalty on the part of his followers; simultaneously, however, there is also an 'impersonal' order. In this case conceived in metaphysical terms, which makes obedience to him incumbent on the Ismailis, although this 'impersonal' order is entirely unlike the legal framework within which obedience to a bureaucratic authority is enjoined. On the other hand, the power wielded by the leadership group in the Ismaili society approximates a bureaucratic set-up in certain respects. In the first place, there is a body of rules, defined as the constitution, within which the leaders act in their capacity as officials. Moreover, the 'impersonal' order in the rational-legal sense within which obedience to bureaucratic leaders is proffered, is found to be present in connection with the authority of the Ismaili officials in exactly the same sense. For the Ismailis recognise the officials who are members of one or other of the 'councils' or holders of administrative posts, only within the boundary of stipulated rules and laws. Nevertheless, there is greater room for a more or less personal impact than Weber would allow in the strictly bureaucratic system. Again, in keeping with the characteristic feature of a bureaucratic system, the Ismaili officials work in total separation from the property or money handled by them, i.e. without appropriation, as is the case in traditional feudal modes of authority. Above all, there is a very clear and organised hierarchy characteristic of rational-legal systems, namely that 'each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one', and that 'there is a right of appeal and of statement of grievances from the lower to the higher', is as accurate a description of the Ismaili legal system as one could possible have [10].

On the other hand, there are other characteristics of bureaucratic systems which fail to be borne out by the leadership institutions among the Ismailis. The 'offices' which these leaders occupy are not defined

as exhaustively as in the 'pure' types of bureaucracy. The leaders receive no remuneration; they have to have no 'technical' training as such for eligibility to office, though they do acquire knowledge through experience - a phenomenon commented on by Weber in connection with bureaucracies [11]; some of the offices they hold do not have exhaustively defined areas of competence attached to them; and finally, the offices are 'honorary' and not the sole or primary occupation of the incumbents. The situation is further complicated, as we have seen, by the complexity of the position of the Imam. In his case, the criteria of bureaucratic organisation do not tally with the facts. For instance, Weber makes an interesting observation in connection with papal infallibility, namely that it is thought of as 'one which functions ex cathedra in the sphere of the office, thus implying the typical distinction between the sphere of office and that of the private affairs of the incumbent'. Such a distinction is absent in the case of the Ismaili Imam.

When we turn our attention to the traditional types of authority, at first glance it would seem as if the Ismaili Imamat could be made intelligible within the framework of this model. A closer examination, however, does not endorse such a judgement. Unlike prominent traditional sociates, the leadership group that acts as a mode of communication between the followers and the Imam in certain routine respects is not composed of personal retainers or householders, but of officials. Moreover, these officials and their status-roles bear several characteristics of bureaucratic office, as we have noticed above. Finally, the Imam has far more importance as one who has the authority and wisdom to initiate and guide changes, than the chief possessing traditional type of authority can have. As a matter of fact, the latter's freedom to propose innovations is markedly limited by precedents and 'traditions which themselves directly determine the content of the command and the objects and extent of authority" [12].

Mistaken analysis owing to a similar tendency to generalise on the part of several writers has resulted in the Imamat frequently

being interpreted as simply charismatic [13]. Since any detailed evaluation of such an analysis presupposes a discussion of the nature, functions and powers of the Imam in Ismaili Society, such a detailed consideration will be reserved till a later chapter. Suffice it to note here that while the Imamat does possess a divine character in Ismaili doctrine, certain other characteristics of charismatic authority fail to be borne out in the Ismaili society. The Imam has to supply no 'proofs' to prove his charismatic powers, nor has he to undergo any tests. Moreover, contemporary Ismaili society is not revolutionary, nor does it feel constrained to repudiate the past, as a charismatic authority usually does. Above all, Weber's notion of the distinguishing features of the 'staff' of the charismatic leader, which includes the assertions that the members of such a 'staff' are chosen on grounds of their charismatic appeal, that they are not 'officials' in the rational-legal sense, that they are, strictly speaking, neither appointed nor dismissed, that they are not hierarchically arranged, and that there are no administrative organs or formal rules within which they are constrained to act, are all contradicted in the administrative machinery of the Ismaili society. It is true that the Imam appoints his successor and in this sense charisma is 'handed down', so that it may not be unjustifiable to talk of the Imamat as a hereditary routinised charisma, but this again, when viewed in conjunction with the other factors discussed above, is not sufficient to characterise the Imamat as 'charismatic' in Weberian sense of the term. For the 'handing down' of the charisma in the Imamat is a feature accompanied by a marked constancy. There is no competition for the Imamat or rival claims to it on the basis of differing amounts of charisma. The successor-Imam is obeyed and followed with as much unquestioning zeal as was his predecessor. Moreover, Weber defines charismatic authority as specifically outside the realm of everyday routine and the profane sphere. On the other hand, he considers both rational and traditional authority as forms of everyday routine control of action. Now in Ismailism

the nature of Imam's authority is both pragmatic and mystical. In other words, the status role of the Imam is both rational and charismatic [14].

An Imam deals with day-to-day affairs of his collowers in the social, political and economic senses of the word. Above all, he is a mystical and a doctrinally cardinal element of the basis of Ismaili faith. This dualism of the Imam's role, both social and mystical, is better explained elsewhere and will be discussed later in this thesis [15]. These factors, together with the observations we have made regarding the administrative staff of the Imam as categorised in the Weberian model, make it imperative for us to approach the charisma of the Imam with greater caution than would be necessary if such an approach was made exclusively from within a theoretical framework without modifications, adaptations, or re-examination of the adequacy of such a framework.

It must be mentioned that yet another writer has used the Weberian model in analysing the Ismaili Society in a short article printed in a sociological journal. He remarks that the existence of a living Imam has meant that Ismailis have been more flexible in adjusting to changing conditions 'in the last 100 years or so', for whereas other Muslims have held a fairly literal interpretation of the Qur'ān and a relatively unchanging interpretation, the Ismailis have been able to refer to another authority in addition to the Qur'ān and the Hadith (canons) - a living person [16]. I hasten to stress here that the doctrine and the institution of Imamat is not merely 100 years old but is embodied in the very belief-system or mystical charter of the Ismaili faith which is nearly as old as Islam itself. Imamat is not a newly devised system. It has been the basis of Shia Islam, the details of which will be given in the next chapter. However, comparing the Pope's authority with that of the Imam, Bocock notes that the latter is not surrounded by a large, bureaucratic structure, with full-time priests and bishops staffing it, but can choose local leaders himself who also could be changed from time to time. Thus, an Imam has more impact on the Ismailis if he has a

policy which he wants to pursue, than a Pope has in the Church. I would like to add that the clergy in a way confers authority of the charismatic kind on the Pope. And the Pope remains indebted to the clergy and merely carries out the tradition of papal authority and duties. In the case of the Imamat, the Imam is not indebted to anyone for his position except to the previous Imam who upon his death, handed over this power to him. The Ismailis, therefore, do not confer power on an Imam; they merely accept it. This system, namely of a hereditary type of routinised charisma, is by far more radical than the papacy. Ideally, any living Imam can implement whatever social changes he desires, abrogating the entire system set up by his predecessor if necessary, without introducing any doubts or conflicts regarding his authority in the minds of his followers. Our task, therefore, in the thesis will be to examine these notions more closely and to consider whether a modification of one or more theoretical models or, alternatively, an intelligent conjunction of several models, can throw more light on the nature of authority in the Ismaili society. The examination of the Weberian model in this context has helped to throw light on the complexities of such a task.

Finally, this brings us to the question of social change. What type of change has been going on amongst the Ismailis in the period described? Has it been 'oscillatory' change? 'Cyclical' change? Have the circumstances and events during this period led to a mere 'situational' change among the Ismailis or to a more far-reaching, radical 'structural' change [17]. Or has there been a 'situational' change which ultimately can be analysed as mere evidence of deeper structural change? It is not possible to answer these questions when the change has not as yet been fully discussed. Nevertheless, some observations of a general and important character should be made at the outset. Parson's distinction between change <u>within</u> and change <u>of</u> systems is of fundamental importance [18]. Evaluation of the social change in the Ismailis in terms of this distinction will have a concluding place in this thesis. Such an evaluation, however, should

be preceded by a careful examination of the nature of the change, as mentioned above. This depends in part on the factors making for change. In any society, the decisions of the authority are an important constituent of change. Conflicts between sub-groups, social mobility, and social interaction amongst the Ismailis are all influenced by the position of the Imam. Beside maintaining the constancy against which change can take place, he also is the listener in whose hearing tensions and conflicts can find vent without seriously disrupting the system. This is why, although the elasticity of the society is compromised by certain factors such as the elaborate and hierarchical character of the councils and administrative machinery in the society, conflicts do not lead to disruption. These questions will be explored more fully in a later chapter. For the present, it is sufficient to note that the general pattern in this thesis will be, firstly, to describe the social dynamics in the Ismaili society within the period stipulated and, secondly, to analyse these dynamics in the light of theories of social change. This would involve, as an inevitable result of the presence of complex elements a reconsideration of the adequacy of various conceptual frameworks. In a more implicit fashion, this should point the way towards a general re-examination of such frameworks, for the complexity of a society such as this in a sense throws the anthropological discipline onto its own resources, so as to say, in an attempt to formulate a suitable method, or a combination, or a modification of various methods.

The very nature of Ismaili society raises the question of its ethnic boundary. When I began writing this thesis, it was most appropriate for me to deal with the whole unit, namely East Africa. There were very insignificant differences in the structure and organisation of the society within the three constituent countries, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The Ismailis were scattered across these political boundaries and formed a unified ethnic community within the larger unit, loosely described as the 'Asian' community. Ismailis as a whole showed clear ethnic distinctions from the rest of the Asians and thus formed the very foundations on which their social system was

built. Despite their political boundaries, Ismailis in East Africa behaved as a single culturally definable unit. Irrespective of the historical factors which were incidentally shared by other communal groups within the Asian sector, the Ismailis regarded themselves as an exclusive group which consisted of ascribed membership. They were easily identified by the actors themselves and thus maintained themselves as a religious, cultural and ethnic group. Using Barth's definition of 'ethnic group', the Ismailis (a) were biologically self-perpetuating, (b) shared fundamental cultural values, (c) made up a field of communication and interaction, (d) had a membership which identified itself and was, to a certain extent, identified by others, as constituting a group distinguishable from other groups of the same order [19]. An ethnic boundary canalizes social life - it entails quite complex organisation of behaviour and social relations. 'A dichotomization of others as strangers as members of another ethnic group, implies a recognition of limitations on shared understandings, differences in criteria for judgement of value and performance, and a restriction of interaction to sectors of assumed common understanding and mutual interest', as Barth further explains [20].

In an empirical sense, the East African Ismailis believed themselves to be an ethnic group based on solidarity which extended beyond their national boundaries. They were evenly distributed all over East African countries according to the size of each separate country. They distinguished themselves as a community, which, although it had an Asian origin, was determined to stay permanently in the land of their adoption and relinquish all their ties with the land of their origin. But this fact was, to a large extent, only recognised by themselves and by the other Asian communal groups. It was not widely accepted nor understood by the indigenous African population. This became evident when, as a last stroke, all 'Asians' were expelled from Uganda in 1972 by General Idi Amin. The other two political incidents which had occurred before the Ugandan crisis were of minor importance. These were the nationalisation of private property in

Tanzania in about 1967 and the expulsion of British Asian citizens from Kenya in the next two years. Neither of these two incidents has hit the East African Ismaili society to the extent the Ugandan crisis has. However, in this thesis I have regarded social changes in the Ismaili society of East Africa as a whole, without giving undue importance to Ugandan Asians because when I began writing this thesis, the recent crisis was not imminent nor expected then. In Chapter VI I have dealt with the effects of the Ugandan crisis because it shows a considerable amount of social change in the contemporary situation. Nevertheless, I have viewed these changes as merely incidental and essentially caused by General Amin's unpredicted political decree. In spite of this unforseeable pronouncement, Ismaili society has not changed in its basic East African ethnic character. This point becomes clearer as we examine the social structure and organisation of the society in the chapters that follow.

It is important, however, to remember that when we talk of Ismaili society, we are referring to East African Ismailis only and the vastness of the Ismailis as a whole remains outside the scope of this anthropological analysis. As I have said earlier, my task is to describe the Ismaili society strictly in an anthropological framework. This necessitates choice of an ethnic boundary and I am taking East Africa as such a unit, at the expense of leaving out other Ismailis residing in over thirty-two other countires, in a variety of diverse social systems. They have, however, one most basic and fundamental element in common. They all recognise the institution and doctrine of Imamat which forms the nucleus of their belief-system. Without seeing the structural position of the east African Ismailis within this wider framework, one gets a very limited picture of this vast community which has developed over not merely one hundred years but many centuries. Most western writers have failed to establish this unique nature of Ismaili society, especially those who have confined themselves within the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology only.

In my conclusion to this chapter I again emphasise the limitations in the methodology which anthropology lays down. For a study of a society in general, one finds it is inevitable to examine its evolution in time and one draws some kind of a geographical boundary round it, thus confining that society within some form of space. The Ismaili society has a vast temporal dimension and cannot be called to have any spatial limitation within which it has remained. In the next chapter I shall try to show the relativity of the recent phase of the East African Ismailis to the rest of the Ismailis, in order to describe social changes that have taken place in its recent period, of merely one hundred and fifty years, within the defined territorial boundary, restricting myself to the epoch of the last successive Imams, called the Aga Khans, out of altogether forty-nine Imams which the society claims to have had. It is therefore most important that we examine the historical and ethnic background of the East African Ismailis in a 'diachronic' form in the next chapter [21].

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C H A P T E R I I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The relevance of historical data to the anthropological survey of a particular society is an issue that assumes special importance in the study of the Ismaili society in East Africa. For instance, Evans-Pritchard's exposure of the weaknesses of Radcliffe-Brown's position regarding history and social anthropology is too well known to need reiteration. Following his classic defence of the historical position as of relevance to social anthropology, other anthropologists of less well-established stature were stimulated into tackling the whole question more seriously. I.M. Lewis made a most definite statement of the indispensibility of history in anthropological studies when he remarked that 'whether he likes it or not, even the most extreme structuralist anthropologist is forced in practice to dip into the past' [1]. In the last chapter the overwhelming functional importance of the principle of Imamat in the Ismaili society as a pivot around which more successful modes of adaptation to the environment could be explored, was discussed. In addition to this, its dual function, i.e. the redressive as well as the catalytic aspects of its function, were discussed at some length. In the Ismaili society, or for that matter in Shia society of which the Ismailis were ideologically a subsect, the crucial issue of the role of divine leadership and the Shia response to it was a most important development which constituted a historical charter that has continued to guide the Ismaili society's reaction to contemporary developments as well as its social controls and standards. The peculiar nature of this response can thus be clearly understood only against the background of the historical development. Another equally fundamental point which ought to be noted here, and which underlines the relevance of history to this study, is that the extent to which this history becomes important in the Ismaili's belief-system and the popular form in which it is assimilated, throws light on the function of the belief-system in the society. Hence, it is important for this purpose, firstly to consider the historical background against which the doctrine of Imamat evolved; secondly, to examine the Ismaili's own interpretation

of this history, and to ascertain whether this is consistent or not with the historical data; and lastly, to consider the importance of the historical development in constituting the strength of the society's contemporary belief-system.

Another relevant fact to be noted here is that although the role of the Imam vis-a-vis the Ismaili society has remained essentially the same throughout the long course of its history, his political role has undergone important changes. During the Fatimid period of Imamat, for instance, the Imam was a monarch, a head of state, as well. Since his role as Imam has remained the same, however, the changes in his political role ought to be observed against differing situations in the past. In this respect the Imam's role could be studied within a developmental framework which would consist of a sequence of stages over time. Besides the role of the Imam, the functional and organisational changes in the society can also be studied in a developmental framework. The social changes among the East African Ismailis since the original conversion constitute a system within which, in addition to the basic structure of the principle of Imamat (which, incidentally, has both a systematised aspect, i.e. the existence of the Imam, as well as a spiritual one, i.e. the morally obligatory loyalty to him), the relationship between institutions and the interplay of functions can also be studied in a developmental framework. Such a study would, in other words, be essentially diachronic as explained in the last chapter. As our object of study in this thesis is a spatio-temporal unit, we may usefully take it as a system which in its turn is a part of a larger system which forms a temporal continuum. Moreover, such a consideration of the Ismaili society in East Africa under the four successive Aga Khans as a system which is part of a still larger system, has the further advantage of making it possible for us to see how far contemporary functions in the society are encapsulations of the past, as well as enabling us to formulate a generalising, comparative approach in the theoretical sense. Finally, consideration of developmental mechanisms over time would also facilitate insight into the contemporary structure of the society.

The process which led to the emergence of Ismailism as a distinctive interpretation of Islamic belief worked on more than one level. Theological differences, philosophic speculations, economic and political dynamics were all involved, but it is important to remember that for the Muslim the religion of Islam was a world-view in which all these various aspects of life were not and, in fact, could not possibly be differentiated. If the root principle and the first distinctive evidence of Islam as a new movement of importance was its unyielding monotheism, passionately preached by Muhammad in his home-town of Mecca, it was after all a simple and fundamental formula of faith which summed up an emerging world-view and contained within it the beginnings of a vast upheaval in the existing forms of organisation and belief. The society in which Muhammad proclaimed the new faith was an integral nomadic society, with a simple economy and characteristic tribal organisation. At the same time, it was simmering with discontent, economic disruption and, consequently, a social convulsiveness which was largely the result of the economic problems connected with the climatic conditions of the desert as well as recent mass migration out of the peninsula. In these uncertain conditions the Arab imagination was well-disposed to seize upon a new and more comprehensive faith which would give a new meaning and zest to his life, help him reorganise his social life along new ideals and fire his enthusiasm by a world-view which took account of a more universal awareness. What evolved was not only a new and articulate religious experience but an elaborate and distinctive set of ideals and values which radically altered the social scene. Yet it was not until after the Prophet had died and the uncontrollable upsurge of energy born out of the new faith spilled into the conquest of vast territory ranging from Iraq and Persia to Egypt, Maghrib (North Africa) and Spain, that the magnitude of the change was thrust onto the Muslim's awareness and the whole question of organisation could no more be shelved or dealt with in a vaguely compromising manner. This was the time when there was an overhaul of basic assumptions about authority, but what should not be

overlooked is that this very problem had presented itself in a more amorphous and yet urgent manner at the time of the Prophet's death. At that precarious moment, the question of the authority who was to maintain the teachings of the Qur'ān which to the Muslim was immutable divine revelation and thus the basis on which he was to shape his life in society as well as the source of his morals and values, presented itself in an unexpectedly urgent manner. But the situation being delicate and precarious, a number of tribal leaders quickly swore fealty to Abu Bakr, a veteran elder of the Prophet's tribe and the father of his wife Aisha. The problem of succession was thus expediently and therefore rather superficially resolved at the same time as it was tacitly shelved. The succession after all was devoid of religious value. For the Qur'ān declared in unequivocal terms that Muhammad had been the last of the 'prophets', i.e. the recipients of the divine revelation. His successor, the Caliph, was looked upon as a maintainer of order and one whose role was politically necessary but who at the same time was as 'human' and fallible as any other Muslim, and who was expected to solve disputes and act as a loosely centralising force in consultation with an informal body of influential tribal elders. His role was thus highly informal and vested with little scope for any strong or original exercise of power. Most important, his role was devoid of any charisma [2]. The succession, however, did not go unchallenged. A party of followers who were attached to Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet who had been one of the earliest converts to Islam and a member of his close circle, had emphasised that the succession to the Prophet was of necessity both a spiritual and secular one. To this effect, they argued that although the Prophet had been the final recipient of the divine revelation, his successor was to succeed him in both his spiritual and secular functions. Thus his task would be not only to preserve order, dispense justice and supervise the army, but also to interpret God's will to the community. Moreover, Ali and Ali alone had the inalienable right to the succession. No better indications for this could be found, they argued, than the Prophet's oft-quoted saying,

viz. Ali was to him as Aaron had been to Moses. Ali was thus the divinely-chosen Imam of the Muslim people. His succession had been willed by Allah and made known through the Prophet, for divine succession could not be governed by the people. Finally, when Ali died, the 'ilm or spiritual knowledge invested in him would continue to run in patrilineal descent. The descendant-Imam would thus be also directly descended from the Prophet through his daughter Fatima. Regarding this important issue on succession to the Prophet, Justice Arnould, in his judgement delivered in the High Court of Bombay on 12th November, 1886, in the lawsuit instituted against the great-great-grandfather of the present Aga Khan, the 46th Imam and the first Aga Khan's claim to the Imamat, proclaimed: "The influence of Ayesha, the young and favourite wife of Mohammed, a rancorous enemy of Fatima and of Ali, procured the election of her own father, Aby Bakr; to Abu Bakr succeeded Omar, and to him Osman, upon whose death in the year 655 of the Christian era, Ali was at last raised to the Caliphate. He was not even then unopposed; aided by Ayesha, Moawiyah of the family of the Ummayads contested the Caliphate with him, and while the strife was still doubtful, in the year A.D.660, Ali was slain by a Kherigite or Muslim fanatic, in the mosque of Cufa, at that time the principal Muslim city on the right or west bank of the Euphrates - itself long since a ruin, at no great distance from the ruins of Babylon" [3].

Here, therefore, was a fundamental ideological conflict. At any rate, it never became militant in the years immediately after Muhammad's death. This may have partly been due to Ali's refusal to contend the succession and his pacifist attitude to the question. As Jimmy Verjee, the Aga Khan's then Education Administrator in Uganda in 1957, reports in his talk given on the radio: " ... Ali with his usual magnanimity and devotion to the faith, being scrupulously anxious to avoid the least discord amongst the disciples of the Master, at once accepted the election of Abu Bakr" [4]. At any rate, after the death of the third Caliph 'Uthman, who had succeeded

'Umar who had in turn succeeded Abu Bakr - each confirmed in power by an informal and varying caucus composed of key people - Ali was elected as the Caliph in the orthodox sense, of the Muslim people as a whole. Soon political intrigue, mainly instigated by Muawiyah, the Syrian governor, whom Muslims have considered as an arch-manipulator and demagogue, came to a head. The final result was that Ali was killed and Muawiyah established himself in power. He managed to expand the Caliphate into a semi-monarchy and cleverly tried to establish dynastic rule (he was the first of the famous Umayyad dynasty) by securing support for his won Yezid as the heir. Naturally, the Shia school was viewed by the latter, under the vicissitudes of the period, as the direct threat to Umayyad dynastic ambitions, and in an unprecedented tragedy at Kerbala in 680 A.D., Imam Husein, Ali's eldest son, was killed. The pathos attendant upon the murder and the shock of the bloodshed violently shook the Islamic world, and the reverberations of this tragedy of the death of the Prophet's grandson continue to be felt today in Muslim nations all over the world. From then on the Caliphate lost the simplicity and piety that it had seemed to possess, at least retrospectively, under the first four Caliphs. The hopes of the more pious were rudely shattered. An interesting observation is made by Sedillot, a historian which I re-quote here: "... had the principle of hereditary succession in favour of Ali been recognised at the outset, it would have prevented the rise of those disastrous pretensions which engulfed Islam in the blood of Moslems. The husband of Fatima, united in his person the right of succession as lawful heir of the Prophet as well as the right by election. It might have been thought that all would submit themselves before his glory so pure and so grand. But it was not to be" [5]. The worldliness of the Umayyad Caliphs drove many to find their refuge in the ascetic and reclusive life. And Shi'ism, which had begun as no more than a simple but fundamental difference on the doctrinal point of succession (the term itself was derived from shī'at, which simply meant 'party'), took on a more organised and elaborate form. The basic doctrine of the Imāmat,

the divine succession, which had formed the Shi'a protest, now became the basis on which a highly intricate and elaborate doctrine involving speculation on such philosophic questions as that of predestination and free will, was organised, thus giving it a highly differentiated identity [6].

The Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad, surnamed as-Sādiq and commonly known as Ja'far Sādiq, the fourth in direct descent from Ali, played an important role in the development of Shi'a philosophy concerning a wide range of issues apart from the Imamat. His death in 764 A.D. led to a conflict over the question of his successor - a conflict that resulted in a split which was to have far-reaching effects on the Shi'a world. A section of the community insisted on Ismail as the legitimate successor, while another section proclaimed the younger surviving son Mūsā, as the Imam. The latter, forming the orthodox bulk of the Shia community and constituting its majority, later came to be known as the Ithnāasheriyā (a term derived from the Arabic word for 'twelve' - they believed in twelve Imams altogether). The fourth Imam after Mūsā, however, died childless, and thus came into being the doctrine of the hidden Imam (ghayb) who is believed to be concealed in a cellar in Samarra, a town north of Baghdād in Iraq, whence he will reappear on the Day of Judgement. The other group, the Ismāīlīyyā, traced the line of Imamat through Ismail and believed in his descendants as the rightful Imams.

At the beginning of the tenth century, al-Mahdi, eleventh of the Ismaili Imams, emerged from political quiescence into victory over the North African Berbers. Thus was established the famous Fatimid dynasty which ruled over Egypt and North Africa for over two centuries. The Ismaili Imams were now monarchs of a powerful political empire as well. The period of their rule in Egypt and North Africa saw many changes. While on one hand political uncertainties and vicissitudes continued, on the other hand there were remarkable achievements in the fields of learning, architecture and town-planning. Under the Imam al-Mu'izz (952-75 A.D.), the city of Cairo traditionally called al-Qahirah) was

completed. In his history of Egypt in the Middle Ages, Lane Poole pays him a great tribute and says: "Muizz was a born statesman and never failed to take advantage of a suitable opportunity. His knowledge was so vast that he could not only write Arabic poetry and literature but was a student of Greek, could talk the Sudanese and Berber dialects fluently and had acquired the knowledge of Slavonic languages in order to be able to talk with the Slavs of Eastern Europe. Prominent among his many commendable qualities were righteousness, statesmanship and an extraordinary regard for justice" [7]. The University of Al-Azhar was also begun during his reign and completed and established as an academy by the next Imam, al-Aziz.

Another appropriate passage about the Fatimid Caliphate could be quoted here: "The Fatimide Court was always full of logicians, mathematicians, jurists and physicians .... Yakub, the Grand Vazier of Muizz, who was Jewish by origin but who later embraced the Ismaili Faith, was a capable administrator and a great patron of learning. In the reign of Al-Aziz ... , Yakub turned the Mosque of Al-Azhar, erected by Muizz, into a University and secured from his Master a grant for the maintenance of a fixed number of scholars who at one time reached the total of 9,758 under 317 professors". [8] In and outside Cairo "new mosques, palaces, bridges, canals and dry docks were built" [9]. Under his successor-Imam, al-Hakim (996-1-21 A.D.), the Dār-al-Hikamat was opened with a large library attached to it. "Lectures were given on the Imam, jurisprudence, astronomy, grammar, Arabic and medicine"[10]. This and other centres of learning "were a significant contribution of Ismailism towards progress in learning. These institutions were free to all and people in classes received writing materials free. Public gatherings were regularly held where learned men wore robes which are thought to be forerunners of modern academic gowns. The cost of these institutions was borne by the government, and the most qualified teachers were brought from as far as Spain or Asia for the sciences" [11]. Meanwhile, an elaborate hierarchy of dā'īs or missionaries was organised and conversion was carried out as far as

India. The doctrine of the sect was formulated on highly intricate and complex lines and has often too simply been described as 'esoteric'. This is not the place to discuss it in any detail, but it may be mentioned in passing that its main emphasis was an allegorical interpretation of the Quran, and an ascending order of spiritual experience for the believer with the help of which he moved from the zahir, i.e. the exterior and formal precepts of faith, to the batin, its hidden kernel or essence. Thus, Fatimid Ismailism shunned the formal system of the orthodox school and stressed that the revelation in its literal and legal aspects (i.e. the 'Shariat') was after all an external form whose importance lay in its being the bearer of the 'haqiqat' (literally 'truth'), or inner meaning. The zahir was important, but more as a means to an end than as an end in itself. In general, zahir comprised the ritual system as well as the laws and the standards of conduct laid down in the scriptures, termed 'Sharia'. The haqiqat or batin, i.e. the truth or 'inner essence', was concealed in the organised form of religion, including its social controls and standards. This haqiqat could only be apprehended under the guidance of the Imam, who was an embodiment of 'universal reason' (Aql-i-Kull) in the Aristotelian sense. The presence of the Imam was thus vital in Fatimid Ismaili thought. Already it was stressed over and over again that the Imam could not disappear (thus sharply demarcating Fatimid doctrine from that of the 'twelvers'). "The Imam was thus ultimate source of the inward and universal sense underlying the outward, evidence sense of Koran or hadith. The outer formulas set forth in these scriptures were called the zahir; the hidden meaning of them, which the Imam revealed, was called the batin. A practice such as the five daily ritual prayers expected of all Muslims .... could thus be interpreted as symbolising ulterior matters of religious or philosophical import. In this fashion the Ismailis could reconcile the authority of the community - embodied in the outer law - with the demands of absolute reason, given its due in the batin" [12].

Thus, a distinctive religious and philosophical system of belief, propagated by an organised and loyal hierarchy or dais was established, and conversion was carried out in places ranging from Yemen through Badakhshan to India. Leading dais or the period are al-Kirmāni, Mu'ayyad fi-d- Din Shirazi, and Nāsir-i-Khusraw, and the reader is referred to their numerous books for a more detailed exposition of Fatimid Ismaili doctrine. Professor Gibbon, a famous historian, has said, "The Fatimide Court surpassed in magnificence, richness, elegance and learning even the brilliance and culture of the Caliphs of Baghdad and was superior to anything which contemporary Europe could boast of" [13].

Mustansirbillah, or Al-Mustansir was the eighth and the last of the Fatimid Caliphs who ruled in Egypt. O'Leary calls his reign "the golden age of Ismaili science" [14]. Summing up the achievements of the Fatimid Caliphate and the Nizari Islam, Mr. Verjee said: "Great men renowned in history for their contributions to science, and world civilisation received great encouragement at the hands of the Fatimide Caliphs. Ibn Yunis a master spirit of the age, invented the pendulum. His works on astronomy were read with profound interest in Europe and China. There were other Ismailis, such as Ibn Haytham, the great mathematician, Al-Hazen the distinguished physicist, who rejected the theory that the eye sends out rays to the object and who asserted the reverse process, a discovery which provided the foundation of modern photography. There was then Jabir, who is described by Dr. Max Meyerhof as the 'Father of Chemistry'; Omar Khayam, the great poet, philosopher, mathematician and astronomer, Aboo Ali Sinna, known to the Western world as Avicenna, a distinguished physician who has been called by E.G. Browne as the 'teacher of Europe in the middle ages' and whose photograph (sic) is still to be found in the great hall of the faculty of medicine at the University of Paris. Still others like Nauman, a distinguished lawyer and Chief Judge at the Court of Muizz and Nasir Khusraw, the famous traveller and missionary who has left an immortal record of the Fatimide rule in his literally masterpiece 'Safar Nama' have all left a deep mark on the history of Islam" [15].

The death of Al-Mustansir, the eighteenth Imam from Ali in the Ismaili tradition, in 1064 A.D. led to another split which divided the Ismailis into two distinguished groups. One of these held to Nizar, the eldest son of Al-Mustansir, as the rightful Imam. His followers therefore came to be known as the Nizar, the eldest son of Al-Mustansir, as the rightful Imam. His followers therefore came to be known as the Nizari Ismailis, and it is this group which is represented by the Ismaili Khojās in India, Pakistan and East Africa today. In common usage, however, the term 'Nizari' is often dropped, and the group is known simply as the 'Ismailis'. Even constitutionally they are generally referred to as the 'Shia Imami Ismailis'. The other group, who followed the lead of Al Afdal, the military captain, in swearing allegiance to Musta'ili the younger son of Al-Mustansir and the son-in-law of Al-Afdal, came to be known as the Mustalian Ismailis. Today, however, they are mainly known as the 'Bohras', and are found mostly in India and Pakistan, South Arabia, Yemen as well as East Africa. Reverting to the Nizari Ismailis, however, we must mention here the spectacular figure of Hasan bin Sabbāh, in whose person history and legend get hopelessly confused with the result that an irresistible aura of romance and legend led to writers, historians and chroniclers relating, with a lavish abundance of exotic detail, the story of the Assassins of Alamut, who intoxicated themselves with 'hashish', who were then given a 'taste' of the 'garden of paradise' which Hasan-bin-Sabbāh had specially created for this purpose, and who, in the hope of winning it eternally, then went out to murder their enemies secretly, one by one. The truth about Hasan-bin-Sabbāh was not entirely simple. It is important to remember that even when the Ismailis were rulers, as during the Fatimid Caliphate and now in the Fortress of Alamut in Persia, they were a heterodox minority. Even when Fatimid Caliphate held sway, the orthodox Muslim Caliphate at Baghdād was the Abbasid dynasty, which was no less and perhaps more severe than its predecessor, the Umayyad dynasty, in persecuting the Shias. And now again the Nizari Ismailis were "an aspiring minority group, whose religions and social orientation had been rejected by the bulk of Islamic society;

and who were faced with a steadily hardening pattern of orthodox life, hostile to them, and which they could not accept"[16]. It was Hasan bin Sabbāh who, after Nizari-Mustalian split at Cairo, established the Nizari headquarters at Alamut (this was a fortress - literally meaning 'eagle's nest' - strategically situated 10,200 feet above sea-level, on the shortest road between the shores of the Caspian and the Persian highlands) [17], and, for thirty-five years, resisted the Saljuqs with formidable strength, maintained rigorous discipline over his followers with an iron hand, even finding time to expound with philosophic finesse the doctrine of the Imamat and the bātin. A Persian and Ithna'asheri by birth, he adopted the Ismaili faith as a young man after coming into contact with Ismaili dais, and was enrolled in their ranks, gradually rising to the position of the chief dai. By his admiring Ismaili supporters he was called 'Sheikh-el-Jebel' or 'old man of the mountains'. Some over-zealous supporters drew up, in usual style, a noble genealogy for him, which he repudiated, saying, "I would rather be the Imam's chosen servant than his false son". When the Nizari-Mustalian split took place he firmly supported Imam Nizar, and since the Nizaris were now shelterless, as the Fatimid Empire (already in its dying days) passed into the hands of Musta'li owing to Al-Afdal's control of the army, he took upon himself the task of establishing a new home for them amidst conditions that were anything but hospitable. For the next sixty years, Alamut remained the impregnable headquarters of the Nizaris through a period which saw events of far-reaching importance ranging from persistent Saljuq hostility to the unforgettable savagery of the Crusades. This extreme characteristic of the period explains much of the lurid detail which was fed into the fanatic stories of the hashish-intoxicated assassins related by writer-travellers such as von Hammer and Marco Polo. It is only now that the complex and problematic history of the sect has begun to be reappraised. Hodgson, for instance, asserts that the word 'assassin', which the West uses for terrorist murders in general, was originally a nickname of the sect, and had nothing to do with killing. It received this connotation in our languages only by analogy to the famous murders of the 'assassins'

- whose 'chief object', however, was not murder, and especially not 'to assassinate crusaders' [18].

The year 1256 A.D. saw the Mongol calamity, when the Mongols swept like a colossal flood over the whole Islamic world and shattered not only the Nizari power at Alamut, but within two years, swept away the Abassid caliphate at Baghdād as well. Orders were also issued to destroy all Ismailis upon whom hands could be laid. The Mongol commander at Quhistan is said to have gathered eighty thousand on the pretext of a general meeting, and massacred them en masse. Besides this, at Alamut, there was another massive destruction which fatally punctured historians' efforts in subsequent times to piece together the Ismaili history. The library at Alamut was razed to the ground by Juwayni, who collected all the archives, documents and treatises he could lay his hands on, "selected what facts about the fallen folk he found edifying or curious enough for posterity to be informed of; and committed the rest to the flames" [19]. The last of the Imams at Alamut, Ruknud-din Khairishah, was killed, but "succeeded in hiding his son and heir, Shamsu'd-din Muhammad. He and his successors lived in disguise, as Sufic Sheykhs and noblemen landowners, probably at first somewhere in South Caucasus, but later on they settled in a large village, Anjudan, on the old road from Isfahan to Hamadan, within about 20 miles of Sultanabad (now Aragh) [20]. This was another period of political quiescence in the history of Ismailism, but some amount of re-organisation and preaching work continued. Most eventful of this was the journey to India of the famous dāi, Pir Sadru'd-din, or Sadardin, under the Imamat of one of the Imams in the period, i.e. the thirtieth Imam, Islam Shah. The conversion work of Pir Sadru'd-din and the other Pirs who preceded as well as followed him, led to the creation of an Ismaili community in India. This came to be known as the Ismaili Khoja community, and it is this community which follows Ismailism in India, Pakistan, Burma and East Africa today. It is therefore important to consider briefly here the history and characteristics of this process of conversion, which led to a unique religious syncretism.

The historical study of the conversion to Ismailism in the sub-continent of India and Pakistan is one that presents a serious challenge to the historian. As Ivanow observed, the Indian mind is "notoriously unhistoric, and its polymeric and syncretic perception is aggravated by intense hyperbolism in expression. It does not care for single years or decades, and measures the past by figures that are usually called 'astronomical' "[21]. This is borne out in accounts of conversion of the Khojahs and all that can be done here is to select the more reliable and certain data, from Khoja tradition itself, without deviating into what for this thesis would be irrelevant and insignificant historical hair-splitting.

Ismaili proselytisation in India had begun as early as during the Fatimid Caliphate, with Sind and Multan as its strongholds. By the time of the Nizari phase in Ismailism, the doctrine had undergone important changes and modifications, but the basic stress on the necessity of an unceasing Imamat in the person of the contemporary direct descendant of the Prophet had remained unaltered. By this time, however, the doctrine had been tinctured with a strong mystical element. The conversion process was essentially and fundamentally a symbolic one. Although the Pirs who came from Persia were aware of Islamic doctrines, the people they converted were Hindus. The resulting amalgamation of Islamic and Hindu belief-systems is a fascinating study in religious syncretism. The outcome was '<u>Satpanth</u>', or 'true path' in Sanskrit, as the new religion was called. At the same time, as we have seen, the doctrine of Imamat (which the <u>Pirs</u> made the most fundamental basis of the new faith) was truly Ismaili. In the sense, the rise and development of Satpanth can be considered as yet another phase (albeit, a highly important one) in the development of Ismailism. I refer the reader to recent work on the entire subject of Satpanth Ismailism with reference to East Africa which I found particularly useful for my thesis [22].

Since the new religion was an amalgamation of Islamic and Hindu elements of belief, it is relevant to ask in what form the Pirs brought

Islam to India. The very term 'Pir' strikes a Sufi note. Moreover, as we have seen, the Nizari phase in Ismailism had already gathered Sufi connotations. Ivanow reinforces this point when he says that "there is no doubt, indeed, that the form of Islam which has given Satpanth a final touch was Persian Nizari Ismailism of a very late date .... As Sufic organisations surely stood incomparably nearer to non-Islamic rural population than the learned theologians of the cities, we must expect, and really do find, many traces of Sufic influences" [23]. It was this form of Islam, therefore, with the doctrine of the Imamat as its nucleus, which the Pirs expanded with the inclusion of local Hindu cosmology and eschatology (which they left intact) into a form of Ismailism that the new converts could easily accept. Even the inclusion of Hindu belief-system here was not objectionable in the Ismaili context. For the Ismailis had already been familiar with the principle of 'taqiyya', or dissimulation or concealment of one's true belief, under conditions of persecution. More important than this, perhaps, was the potential for such a syncretism that was inherent in Islamic dogma. As Ivanow relates, "Islam itself from its inception favoured historico-philosophic theories depicting the Divine Revelation as one single process. It started with the first man, Adam, who was at the same time the first great prophet: the Apostle of God. With the progress of humanity each successive Apostle brought a more perfect system of the Divine law and beliefs .... In mediaeval india, in circles inclined to a compromise with the local ideas and conditions, a theory was commonly favoured according to which those whom the Hindus regarded as their gods or great saints were, in fact, some of those ancient prophets of God sent to their country. The Ismaili missionaries were thus in line with the orthodox in this respect. They brought the matter a step further by proclaiming Islam the crowning phase of the whole development of Hinduism. According to them, the Coran (together with the ta'wil system) was the last and final Ved, completing abrogating and superseding the earlier revelation. In this theory Hinduism was merely a preparatory phase ....

in the revelation of the only True Religion, Satpanth" [24]. Added to this inherent adaptability afforded by the nature of the Islamic belief regarding prophethood, was the absence in Ismailism of the orthodox insistence on purity: "the impediment which belonged to the inner nature of the preaching of Islam was connected with its conservatism of forms. When the preaching started amongst the heathen Arabs, it was easy indeed to demand that they would learn the new forms of worship and accept the new scriptures in the Arabic language. Perhaps it was not so difficult in the case of the Semitic peoples who lived in close touch with the Arabs. But for those who had nothing in common with all this, such necessity constituted a serious obstacle both for the acquisition of the necessary familiarity with the religion, and for the final act of conversion. In fact, conversion to Islam demanded that the new convert should not only become a Muslim, but also - at least partially - an Arab. He had to switch his religious life to the new ideas expressed in a difficult foreign language, adopt foreign standards, ideals and so forth. This, of course, was quite possible for individuals, but presented an almost unsurmountable obstacle to the masses in a different social system, as in the caste organisation in India. Here, with the individual being nothing without his caste connections, the only method that could work was mass conversion, not of individuals but of whole castes. This simple idea was probably never realised, and it is for this reason that not only the preaching of orthodox Islam met with less success than in other countries but that many reformatory movements, such as those started by Akbar, Dara Shikuh and others failed miserably"[25].

Either by intuition or sound and clever reasoning, the Nizari Ismaili missionaries devised methods which helped them to overcome such local obstacles. These methods depended on two principles. One was their bold tactics in separating the meaning and spirit of Islam from its hard Arabic shell. The other was their concentration of effort on a few definite castes, or those strata of the depressed classes in which the caste hold was weaker. They explained the high

ideals of Islam in the familiar terms of the ancestral religion and culture of the new converts, Hinduism, striving to make of them good mu'mīns, sincere adepts of the spirit of Islam, rather than muslims, i.e. those who formally profess Islam, often without paying attention to its spirit and implications.

The form in which the new doctrine was put forward was the ginans, or devotional poetry, meant to be sung in a variety of tunes. In all, these ginans run into several hundred, including the larger ones each of which constitutes a volume in itself. The chief Pirs whose ginans have come down, and who played a vital role in formulating the doctrine, were: a) Pir Shams, who seems to have preached mainly in Punjab, during the Imamat of the twenty-ninth Imam, Qasim-Shah. The so-called 'Shamshis', are said to be descendants of his followers and are found mainly in Multan, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Dera Chazi Khan and in surrounding districts; b) Pir Sadru'd-din, who is buried not far from Ūchchh, near the village called Jetpur, in Bhawalpur State. Although he preached the same doctrine as the Pirs who had preceded and those who followed him, he seems to be the first Pir to have laid the essential rudiments of organisation that have survived up to the present day. He established the first Jamātkhāna (or the house where the congregation was to meet for prayers - today the jamātkhāna in many ways forms the nucleus of the community) at Kotdi, in Sindh, with a Mukhī or headman in charge. Ismaili tradition gives the names of the Mukhis he appointed in Sindh, Punjab, and Kashmir, as Mukhi Trikam, Sheth Shamerdas Lahori and Sheth Tulsidas, respectively. Again it was Pir Sadru'd-din who gave the name 'Khwājah', to the new community. It may be roughly translated as 'honourable worshippers'. By prolonged usage, the term Khwājah came to be corrupted into 'Khojah' or Khoja. Pir Sadar-din's conversion work took place during the Imamat of Islam-Shah, the thirtieth Imam, in order to meet whom he seems to have made two perilous journeys to Iran, from India. c) Pir Hasan Kabiru'd-din, Pir Sadar-din's son, whose ginans are marked by a striking humility and sense of contriteness; d) Imam Shah, Pir Hasan

Kabiru'd-din's son, who also composed many gīnāns. He, however, is a controversial figure, for today there exists a small sect in Gujerat (probably numbering about 200,000, although the numbers are fast declining), who revere him as Imam. It is not quite clear when exactly the split took place. It is related that after the death of his father, Pir Hasan Kabiru'd-din, Imam Shah left for Iran in order to visit the Imam, who, however, did not appoint him to succeed his father as Pir. Ivanow firmly believes that despite this, Imam Shah remained loyal to the Imam and it was his son, Nar Muhammad Shah, who broke away and demanded obedience to himself as Imam. Since, however, the followers at Gujerat had been converted to Satpanth by Imam Shah, his father, the split was attributed retrospectively, so that the break-away sect came to be known as Imām-Shāhī. The followers of this sect take great pains to deny their original connection with Ismailism. This, however, is a confused attempt, since they accept all the Ismaili Imams as well as the Pirs up to the time of the split. For this and other details the reader is referred to Ivanow's "The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujrat", Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. XII (1936). In passing, it may be noted that Ivanow thinks the split did "incalculable harm" to the break-away sect. For its followers "have become nothing but a petty community of 'Piranawallas', a kind of inferior Hindus, and very doubtful Muslims. Anyhow, orthodox Muslims do not regard them as Muslims, and orthodox Hindus do not regard them as Hindus. Such a position of utter isolation can only be endured in primitive conditions of village life, illiteracy and ignorance. As soon as the standard of living, education etc. rise, the followers cease to find satisfaction in the faith of their forefathers and turn to the religion of the more cultured strata. Thus the sect automatically loses its cultural elements and rapidly sinks deeper and deeper, with no prospect of early regeneration" [26].

We may pause here briefly to consider the chief characteristics of the Satpanth belief-system, as expressed in the gīnāns. A very important point to remember is that the gīnāns were the expression of not an itellectual or legalistic but an effective response to the

doctrine of the Imamat. For the Pirs, the Imamat was the ultimate and only source of meaning, values and morality. In rendering the Imamat-concept intelligible and indigenous, the Pirs made use of the Avatār-theory which was made the basis of the Imamat-position. The Imam, residing in Iran, was presented as the tenth avatār or manifestation of the Divine Will, and this was made the pivot of the new faith. It was thus no effort "to make Islam recognised as the religion of the final period, Kaljūg, according to Hindu terminology, promised in ancient prophecies. Ali b. Abu Talib, the first Imam, was introduced as the expected Tenth Avatār of the Deity. The Coran had to be the last Ved, cancelling and abrogating the former scriptures, but on the whole, continuing the same tradition of the periodical Divine revelation. Ali b. Abu Talib, however, was not the legendary religious hero who came upon the historical stage, performed miracles and disappeared. He was, so to speak, 'continued' in his successor-Imams. The manifestations of the same Divine Substance" [27].

Once the Imam was thus made the source of authority for meaning and values, this cardinal belief was then expanded into a system with the help of a cosmoginy (mainly Hindu), as well as an eschatology (which brought together the Hindu concept of the 'wheel of rebirth' and the Islamic one of paradise and hell). Incidentally, it may be appropriate to remark here that the book Das Avatār, composed by Pir Sadar-din and considered as the standard text-book of Ismaili devotion in the Khojah Case of 1866 as well as in recent books like H.S. Morris's Indians in Uganda (1966), is by no means so singularly important. It no doubt sets out the doctrine of the Imam Ali as the Tenth Avatār, but this after all is a doctrine that is repeated in many gīnāns, so that the Das Avatār is not unique in that respect. Nor has it ever been given unique and exclusive importance amongst the Khojas. True, it used to be recited by the dying man's bedside in the past, but this in itself is not sufficient to make it tower above the rest of the gīnāns. Finally, it is important to note that the gīnāns, especially in view of their lyrical beauty, their mystical ardour and the pious hopefulness and urgency of devotion running through them,

continue till today to inspire, with all their fervour and poetic beauty, the religious life of the Khojah Ismailis. Ivanow correctly observes "the strange fascination, the majestic pathos, and beauty" of these gīnāns, and the fact that their "mystical appeal equals, if not exceeds, that exercised by the Coran on Arabic speaking peoples" [28].

Having thus carried the historical account so far, and considering the fact that no events of crucial significance happened or, at least, are known, after the Imam-Shahi split till about the middle of the nineteenth century, we may now pass over this period to events which are more immediately relevant to the Ismaili society in East Africa today. Suffice it to note that historical evidence suggests that during this long period after the conversion, groups of followers from 'Indo-Pak' now and then made long journeys to Iran to have dīdār, i.e. to see the Imam. Ismaili tradition is full of accounts of such arduous and heroic attempts made by the devoted members who continued visiting their Imam of the Age wherever he happened to reside at the time. Ivanow too, refers to this practice in a number of his books and in one such incident he reports that as early as in the thirteenth century, about two or three hundred Ismaili Khojas who had reached Iran eventually, having travelled all the way from India, never returned to their homeland. They were attacked by some hostile bands of people and were later buried in a mass grave near Iran and were posthumously given the title of Rāi, by the then Imam, for their devotion. Incidentally, the title of Rāi is still conferred by the Aga Khan from time to time on his followers for their special services.

The beginning of the nineteenth century marks a special era in the social history of the Ismailis, particularly from the point of view of their social identity which had so far been such a nebulous one. For the first time ever, the Ismailis have all over the world become openly known or accepted as an altogether separate sect of Islam. What is more, they have gained recognition and support from the British government, the first western country which has ever come into direct contact with this long-forgotten sect, since the disputable days of

the 'Order of the Assassins' and the Crusades. No doubt, western writers still too hastily connect the Ismailis with the 'Assassins', overlooking their entire doctrine and tradition, which dates right back to the various phases of Islam that the Ismailis have passed through, mainly in defence of the Imamat as has been outlined here, in this chapter. I refer the reader to an Imam's own explanation of this label which is attached to the sect, quite mistakenly [29]. In fact, very few non-Ismailis see the connection with the Fatimid Caliphate and the very establishment of Shia doctrine before that with this sect. Ismailism can be viewed only from one angle. It is the only Shīa sect which has remained so consistent in its fundamental principle, that of the institution of the Imamat. Whether the Ismailis have been socially identified or not by the other social groups among whom they have lived or emerged from time to time, for over 1350 years, makes no difference to the continuity in the core of their belief, that of the Imamat, embodied in the actual person of a living Imam. Hence, it is important that we do not rely merely on the recorded history of past events as written down by non-Ismailis but equally consider Ismailis' own interpretation of history which is steeped in their vast amount of 'oral tradition' as Vansina would put it [30]. Without consideration of these data, our research is bound to be stilted and biased.

We shall therefore concentrate on the major events of the last century and see these in relation to the Ismailis of East Africa and other Commonwealth countries at any rate. These are, no doubt, of significant importance in so far as they have helped to establish the format and social identity of the society which till then had an inconspicuous, amorphous and a loosely defined structure. As a result of the Khoja Case in 1866, which was filed against the first Aga Khan, the forty-sixth Imam of the Ismailis, the position of the recent Imams has gained legal and constitutional status, both in the Ismaili and the non-Ismaili world, within the structure of the community as well as outside it. The judgement in the Khoja Case, although it has not introduced a new doctrinal system, has introduced a new dimension to the identity of the community. "The beliefs and tenets of the Ismailis

were now embedded in the pronouncement by an institution of no less prestige than the British High Court, whose legal authority carried the utmost weight and on whose decision the community could fall back in case of similar challenges in the future", so reports a recent scholar of Satpanth Ismailism, evaluating the importance of this case [31].

Let us, therefore, examine the recent phase of the Imamat which also coincides with the Imamat of the four successive Aga Khans. This phase is important as it brought about major changes in the structure and identity of the Ismaili community as a whole. These were changes that took place at an organisational level, i.e. the relatively formal and directly observable level. These changes were part of a changing identity in relation to the non-Ismaili groups that constituted the social environment in which Ismailis found themselves living all over the world. But they also caused some changes in the internal organisation of the society. Organisational changes assumed the function of articulating the self-view of the Ismailis. This involves ideational and social changes which have taken place since Aga Khan I, for the first time, met his followers in the sub-continent of India, who had revered but now accepted him, and this historical event shows the quest for a more secure and viable social identity among the Ismailis living in these parts of the world.

Muhammad Husayn Husayni, otherwise known as Hasan Ali Shah, the first Aga Khan, was the 46th Imam of the Ismaili tradition. His father, the Imam Khalilullah, was murdered in 1818 in a local skirmish in Iran. The then Shah, Fateh Ali Shah Qajar (1798-1834) "alarmed by possible consequences feared grave reprisals from the fanatically loyal Ismaili followers of the Imam, bestowed favours upon the new Imam, conferring upon him the governorship of the provinces of Mahellat and Qum and marrying him to his own daughter". The new Imam had the petname "Aga Khan" in the court of the Shah, which was later adopted as a hereditary title [32]. In 1837, Haji Mirza Aghasi, the Prime Minister, rose against Muhammad Ali Shah Qajar, the next Shah of Persia. This forced Hasan Ali Shah to flee from Persia, taking refuge with the

British at Qandahar. He rendered military assistance to the British in quelling the revolt by the local tribesmen at Kabul. He used his influence also to pacify the militant 'mirs' (leaders) who were hostile to the British forces. In 1842, the Imam arrived at Sindh, in India, where again his military prowess and war-like character were of help to Sir Charles Napier, the British governor, especially in the wars of Miani and Dubba in 1843. In the same year, he reached Calcutta and finally settled in Bombay in 1848, where he was received with reverence by his followers. The intense veneration with which the Ismailis have looked to their Imams is a reflection of the Sufistic notions of the relationship between the Imam and his followers in Ismaili philosophy.

After a period of unsettled wandering and vicissitudes, Hasan Ali Shah finally arrived at Bombay where he was cordially received by his waiting followers. Here account must be taken of a dissenting party called 'Bārbhāi' who refused to accept the Imam's authority, and whose secession had considerable effect in moulding the subsequent organisation of the community. First of all, however, it must be stressed that the Khojah community of India was an amorphous one, with little or no organisation. This is not surprising in view of the fact that it was for such a long time without accessible contact with the Imam or a Pir to represent him. In 1829, a party of Khojahs in Bombay headed by a Habib Ibrahim opposed the customary payment of dasōnd or 'tithe' to the Imam Hasan Ali Shah who was then in Persia. In order to counteract the resistance and prevent it from extending, the Imam sent one Mirza Abdul Kassam as his special agent, together with his maternal grandmother, to settle the dispute. She is, incidentally, revered in the old duā, prayer, of the Khojas, as Pir, her name appearing as Pir Sarkar Mata Salamat[33].

Thus, in 1830, by common consent, the Khojas excommunicated Habib Ibrahim and his party. However, in 1835, on relenting and paying the dues and on grounds of its petition to the Imam, Habib's party was readmitted into the community [34]. In 1846 another incident took place over the issue of rights of Khoja women to inherit property. The

plaintiff in a case which was filed, were two sisters whose father's property, after his death, had passed into the hands of his brother. The latter, upon his death, left a will in which he appointed his widow and one of his nieces trustees of the property he left behind. Thereupon, the two sisters filed a suit claiming that as Khojas, who were Muslims, they had a right to inherit the property from their father. The major issue raised once again questioned the social identity of the Khojas. Were the Khoja laws of inheritance to be governed by Islamic shariā or Hindu law?

The Aga Khan was determined that in this particular case, it should be the Islamic shariā which should be observed and thus supported the plaintiffs. But the dissenting party held that they ought to be governed by Hindu laws of inheritance. This standpoint is very surprising in view of the fact that in other disputes the dissenters had claimed that the Khojas were Sunnīs.[35] However, in his judgement, Sir Erskine Perry pronounced against the rights of the Khoja women to inherit property and commented that the religion of Khojas was Islam but their dress, manners and appearance were Hindu[36].

In 1848, Habib Ibrahim and his supporters were excommunicated once again as a result of resurgence of disturbance following the suit. Subsequently, they established themselves in a different jamāt khāna. But in 1850, four Khojas of the dissenting group were murdered by fanatical members of the main body. Those who were arrested were capitally sentenced. After some time, the dissenters were readmitted into the community and there was a temporary suspension of hostilities.

In 1861, the Imam made a fresh and determined effort to destroy the ground for dissension and established a distinct Ismaili identity of his followers. He published a paper declaring that the rites and customs accompanying "marriages, ablutions and funeral ceremonies" be performed thenceforward in accordance with the Shia Imami Ismaili creed[37]. At the end of the statement, he asked: "Now he who may be willing to obey my orders shall write his name in this book that I may know him"[38]. This declaration can be considered as the first significant step towards

the elimination of taqiyya, and the affirmation of a separate identity. About 1,000 families out of 1,400 in Bombay and its immediate neighbourhood, professed loyalty to the Imam. As the next step, the Khoja jamāt met in 1862 and passed a resolution to serve a form of notice to the dissenters granting them a period of grace of 21 days within which, if they paid their customary dues, they would be accepted back into the fold of the community. The non-supporters were finally excommunicated. In 1864, the Sunnī mullā attached to the Khoja burial ground was asked to leave. In 1862, the famous suit was entered in the Bombay High Court which led to the Chief Justice, Sir Joseph Arnould's judgement in 1866. The 'breakthrough' in the social identity of the Khojas through the judgement, though dramatic, did not introduce a new doctrinal system. But it certainly strengthened it, Ismailis being no longer required to hide their true belief in the concept of living Imams. This constitutional victory was of outstanding importance in the history of the Khoja Case since it laid down the rudiments of an organisation that was later developed, by the Aga Khan's grandson, Aga Khan III, to give a distinct identity to the community.

The first Aga Khan died in 1881 at Bombay and was succeeded by his son, Aga Ali Shah (Aga Khan II) who died in 1885 after a brief Imamat of only four years. He was succeeded by his son, then hardly eight years old, Muhammad Sultān al-Husayni, generally known as Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, who was born in Karachi in 1877. During his long and outstanding Imamat of seventy-two years, he initiated crucial and far-reaching changes within the community. Already in his early years in India, he was a staunch educationalist and campaigned for better education for Muslims in India and other countries, and played an important part in the establishment of the Aligarh University at Karachi. When Bombay was swept in 1897 by a disastrous epidemic of plague, he made one of his houses near Bombay available to Professor Haffkine to work on an inoculation programme. When the idea of inoculation met with a fierce hostility from the masses owing to superstition and prejudice, the Aga Khan had himself

publicly inoculated to set an example. During the ensuing years, he travelled to Europe and was received by Queen Victoria in England. Later on, he settled permanently in Europe. During the First World War, he was entrusted by the British Government with peace-missions in Egypt, Turkey and other countries who were involved. He became the President of the Muslim League (1906-1912). In 1928, he presided over all-India Muslim Conference at Delhi and resolved to press for separate representation for the Muslims. Again, in 1930, he led the Muslim delegates which included Muhammadali Jinnah, Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan and Sir Muhammad Shafi to the Round Table Conference on the Indian Constitution. Involved in Indian politics since the earliest years, he eventually played an important part in the creation of Pakistan. In 1937, his political career came to a height when he was elected as the President of the League of Nations. The experience gathered in his long, ripe and active career was undoubtedly reflected in his handling of Ismaili affairs. By this time, one of the most important groups of his followers was the Khoja community in East Africa, who had migrated from Indo-Pak several decades ago. It is difficult to be certain about the exact date when the bulk of the emigration took place. The Khoja Case (1866) records that there were 450 Khoja families in Zanzibar then. Oral tradition seems to be in agreement with the general implications of this statement. For instance, an ex-President of the Tanzania Ismailis Association said, at a speech in Bombay regarding the history of the East African group, that Ismailis came to East Africa 'some 125 years ago*. It is further known that the Aga Khan III not only encouraged emigration but also gave directives regarding the emigration patters within East Africa today. These emigration patterns and the general history of Khoja emigration to East Africa will be discussed in detail in a later chapter. For the present, we ought to consider the bearing of his (i.e. Aga Khan III's) worldly-wise personality, rich with a mellow experience of international affairs, on his leadership of the East African Khoja Ismaili community. Bitterly critical of the Muslim custom of '<u>purdāh</u>' or veiling of women, he saw subordinate and segregated

status of women in Muslim countries, which he thought was un-Islamic. The Aga Khan promoted the welfare of Ismaili women by introducing women's associations and bringing them into welfare and educational activities. He also established a large number of schools and dispensaries in Pakistan, India and East Africa. Co-operative stores and huge economic institutions (including an insurance company) were set up. An increasing modernisation was thus established. Hailed in many quarters as a beneficiary and patron of the Muslim community as a whole, in East Africa, he also made his followers more aware of their ties with Islam and insisted on a movement away from Hindu customs. Finally, he gave to the community an elaborate organisation and constitution which established a distinct social identity, defined in organisational and constitutional terms, for his followers. The significance of these changes will be discussed at a later stage in this thesis. For the present, to bring this historical account up-to-date, we may note that the Aga Khan died in 1957 after a long Imamat of seventy-two years. He was succeeded by his grandson, Prince Karim, who is thus the Aga Khan IV, and the forty-ninth Imam in the Ismaili tradition. Prince Karim has been guiding and ruling over the multifarious projects of the community in countries which are now independent, with marked seriousness and success. He has not only pushed the welfare ventures of his grandfather much further, but also, within a relatively short time, made important adjustments in the organisation of his followers, as well as establishing several new projects. These again will be considered in detail in the later chapter. For the moment, having shown the flux of ideas and vicissitudes of fortune in the Ismaili society over the centuries, in diverse situations over far-flung areas, and the continuity of the Imamat-concept as an indispensable basis for the social process in the community, let us proceed with this historical chapter and examine a few crucial details based on the continuity of the Imamat.

The first point which must be considered in detail is the tradition of the Imamat itself. From a sociological point of view, one can

discern a considerable amount of confusion over the institution of the Imamat, especially in the succession of the four Aga Khans. The Imamat, as we saw in the last chapter, was established after the death of Prophet muhammad and the first Imam of the Ismailis (as well as the Shias on the whole), was Hazrat Ali. Ali was married to the Prophet's only surviving daughter Fatima, but he was also the Prophet's patrilateral parallel cousin. The line of the Imamat has continued since then. For the Ismailis, the continuity of the line of the Imamat is the most fundamental element of their faith. According to them the Imamat is everlasting. The Ismailis further maintained that the office of the Imamat never remains unfilled. The late Aga Khan, Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, a more recent Ismaili Imam, has stated this belief clearly when he has said that: "When Mowla Murtaza Ali physically left this world, he entrusted the throne of the Imamat to Imam Husein. In this way, Imams have appointed their successors one after the other on the throne of the Imamat in order to guide the people to the true path of religion ... If the world were to go on without the Imam, Mowla Murtaza Ali would not have appointed his successor in his time. If the Book of Quran was sufficient, he would not have appointed his successor and would have ended the Imamat with himself [39]. It should be noted that among the Shia, the Nizari Ismailis are the only sect where an unbroken line of the Imamat is traced from Ali to the present Imam. The system of succession of the Imamat is continuous and the perpetual presence of the Hazar Imam is, in their doctrinal view, an absolute necessity. The Hazar Imam literally means the Imam who is present at any given point in time. Thus, two cardinal facts about the Imamat that should be noted at this stage are: firstly, that the status-role of the Imamat is positionally occuped in continuous succession and secondly, that the principle of succession is hereditary. Each Imam is a direct descendant of the Prophet through his daughter Fatima. The Imams from Ali onwards are patrilineally descended. On the other hand, if we trace the Imamat back to the Prophet himself, it is clear that the Imamat is not solely patrilineal. The Prophet had only Fatima as the surviving child at the time of his death. Her

husband Ali and her son, Husein, were the first two Ismaili Imams. Another illustration may be cited to clarify the principle further. The pedigree of the Imams from Ali down to the present Aga Khan forms part of the du'a (daily prayer) recited in the Ismaili jamatkhana (mosque). As a matter of fact, the observer cannot but be struck by the fluency and ease with which this pedigree is recited. We shall examine later the rites and practices of Ismailis and the significance of the du'a and the jamat Khana in their daily social and religious life. The recent phase of the Imamat of the Aga Khans can, therefore, be considered only as a part of the historical line of the Imamat. The names of the recent Imams are in no way set apart from the rest of the names of the Imams from Ali onwards. This itself is sufficient to show that the succession of the four Aga Khans is seen to be an integral link in the chain of the succession of the Imams since Ali. The Imamat can, therefore, be regarded as a historical as well as a doctrinal charter of the Nizari Ismailis.

It is, however, important to note that there are certain complex features which ought to be considered in the system of succession to the Imamat. Within the time-scale which is selected in this study, i.e. that which covers the Imamat of the four Aga Khans, certain points deserve special mention in a sociological study of the hereditary system of succession of the Imamat. It is important first of all to consider briefly certain biographical and historical details about the recent Imams. The four Aga Khans are also the forty-sixth, forty-seventh, forty-eighth and forty-ninth Imams, respectively. Imam Hassan Ali Shah was in fact the first one upon whom the hereditary title of the Aga Khan was first bestowed by the Persian monarch in the early nineteenth century. Hasan Ali Shah (the sone of the forty-fifth Imam Khallilullah), was a governor of the province of Kerman in Persia and was also married to the Shah's daughter. Owing to his involvements in certain political events in Persia which followed the change of Monarchy, Hasan Ali Shah was forced to leave Persia and finally settled in India around 1840. As an Imam of the Ismailis he held the office for over

sixty years until his death in 1881. As we have already seen, his son Imam Ali Shah had been appointed as his successor, and was thus the second Aga Khan, and the forty-seventh Imam. Ali Shah died after a short Imamat of only four years in 1885. He was succeeded by Sultan Muhammad Shah, who was then only eight years old. Thus, he was the third Aga Khan, and, correspondingly, the forty-eighth of the Imams. After a long period of Imamat of about seventy-two years, Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah died in 1957, appointing his grandson as his heir. His Highness Prince Karim the Aga Khan is therefore the forty-ninth Imam and thus the fourth Aga Khan. It should be noted that the Ismailis regard only a particular member of the Imam's or the Aga Khan's family as their Imam if he has been so appointed by the previous Imam. Prince Amyn Aga Khan, who is the brother of Prince Karim, 49th Imam, or Prince Sadrūd'din Aga Khan, the younger son of the late Imam and uncle of the present one are thus not regarded as the Imams.

From the above details which I have repeated here emerges a special point regarding the succession of the Imamat. To take a specific example, the Aga Khan II, Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, appointed his grandson as the next Imam. Thus the succession passed over the late Imam's own elder son, Prince Aly Soloman Khan, who was the father of Prince Karim Aga Khan. However, one writer, presumably assuming that the Imamat descends in successive generations from father to son, makes a factual error by calling Prince Aly the Successor of the late Aga Khan [40]. Furthermore, she makes a similar and gross error of fact when she calls the late Imam the first and not the third Aga Khan [41]. Though these errors are neither obvious nor major ones, they remind one of the essential truth, namely that it is not possible to deduce any hard and fast rules about the succession of the Imamat. However, certain inferences based on direct observation of the recent phase of the Imamat and from the historical data itself, could here be mentioned. The chief of these are, firstly that the Imamat has never been inherited through a female member in the line from Ali onwards. Secondly, only a male member who is a patrilineal kinsman and a

descendant of the previous Imam is eligible to succeed. In this sense, the question of genealogical descent based on a patrilineal system ought to be taken into account. In the Nizari Ismaili pedigree of the Imam, as happens in the case of other Ismaili or Shia groups, Hassan, who was Imam Husein's brother, is not reckoned as the Imam since that would imply that Ali, their father, appointed both the sons Husein and Hassan as the Imams. This, as the Nizari Ismaili tradition stands, is not possible. Generally an Imam appoints his heir from the descending generation and therefore the line is hereditary and it is the principle of patrilineal descent rather than primogeniture which is maintained. The third factor is crucial in the Shia Imami Ismaili doctrine and it is this which prevents any doubts in the minds of the Nizari Ismailis over the question of legitimacy of the Imam. Each Imam is appointed by the previous one before the latter's death and the one who is thus declared as the heir is the rightful Imam. Thus, the Hāzar Imām is nominated by the previous Imam; he is neither selected from among the surviving possible heirs as seems to have happened in other Shia sects, nor elected by any group of followers. Fourthly, the office of the Imamat is held by only one individual at a time, and is never shared by any other member of the family, however closely he may be related to the Imam. As we have just seen, Prince Aly Khan the eldest son of the late Imam was a closer and immediate kinsman, if the theories of primogeniture were taken into account too literally. But a whole generation was left out in the appointment of the present Imam who as a matter of fact is the grandson and thus patrilineally a distant kinsman. Bearing in mind these points which nevertheless are not hard and fast rules, we might conclude that the succession of the Imamat allows only limited theoretical generalisations. Moreover, the Imamat as a pragmatic factor can be seen as operating at two major levels. It is the very basis of change, since each Imam succeeds the other. On the other hand, the Imamat itself as a doctrinal principle does not change. Thus, the doctrinal principle of the Imamat is a structural component of the Nizari Ismaili society but at the same time it remains outside the society as an external, but nonetheless,

binding system. The Imamat is thus in a way external to, independent of, and constraining on the individuals within the society [42]. It is, in other words, a social fact. The crucial and practical role of the Imamat will become clearer in the next and following chapters.

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C H A P T E R I I I

GENERAL SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY ISMAILI SOCIETIES

In the last chapter we surveyed the origin of Ismailism and its subsequent evolution through varying political climates through the ages. Using this historical framework as a background, we shall now proceed to a closer examination of the details of the contemporary distribution of the Ismailis in different areas with particular reference to East Africa. In a sociological analysis of contemporary Ismaili groups and their belief-system one is compelled to take note of a prevalent confusion in their social identification which in turn is the result of a number of complex factors. These factors are an integral part of their religion, culture and society. Ismailism has spread over a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds and as more and more groups began to settle in different nations, certain local features were bound to have an effect on their social and cultural identity. Ismailism also spread over areas where there were already other deeply rooted cultural traditions. In some cases these traditions have maintained such a stronghold over the people that, as a result, Ismailism in these areas is less evident to a casual observer. In as much as the Ismailis have had to contend with a ferocious programme of persecution in those countries where they have found themselves a minority they cannot but conceal their true beliefs. What they have usually done in such circumstances is to adopt alien practices which would guarantee a sufficiently secure protection against recognition and consequent persecution. Over the years an oppressive awareness of hostility on the part of orthodox groups has become so ingrained, and so much a part and parcel of the fabric of their value-system, that their social identity has become correspondingly amorphous. To cite a concrete example, Ismailis live in the communistic countries today, namely in China and in U.S.S.R. Since it would be to their disadvantage to reveal their belief-system they have continued to abide by the political temper in these countries and have never indulged in open rebellion or protests against authority. Moreover, unlike the Christian communities in these countries and elsewhere, the Ismailis have no evangelical aims in mind and do not encourage proselytization

of their faith. This has enabled them to co-exist peacefully with any other diverse groups, a special characteristic of this vast religious community.

Ethnic and cultural diversity is one of the most challenging problems which an anthropological study must take into consideration in an analysis of a vast, but nevertheless religiously united community, such as that of the Ismailis. Through a general survey of contemporary Ismailis over a wide area, some specific features of the East African Ismailis which is the subject of this thesis, might become clearer. Again, a religiously unified community such as that of the Ismailis cannot be studied strictly within a single territorial framework, without considering its distribution over vaster geographical areas. Therefore, having a wider spatial framework in mind, I propose to stress certain religious and cultural features of the Ismaili society which are ubiquitous and which in turn will clarify certain social characteristics in the more recent phase of the society's history of development. In this brief survey I shall also outline the nature and the processes of change over a time-scale which roughly covers the period from the time when a branch of Ismailis migrated from the sub-continent of India to East Africa and its neighbouring countries as pioneering traders until the present day when they have settled fairly successfully as citizens of the now independent African countries. As explained before, we shall not isolate the case of Ismailis in Uganda despite the present crisis which has recently sprung up there. This time-scale also coincides with the Imamat of the four Aga Khans. This period has also been of crucial importance in the phase of the society's readjustment. Ismailis in general have shown remarkable readiness to adapt themselves in a variety of changing situations. Over the years this adaptability has become their most prominent characteristic. For instance, the East African Ismailis, who have acquired local citizenship, on the whole form a collectivity that actively participates in various national projects, whilst at the same time they have also retained their own socio-cultural and religious identity.

However diffuse the contemporary Ismaili groups may seem to be against the variety of social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, they are essentially unified as a single religious community under the traditional and religious leadership of the Aga Khan. Ismaili tradition is based on the dominant principle of obedience to the Imam. The Imamat is the most binding principle of the community and constitutes a most durable social institution maintaining the stability and continuity of the social and religious system of the society. Thus the mainspring of the force of the belief in the Imamat is to be found in a long-established religious and historical principle. By virtue of its predominant position in the structure of the society, the Imamat has a dynamic quality in that it is represented in the presence of the Imām-e-zamān, the Imam of the Age. At this stage, one may postpone a fuller discussion of the importance of the Imamat in the Ismaili society, since in this survey we are only dealing with the Ismailis organised under the religious and constitutional leadership of the recent Imams in the persons of the four successive Aga Khans. During this recent phase of the Imamat certain radical changes have taken place in the community, which are reflected in their present form of social and political organisation. Various Ismaili groups are administratively organised with a representative or a body of officials at the top, who are directly responsible to the Imam, who thus wields centralised authority. Thus, various Ismaili groups have state-like characteristics. For instance, the East African Ismailis and certain other groups elsewhere have an intricate and hierarchical system of District, Provincial, Territorial and Supreme Councils. These Councils serve the function of meeting the major requirements of the internal organisation of the community. But the Ismailis are not organised in the same way in other areas. Thus one finds a wide variety in the social organisation of the communities in different areas of the globe. It should also be noted that the four Aga Khans are but a part of the hereditary chain of the institution of the Imamat in the Shia Imami Ismaili tradition. A study of the multivarious roles of the Imamat, showing the institution in a relatively

recent phase of the Ismailis' development might seem extremely useful, but in practical terms it is not an easy task to carry out in view of a number of methodological difficulties.

One of the most crucial and directly relevant methodological problems in the study of the Ismailis is posed by the nature of their 'social field'. The concept of the social field in the survey of the contemporary Ismailis at once raises a series of further questions. We shall only outline three major levels at which the problem ought to be considered in a sociological study of the Ismailis. Firstly, the Ismailis live over an extensive social field. It extends over a vast number of different nations. The East African Ismailis are merely a part of the wider community which is spread out over approximately thirty-two different countries, all acknowledging the leadership of the present Aga Khan. Obviously, it is not possible for an anthropologist to attempt a study of the Ismailis over such an extensive social scale. On the other hand, it would not be appropriate to study the East African Ismailis as an exclusive social system without relating them to their counterparts in other areas. The second level of the social field presents an equally challenging problem. The Ismailis are essentially Muslims and as such have their own particular doctrinal interpretation of Islam. The distinctiveness of the Shia Ismaili group can therefore be examined only within the overall framework of Islam. Since the awareness of the Ismailis extends beyond their own immediate situation, this level is all the more important to consider in this study. Recently, under the guidance of the Aga Khans, the Ismailis have participated actively in various social projects which have generally benefited the African Muslims, especially in East Africa. Hence this particular level of the social field cannot be ignored. This leads us to the third level of the social field. In recent times when a number of countries have become independent states, the Ismailis have adapted themselves to the new situation in these various countries. Hence, they should be studied within the national framework as well, where their social adjustment in differing situations and circumstances can be examined.

In the study of the East African Ismailis, this dimension of the social field is especially important to bear in mind. Adaptations and responses required by the transfer of political power from one government to another in the East African countries have had their most obvious and direct effects on the society's present character. These in turn have been responsible for bringing about some significant changes in their social structure. As one of the minority groups their relationships vis-a-vis other groups must be examined within the national framework. Moreover, the Ismailis are socially and culturally defined as part of the 'Asian community' in East Africa. To a certain extent, such a classification is justifiable, since the Ismailis share some of the cultural traits with the other - Muslim and non-Muslim - Asian communities. But it should be noted that the Ismailis as a communal group have maintained a somewhat exclusive social position. In view of the most recent changes in the political circumstances in East Africa, their separate identity stands out in striking contrast to their Asian origin. For all these reasons, at the third level of the social field the Ismailis can best be studied as members of a plural society within the context of the East African countries.

The position of the Ugandan Ismailis as members of a plural society has already been dealt with by H.S. Morris in one of his papers. He points out how in a study of this kind a number of factors have to be considered, for a society may consist of a system of 'social ranking' as well as 'social stratification' [1]. In so far as the Ismailis are an ethnic group or a culturally separate category of Asians with a particular belief and value-system they are not ranked against similar other Asian groups but instead are related to these groups in a kind of 'federal' system. On the other hand, since Asians on the whole are an observable racial entity, they at the same time form an integral part of the East African society comprising European and African counter-parts in a roughly stratified system based on social class or role and status. Thus, we have to contend with social stratification and therefore, East African society becomes a 'stratified plural

society'[2]. An important point arises from this discussion. The study of the Ismailis involves a study of a ranked social group which is also related to other ranked social groups and at the same time is arranged in some form of a hierarchical structure within the framework of East African society at large, including all the other culturally and economically or structurally diverse groups. Ethnically, Ismailis are members of the Asian category but in a religious and cultural sense they are members of the wider Muslim community which cuts across racial ethnic, linguistic or structural boundaries. In the development of the Ismaili society in East Africa, the dual position of the group, both as a member of the wider Asian community and of the extensive Muslim community poses an interesting problem of analysis and Ismailis have to be considered as members of both these groups simultaneously. As Morris implies, Ismailis are a group of people whose membership is ascribed to the Asian group and this imposes on them a definite mode of behaviour that marks and excludes them from the African and European communities and thus they become an objectively observable entity within this framework. But as we shall examine later in detail, Ismailis have always remained aloof from the rest of the Asian community. Whereas, other Asian groups came to East Africa predominantly for economic reasons and always cherished a hope of returning to their 'homeland', the Ismailis were advised time and time again by their Imām-e-zamān to consider East Africa as their new home and adapt themselves completely to the country of their adoption and not think of the country of their origin. In course of time, the Ismailis actually repudiated their past and relinquished their social and cultural ties with the sub-continent of India, more so than any other Asian group. To cite as an example, one of the prominent lawyers and an Ismaili leader in Uganda who was later appointed as a Member of the Legislative Council made an emphatic statement in the press regarding the group identity of the Ismailis during the late 1950's and early 1960's in the pre-independece phase. Count B.K.S. Verjee had said that Ismailis were most definitely 'Africans' although of Asian origin. He further expressed that Ismailis had no intention of leaving East Africa because

they had belonged there for over three or four generations and had hardly any social ties with the east. This caused a great deal of controversy in various communities. Morris points out in his article mentioned earlier that divisions in a ranked society can only be made provided the groups concerned are objectively observable. He further adds that such a division should also be subjectively accepted 'by the various groups themselves. Now in the case of Ismailis, their own self-image has been contrary to what other groups have often described them as, as we have seen from this Ismaili's own statement. Ismailis have overtly excluded themselves as part of the Asian community and have been constantly and actively struggling to become citizens of the independent African community. Their religious identity as Muslims includes a large number of African Muslims with whom they have collaborated and participated in their numerous joint welfare and development projects, at least in the recent phase of development. In Morris's own words, "when some of the qualifications for belonging to a class stratum are also those for belonging to an ethnic group, the difficulties of analysis may become very great indeed" [3].

One of the suggestions Morris makes in his exposition of the study of plural society is that of 'status' and 'role' as aspects of the same observed behaviour. Applying these criteria onw notes that the Ismailis have an ascribed status which is determined by their birth and gives them membership of the 'Asian' community. This is a feature of the closed system as found in caste societies. Their mobility from one stratum into another is almost restricted on the basis of their status decided entirely by their birth. But as I have explained already, the role the Ismailis have played in the changing process has been of seeking a new social identity for themselves. Their mobility from one stratum to another within the context of the open system based on class and value system is not to be under-rated [4]. Morris has made some interesting theoretical points on the notion of plural society, bearing in mind his own early observations of the East African situation. In fact, with the facts he had gathered in 1956, he later seems to have developed the

concepts of plural society in a greater depth and detail [5]. Let us consider the problem of 'social field' which I had mentioned earlier and proceed with our discussion on the methodological difficulty which arises in the study of the Ismailis in this thesis.

The three levels of the social field discussed above cannot be totally separated from one another. They are all intertwined and the fact that the Ismailis in East Africa have to be studied in relation to all these fields presents a special problem. The East African Ismailis are essentially members of a widely dispersed religious community unified under the spiritual authority of the Imam. This is the primary element in their loyalty. Thus, the most predominant part of their sense of belonging lies in their consciousness of being an integral part of the larger, overall Ismaili community spread over different countries of the world. Secondly, they belong to the Muslim community. Thus Islam provides them - as it does other Muslim groups as well - with basic ideals and values. Thirdly, they are also citizens, for that matter Asian citizens, of the various African nations which they have adopted as their homes. In East Africa, the Ismailis are distributed through three different countries. Therefore, they are subject to particular governments which are prevalent in these independent nations. The failure on the part of observers to do full justice to the complex interaction of these three social fields that we have discussed has been responsible for certain distortions in analysis which we shall discuss further below. Bearing in mind the various points made above, we shall now proceed with the description of the contemporary Ismailis in general, with special reference to those living in East Africa during the period of the Imamat of the four successive Aga Khans. In the previous chapter, we found it useful to select an extensively large temporal framework in order to outline the more recent phase of the Imamat. In this chapter we shall be compelled to have a vast spatial scale, in order to outline the distribution of this unusual community called the Ismailis.

We shall now proceed to examine the demographic distribution of

the Ismailis on a general basis, covering certain specific parts of the world where they reside. Our main emphasis will be to examine the variety in which they are organised as corporate groups, starting with the central point where Islam first began, i.e. in the Arab peninsula; we do not know if there are any Ismailis living in all the different countries there today. A census account of the Minorities in the Arab World in 1947 shows a very small number of Ismailis who live in Syria. They are said to form a 'compact community' having no political claims in the Syrian government. They are distributed as follows in Syria:

Damascus	Aleppo	Homs	Hama	Hauran	Euphrates	Jazira	Jebel Druze	Latakia
18	31	13	20,541	-	12	8	-	7,904

TOTAL: 28,257 out of 2,860,411 other Arab minorities in Syria, not including the Beduins, who are nominally Moslems and number perhaps 400,000 as the writer reports [6]. This, incidentally, is true for almost all the Ismaili groups in general where they form a minority. There is, however, an exception in the case of Hunza (small state in Central Asia), where the secular leader, the Mir himself, is an Ismaili. It is important to notice that he is only an administrator and a secular representative of the Imam, without any religious claim whatsoever. In a current periodical which is published weekly in Kenya, an East African Ismaili (who visited Syria in 1967) gives some further information on the basis of his visit to the Jamāt Khānās (the Ismaili mosques) in Salamiya and Talderaa [7]. He is especially struck by the marked similarity of the Syrian Ismailis to other Ismaili groups, a similarity which, he notes, is reflected in their manner of greeting one another, in the common prayer, the Du'ā, which is recited in Arabic as almost everywhere else, and in the Ismaili network of officials like the Mukhi and Kamadia, who are found in Ismaili Jamāt Khānās. Although the bulk of the Syrian Ismailis had not been able to get in direct touch with their Imam for several generations, the Imam had nevertheless maintained contact with the Syrian Ismaili

followers. The administrative representatives are known as the Amirs and one such family has retained an unbroken connection with the Aga Khan's family for more than a thousand years [8].

As regards the Ismailis in Iran, the Aga Khan III visited them in 1951 for the first time after his grandfather, the Aga Khan I, had left the country nearly 110 years previously. There has been a considerable progress and development of the Iranian Ismailis since then. They have about twenty-two Jamat Khanas and about twenty primary and one or more secondary schools have been established. We are told that there are about 60,000 families of Ismailis living in Iran, three-quarters of whom are occupied in agriculture and cattle rearing [9].

There is very little current information about the Ismailis in Russia except to the effect that they are not persecuted and are relatively free in their religious life. We gather that recently, as a result of certain Muslim conferences held in Russia in 1943 and again in 1948, the Shia rite (which presumably includes the Ismaili rite), has been officially recognised as the fifth orthodox rite in the Soviet Union [10]. Just as little is known about the Ismailis in China, especially the Sinkiang, Kashgar and Yarkand, since the frontier is closed "but no more firmly against the Ismailis than against anyone else", explains the late Aga Khan, adding: "... they are free to follow their religion" and that "they are firm and devoted with a great deal of self-confidence and the feeling that they constitute by far the most important Ismaili community in the whole world [11]. About their social custom we gather that they use the same greeting, "Ya Ali Madad", as do the Ismailis elsewhere. They also marry with the other Ismailis from Badakshan, Hunza, Chitral "whose settlement in China has been six to seven generations deep" [12]. Against the background of this uniformity, however, it is also obvious that the organisational matters there would have significant differences. As the late Aga Khan explains in his memoirs, "The headship of a religious community spread over a considerable part of the world

surface - from Cape Town to Kashgar, from Syria to Singapore - cannot be sustained in accordance with any cut-and-dried system. Moral conditions, material facilities, national aspirations and outlook and profoundly differing historical backgrounds have to be borne vastly in mind, and the necessary mental adjustments made" [13]. Describing the differing terms of social organisation in the extensively scattered communities of Ismailis, the Aga Khan explains that in certain countries the local leadership is in the hands of certain families and passes down in a close connection of kinship from one generation to another; sometimes it is the hereditary chieftain and occasionally - as in the case of Hunza - the secular king, the Mir, himself an Ismaili, who is the administrator of 'religious brotherhood' in that province of Central Asia. In Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Central Asia, Russia and Chinese Turkestan, the administrative leadership of the Ismailis is in the hands of certain families, and has been handed down in a continuous line through the generations. In Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Portuguese East Africa, Malagasy, South Africa, Congo (now Zaire), Madagascar, Malaya, India and Pakistan there is a system of councils which carries out the daily routine in the administration of various social sectors of the Ismaili community organisation.

A traveller gives an authentic account of some Ismailis living in Hunza in the Himalayas, describing their religious practices which he was able to see for himself "dawn prayers were the only service in the Ismailia Church. They consisted of a quiet gathering of those who cared to attend ... led them through the formal prayer and recital of Sura Fatiyeh, then gave them a brief religious discussion, and the service was over. The Ismailia sect prayed but twice a day, not five times as do most others, and many of these hard-working farmers prayed only on Fridays. They could, of course, pray at home, in their fields or anywhere else they wished, but attending the morning service was rightly as a valuable religious experience" [15]. The typical belief of a Hunzaite was as follows: "he regarded God as a deeply respected father to whom he could talk; he needed no more formality than the simple

dawn service, and wisely his church did not burden him with ceremonies" [16]. Incidentally, in the Imamat Day, Souvenir, 1967 it is stated that the present Aga Khan visited his followers in Gilgit and Hunza in October, 1960 [17]. He is the first Imam ever known to have visited these most remote settlements of Ismailis. Apparently, they were converted to Ismailism by Nasir Khusraw, an Iranian mystique or Dāī during the time of the 18th Ismaili Imam, Mustansirbillah. The reader is also referred to another biographical account of an Ismaili missionary called Pir Sabza'ali who travelled, in April 1923, through Chitral, Hunza, Gilgit, Yasin, Pamir, Yarkand, Kashgar, Afghanistan and Badakshan, to mention a few of these places, in the most arduous regions of Central Asia. In this account one notices a wide variety of tribal-like or semi-feudal structures of Ismailis scattered in these vast areas. They are locally called Mowlais Illahis, Nusheris and Darūzis in different parts and it is estimated that in Chitral itself at present there are 60,000 Ismailis having 200 jamāt Khānās, Gilgit has 40,000 Ismailis and about 300 jamāt Khānās and Hunza has 30,000 Ismailis. After the visit of the Aga Khan in 1960 a lot of development and change has taken place in these communities, and they now have schools in some areas where they learn Urdu or Persian [18].

From the brief survey of the Ismailis in some parts of the world, let us concentrate on Ismailis in the sub-continent of India and Africa and relate this to various written accounts by several other writers. In an article already mentioned in the last chapter by Ivanow, on the Sect of Imam Shah in Gujrat, we had gathered that these were a different group who had severed their connection with the parent sect of the Nizari Ismailis and called themselves Imām-Shāhis or Satpanthīs. They were members of various castes in Gujerat, Kathiawar, Kachh, Berar and Khandesh and were about 200,000 rapidly decreasing because of re-conversion into Hinduism [19]. The reader must be reminded that although the Khoja Ismailis are sometimes called the Satpanthis they have nothing to do with the so-called Imam Shahis. Yet, an interesting confusion can be cited here as arising in a study called Muslim Communities in Gujarat, 1964. In Chapter 3 the writer, S.C. Misra, gives some information

about the Nizari missionaries and their followers in Gujarat but makes very inaccurate statements about their religious philosophy. Apparently, it is because he has muddled them up with the sect of Imam Shahis. At times he treats the Momnas with their leader, a Pir Mashaikh, as though they too were Nizari Ismailis [20]. In Chapter 4 he enlists the 'Khojahs' as the thirty-eighth community and calls them "... the well-known Shi'a Ismaili community which is well distributed all over Gujarat towns. It is educationally advanced and is economically prosperous, engaged almost exclusively in trade" [21]. In Chapter 5, he traces the origin of Shia Ismaili community through the 'Vohra' or Bohra community. From their tenet of Hai Zinda, a testimony to the continued presence of the Imam, even what he calls Satpanthis resemble the Ismailis [22].

Another writer, in an article, assumes that the identity of the Asians is "based on language, region of origin in India, caste and/or religion". In the case of the Ismailis in East Africa today, such a detailed distinction is not made. Desai further states that "The caste-groups are the easiest to identify, since all (my emphasis) Asians derive their basic group identity initially in terms of caste and only later in terms of language, regions of origin in India or religion" [23]. In fact, to an East African Ismaili, the caste criterion is almost meaningless. The only identity which the Ismailis in East Africa and elsewhere regard as the most important is the religious one. It is true to say that the Ismailis in East Africa do come from the sub-continent of India where the caste-system is the basis of social stratification, but since they were converted to Ismailism in different sub-cultures or linguistic groups over an extensive historical period, the relics of caste-structure are completely eradicated by the imposition of a super-structure which is based entirely on their religious ideology, especially where social contact with other groups was established and communication took place. However, it should be emphasised, at this stage, that the East African Ismailis seem to have come largely from a Gujerati-speaking region in India but a few have come from Sindhi or Kachhi-speaking areas and a handful from Urdu,

Hindi, or even Marathi language backgrounds. We shall examine these details more closely in the next chapter and for the time being continue with the discussion on a diachronic basis.

In spite of such a diffused character of the Ismaili society on the whole, it is essentially united through the doctrine of the living Imam, at present embodied in the person of the forty-ninth Imam. In December, 1964, a World Ismailia Conference, the first of its kind, was held at Karachi and was attended by delegates from India, Syria, Malaysia, Ceylon, Switzerland, France, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malagasy, Portuguese East Africa, South Africa, Congo, Aden, Iraq, Iran, United Kingdom, Muscat, Kuwait, Pakistan etc. This list is by no means exhaustive and does not cover the thirty-two countries where over twenty million Ismailis are said to be scattered. Another World Conference called 'WISE' was held at Geneva in 1967. Such gatherings help to establish social links between different Ismaili groups and the vast community is thus drawn together, cutting across territorial, ethnic, linguistic or cultural boundaries. The WISE conference was held in order to discuss various practical problems in the socio-economic sphere of the community. In the recent history of the Ismailia community such major events are not unknown. Through the delegates who attend conferences from time to time, the Imams gear rapid and radical innovations in various aspects of the social life of their followers. During the Imamat of the late Aga Khan III Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, the various Jubilees which were held to mark the specific anniversaries of the Imamat were similar events which today have very direct effects on the structure and organisation of the Ismaili community as a whole.

This further raises the question regarding the nature of the wider Ismaili or Ismailia (sometimes also called the Ismai'lite) community. As we have seen through this and the previous chapters, Ismailism has spread over a wider spatial framework during the leadership of certain Imams. Furthermore, through the enthusiasm and adventures of a few devoted da'is or pirs, it has spread over quite remote and isolated areas of the world. The natives of these regions

have been converted into this faith, despite their local beliefs or sub-cultures. We also examined that during various periods of persecution, the practice of taqiyya, or deliberate concealment of the belief, was also prevalent. In the case of the sub-continent of India (or Asia for that matter, which includes Burma, China and others) there were already Hinduistic or other beliefs held by the people, from our specific example of India. Ismailism has been superimposed upon these existent beliefs and cultures and a kind of religious syncretism has taken place in these areas. The acceptance of the new doctrine might not have essentially changed the basic social, economic and political organisation or structure of some of these local ethnic communities, especially where communication with the rest of the world has been extra difficult, as in our illustration of Hunza and Chitral which are geographically almost inaccessible. We have also noticed that there is a sort of kingdom with an overall leader, called the Mīr in Hunza. In the Ismaili world we find large semi-tribal communities, pre-feudal and state-like communal groups or even little bands of people scattered right through Yemen, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Kashgar, Yarkand, Pamir, Badakshan, Samarkand, Bokhara, Azerbaidjan, Yasin, Gilgit, Chitral, Sinkiang and in fact, all through the Near, the Middle and the Far East. The convertees, if they are Ismailis (in our sense of the word, whatever they might choose to call themselves) would most certainly be aware of the notion of Imām-e-Zamān or Sāheb-ūl-zamān or Hāzar Imām, or whatever local name they might use for their overall religious leader. The idea that there is a leading person, a guide, actually living somewhere whom they must obey or follow, is very likely to be the consensus of all these various communal groups. What is more, their leader within the Ismaili context is likely to be changed with mystical power, understood by them as having a kind of a divine existence. The Ismailis call this Bātun as opposed to Zāher, merely a concrete existence. The followers might think of him as ever-present and later on learn to accept the notion of the hereditary leadership of the Imam which they say, has to continue. Depending

upon the degree of intellectual sophistication the particular group has acquired, they further explain their faith within the Islamic framework. They often argue that the divine substance that their Imam has, derives from Allāh, the supreme being, whose nūr or light never ceases to manifest itself and is now contained in the Imam who has descended directly from Muhammad, the Prophet, who too, was the holder of the same divine light, the nūr. All these various structural elements of their religious doctrine formulate the pattern of the Ismaili belief-system. These components may be combined in various degrees but the sum-total of them gives us a basic structure or a loose definition of the Ismaili religious-system.

As conversion to Ismaili faith spread over wider areas, another pattern can be observed. We saw that dā'īs and pīrs were often the carriers of Ismaili doctrine over vast communities. In the case of India, we had earlier noted that bands of followers set out from time to time on pilgrimages to seek the dīdār of their Imam. Similar groups of devotees are known to have made such pilgrimages from other groups too, as one considers many more accounts found in the gīnāns, or mystical songs of the Ismailis, their folk lore, in general through their vast collection of written and oral tradition. We just dealt with another example of an Ismaili Pīr, namely, Sabza'li who visited large numbers of Ismaili communities living in remote parts through the Central Asia in 1923, on behalf of the Aga Khan III. It is significant to mention that the communities he met were observing the Ismaili faith since their conversion by Nāsir Khūsraw, an Ismaili Dāī, about eight to ten centuries ago, during the Fatimid period. Moreover, when the present Aga Khan visited a few of these communities in Gilgit and Hunza in October, 1960 he was the first Imam ever to have met his followers. Similarly, the Indian Ismailis who had been converted during early Fatimid and later in the Nizari period, around the twelfth or thirteenth century, met Hasan Ali Shah, the first Aga Khan and the forty-sixth Imam, for the very first time when he was compelled to leave Persia and go to India in 1840. But in case of the Indian

Ismailis some form of contact was kept, either through the various Pirs already mentioned in the last chapter, or by a few Ismaili adepts and rais who visited the Imam from time to time. It must be realised that these journeys were less cumbersome to make than between the states of Central Asia, Russia, China and Iran. Therefore, where it has been possible, communication has played an important role in the social, political or economic unification of the various Ismaili communities scattered through over thirty-two countries today. It can be safely assumed that although Ismailis have been known to be residing in the U.S.S.R. and China, no Imam has probably actually visited them. Another interesting point to note is that in some countries when an Imam has left, he has probably not been able to return to it for several generations, at least not in his own life time. To give a few examples, since the tragedy of Imam Husein, the second Imam, in Kerbala in Iraq, for several generations until the overthrow of the Umayyad Caliphate in Baghdad, no Imam could visit Iraq. Again, after the collapse of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, the Imams did not return there for a few centuries. Incidentally, the Aga Khan III has been buried near Aswān in Egypt, according to his wish expressed in his will. Lastly, after leaving Persia in 1840, Hasan Ali Shah settled in India. His grandson, Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, returned to Persia in February, 1951, at the new Emperor's wedding, about 110 years after leaving the country. Since in the recent times the various Shahs have given an official recognition to the Ismaili religion in predominantly an Ithna Asheri or Asna Ashari state, the present Aga Khan, Prince Karim too, has been able to visit Iran in 1959. Through the visits of the Imams to various countries the Ismailis have been able to make a great deal of material and social progress. The Ismaili community on the whole is known to have made tremendous progress and modernised itself continually as several writers have observed.

In conclusion to this chapter on the general survey of the Ismailis we must focus our attention on a few more specific details. In the

early phase of Ismailism in India, the Hindu basis of the theory of avatār was used and the Imam was presented as a manifestation of the tenth avatār, which is expected to reveal itself, according to the Hindu doctrine of divine incarnation. Ismaili faith can thus be seen as a super-structure which has been embroidered over a backcloth of Hinduism. Let us examine this super-structure a little more closely. Together with the doctrine of the Imamat were stressed the ideology of the Imamat and the conflict between zaher and batun, simply put as the difference between the concrete and the abstract, the body and the spirit, the matter and the mind. Although the mū'min, or the disciple always hopes to seek also the zāheri didār (or darshan in Sanskrit) which means the physical sight or glimpse of the Imam, in actual fact he should strive to get the bātuni or the nūrāni dīdār of the Imam. The latter is believed to be more important and effectual. The nūr of the Imam is supposed to be present all the time and constantly guides the followers but a true mū'min can even invoke the bātuni substance in himself and see the divine nūr of Allāh. Thus Ismailism depicts a highly mystical and a metaphysical notion in its belief in the Imamat. The interpretation of the Imamat has been formulated and has evolved in an Islamic, for that matter, sūfī Islamic or Shīa terms. It has been stressed again and again that the very essence of Shia Ismailism consists in the acknowledgement of a living or an ever-present, and not concealed or hidden Imam. This ideology was further developed especially during the Fatimid and the Nizari period when the other main Shia group, namely the Ithna asheri sect had already split away from the main stream of hereditary Imams. Islam was re-interpreted and modified in a philosophical, mystical and metaphysical framework giving rise to the spread of Sufism in Islam which in itself has almost become a religion. Having examined the spread of Ismailism as a super-structure fitted on to a variety of sub-cultures in a very wide spatial context we shall now proceed with the thesis from a somewhat diachronic to a specific and narrower framework concentrating mainly on the last four successive Imams limited within the territorial boundary of East Africa as a whole.

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C H A P T E R I V

DYNAMICS OF MIGRATION AND THEIR SETTLEMENT IN EAST AFRICA

Having surveyed the contemporary distribution of the Ismailis (known by a wide range of names in various localities where they have lived) mainly through a historical perspective, and having noted the wide variety in the local administration of these various scattered groups in different areas spread over the globe, we shall briefly discuss various social intricacies that are involved in identifying the particular 'Ismaili' group within a smaller scale. In order to study the Ismailis of East Africa more closely, it is, however, necessary to consider them as a cultural unit of the Ismailis of Indo-Pak. It is one of the most difficult tasks and essentially a historical one, to trace the social and cultural origins of contemporary Ismailis of India, Pakistan and East Africa. On the other hand, to observe these groups in a static synchronic framework, or at the present moment in time, i.e. the phase of the Imamat of successive Aga Khans, a time-span stretched over about one-and-a-half centuries, we cannot but examine them in relation to other relevant communal or corporate social groups.

It might be said that although they come from a historical background of a caste-structure in India, East African Ismailis show no traces of caste elements in their present social structure. The only relic of the past - and this is not noticeable in some cases - is the various names or surnames of some Ismailis of Indo-Pak and East Africa. Some of these names are clearly associated with Hinduistic caste-names or with specialised occupations within a caste-framework. However, it is interesting to note that the Ismailis themselves are totally ignorant of the origin of their surnames and are generally unable to give any satisfactory explanations for having them.

Ismaili proselytisation as we saw earlier, had begun in India during the Fatimite Caliphate, in Sind and Multan. Later during the Nizari phase the doctrine spread more widely and a number of Persian Pīrs (Missionaries) were sent to various parts of the sub-continent from time to time by the then Imams who were residing in the Middle East. These Pīrs preached mainly in Punjab, Sindh, Kashmir, Gujerat, Bombay

and a few other places. After the conversion had been carried out, it is quite possible that the majority of the neophytes continued to live in the particular regional and linguistic areas in isolated communal groups for several generations. Hence they might have, to a certain extent, retained some of the characteristic cultural features. These would include food, dress, particular language dialects or certain specialised occupations in which they were engaged. But the very dynamic element in their religious faith embodied in the presence of a living Imam was strongly entrenched. They were not unaware that they could directly get in touch with the Imam of that time. In fact, a number of accounts prove that from time to time, various Ismailis went on such pilgrimages to meet their Imam and offer him their devotions. Several groups of devoted followers from different parts of the world made arduous journeys in pursuit of the Imam, somtimes even being unable to return to their homeland. A number of Gīnāns (mystical and devotional poems) in the Khoja or Satpanth Ismaili tradition also, narrate the experiences of the Pīrs who undertook such pilgrimages, sometimes accompanied by other devotees, from India (Jampūdīp) to the Middle Eastern peninsula which is referred to as Sehēnterdīp where the Imams continued to live. These various factors prove that although the Shia Imami Ismailis seemed to be divided into several social categories, they nevertheless, had a single doctrinal belief unifying them.

In the Khoja Case of 1866, various facts about the community are documented on the basis of their doctrinal belief. However, in the Muslim Communities in Gujerat (1964), the writer makes some fundamental and factual errors about the Ismailis on several points which were mentioned in the last chapter but should again be outlined in detail here [2]. For instance, Misra includes a group called the Momnās, with their leader, a Pir Mashaikh, who is not known in the Ismaili history as part of the category of the Ismailis. Again he traces the origin of the Shia Ismailis through the Vohra community who in fact have an entirely different religious doctrine. The Vohras (or Bohoras) are Mustalian or 'eastern' Ismailis who did not follow the Ismaili Imam

from the nineteenth Imam Nizar onwards (See Chapter II). Lastly, he has failed to distinguish the Ismailis from the Imam-Shahis, who are both called Satpanthīs at times. The word Satpanth simply means the 'true path' in Sanskrit and it is a term which the Nizari Ismaili Pīrs had used at first for the Ismaili doctrine they preached in India. Later, the Imam-Shahis broke away from the main branch of the Ismailis. This happened during the time when the Pīrs were no longer sent to India by the Imam. The majority of the Ismailis continued to follow the teachings of the early Pīrs who had first taught them essentials of the doctrine. It is believed that some of the descendants of Imam Shah demanded obedience to themselves and proclaimed Imam Shah posthumously as the Imam in Gujerat. This gave rise to the off-shoots of the Imam-Shahis who were also called the Pīranawallās. They worshipped the shrine of the Pīrs, a practice which is not acceptable in the doctrine of the Ismailis. The Ismailis should hence be treated separately from the various other groups that have been discussed.

Another social historian makes a similar error in defining the Shia Ismailis. In an Intellectual History of Islam in India (1969), the writer has considered the Ismailis and the Khojas as distinct sects [3]. Also, the Imam-Shahis or the Pīrais are included as 'a minor Ismaili sect' when in fact, their doctrine - which we have just examined - is totally different from that of the Ismailis. Another group, called the Shamshīs are described as 'members of a sub-sect of the Khojas' and they are said to be followers of one Shams-ad-din. Two more social categories, namely the Guptis and the Momnas, who again seem to follow different doctrines are mentioned as Ismaili sects. At this stage, it should be borne in mind that the term 'Khoja' is very misleading. Both the Ismailis and the Ithna-asheris (together with a small group of Sunnis who are mostly found in Bombay), are known as the 'Khojas' in Indo-Pak and East Africa. The title of 'Khwaja' means 'the honourable worshippers'; it was originally given by Pir Sadrud-din to the new converts. Later on when secessions from the Ismaili community took place during the Imamat of Aga Khan I, some of the Ismailis joined the Ithna-asheris while others became Sunnis and all these groups retain the

term Khoja in describing themselves. Therefore it should be noted that not all Khojas are Ismailis just as it is also true that not all Ismailis are Khojas.

Regarding the point about diverse social categories in the early Ismailis, it should be noted that although the community had shed a number of caste-elements (since Ismailism allows no social differentiation on the basis of caste structure), the various cultural categories might have remained isolated from one another. This was partly because trade and communication systems were not fully developed and the bulk of the society was not fit to become socially mobile then. But this might also be due to the absence of an effective centralised authority and leadership in the Indian Ismaili community then. It is not surprising, therefore, that because no direct contact between the Imam and the various social categories was established in the early days, the wider community had no distinct social identity.

On arriving in India from Iran around 1840, the Aga Khan I started the process of uniting all the Ismailis into an organised community. He encouraged the Ismailis to adopt the Shia custom of marriage and burial rites which directly contributed towards consolidation of various cultural categories into a single social system [4]. After the Khoja Case of 1866 the Ismaili community was officially recognised and legally defined as "a sect of people whose ancestors were Hindus in origin, which was converted to and has throughout abided in the faith of the Shia Imami Ismailis, and which has always been and until now is bound by ties of spiritual allegiance to the hereditary Imams of the Ismailis" [5]. The judgement on the Khoja Case provided a considerable incentive to the isolated rural Ismailis to discard some of the alien practices which they had been observing for several centuries after their conversion. Gradually they abandoned these practices and became completely assimilated with the rest of the Ismailis in India and elsewhere.

On arrival of Hasan Aly Shah, the Aga Khan I, the Ismailis presumably also began to move out from crowded cities and with his

encouragement, they established trading centres in a number of places. It is reported that there were already 2,300 families in Sind; 5,000 in Kathiawar; 1,400 in Bombay and in addition to these there were about 400 families in Muscat and 450 in Zanzibar before the end of the century [6].

Since the Ismailis were soon one of the most mobilised groups in India they were advised by the Imam to look for better opportunities elsewhere whenever the resources in a certain place failed to provide them with sufficient means of a livelihood. Thus, they moved with considerable ease from rural to urban areas, when farming was no longer a rewarding occupation, because of the famine. Similarly, when there was over-crowding in the city they were cautioned to spread out into the suburban areas or migrate to another country. By virtue of the very distinctive characteristics of self-help and the internal solidarity which are general features of the Ismailis, there was an increase in social mobility which in turn made adaptation to a new environment reasonably easy. Moreover, they always found useful contacts in the new areas which facilitated their settlement. Social mobility and internal solidarity thus eradicated any residual caste-elements in the society, and the various groups, in the movement from one area to another, found ready acceptance by the Ismaili hosts already living in those areas.

Ismailis were encouraged to regard one another as their equals and were specially praised by the Imam when they offered help to the less privileged members of the community during times of adversity. The increase in class and social mobility, therefore, brought about further contact between various culturally isolated categories which in turn resulted in the frequency of exogamous marriages, i.e. a headway towards the process of assimilation. Marriages between various Ismaili cultural groups was relatively easy since the caste rules of endogamy did not apply to them in any way. Any tendencies which would have brought about a caste-like structure in the Indian Ismailis were thus eliminated and their place was taken by the value of social solidarity based on the guidance and leadership of the Imam.

From the Firmāns (a term used for the sayings of the Imam considered as 'Holy Guidance') of the late Aga Khan, it is quite evident that the Indian Ismailis were already a unified community although they were scattered in different parts of Indo-Pak and Africa. In his early Firmans we find references to specific social categories like the Sindhis, the Punjabis, the Suratis, the Kathiawaris, the Khalus (from Iran), apart from the Khojas, the Guptis and the Momnas. Most of these are regional categories. The Momnas and the Guptis, however, seem to be distinct social or caste-like categories and are later converts, though it is difficult to say exactly when and how many of them embraced Ismailism. Of course, no traces of their cultural differences are to be found today and it is almost impossible to confuse them with the other non-Ismaili Momnas or Guptis. But it seems as though for a few years the Ismaili Momnas remained a distinct social category and were engaged in the occupation of driving horse-carriages in Bombay. Sultan Muhammad Shah, the late Aga Khan, in his Firmāns had encouraged them to work hard and migrate to the rural parts. They were advised to set themselves up in retail trade with the help of more experienced businessmen. A number of Khalus who were a depressed class in Iran also became completely amalgamated with the Ismailis of Hassanābād in India. The latter provided the young children of the Khalus with homes and school education. The Surati Ismailis (from Surat) moved over to less crowded areas and were able to find prosperous occupation and support from the Khoja Ismailis in these areas. The Kathiawaris (from Kathiawar), left for the southern parts of India and were helped by the traders who were already skilled and established in that profession. Those in Punjab gradually identified themselves with the Punjabi Muslims and form the bulk of Ismaili population in West Pakistan. They learned to speak Urdu, the national language of West Pakistan, and practised Ismaili religion with complete freedom. Regarding cultural and social flexibility in the Ismailis in general, it ought to be pointed out here that especially under the guidance of the recent Imams, the Ismailis are specifically told first to adopt

the language of the place wherever they have settled. For instance, we gather from the Firmāns that some of the Indian Ismaili men had migrated to Muscat and Burma, where they were asked to identify themselves thoroughly with the local population. In these nations at present the Ismailis have not only adopted the language and the dress of the indigenous people but are also almost totally accepted by the natives, for some of the latter have intermarried with the Ismaili migrants and have adopted their religion.

The factors discussed above leave us with the fact that the Ismailis were progressively to depart from the caste-elements in their society, chiefly because of the nature of their religious beliefs and organisation, as well as on the basis of strong leadership of the recent Imams. Once they were thus consolidated, the secondary features based on linguistic and cultural difference became insignificant in the minds of the individuals in the community. Consequently, the obedience to the Imam was underlined more emphatically and became their primary concern which in turn brought about innovations in the direction of the general welfare in the society. With the early detachments from caste-elements came a new and reinforced sentiment of giving mutual help which was regarded as equivalent to offering services and devotion to the Imam. Through a detailed examination of contemporary Ismailis of Indo-Pak and East Africa one might safely postulate that this highly united community cannot be divided on ethnic or social lines since these divisions would be quite meaningless against the unity of their faith which is their basic ideational system, as Levi-Strauss might put it.

After this general outline and bearing in mind the fact that no statistical information is available, we may now turn to the immigration of the Ismailis to East Africa. Here a note must be taken of the fact that they were considered as 'Indians' or 'Asians' until recently when they have been included and listed as 'citizens', except in Uganda at the present moment. About ninety per cent of them have acquired citizenship of the respective East African countries. In terms of nationality, therefore, the Ismailis in East Africa can be classified into those who are citizens by birth, and those who have renounced

their previous British nationality or British protection in favour of their newly adopted status. One also finds a very small minority of them earning their livelihood in one of the East African territories other than the one of which they are citizens and thus possessing Temporary Residential Permits. This minority would also include those individuals whose applications for citizenship are pending acceptance. nevertheless, the number of the Ismailis whose citizenship status would place them into this category is relatively meagre.

Perhaps at this stage, it might be relevant to examine the population distribution of Asians by major religions. From the Censuses taken in Kenya in 1962, Uganda in 1959 and Tanganyika in 1957, it can be said that there were more Hindus than Muslims, except in Tanganyika:

55.4% Hindus	22.7% Muslims	in Kenya in 1962
69.0% Hindus	26.0% Muslims	in Uganda in 1959
42.0% Hindus	51.0% Muslims	in Tanganyika in 1957

From the specific example of Kenyan Asians distributed on the basis of religion in 1931, 1948, 1962 the following can be seen:

	1931		1948		1962	
Religion	Number	%age	Number	%age	Number	%age
Hindu	19,748	45.3	51,395	52.6	97,841	55.4
Muslim	15,006	34.4	27,385	28.2	40,057	22.7
Sikh	4,427	10.1	10,621	10.9	21,169	12.0
Christian	4,131	9.5	7,613	7.8	16,524	9.3
Others	311	0.7	473	0.5	1,022	0.6
TOTAL	43,623	100.0	97,687	100.0	176,613	100.0

The population distribution on a racial basis, in the same year in Kenya shows the proportion of Asians as follows:

Race	Total
Africans/Somalis	8,365,942
Asians	176,613
Europeans	55,759
Arabs	34,048
Others	3,901
TOTAL	8,636,263

Finally, the following Table shows their occupation distribution:

Professional and Managerial		Technical and Supervisory		Clerical and Sales		Craftsmen and skilled manual workers		Semi-skilled, unskilled and others		TOTAL	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
9,330	23.0	1,674	4.1	17,087	42.1	10,573	26.0	1,970	4.8	40,634	100.0

Economically Active Adult Asian Males by Major Occupation Groups

The above table does not, however, include the female adult occupation. Regarding the Asian household size and composition, since no detailed analysis by religion was done, it was nevertheless stated that "Hindus and some Christians, namely Catholic Goans are likely to have larger families". On the other hand, with the efforts by His Highness Aga Khan, Family Planning was introduced at the Ismailia Health Centre, the services of which were extended to non-Ismailis as well [7].

From the approximate figures given below we might be able to estimate the ratio of the Ismailis to the rest of the East African population. The following table shows the distribution of non-African population in 1965, quoted from Zamani [8]:

Estimated Non-African Population in East Africa

Country	Europeans	Indo-Pakistanis	Arabs	Others
Kenya	41,000	186,000	37,000	4,000
Uganda	9,000	85,900	2,100	2,200
Tanganyika	17,300	85,900	25,600	4,200
Zanzibar	650	19,700	298,700	360

Against these figures the total population in each country is estimated as 9,365,000 in Kenya, 7,551,000 in Uganda, 10,179,000 in Tanzania [9].

Thus, the percentage of Asians to that of the Africans is very low. Among Asians the Ismailis are only a minority against the Hindus and other Muslim Sects. The Muslims form about 33% of the total number of Asians in the East African countries which also includes Ismaili and other Muslim sects [10]. Thus, it is clear that the Ismailis indeed are a minority against the bulk of the 'Asian' population. There is no census of their number but from various accounts they could be estimated to be about sixty to seventy thousands in all in East Africa as a whole. From these various general statistical details given about the Asians in East Africa, mainly from the Kenyan Census of 1962, we shall study the dynamics of Asian migration within the various sub-divisions in the Asian community, which is based on various social groupings, with greater detail and depth in order to arrive at some general observations about the Ismaili settlement within the context of the East African Asians.

Indians from the north-west India were crossing the sea to the African coasts long before history was recorded. It is sometimes thought that Indian immigration into East Africa began with the building of the Kenya-Uganda railway when the British government employed the labour migrants in 1896. In fact, the Arab and the Indian traffic to the East African coasts is known to be considerably older; even Herodotus, the Greek historian is said to have reported this.[11] Aided by the monsoon winds, the Indians and the Arabs were able to take

advantage of trading in the coastal towns of East Africa. Vasco-da-Gama also found Indians, some of whom seem to have been Khojas at Mozambique, Kilwa, Mombasa and Malindi [12]. In 1840, Sultan Seyyid Said moved his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar. Realising the special aptitude of the Indians in trade he encouraged them to settle in this port, with the knowledge that this would contribute to the economic development of the island [13]. By 1841, when a representative of the Indian government was posted in Zanzibar as part of the policy of the Imperial Consolidation, there were already about one thousand Indians on the island. This is the year also when the Aga Khan I migrated to India from Iran . In 1844, Captain Hamerton reckoned 500 Hindu and 600-700 Muslim Indians in Zanzibar and other coastal ports under the Sultan's authority [14]. By 1860, between 5,000 to 6,000 Indians had settled in Zanzibar [15]. Captain Rigby, the British Consul at Zanzibar from 1858-1861, noted the presence of Khojas and Bohras from Surat, Bombay amd Kutch. He also reported that unlike the Hindus, the Muslims usually brought their wives and emigrated there with a view to permanent settlement [16].

In 1866, on the eve of the expansion of the European powers over the East African territories, and during the time John Kirk was the vice-consul in Zanzibar, the local Indian population had increased to about six thousand [17]. On his arrival Kirk found them in Zanzibar, in coastal towns and at trading posts in the interior. Of these, about half the number came from British India or from Indian states in Kathiawar and Cutch under the British protection and were therefore either British subjects or British protected persons. Burton observed during his travels that the nearest approach to a shop was the store of a Khoja "who will buy and sell everything from a bead to a bale of cloth"[18]. He also noted that the Khojahs practised 'profound Takiyyah' and called themselves Sunnis, or Shiahs as the case might require and assumed Hindu as well as Moslem names [19]. In 1866, the year of the Khoja Case, the British Consul at Zanzibar reported the existence of 2558 Khojas in East Africa, as against 588 Bohras and 474 Hindus [20]. A

British doctor working in Zanzibar, noted that the Khojas formed "the largest section of the native mercantile community, permanently resident on the island. They are natives of Cutch, the Kathiawar ports, Surat and Bombay, but they may now be regarded as permanent settlers on the island, most of them having been born there" [21]. He also emphasised that the Khojas were different from Bohras and Memons and did not undertake proselytization. Regarding their group solidarity he adds: "In no class of society, civilised or uncivilised, Christian or Mohammedan, have I ever seen so much kindness and genuine affection displayed towards each other as I have constantly witnessed among the members of the community .... the presence of a deadly disease in their midst never prevented them from hurrying to the houses of their afflicted friends" [22].

A long time before this however, before the arrival from Iran, Hassan Aly Shah, the Aga Khan I, disturbed by the poverty and low standard of living of his followers in India, had been advising the Ismailis to migrate to East Africa, where he was convinced they had a better future. In 1829, the Ismaili community had reached a fairly substantial number in Bombay. From there they spread out over a number of trading centres. The Ismailis who had previously been farmers in Cutch and Kathiawar seemed to have entered business when they migrated to Porbandar. A majority of them were engaged in trade and commerce which provided training for settlement in more remote areas. The motives of the early migrants can be explained in terms of the 'push' factors, for famine and poverty were the main factors impelling them to leave India. The increased hardship brought by the famine forced the younger men to leave their families and find employment or set up small business on apprenticeship basis. A young pioneering Ismaili migrant left India usually alone at first for lack of enough money to pay the passage for more than one person. Until he felt certain of better living conditions, there was little sense in uprooting an entire family. In the course of time, using his basic skill which was appreciated and welcomed by the Arabs, he soon engaged in small-scale

trade. Towards the end of the first half of the nineteenth century and during its second half, therefore, the Ismaili Khojas had already begun to settle in Zanzibar. It should be noted that neither the exact date when the process of migration began from the Indo-Pak, nor the details about when the first two Aga Khans advised them to migrate, are known with any precision.

We shall, therefore, have to rely on various accounts of these early years of settlement given by explorers, historians and what, in fact, is found in the oral tradition which has been gathered and printed in various publications made by the Ismailis in Bombay, Karachi and East Africa. The rest of the oral tradition will be based on recorded interviews with some of the informants who occupy influential positions in the network of leadership in modern East Africa. The descendants of the early pioneers like Sewa Hajee Paroo, Sir Tharia Topan, Allidina Visram, Hussein Suleman Verjee, are important in the survey of the dynamics of migration and settlement. It should be particularly emphasised that the traditional material which exists in the community is not in serious conflict with the historical research carried out by recent scholars, especially in post-independent East Africa.

From the earliest accounts of the Indian settlement in East Africa, one can deduce that the Indians were in close alliance with the Arabs for several generations. They had been trading in the Persian Gulf and helping the Arabs as financiers and customs collectors. When Said moved his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar in 1840 there were already Indian merchants who constituted a body of the principal traders enjoying freedom of enterprise and religious toleration. These traders formed the nucleus of Indian expansion to the Sultan's new dominions. A number of Indians were appointed as customs collectors at Muscat, Zanzibar and Mombasa as early as 1831. The British opened a consulate in Zanzibar in 1841 and reinforced this policy strengthening the link between the British Indians and the Arab subjects in the Sultanate. The Indians were known to play a useful role as middlemen.

Various descriptions of the early Indian settlement in East Africa

tell us that Ismaili Khojas were one of the strongest industrious groups and were a closely-knit social unit; the solidarity and cohesiveness of the Ismailis was reflected in their daily social activities. They lived on the same street in small houses and formed a neighbourhood. Although they came from different towns in India and presumably did not know one another before arriving at Zanzibar, there was strong interaction among them in various fields of their social life. At the domestic level women helped one another in the daily household chores. They also provided useful labour and manpower in the running of the shops.

In the evenings they attended the Jamāt Khāna which served as a community hall, besides, of course, being a prayer-house. Two officials of the Mukhi and the Kamadia were annually elected and their duty was to collect small subscriptions from the members for the running of the Jamāt Khāna where they occasionally had communal feasts. These officials were also authorised to settle minor disputes between the members. The institution of Jamāt Khāna helped to establish moral and social sanctions upon the Ismaili Khojas whose behaviour was thus standardised. This, in effect contributed to a remarkable group solidarity among the members, thus establishing them to present a united social front to the outsiders.

At this stage it may be worthwhile to examine biographical case histories of certain Ismaili pioneers, for this would enable us to understand important features of the social and cultural patterns of the time. One of the early settlers was Tharia Topan who provided the impetus to many other Ismailis to settle in East Africa. In 1881 he supported Kirk's efforts in the establishment of a school in Zanzibar by providing Rs. 200,000 and in 1887 he donated a further sum of money for the establishment of the first general hospital in Zanzibar. He also assisted the British in the final suppression of slavery in Zanzibar, and for this he was knighted in 1890. It was partly owing to his personal influence with the Sultan Seyyid Bargash that the negotiations for abolition of slavery were successfully carried out. Topan acquired the post of Customs Master in 1876 and accompanied Seyyid Bargash to England [23]. The Noorum-Mubin, a book written in

Gujerati in India, and popular among the Ismailis mentions Sir Tharia Topan in connection with the Khoja Case (known in traditional Gujerati as the 'Barbhaya Case'). It states that many officers of the Jamāt had played an important role in the cause of the Imam among whom Topan's contribution was substantial. Owing to his excellent services he had been awarded the honorific title of 'Vazier' by the Imam. He seems to have made several trips back and forth to India. The Noorum-Mubin also mentions Sir Tharia Topan as one of the Khoja officers present when the embalmed body of Aga Khan II, who had died in August 1885, was sent to Kerbala to be ceremoniously buried in October 1885. Topan is said to have returned to Bombay and retired there [24].

Another well-known trader was Sewa Hajee Paroo, who established trading concern in the interior of Bagamoyo and German East Africa after his arrival in about 1851. He contributed substantially to the expansion of Tanganyika for which the German Government had honoured him with a title, thus making him the first Asian to receive such an award. Count Capri succeeding Bismarck is said to have been in favour of the Indian traders who provided useful connections with the interior of Africa. The Germans were not in a position to replace them and decided to make use of their strength [25]. Paroo began his career initially as a supplier of trade goods and provisions to the parties of European hunters and explorers. Later he extended his business by opening a number of stores and agencies which were supplied with a variety of trade goods such as cotton, cloth, beads and ammunition which were exchanged for local products, mainly ivory. He is remembered as an influential trader by the Ismailis and died in 1897. One of his patrilineal descendants is considered a prominent leader of the Ismailis in Mombasa. Count Kassamali Paroo is also known by many for the various public services which he has rendered. He took a keen interest in the social welfare work and was appointed as the President of the Indian Merchants Chamber after serving as a member on the Kenya Legislative Council. As a leader of the Ismailia community

he was the managing director of the Jubilee Investment Trust and also served as the President of the Provincial Ismailia Council; later he was appointed a member of Ismailia Federal Council for Africa until he retired from this office in 1962. Paroo's role in multifarious fields in East Africa needs specially to be mentioned. Furthermore, he has also made a keen study of Islam and Ismailism and is said to have given several talks in the East African Jamāt Khānās on religious, social and economic matters. Paroo is but one typical example of a modern Ismaili trader engaged in diverse social activities.

The next well-known pioneer who was Sewa Hajee Paroo's contemporary in fact worked as an apprentice in his firm. Alidina Visram (1863-1916) extended his trade widely through Uganda and Kenya into Congo. His agents proved to be extremely useful to the British by acting as bankers and supplying a variety of commodities. His stores were run by Indian branch managers, most of whom were young Ismaili apprentices with a large number of African shop assistants. An important feature of his business career was his relations with the government and the people generally, for he is known to have a humorous and lively personality and therefore was able to attract the goodwill and friendship of many. He also established cordial relations with the Christian missionaries of the time. As some of them wielded important influence, Alidina was able to obtain the necessary help in procuring a contract for supplying the hunters with foodstuffs during their excursions into the interior. Thus, one of his trading activities consisted in packing such material as dry meat, fish etc. in wooden boxes and supplying these foodstuffs to the parties of hunters. His business assumed such a large scale production that he began to be known locally as the 'King of Ivory'. The building of the railway to Uganda acted as a considerable stimulus to his business expansion. He obtained a special permission from the government to open canteen-shops on the route along which the line was being laid. Thus, Sheth Alidina's business 'empire' extended through Mombasa and Bagamoyo to over thirty major branches in East Africa. Vazier Alidina

gave substantial donations to the Namirembe Cathedral, the local hospital and the Red Cross at Kampala, and to the secondary school at Mombasa which, until recently bore his name. It is said that on his second visit to East Africa in 1905, the Aga Khan III had personally told Alidina to encourage the Ismailis from Kathiawar and Cutch to settle in East Africa. The steady emigration of the Ismailis to East Africa since the beginning of this century could thus be said to be based on 'pull' factors. The early migrants are to be distinguished from them for they faced relatively more difficult conditions. Once they were settled, it was easier for their relatives to join their kinsmen. The comfort of kinship and cultural ties had been denied to the first pioneers.

During the later part of his life, Alidina made a journey to the Congo in order to recover a large sum of money that was owed to him. The failure in this caused a shock to him. On his return journey he contracted pneumonia and died. His son built the school as a memorial to his father, but lacked the talent and the skill of running the business which his father had started.

Hussein Suleman Verjee arrived much later and is particularly known for his support to the other Indian traders in their launching of the campaign demanding equal treatment with the European settlers in Kenya. It should, however, be remembered that the Ismailis as individuals took little or no part in the politics of East Africa, and are said to "have stood aloof from any inter-communal movements of agitating against Europeans in alliance with Indians and Africans" although they were described as a 'strong group' among a number of different religious communities represented in East Africa [26]. Verjee's family first settled in Kenya in 1885. They have donated towards the building of the Aga Khan school in Mombasa as well as contributing towards building an elegant Jamāt Khāna in Nairobi. A great grandson of Suleman is one of the prominent members of the Ismaili community, as already mentioned in an earlier chapter. Vazier Jimmy Verjee was interviewed in 1965 (a few years after having given a radio broadcast

in 1957) by an ex-student of Makerere University College whose research papers provide some crucial information about the social organisation of the Ismailis on the whole [27]. After qualifying as a Barrister at Law at the Middle Temple in 1949, Vazier Jimmy returned to Uganda and was appointed as a Resident Magistrate. In 1954, the late Aga Khan appointed him as the Education Administrator in the Ismailia community of Uganda. Four years later, after the completion of several of the Aga Khan schools' building projects in Uganda which are open to all races, Jimmy resumed similar projects in Kenya under the guidance of the present Aga Khan. At the time of the interview he was the Managing Director of the Industrial Promotion Services in Kenya. The IPS has been established by the present Aga Khan to promote industrial expansion in East Africa and elsewhere, including India and Pakistan, which will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

So far we have examined the process of Ismaili migration to East Africa within the context of the political and social conditions of the time. The case histories of Ismaili pioneer traders which have been recorded in detail reflect the present status of the society. We have observed that Ismailis are a corporate group with an internal system of social and political organisation. They are a compact social entity with a remarkable degree of solidarity. They have a singularly different structure from the other Indian communities since they are, in the first instance, a religious community. As a Muslim group they espouse an ideology which cuts across all racial boundaries. Yet their doctrine is exclusive in as much as it includes the institution of the living Imam which is not shared by the other Muslims.

Let us return to some important details regarding Asian settlement in East Africa since the end of the last century. From 1890 onwards, the importance of Zanzibar declined with the expansion of colonial development into the interior. Kenya was proclaimed under the British 'sphere of influence' and Tanganyika was taken over by the Germans. Both Zanzibar and Uganda were declared British Protectorates since the British East Africa Company handed over the administration of Uganda to

the British Government in 1893. The Government of India was encouraged to send migrants to settle as agriculturists in British and German East Africa [28]. But in 1899, during his first visit to Zanzibar and Bagamoyo in East Africa, the Aga Khan III faced disagreement from the various colonial governments over obtaining the land rights for his followers. He advised his settled community to spread out into different towns on the coast and hinterland as traders [29]. On his second extensive tour of East Africa in 1905, he visited Nairobi, Mombasa and Zanzibar, appointing three of his more established followers as official leaders of the community giving them power of attorney [30]. He also supervised the compilation of a code of laws binding on the members of his community. These constitutional developments separated the dissenting members i.e. the Khoja Ithna'asheris who had seceded from the Khoja Ismailis, thus enabling them to bring about some important organisational changes within the latter, his community [31]. Hence, in 1924, the Chief Justice sitting in a High Court in Tanganyika noted that the Ismaili Khoja "had established a distinctive political and social organisation for theselves, and had never been absorbed in the general body of Muslims" [32]. Their distinctiveness as a religious community came to be recognised by other communities and by the British authority who had then obtained Tanganyika from the hands of the Germans at the end of the First World War.

Ismailis emerged as a corporate group in the consequent period of adjustment to East African conditions and formed a major group within the Indian Muslims of East Africa, though they were merely a fraction of the Indian population as a whole. However, under the colonial policy, there was the tendency on the part of the administration to treat the entire Indian population, in all the three countries of East Africa, as if Indians formed a single, homogeneous community. Incidentally, this happened even in 1972 when all 'Asians' were expelled from Uganda by General Idi Amin. The knowledge of the officials had been limited and they had paid little attention to the fundamental differences between the various Indian communities. "Since the Ismaili

community was already the most organised of all, and since its consciousness of its own distinct identity, on account of its religious doctrines, was most pronounced, and since, again, the prestige and influence of the Aga Khan with the British government put him to a very strong bargaining position, the Ismailis were naturally the first to protest, and showed the most determined resistance, notes Aziz Esmail in early 1972, in his Ph.D. thesis on Satpanth Ismailism [33]. Common schools for all Indians were to be set up in the 1920's. Advisory committees consisting of government officials and Indian nominees were also set up in East African territories. The Ismailis clearly backed out from such proposals for common schools and the Aga Khan wrote to Sir James Doboulay, Viceroy of India on 8th March, 1912, explaining that there were "real and historical causes that make my people in Africa insist on 'separatism'. They will not want any grant for their schools from Government, but they will not go to mixed schools, either" [33].

Another point on which the Ismailis opposed British colonial policy was on the latter's proposal for the establishment of the communal property for Indians in 1924. Ismailis over the years had developed a highly systematic organisation which made them detach themselves from the other Indian communities and the British had to negotiate directly with the Aga Khan who was at the top of the bureaucratic organisation of his community. The distinctions between the various Indian communities on one hand and Ismailis on the other became more and more conspicuous. Several observers have noted that Aga Khan schools, which eventually received grants, maintained impressive and commendable standards [34]. Certain institutions such as Chambers of Commerce and a number of advisory boards functioned on all-Indian basis on which individual Ismailis were appointed but unity in other aspects became implausible. These Ismailis never voiced their opinion as a collective whole. Morris notes that "the other Indians in East Africa have watched this development guided by the wisdom and experience of a very great man indeed, with a mixture of envy and

horror and the Hindus and other Muslims alike have attempted, for the most part unsuccessfully, to copy the organisation in their own caste and sectarian communities" [35]. Ismailis were politically organised if 'political' means an organisation which is concerned with the establishment and maintenance of internal co-operation and external independence [36].

In 1926, the late Aga Khan advised Ismailis to quit Zanzibar and the coast and settle into the mainland Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda and even the Congo where trade was free from competition. In his third visit in 1937, his main advice was to emigrate to rural areas and give up the luxury of urban life. In his visit in 1945-1946, he advised Ismailis to move to the new trading centres which were opening up in the hinterland rather than crowd in few towns and through messages which he sent frequently in 1950, his suggestions to those not doing too well, were to move to the Belgian Congo. This caused large and joint families to break down and younger members began to open up new branches of the main family concerns. Ismaili community thus extended beyond East Africa, into the Congo, West Africa, Madagascar, Central and South Africa.

We have briefly outlined the pattern of settlement of the Ismailis in East Africa up to about the middle of the twnetieth century and in the following chapter we shall examine various social changes in many other fields not dealt with here. It must be remembered, however, that although the colonial policies posed a threat to their sense of identity, their ideational system which so far was confined to doctrinal matters, was not translated into a social reality by effective organisation.

We shall now consider some important features of the Asian community of East Africa. Indian citizens can generally be divided into two main categories, the Hindus and the Muslims. But in East Africa, where religious, ideological, racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, communal, tribal and political factors all complicate the scene, it is not surprising that a minority group such

as the Ismailis have been classified in a variety of ways.

Asian claims and aspirations of the time are aptly viewed in the British Survey which was carried out on Racial Problems In Africa (1957). It reports that as so often happens, many Hindus demand "the spiritual right to be loyal to Mother India", and at the same time they "demand full citizenship in the country where they have settled to work ... the Muslims", it continues, "especially the Aga Khan's community are much less prone to this attitude". However, despite this distinction between the Ismailis and the other Asian immigrants, the former very often are, broadly classified as 'Asians' [37]. As early as 1949, an Ismaili who sat on the Select Committee on Indian Education had insisted that the word 'Indian' should not be used for Muslims after the Indo-Pak partition which took place in 1947 [38]. Consequently, the term 'Asian' was officially used in the Kenya Population Census of 1962 as already mentioned earlier, denoting persons originating from the sub-continent of India or Pakistan or Goa. It is interesting to note that on the same census schedules of 1962 a substantial number of Ismailis described themselves only as such, and their classification as either Indians or Pakistanis was largely a matter of guesswork. Similarly, in the case of the Goans, a Roman Catholic Christian Asian community, many persons of Goan origin had become citizens of India since the occupation of Goa by India. For these Goans to have to classify themselves as 'Indians' was contrary to their own cultural and social identity. Thus, it became clear that sociologically the most important sub-division of the Asian community as a whole is based on religion, and not on whether they could be described as Indians or Pakistanis. Moreover, by 1962, in Kenya some two-thirds of the Asians were born in East Africa. They could not be classified as Indians or Pakistanis, in a strict sense. Ismailis are only a minority against the Hindus if not against other Islamic or Muslim sects among the Asians, but "they have invested their money and their faith in East Africa, not in India or Pakistan" [39]. This is entirely because they were constantly reminded by the Aga Khan III of particularly, their Islamic

tradition and civic obligations to live a "Western material life based on Islamic spiritual principles". In matters of adaptation and the changing climate of the country, the Ismailis have been guided by the last four Imams towards complete adaptation. On an important occasion, that of his coronation or the Installation Ceremony (called Takht-nashim) in 1957, the forty-ninth Imam, the present Aga Khan, addressed the Ismailis in Nairobi "Our faith keeps us a united community. This is essential to our spiritual welfare. But in every other way you must remember that you are citizens of Kenya. It is to this government that you owe allegiance" [40]. Similar advice has been repeated in Uganda and Tanzania as well as other parts of Africa by the recent Ismaili Imams.

This chapter on the dynamics of migration and settlement cannot be concluded without drawing a comparison between the Ismailis and other Indian or Asian immigrant communities in East Africa in an overall sociological context. So far we have noted that the Asians of East Africa were roughly divided into two main groups, i.e. the Hindu and the Muslim. In the former, the basic pattern of traditional attitudes in social relationships was to a large extent retained, though social organisation in terms of the classical caste-structure as in India, was not strictly observed owing to special East African circumstances rendering such conformity impossible. Traditionalism among the Hindus was to be found in matters ranging from dress, diet, language on one hand to kinship, marriage rules, relgious values, on the others. We shall first take some specific examples of a few Hindu communal groups to illustrate this point:

The Patidars (or Patels) by far the largest Hindu community in East Africa, adopted certain secular ideals based on western criteria. But the close kinship and other ties they had with India, in common with other Hindus, compelled them to maintain certain affinity with the caste or village system upheld there. Moreover, the Patidars never pursued economic gain or other secular aims as a community. The extenf of communal organisation among them, as among other Hindus too, was limited to township boundaries and no overall institutional network,

linking the various Patidars in different areas of the country, existed. Their organisation was largely based on the kinship and village system prevalent among them in India and they scrupulously followed the principle of village exogamy. Their language was Gujerati and they were mainly engaged in trade and commerce.

Another Gujerati group, the Lohanas, tried harder to break themselves free from the limiting influence of traditional outlook and organisation, and to develop institutions which would cater for their altered needs in the new environment. First of all, they were the only Gujerari-speaking Hindu group who worshipped Rama as opposed to Krishna. They failed to establish institutions of the type the Ismailis had formed, though some richer members had "hoped to make use of the contributions and savings of the whole community in the same way as the Shia Imami Ismaili insurance and finance companies" [41]. This also related to their failure to form a united community organised on the whole East African basis, although a well-known and prosperous family called the Madhvanis had nearly established a whole settlement near Jinja, in Uganda and had undertaken major industrial projects in the development and economy of Uganda thus mobilising a large number of Hindus, mainly Lohanas and other groups. Recently they offered bursaries and scholarships to successful candidates through their financing foundation they had established.

The Banias (Vanias or Vaniks) and Jains were of a somewhat higher caste-stratum and were mainly Gujerati-speakers but a few spoke Hindustani or Hindi among them. They had an intricate system of further sub-divisions and in local East African papers, especially in Nairobi, one read various advertisements from the dasa or the Visa Oshwal groups of Vanias (Banias), seeking suitable marriage partners. Moreover, the two language groups, namely Gujerati and Hindi did not intermarry. In Nairobi and Mombasa the Jains and the Banias had their strong-hold and often were recognizable by their most common surnames like Shah, Mehta, Seth, Lal etc.

There were also a few other minority groups among the Hindus like the Brahmanic ones, identifiable by surnames like Vyas, Sharma, Purohit, Joshi and others. There were a few craftsmen categorised within the

Jajmani system in Hinduism consisting of tailors, barbers, clerks, shoe-makers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths etc. with surnames like Mistry, Parmar, Jessa, Somani, Barot, Soni, Solanki, Sidpra, Clarke, Govind etc. Finally, there were some regional or linguistic groups like the Mārāthis, Madrasīs, Bengalīs, Punjabīs (including the Hindu and Muslim groups in this category), Sindhis, Suratis, Kāthiawādis.

A fairly large communal group, which is neither Hindu nor Muslim, was that of the Sikhs, who mainly spoke Punjabi and learnt their own script called 'Gūrmūkhi'. The men wore turbans and had unshorn hair and women wore khūrta, a tunic and soft trousers. They were talented craftsmen and successfully took up building, designing or contractors' jobs and in recent times were most likely to take up various courses in engineering, mechanics, designing etc. although they also joined some other professions. They were divided into two groups, the Rāmgharīās and Jāts. The Sikhs were particularly noticeable because of their rigid adherence to the customary manner of dressing.

Another non-Hindu community was that of the Pārsees who were Zoroastrians by religion and spoke their own dialect of Gujerati and celebrated certain Persian festivals, as they had some cultural links with Iran. They were a tiny minority and were highly skilled and a professional group employed as teachers, solicitors, chartered accountants, managerial and administrative staff. They had adopted a fair amount of Western ideals and had developed a modern outlook. Parsee women were highly emancipated and usually had some form of a career.

Yet another non-Hindu community which really adopted Western culture were a group of Roman Catholics called the Goans. However, with regard to the important institution of marriage, they conformed strictly to traditional requirements [42]. Strangely enough, they were sub-divided into two main groups, the Brahmanic type of caste-system and the tailors at the other end and had two separate clubs called the Goan Institute and St. Xaviers' or the Tailor Club in the main town centres of East Africa. Some of the Goans spoke Konkani but others had no other language except English. They were skilled and semi-skilled, found in the teaching profession or worked as bank clerks, stewards,

chefs etc. Goans did not systematically follow the ideal of secular progress as an ethically desirable end in itself, as the Ismailis did, at the same time preserving their religious affiliations.

We now come to the main Muslim category of Asians with its intricate system of sub-divisions. It must, however, be noted that most of the Asian Muslim communal groups had migrated to East Africa with a view to permanent settlement and could hardly have expected to return to their country of origin, i.e. India before the partition in 1947. Their position in India was far from that of a settled community with the domination of caste values, which under-rated and excluded all those who were adherents of Islam as a whole. Muslims, as is well-known, are divided into two main streams. The Shia and the Sunni Ismailis, Ithna'asheris and Bohrās are in the Shia branch of the faith and the rest are Sunnis, except the Ahmedias or Ahmadiyyas whose position is difficult to define.

About the Ithna'asheris, Hollister comments that the Mujtāhids, their religious leaders: "... appear to be bound to the past, not less than the Sunni 'Ulama; almost oblivious of onflowing currents in an advancing world" [43]. Morris notes, the Ithna-asheris in East Africa, like those in India, "have always resisted the formation of effective centralised institutions" [44]. The reader might recall that the Shia Khoja Ithna-asheris of India and East Africa were a breakaway sect from the branch of Shia Imami Ismailis, as has been explained in the second chapter in this thesis. After dissenting from the Ismaili sect, the Ithna-asheris had tried to re-establish a new identity with the Persian Shias but had met with little success because of the language and cultural barrier that exists between the Khoja Shias from India and their Persian counter-parts of this Twelver, or Twelve Imami sect. Ithna-asheris observe the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam-Husein at Kerbala in Iraq, during the month of Muharram, with a great deal of involvement. No other Muslims (Ismailis included), participate with them. Moreover, Shia Ithna-asheris tend to regard the first three of the four Caliphs who succeeded Muhammad (viz. Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman),

with a certain amount of scorn. Ismailis (whose recent Imams, and particularly the third Aga Khan, had always advocated Pan-Islamic ideals), cannot but keep aloof from the Shia Ithna-asheris for their extreme practices. In about the last three decades the Ithna-asheris had established their own primary and junior secondary schools in Kampala, especially to enhance religious education for their children, and admitted no others except members of their own faith. These schools had to close down in the post-independence period on the grounds of being exclusivist. Ismaili or Aga Khan schools, on the other hand, continued to thrive and in fact increased in numbers, since they had already begun to admit children of all races and denominations since the early 1950's, as an outcome of Evian Conference when some major constitutional changes had taken place within the community.

The next Shia group, the Bohras are organised as a relatively more corporate group, but in their case again, "... a deeply ingrained element of traditionalism acted as a powerful brake on any movement towards an effective breakthrough in the direction of moderisation and in the introduction of changes in their value-system. It was this refractory nature of the community that provoked vigorous outbursts of dissatisfaction from its younger members" [45]. The younger members of the Bohra community have recently shown a certain amount of scepticism about the role of Dai-ul-Mutlaq, their overall leader. In fact, during the late 1960's the Tanzania Government had banned the visits of the Bohra religious leader who otherwise resides in Bombay and is regarded as a representative of and in communion with their hidden Imam, as the title Dai-ul-Mutlaq suggests. Hollister reports that the young Bohras "want to abolish the custom of giving expensive caste dinners on the occasion of marriages and funerals ... they shave their faces clean ... they adopt the Western style of dress, which is most unusual among their people ... they wish to establish hospitals, high schools and other instituions for the uplift and progress of the community" [46]. This reforming group, however, has remained a minority in the community and owing to the strength of a traditional element in their leadership, has been largely unsuccessful in achieving its aims. Bohras had split from the main branch of the

Ismaili Shia group during the Imamat of al-Mustansir, the eighteenth Ismaili Imam, as has already been discussed in a previous chapter.

The Ahmedias, or Ahmediyyas, is a very small sect in East Africa which alone proselytizes and has a few African converts. The Sunni Asian Muslims who have certain ties with West Pakistan through Punjabi and Urdu culture, do not accept their ideology and recently they have been banned as a free religious group in their homeland, i.e. West Pakistan where they had their leadership embodied in the person of a Caliph or Khalifa. Some of the Asian Ahmediyyas, the writer has known in Uganda and Kenya were of Punjabi and Urdu cultural and linguistic origin and were a semi-professional class and quite well to do. Because of their different interpretation of Islam they remained more in the background but occasionally became known as an active force through their zeal expressed in their various religious publications, yet one hardly knew them as a distinguishable separate social group.

The Sunnis, the last of the Asian Muslim groups, lacked even the rudiments of a type of organisation as comparable to that of the Ismailis. The Asian group of this larger branch of Sunni, rather than Shia Muslims, followed Hanāfi law whereas the Arabs and the Bantu African Muslims such as the Baganda followed Shāfi'ite school of law. Among the Asian Sunni groups who were mostly Punjabi-speakers, there was a small group of Sunni Memons who spoke Cutchi, a dialect of Sindhi.

It is interesting to note that the late Aga Khan III in particular, was a fervent advocate of 'Pan-Islamism' which was a non-political movement 'Itehād-I-Islām' which means cultural, religious and economic union between all Muslim peoples. In 1905, he called a meeting of Muslims in Uganda and met Prince Nuhu Mbogo, the traditional leader of African Muslims. In 1937, he called a Round Table Conference and tried to formulate some kind of unity among various Muslim groups and donated a large sum of money but this attempt failed in integrating all Muslims so in 1945 another Conference was called in Mombasa when delegates of all Muslim sects were called and were urged to re-consider the re-organisation of the Muslims and he offered equal grant for that raised by the delegates

and their supporters. Branches of East African Muslim Welfare Society were established in Mombasa, Nairobi, Kisumu in Kenya; Kampala, Jinja, Masaka, Mbale, Fort Portal, Soroti, in Uganda; Dar-es-salaam, Moshi, Tanga, Dodoma, Lindi, Singida, Kigoma in Tanzania. Asian Muslims, because of wealth and education, were predominant in EAMWS's activities and projects. Their functions included tabl̄ig (preaching), building of mosques, maintenance of Qu'rān teachers, establishment of schools. Kibuli Mosque, Primary School and Teacher Training College in Kampala, Jamiyya Mosque in Tanga and Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education (MIOME), which was a Technical College in Kenya are a few examples of the outcome of EAMWS's objectives. In 1954, EAMWS sent a delegation of Muslim leaders to West Africa for closer association and reported to the Aga Khan at Evian les Bains, in France. Recently, in 1966, the present Aga Khan in a visit to Makerere College in Uganda urged the Muslim students there, and more specifically his own followers, to work in a climate of harmony, for the traditional sectarian differences, he said, were fast becoming archaic and irrelevant. Using a vivid phrase he advised those present, not to "rub salt into historical wounds" when there was an urgent need for change in the present era [47].

Having considered the position of the Ismailis in a wider cultural perspective and having related this to other social groups in East Africa, especially within the Asian social field, one might raise an important question. What were the distinctive facts about the Ismailis which impelled them to modernise their way of life, in contrast with other Indian communities?

In this chapter we have attempted to examine the position of the Ismailis within a cultural and structural framework, placing them adjacent to a number of minority groups. Moreover, we have discussed the structural pattern of the community, at the same time viewing it in a changing phase of development and settlement, starting right from the very nature of Ismaili migration into East Africa and their particular adaptation and adjustment to the new political and social environment. In the next chapter, we shall examine the social intricacies within the

Ismaili society and their various social institutions in a greater depth, in an organisational framework.

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C H A P T E R V

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

As an anthropologist, namely Fortes, has pointed out to us, any structural changes in a society should be viewed at two main levels, namely at the 'domestic' level and at the level of 'politico-jural' domain.[1] Hence, in this chapter we shall consider the family pattern of the Ismaili society and how it has changed, together with its effects on the social structure of the whole society within the time-span which has been selected in this thesis. We shall also consider the basis of innovation and the nature of the society's in-built leadership which has provided the members with an impetus to change without letting it lose the core of its beliefs and doctrinal values.

As we have already seen, the migration to East Africa took place in the late half of the last and the early half of this century when a few individuals, such as members of large families, left the Indian sub-continent because of socio-economic factors which offered them hope of a better future abroad. Only one member, preferably a young man, was at first encouraged by his family to seek his fortune in the new country. While he was away this member generally left his dependents (wife and children) under the care of his other kinsmen in the particular joint family unit to which he belonged. Often he worked at first as an apprentice in East Africa in the trading concern already started by an experienced Ismaili or other Asian capitalist. As time went on, the young apprentice was able to learn more about trade and set up his own independent business. A few years later, he was able to call his immediate relative, i.e. his wife or a brother, to join him. Soon one or more brothers joined in with their wives to follow. In course of time, the old parents too left for East Africa, unlike some of the other Asians, namely Hindu families who reckoned on having spiritual ties with 'Mother India' and regarded the crossing of the seas as an act of profanity, an act which the older members were reluctant to commit [2]. Since the Aga Khan III, during his Imamat, advised his followers to migrate permanently to other countries including Indonesia, Burma, when possible all the other family members

left for these countries, depending upon what sources they had already built and how well they could settle there. The family estate was then sold off back 'at home' and the money utilised in the travelling fares. In some cases, a portion of the extended family set up one or more satellite family unit leaving the old and the more established members behind. This gave rise to the growth of several nuclear families dispersed into various units, but nevertheless, sharing the same family estate and socio-cultural identity in Indo-Pak. As the economic conditions manifested through flood or famine, became more oppressive, the main estate in Indo-Pak could no longer support all these separate units, least of all the ones abroad. Moreover, the migrants soon began to prosper in the new countries in the small scale trade they began to establish, which remained their main occupation for some time to come. With the increase of famine and other adverse economic and political conditions which the rest of the members had to face in the 'homeland' it was wiser for them to join the migrant in his new enterprise, provided they could supply the manpower and assist him in the running of the business and not be a burden to him. Those who could soon joined the migrant and the rest of the established members found it less burdensome to share out the remaining property, as the size of the family had by then decreased considerably. The result was that the same family now had two or more estates, one at 'home', another in their adoptive country.

It would be quite appropriate here to discuss the nature of Asian families, particularly with reference to East Africa. Desai has defined Hindu joint family as one consisting of: "a man and his descending generations, or brothers and their descending generations, with unmarried women born into the unit and others recruited by marriage" [3]. He further explains that a joint family may be divided into two or more domestic groups spread over in different towns or villages in both India and East Africa. A joint family becomes an extended one when it includes affines of a particular male member, or a widowed daughter or sister's children joining in to form a single domestic group.

An Asian family in the early East Africa was not only a business owning unit but also a managing unit. When a family first started a business, it utilised the potential labour power of all its members; women were included in this labour force. The outsiders were employed to do the most menial or the very specialised skilled labour, which the family could not provide from within its own resources. As the business expanded, the family members began to occupy the managerial positions at the top level only. But primarily, a family business started on the basis of providing activity in which all its adult male members and a few female members in some cases, could find a gainful occupation. Thus a man would often start a business with the help of his brothers or sons (and their wives, if possible) rather than choose an efficient business partner from outside the 'boundaries' of his joint or extended family. Similar pattern of family business enterprise was found in almost all Asian communal groups, Ismailis included.

The Aga Khan III gave special advice to his followers to look upon these countries as their new home. This discouraged the members from returning to the already overcrowded estate in the pre-independent India, their place of origin. Instead of looking upon the share in the resources which were scanty anyway, the migrant members, on the other hand, were in a position to offer new resources to the rest of the family members. As the firmāns became more emphatic on migration to East Africa, more people left India (which also included the present Pakistan). Thus the Ismailis began to form large units in East Africa and with the increase in their numbers their corporateness became more evident. The formation of a substantial Ismaili community resulted in the establishment of separate jamāts (community centres) in the towns where they settled, and soon the Jamāt Khāna became the centre of the social unit, providing them with the basis of socio-cultural, religious and welfare activities for its members.

The institute of jamāt Khāna serves a dual purpose. It is a place for prayer as well as a hall where the Ismailis gather for a highly institutionalised community life. The two officials, the Mukhī and the Kāmadia, have ritual as well as socio-political status, in the sense

that they can exercise moral and social sanctions on the members of the particular Jamāt by being the very representatives of the community. It must, however, be remembered that the Mukhi and the Kāmadiā are not regarded as the 'vicar' of the Imam, as is so often misgiven by casual observers who have been tempted to compare Ismaili system with Christian doctrine. Ismailis and for that matter, Islam, has no priesthood as such initially.

As more people arrived in Zanzibar, the need was felt to move into the hinterlands. Since the beginning of this century the firmāns emphasised emigration to the interior. Greater stress was laid on accepting the country as 'home', and the jamāts were told to explore every possibility of settling in East Africa on a permanent basis. As early as 1908, the Aga Khan III advised his followers to fight for a civilised, urbanised life. "If in fighting for the cause, death was the result, there was heroic dignity in trying", he declared [4]. They were encouraged to love Africa and to consider Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar as their 'home'. Thus, the Ismailis were soon in the process of development in a style which was, as the late Aga Khan described it, "European-African". To have retained Asiatic outlook in language, habits, clothing was a complication and socially a deadweight of archaism in the Africa of the future. Another writer observes that the Ismailis today are "... the epitome of Western culture in an Asian milieu, in the image of Hindus and conservative Indian Muslims" [6]. This statement leaves out the African element in the social character of the Ismailis, since they have played the most active role also in the welfare of African Muslims through the establishment of East African Muslim Welfare Society (EAMWS). Ismailis have been known to have made numerous other positive attempts towards promoting a multi-racial society in East Africa, by actually offering their exclusively communal schools (and hospitals) to Africans in the last twenty years, without attaching any religious obligations, as in similar denominational schools owned by the Christian sector of the East African Society. No doubt the Ismailis initially had to build their own commun-al schools like most

other Asian communities, and the British had declared their interests at the time as of 'paramount importance to the welfare of the natives' [7].

At the same time, in the 1920's East African Asians were declared as second-rate citizens because of conflicting interests of the white settlers, especially in Kenya Colony. The decision to stay permanently and the attempts made to contribute to the indigenous population by identifying with them and standing for their rights have earned the Ismailis epithets like 'a pace-making group' and 'the most progressive sect in Islam' etc. These have been given to them by scores of writers. The reader is referred to H.S. Morris, J.S. Trimingham, J.N.D. Anderson, L.W. Hollingsworth, George Delf, for details. As a final example of the Ismaili allegiance to East Africa, it might not be inappropriate to mention here that since independence in all the three major East African countries, Ismailis have been the only Asian group who have acquired the new citizenship in the independent and decolonised East Africa. This might necessitate to point out the case in Uganda, where the events of 1972 have somewhat altered the status of Ismaili and other Asian citizens, since at one stage, all Asians including the Ugandan passport-holders were asked to leave by General Idi Amin, within three months preceding November, 1972.

Reverting to the early stages of migration to East Africa, we should note that out of a small number of Ismaili families grew a sizeable society of modern East Africa with a marked degree of organisation. Ismailis are noted for their highly intricate social and administrative system which sets them apart from any other similar groups. In 1924, Chief Justice sitting in the High Court in Tanganyika noted that "the Ismaili Khoja ... had established a distinctive political and social organisation for themselves and had never been absorbed in the general body of Muslims" [8]. The dual position of Ismailis as a socially distinct group and as part of the larger Muslim community is an important one to understand first.

We shall call the process of settlement of the Ismailis in East Africa 'de-Indianisation', 'pro-westernisation' or 'modernisation' since their traditional mode of life had first of all to be adjusted

to the new requirements. For instance, a communal religious or familial feast is an old practice among the Asians on the whole. This practice was discouraged as financially a harmful one, and the Indian sentiment of commensality which Ismailis also held, was abandoned or at least minimised. There are several examples of de-Indianisation in the Ismaili community. They also changed their mode of dress almost radically and the unity of their faith enabled them to regard all their members as part of a large religious family unified on the basis of their beliefs and ideology. They regarded the Imam as their 'spiritual father and mother' in a doctrinal sense whose guidance they followed as a charter of their faith.

The jamāt Khāna became the medium of communication, and its attendance was made compulsory for the community officials too. It was a secularised centre as well as a place of worship. As noted earlier, Spencer Trimingham has called the Ismailis "... the most highly organised Muslim community in East Africa" [9]. The organisation of the Ismaili community into a system of administrative councils and into a social system which placed the utmost possible stress on education, on commercial and industrial developments, on the emancipation of women and on social welfare including health and housing, was carried out mainly through the guidance and leadership of the late Aga Khan, especially during this crucial period of settlement.

One of the most outstanding features of the religious system of the Ismailis which has set them apart from other groups is expressed within the realm of rites and practices of the community. The fundamental place of the Imamat in their doctrinal system has been stressed sufficiently. But the most significant feature in an institutional sense, that of the existence of the jamāt khāna, has not been discussed in detail yet. The collective consciousness of individual Ismailis is expressed and shared within this significant institution, that of the jamāt khāna. The practices like du'a, ginans, firmāns, dasond, etc. are all elements of the Ismaili belief system and are associated with the existence of the jamāt khāna, wherever Ismailis have settled in some numbers.

A jamāt khānā in a definite sense, is the vital centre of development of religious, and a distinct social identity of the Ismailis. The first Khoja Ismaili jamāt khānā, as it has already been mentioned in the historical chapter, was established in Sindh in India by Pir Sadardin. Later Justics Arrould had mentioned the existence of jamāt Khānās where Ismailis met regularly twice a day to say prayers and perform their religious rites [10]. Yet another writer explains the significance of the jamāt khānās "... remind us of the Fatimid House of Wisdom in which their Majlises were held and although we do not hear of any such institutions among the Assassins of Alamūt we shall not be very wrong to consider the Jamā'at Khanas made in imitation of those. The Fatimid House of Wisdom existed side by side with the orthodox Mosques and they as well as the Jamā'at Khanas remind us of the earliest Mosques founded by the Prophet in Medina which were used not only for prayers but meetings, transactions with the non-Muslims, receiving ambassadors, treatment of believers wounded in battle etc." [11]

From being the nucleus if religious and social life, the jamāt khānā evolved into a centre where their multifarious institutions and activities converged. Over the course of years, as the Ismailis have made social progress, an important component of their value-system, that of secular progress, and as they have developed an efficient network of schools, hospitals and welfare projects, the jamāt khānā has become an important centre of information where new ideas and adjustments are constantly instilled into the members of the community. This way the Ismailis remain up-to-date with their achievements and compare their activities with those of fellow Ismailis in other areas. Moreover, guidance and advice from the Imam is often sent in the form of telegrams and detailed letters or through leading delegates concerning specific issues who make speeches in the jamāt khānā on topical events and explain Imam's views on various issues and current matters. When the Imam personally visits his followers, he always gives further guidance to them and speaks to them in the jamāt khānās of the particular towns or major city in the country he happens to be visiting. The vital and multi-purposive role of the jamāt khānā in the religious and social life

of the Ismailis should be borne in mind in understanding social institutions and interpersonal relationships within this community living in East Africa and other areas of the world.

Let us examine the function of a jamāt Khānā in the Ismaili society and view it primarily as a social institution in a small community living in a certain area. The jamāt Khānā literally means the 'house of congregation' in the Khoja place of worship. A typical jamāt Khānā consists of two halls, or one large hall sub-divided into two parts, one for the men and the other for the women; However, the two parts of jamāt Khānā are not really separated from one another. The lighting in the jamāt Khānā is bright and decorative on festive occasions. Some very low tables called the pāts are placed against the walls for things such as flowers, candles or food offerings to be placed on them. A few photographs of the Aga Khan may be found on the walls. Sometimes between the men's and the women's hall or near the entrance is to be found a large throne with the photograph of His Highness the Aga Khan placed on the cushion. This is called the takht and is a symbolic reminder of the Imam's religious authority and presence. The ceremonies in the jamāt Khānā are presided over by two people known as the Mukhī and the Kamadiā. They sit side by side facing the jamāt or congregation while the religious service is in progress, and in front of them is a low table on which food offerings etc. are placed. The Mukhī and Kamadiā are replaced periodically, normally about every two years, by new ones selected by the Aga Khan himself from names proposed to him by the retiring pair. The floor of the jamāt Khānā is covered by matting or carpets, with a long rug down the middle which leads to the Mukhī's and Kamadiā's seats. Usually jamāt Khānās have large windows with heavy curtains, electric lighting or chandeliers and fans. In large towns there may be one chief jamāt Khānā among several subsidiary ones, called the Darkhānā, which literally means the Imam's residence. There are many smaller, subsidiary jamāt Khānās beside the main Darkhānā in Mombasa, Nairobi, Dar-es-salaam, etc., the major cities of East Africa as used to be the case in Kampala as well.

We shall now follow events through a typical evening at a jamāt Khānā. It is one of the most important articles of the Ismaili faith that all Ismailis should attend the jamāt Khānā daily except in very special and difficult circumstances. The Ismailis pray three times a day - at dawn, sunset and at night and these three prayers are obligatory. They are to be said, preferably, in congregation, in the jamāt Khānās except in case of illness or unavoidable circumstances. In the case of one not being able to reach the jamāt Khānā, through business or travel, it is incumbent on one to say the prayers at the prescribed times wherever one may be, whether in the shop or office, the train or plan, thus advises the Imam. Activity in the jamāt Khānā begins a little before sunset, when gīnāns (devotional songs) are recited by children, women and men alike as people begin to arrive. Then comes the first prayer. The time of the prayer is fixed but may differ in various places. In Kampala recently it was 6.50 p.m. After the Du'ā, or first prayer, is completed, each worshipper shakes hands with the two followers sitting on either side of him as a gesture of religious brotherhood. After the Du'ā comes the short tasbīh. The Mukhī recites a number of prayers in Gujarati or Kutchi, the two most widely spoken languages of the Ismailis in East Africa, for the forgiveness of sins, healing of afflictions and pain, granting of supplication, increase of faith and humility in the heart, worldly and spiritual prosperity etc. The worshippers then turn over the beads of the rosary silently, calling out to themselves 'O Ali, O Muhammad'. The Mukhī then concludes the short tasbīh. After this the congregation stands up for a long tasbīh. This time more supplications are made, again in Gujarati or Kutchi. It is recited by any member of the congregation, man, woman or an older child, whoever is designated to carry it out and is summoned to do so by the Mukhī. After the conclusion of the tasbīh, which sometimes contains the zīkr or zīkar, chanting of some attribute of Allah, the congregation sits down again. If the Executive Council or the Mukhī in a small scale jamāt Khānā has received any message or any telegram or letter

of blessings for the followers from the Aga Khan, it is read first and is then followed by a ginān for the occasion. If there are no such messages, any other ginān is recited. On some evenings the firmāns of the Imam are read instead of, or as well as, the gināns. After this is completed, local announcements about coming events, coming festivals, as well as programmes in the schools, hostels or sports clubs, various health clinics, vaccination campaigns or other social events regarding entertainments, general meetings of various committees etc. are made. On some evenings circulars from various councils - local, district, provincial or territorial - regarding organisation of community affairs, welfare projects and so on, may be read. After this comes the second Du'ā which is recited in exactly the same way as the first one.

On certain days 'Ābe safā' or holy water is prepared where each worshipper drinks from a cupful of water laid on a tray which is replenished ontinually. Any volunteers may be asked to serve the Abe safā, otherwise known as niyaz. In addition to this ceremony there is one called Du'ā karāvavi which may be performed on entering or leaving the mosque. The worshipper goes to the Mukhi or Kāmadia, offers a piece of coin as a sign of devotion to the Imam, joins his hands in an attitude of repentance and silently asks for forgiveness, then shakes hands with the Mukhi, who blesses him on behalf of the Imam. The ceremony is offered to express repentance for any form of ill deed or fault committed during the day. The worshippers may also offer a few pieces of coin in the plate on the table beside the vessel containing the holy water which is being served in another part of the jamāt Khāna by any worshipper called upon to carry out this duty of serving it to the Jamāt or congregation, since Ismailism does not have any priesthood to authorise the performance of various rites and all members are considered capable of performing any of these rites. Besides offering of money is not obligatory - it is purely a voluntary action. The money collected in various ways in the jamāt Khāna goes to the communal treasury, the funds of which are used for charitable purposes and contribute towards the cost of maintenance of the

jamāt Khānās. Food is voluntarily offered as a sign of devotion to the Imam. It is then bought by those worshippers who wish to do so, and the money collected is the sign of devotion on the part of those who have contributed it, and is used for charitable purposes. The contributions are used for the welfare of the whole community, "the upkeep of the jama'at khānas and their staff, setting up Ismailis in business and provision of houses for their members", etc. [12]

We shall now consider the composition of a jamāt and its various structural components in terms of status-role. We have mentioned the Mukhī and the Kāmadiā who are appointed by the Imam approximately every two years. Besides officiating in the jamāt Khāna every evening, their presence at wedding ceremonies or funerary rites is also essential. Mukhī and Kāmadia represent ritual and social leadership in matters of community tasks and ceremonies. Other administrative leaders are the Council members and various title-holders who denote social status. The latter are only appoihted by the Imam to create a class of rank-holders in return for their devotion and services to him and to the community. The hierarchy of the Council system will be explained later in the chapter. There is a group of what can be called the Wa'azin, or the 'missionaries', who are not leaders of the community: "... they are acquainted with the inner doctrine ... who go around visiting local groups ... and do not proselytise other Muslims" [13]. In every large town there is usually an al-wa'az residing there, whose main function is to explain the religious faith to the jamāts in that district or run evening classes for school children in religious education. Sometimes they travel from place to place giving talks in several towns. The religious talk, somewhat like a sermon, which they preach is called the Wā'az and the person giving it is called the Al Wā'az. In every jamāt khāna there is also a group of volunteer workers whose main task is that of orderlies. Their task is to organise and maintain discipline and sitting arrangements in the jamāt khāna, to serve the ābe safā, to mind the shoes downstairs (as these are removed before entering the halls of the jamāt khāna), and

so on. The volunteers are divided into several categories. For instance, some may be in charge of keeping the premises tidy and seeing that the car-parking is well organised. Thus they may be divided into various sub-committees like the safai, or cleanliness committee or parking committee and so on. Each jamat has its own network of special workers who help every Ismaili family at various occasions like the burial, feats, etc. These are called the mayyat gusal, or the burial committee, the randhan (cookery) or caterers' committee, dramatic or entertainment committee etc. The special randhan group is responsible for preparing the meal on the occasion of a major annual feast to celebrate the Imamat Day, which is the day of installation of the Imam, when the whole jamat partake of a meal. In some jamats there is a small library and a book depot where religious books and periodicals, as well as others, may be borrowed or bought. Thus there will be a librarian or a Committee appointed for this task. In each of the three major towns of East Africa the jamats have their own printing press which publishes current Ismaili news bulletins, the Imamat Day or other souvenirs or periodicals.

Apart from all these various social categories of volunteers in the community, there is a limited number of paid workers called the Jamatbhai and the Daftari. The former is a caretaker and usually resides in the quarters built within the jamat khana compound or premises. The Daftari is a clerk of the Council who has certain responsibilities of an accountant or of book-keeping and is a go-between the Mukhi-Kamadia and the Council, as he serves both these institutions. Apart from these various social categories within the jamat khana there is an Old Boys Association, Club Committee, Ladies Committee which organises baby shows, cookery and needlework classes, Family Planning and other Clinics, Employment and Marriage Bureaux, Welfare Society, Tribunal Committee, Ismaili Girl Guides, Boy Scounts, Cub Scouts, Brownies and so on, which function at social and secular levels of the Ismaili society.

The Ismailis are encouraged to live a spiritual as well as a

wordly prosperous and a full life. One often sees the following saying printed on a wall card in several Ismaili homes: "According to our Faith, one of the greatest services you can render to the cause of our Religion is to make your worldly affairs a success" [14]. This movement towards social progress is based on the concept held by the successive Imams for their followers that firmāns might change with the change of time. Ismailis maintain that successive Aga Khans and the Imams before them have made it clear to them that at any point in time, in which any community happens to be, its social progress is absolutely essential. In his Memoirs the Aga Khan III confirms this: "Ismailism has survived because it has been fluid. Rigidity is contrary to our whole way of life and outlook" [15]. The social progress of the Ismailis can be considered under various headings: education, health, housing, social welfare, economic upliftment, emancipation and rights of women in the Ismaili community, the Ismaili administrative system, the Ismaili law and so on.

The Ismaili system of councils is called by H.S. Morris 'a system of government'. The Ismaili system of councils has gone through changes and evolution to suit circumstances and fresh necessities. The present system was incorporated into an official constitution in 1962, under the present Aga Khan, which in a way modifies the previous constitutions which are now cancelled and replaced by the latest constitution. The present system is as follows:

1. Provincial Councils in each province, in charge of local matters. Under the Provincial Council are the Economic Committee, Welfare Society, Education Board, Health Committee, Housing and Tenants Committee, Ismailia Association, Women's Association, Youth Association, Club Committee etc.

2. A Territorial Council in each of the states of East Africa, to supervise the Provincial Councils. Members are selected from each country and its various provinces.

3. A Supreme Council for Africa with its present headquarters at Nairobi, to supervise and co-ordinate the various Territorial Councils.

4. An Executive Council for Africa, to distribute finance to various communal institutions. The financial distribution is made out of the community funds.

5. Marriage and divorce proceedings, disputes regarding inheritance etc. and cases of breach of the Ismaili constitution are all carried to the various Tribunals, usually composed of Ismaili lawyers, where rulings are made according to the Ismaili tradition and constitution. There are Provincial Tribunals who deal with the cases first. One has the right of appeal against the judgement of the Provincial Tribunal to the Territorial Tribunal and still further, to the Supreme Tribunal. A final appeal or plea of mercy may be made to His Highness the Aga Khan himself whose verdict is final. It must be remembered that the Ismaili legal system mostly deals with the civil and not criminal cases, where the members can settle minor conflicts and disputes without taking their suits into the state courts.

6. Education falls within the office of the Administrator for Education in each of the territories, under whom are Provincial Education Boards. The Chairman of the Education Board is an ex-officio member of the Provincial Council. The Administrator himself is an ex-officio member of the Territorial Council.

7. Health institutions are the concern of the Health Administrator of the country, with Provincial Committees under him. The Chairman of the Provincial Hospital Committee is an ex-officio member of the Provincial Council. The Health Administrator is an ex-officio member of the Territorial Council.

8. Religious matters are supervised by the Ismailis Association in each country, the President of the Association being an ex-officio member of the Territorial Council. Under the Association is the Provincial Ismailia Association Committee whose chairman is an ex-officio member of the Provincial Council.

In the matter of law, the Ismailis moved away from Hindu customs and traditional Muslim law, to a constitution which incorporates the spirit of Islam adapted to Western political and economic conditions.

At this stage it might be appropriate to trace historically the setting up of the system of councils in the Ismaili community living in East Africa. We had already discussed in Chapter II the significance of the Khoja Case in 1866, during the leadership of Aga Khan I in the High Court of Bombay under Chief Justice Sir Joseph Arrould, which formally established the legal position and gave social identity to the Shia Imami Ismaili sect, as a separate and an autonomous religion based community which follows the leadership of hereditary Imams. The constitutional victory of this court case laid down the rudiments of an organisation that was later developed by subsequent Aga Khans. The reader might recall the case on inheritance of property which was filed in the Bombay Court by two Ismaili women in 1840, which is described in an earlier chapter on historical background. The Aga Khan was determined that the laws of inheritance should be governed by Islamic sharia and therefore he supported the plaintiffs. But the dissenting party held that they ought to be governed by Hindu law of inheritance. In fact, in his judgement, Sir Erskine Perry pronounced against the rights of these Ismaili women and commented that the Khojas observed Islam, but their dress, manners and appearance were Hindu [16]. There were some other conflicts based on refusal of payment of traditional tithe (dasond) by a few dissenters which resulted in ex-communication and even murder by a few fanatical members within the community around that same period, during the Imamat of Aga Khan I. Hence, the Khoja Case of 1866 in the Bombay High Court marks the first step of the set up of a legal system in the Ismaili Community. In 1908, Justice Russell settled yet another dispute in which Aga Khan III's relatives claimed a share of the communal property. This case was dismissed in favour of the Imam giving him judicial backing of recognised leadership of an autonomous community defined by its distinctive doctrine and tenets [17].

Owing to various law-suits that the Aga Khans themselves had to go through, the policies of creating an effective mechanism for settling disputes within the community based on the same lines as in courts of law, was being set up. In his visit in 1899 to Zanzibar, Aga Khan III stressed the power of arbitration in settling disputes. In 1905, he presided over the compilation of a detailed body of rules

which was officially published as the first constitution of the community. In the same year, he executed a power of attorney, appointing three of his followers as his administrative representative in community affairs. The system of councils followed the natural pattern of development from coastal towns to the hinterland and in 1924 this system of councils was extended over the whole of East Africa and by 1926 there were separate councils for Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar.

In 1954, a 'Federal Council', having jurisdiction over all the communities in Africa and co-ordinating the work of various councils in different regions, came into being. Under it were 'Supreme Councils' in Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, South Africa, Portuguese East Africa, Madagascar respectively. Under these were a number of 'Provincial Councils' exercising administrative authority in each province or district. In 1962, the new constitution which is currently in use, was issued by Aga Khan IV, the present Imam. The system of councils has remained almost the same except that there are ten 'Territorial Councils' stationed in Kenya, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Uganda, Congo, Ruanda, Burundi, Malagasy Republic, Portuguese East Africa. Later Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged into Tanzanian Territorial Council. Also Uganda, since 1972, has perhaps got hardly any Ismailis residing there since the Asian expulsion in November.

Apart from this, the new constitution includes a detailed and well-defined category of 'Personal Law' comprising rules governing such matters as marriage, divorce, guardianship, adoption, inheritance, apostasy etc.

Let us now examine the nature of the Ismaili society within the rubric of Asians of East Africa. "The Caste-groups are the easiest to identify, since <u>all</u> (my underlining) Asians derive their basic group identity essentially in terms of caste and only later in terms of language, regions of origin in India or religion. The case groups merge into a linguistic or cultural group which run across religious grouping" [9]. This statement by R.H. Desai is not altogether applicable

when we consider the Ismaili society as a part of the Asian community in East Africa and Indo-Pak. In fact, the Ismailis are essentially a religious and not a caste grouping. Religion is the only criterion by which they are identified, caste being non-existent, and the region of origin in Indo-Pak is unimportant in their particular case. A number of other writers also have too easily used their own pre-constructed models in analysing the question of East African Asians, without gathering sufficient data from the inhabitants themselves, who consistently define their own structural position in the way they see it, in relation to other Asian communal groups. Ismailis are such a group, whose social and religious criteria must be taken into account before any conclusions can be drawn about the nature of East African Asians on the whole, merely basing one's deductions on sociological theory and not facts.

Let us examine in detail the socio-cultural aspects and the religious activities within the Ismaili community. Besides attending the jamāt Khānā for prayers in the evening and early hours of the morning whenever possible, the Ismailis meet for a number of social activities. Every quarter or term, the Ismaili mission students arrange a Wa'az competition, or a Gīnān mūshāirā (contest). The candidates may either be living in the same large town or in some cases may come from nearby towns, from different jamāts. Prizes and trophies are presented by some leaders of the jamāt and a large assembly is held. This competition may last for a whole day or two. The Club Committee arranges Whist Drives, teenagers' or other balls or discotheques, annual dinners, visits or outings to different places, and so on within the community. The Health Committee, together with the Ladies' Committee, arranges baby shows or a cookery competition or a needlework and crafts exhibition at which prizes are presented by some influential person, for example the mayor of the town, a parliamentary minister or some leader within the community. There are also public talks, inaugural lectures, brains trusts, debates, variety programmes or even twenty-questions, organised by various Ismaili institutions. This provides a wide range of activities for the youngsters in the

community. In order to raise funds a couple of years ago, the Ismailia Welfare Society had staged a variety concert in which school children, including a number of non-Ismaili children, had participated. The Kampala jamāt also has an amateur dramatic society and a cricket club. In the Annual Drama Festival held on a town basis at the National Theatre, there is always an entry by the Ismaili Dramatic Society. In fact, in 1970 an Ismaili artiste from Mombasa, who also plays and teaches Indian classical music, was invited to adjudicate at the Festival. In 1966, they had won a second prize in staging a one-act Gujarati play. This was considered as quite an achievement by the community, since Gujarati had been banished from the Ismaili schools since 1954. The rival groups were represented by other Asian communities throughout the city, who have supposedly 'preserved' the Indian culture. Ismailis are the only group who have been entering in the Annual Drama Festival as a religiously-based communal group. Sometimes one or two other groups enter on the basis of their sub-caste identity. For instance, Patidar Samaj, Lohana Club or Jain Sangh have also entered in either the Drama or Folk-Dancing competitions.

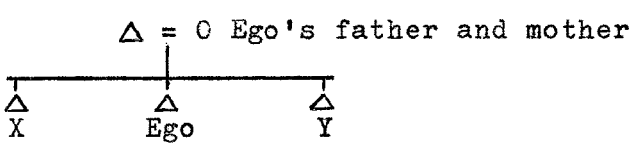
Further to this realm of socio-cultural activities, the extraneous events remembered with a certain amount of nostalgia and which were of major importance within the community were the three Jubilees of the late Aga Khan. These were held in Africa to celebrate the fiftieth, the sixtieth and the seventieth anniversaries of the late Imam's installation as the Imam. The present Imam, too, has had three installation ceremonies, one in each of the main towns of the three East African countries. These are called Takhtanashīnī (the ceremony of sitting on the Takht, the religious or ceremonial throne). Every year the Imamat Day and the Imam's birthday are celebrated as the community's special festivals. The former assumes greater importance since it is considered as the spiritual birthday of the Imam, as being different and higher in significance than from the physical birthday. These two days, called the Khushīālīs, are celebrated with considerable pomp when the jamāt Khānā is specially illuminated.

Of course, the most important events in the life of the Ismailis in East Africa are when their Imam visits them. Every single Ismaili makes it an extra effort to attend the jamāt Khānās even though individuals may not be so regular in their attendance under ordinary circumstances. A lot of time and zeal goes into making the preparations for the Imam's visit. Usually, some building or other is ready for its official opening. The Imam usually invited the key-figure in the country to perform the opening ceremony, and often stays as a guest of the President or Prime Minister of the state he is visiting. This diplomacy fosters better racial and communal relations for the community and establishes an improved status within the rapidly changing political climates in the newly independent African and Indo-Pakistani countries. Wherever he goes, he promises complete loyalty of his followers to the country of their adoption.

As other festivals in the Ismaili calendar, they celebrate Navroz, the equinox on 21st March. In this respect Ismailis are the only other Muslim group who celebrate Navroz, like their counterparts, Shia Ithna-ashari Muslims of Iran. On this day, a few grains of wheat are distributed together with some dried fruit and nuts and sweets to all the members in the Jamāt Khāna. The wheat is kept for the whole year or mixed with other grains of food. This symbolises barākat or abundance of food for the devotee. Ismailis also consider the new moon nights as auspicious in their calendar. These are the nights on which traditionally they pay their tithe which is about one tenth of their income, to their Imam, which includes zakāt or charity as Muslims call it, one of the pillars of Islam. On the Chānd-rāt night or the new moon night, they also have a ceremony of chhāntā when some of the abē safā or holy water is sprinkled on the face of the devotee by the Mukhī or Kāmadia. It marks a special act of forgiveness. The same ceremony of chhāntā is also done to a new member joining the Ismaili faith, including a new-born baby arriving at the Jamāt Khāna for the first time. Thus, the Ismaili calendar of feasts and events is somewhat different from that of the rest of the Muslims. Both Ismailis

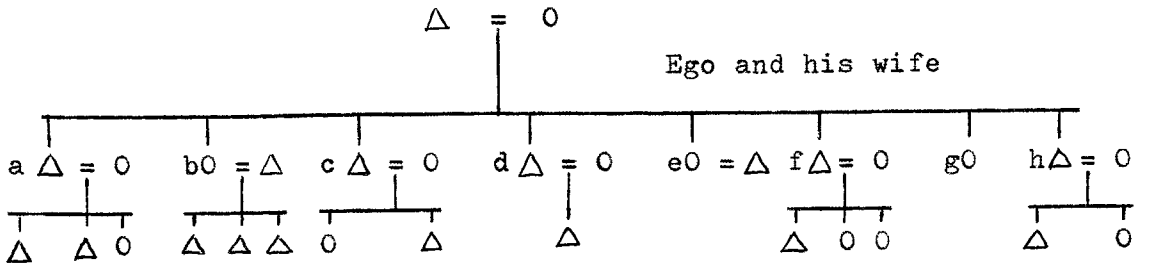
and the other Muslims also celebrate Ramadhān and the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-zohā. However, the number of Ismailis who actually fast during Ramadhān is relatively smaller than the rest of the Muslims. Besides, Ismailis celebrate the Imamat Day with greater zeal than any other festival described, whereas this day is hardly recognised by the other Muslim groups. We have seen the group solidarity of the Ismailis at a socio-cultural plane which binds the members together providing them with a wide range of activities and an intricate system of social organisation and administrative system.

We shall now examine in detail the smallest social unit, that of family structure in the Ismaili community. We shall trace the domestic cycle of 'ego' as a member of a joint family originally living in India, where he was born, starting from when he first arrived in East Africa until the present, about fifty years later when he became the head of his own family. Ego belonged to the following family thus:



Soon after his younger brother was born his father died. His brother X had first migrated to East Africa and had started the family business enterprise. With the help of ego, his brother built the business and they were later joined by their wives. Ego's youngest brother Y remained in India until they were able to call him with their widowed mother. Y married in East Africa a few years later. For about two decades their business was united until the families could no longer be sustained on the limited resources. Moreover, with the death of their mother, the brothers split into three separate nuclear units.

Thus, ego's family now looks like this.



Ego's children no longer live together as he had to do in the past with his own brothers as a joint family, for a long time after he was married. Just a couple of years ago before the Asians were finally expelled from Uganda in 1972, his family were living as follows:

Ego and his wife, now in their early seventies, started living with their eldest son 'a' and his wife and three children. Until their youngest daughter 'g' left for Britain, she too lived with her parents and moved with them, in turn, to one or the other of the three married sons' houses. All except 'a', 'c' and 'f' were, until recently, living in Kampala. Ego and his wife were quite old now, hence their sons insisted on looking after the parents in turn, and since there were three of them in Kampala, the responsibility was divided equally among them and this arrangement suited the members ideally. The youngest unmarried daughter 'g', who was already twenty-six, now joined her parents wherever they decided to stay, although she had a fairly independent existence during the time she was at the University in Uganda and also while she was training to be a teacher at a local Teacher Training College before joining the University. Ego and his wife had settled in Kampala since 1920, where they raised their family and ego set up his own family business in the course of time in about 1933, after his widowed mother had died and his brothers had split from the large extended family. Ego was able to run his business for about five years until the beginning of the Second World War, when he had to wind up his business due to lack of manpower, as his eldest son 'a' was still at school and he could not cope with it on his own. Another Asian trader who acted as ego's guarantor failed to stand by him during the financial crisis ego had in his little business. His shop

had to be auctioned and Ego had to pay the creditors their various claims. This belittled his social image a great deal and the well-established traders were reluctant to lend him any capital to re-start his trade or to employ him as a paid clerk or junior assistant. His wife gave him great support and together they were able to educate all their children right up to the end of secondary school education. She took over the business of a seamstress from another Ismaili woman who was leaving and they made it into a little family enterprise, employing about three African tailors. Ego's eldest daughter 'b' helped her mother until she got married at the age of nineteen. She, too, was allowed by her parents to complete her school education before she started helping her mother in the business and in numerous domestic chores of cooking and looking after the younger brothers and sisters. The remarkable thing about Ego and his wife was that in spite of shortage of manpower in his own shop which he had, they never let their sons and daughters give up their studies to join and help him in the running of their parents' business. When circumstances compelled him to give up the shop, Ego himself started serving as a book-keeping clerk in a large Ismaili shop, while his wife had already started the home industry and made garments for Hindu women in the neighbourhood. Between them they earned just enough to support themselves and pay the school fees for all the children who were still young at that time. Ego has been very proud of this achievement in his family and praises his wife for her support in maintaining such a large family, especially in the difficult period during the World War when they lived at mere subsistance level. Ego has been fortunate with his children since all of them turned out to be fairly bright in their studies. This gave him more incentive to educate them further, until he was able to send his fourth child 'd' to a University in Britain. This son 'd' had done very well at school and had won a scholarship offered by the late Aga Khan, to study medicine. In 1947 'd' left for Britain and was a great pride to the family. In the same year, the eldest son 'a' and the eldest daughter 'b' had got married. The second son 'c', not having

obtained an outstanding result at school, started working as a junior accountant in an Ismaili firm of lawyers and solicitors. Between Ego and his grown-up sons they were able to support the rest of the family. Ego's wife had now lost the help of her eldest daughter who was married to a senior clerk in a famous hardware shop in Nairobi. As she had rheumatism and still had domestic chores to cope with (as the second daughter 'e' was still at school), single-handed, she eventually gave up sewing in order to earn money and Ego's and his growing-up sons' income was sufficient to provide for the family.

Seven years later, the son 'd' returned to Uganda as a doctor and got a job in the Aga Khan Charitable Dispensary in Mbale to start with, until a few years later he could start his own practice. He got married in Mbale and used to visit his family in Kampala from time to time. He worked in Uganda until about 1966 for twelve years since qualifying, but eventually decided to migrate to Canada owing to changing political circumstances in Uganda. In the very year in which he had returned from Britain, 1954, his younger brother 'f' had obtained admission at a well-known College of Technology under London University, to study electrical engineering. He got married to an Ismaili girl in England whom he had previously known in East Africa and when he returned to Uganda in 1961, they already had a son. He joined the Uganda Electricity Board and lived in the residential quarters provided by the Board. He worked in Uganda for ten years until 1971 as a Divisional Engineer, but as no further promotion was likely to come his way because of an intense programme of 'Africanisation' in the Ugandan governmental policy, he left for Canada just a year before the crisis when all Asians (Ugandan and non-Ugandan) were expelled. In the meantime, Ego's youngest son 'h' was ready to go abroad too to study Chartered Accountancy, a course which was not available in East Africa. He left in about 1961, a year before Uganda got her Independence. This son 'h' has got married to a German girl in 1965, just before the Immigrants Act of 1968, and they have two children and live just outside London. Since

'h' has completed his course, he considers himself as qualified after finishing his articles with a firm of auditors, in about 1971. The youngest son 'h', with his wife and children, had to work very hard while he was still acquiring his qualifications having a family to support as well. However, he visited his parents about four years ago, after being away for the last seven years, when the family met his wife for the first time.

Since 1967, Ego's youngest daughter 'g' has also left Uganda for further studies and is at present working as a qualified teacher in a large Comprehensive School in the Midlands. She has also just finished her post-graduate studies in Social Science and has obtained her second degree from a University of great distinction in Britain, her first degree being from the University at home in Uganda. With four of his children thus well educated abroad, Ego thinks he has done quite well for himself and his own family. Ego has been very proud of his family, for two of his sons were also appointed as members in the Ismailia Provincial Councils in Mbale and Kampala at various stages: 'd' was the Chairman of the Education Board in Mbale, a town where he started practising medicine; 'f' was appointed as a youth representative member in the Council in Kampala. Before 'f' went to London, he was taking a very keen interest in the running of Ismailia Boy Scouts Troop and had started a community orchestral band. His second son 'c' was also quite active in community work and was a member of the Ismailia Welfare Society for a number of years. His youngest daughter 'g' was well known too, as a school teacher and was appointed on the Hospital Insurance Committee, the Library Committee and ran an Aga Khan School Brownie Pack.

As mentioned earlier, Ego and three of his sons, 'a', 'c' and 'f' were the only ones left in Kampala with the departure of all the rest of Ego's children. The eldest daughter's husband, who was a senior clerk of a hardware store in Nairobi, gained a promotion with the firm and is now a manager in the same firm in Nairobi. The second daughter, 'e' married a young Ismaili and together they left for the Congo before

it became Zaire a good twelve years ago. As was noted before, the youngest daughter 'g' had left Uganda to resume her course at the University in Britain, and the youngest son 'h' has well settled in his job, having just completed his articles at a firm of Chartered Accountants in London before finally passing his examinations. The son 'd', who was a doctor, had left with his wife and a seven-years old son for Canada. Their marriage has broken down and the wife has remarried, leaving the son with his father.

Ego's wife was an invalid for a few years and the three sons had agreed to look after their old parents among themselves. Ego's eldest son 'a' had three children and they were all living in Kampala in an Ismailis flat built by the building society on tenant-to-owner basis, one of the community's projects. The third child 'c' lived in a flat owned by his wife's wealthy parents who lived in Nairobi. In return for caretaking and collecting the rent from other tenants in the block of flats in which they were living 'c' and his wife and two children were able to reside there almost free of charge. The next son 'f', who had returned from Britain with his wife after qualifying as an engineer, had two additions to the family, making three children in all. They were living in an elegant house provided by the Uganda Electricity Board on the Kololo Hill in Kampala, an area where most civil servants of high status and diplomats lived in the pre-Independence days. However, 'f' was not satisfied with the latest policies in Uganda, and thought that he was being penalised for not being 'African' enough to gain any further promotion for the responsibilities which he had at the Board. The government recruited an African a lot less qualified than 'f', and had placed him directly above him. Feeling discontented, as things began to go wrong around the country, he too left for Canada just a year before the final crisis in 1972 in Uganda of Asian Expulsion.

Although Ego's children during recent years began to disperse, they have still continued to share a common bond. For instance, 'a', 'c' and 'f' who were the last ones to leave Kampala had all contributed money to 'h' enabling him to purchase a house near London, in which he now lives. This way, the family began to own some property

near London where any of them could stay if they happened to visit England and it was a worthwhile investment for them, since the price of property has risen considerably in recent years. Secondly, the family support could be seen when 'd' finally decided to migrate to Canada, a member on whose profession the rest of the family had so much counted. The rest of 'd's brothers helped him in closing down his surgery and took care of his house in Mbale. Thirdly, 'f', who had been economically enterprising, needed some capital to set up a small industry for manufacturing electrical equipment as a side business which was almost like a cottage industry, starting initially in his backyard garage, later flourishing as a small factory. He received a handsome loan from his brothers and Ego, too, made some personal contribution. The family has been so united that they have helped any member who has been in need of money. Thus, the two daughters 'b' and 'e' were both married with the expenses shared by the brothers. The youngest daughter 'g' had always wanted to continue studying. She went to a Training College, then to a University and then for post-graduate studies abroad. Without the moral help and financial support of her brothers, she would not have accomplished her ambitions. No doubt, she had been earning enough as a teacher in Kampala to save for a major part of her expenses which were required abroad, and has been financially almost independent of her family. But it is the co-operation of their family which one notices in the analysis of Ego's whole family.

The three brothers 'a', 'c' and 'f' lived in their respective houses in nuclear families, with the parents staying in turn with each of them. The whole family used to meet on several occasions, such as children's birthdays, Ismaili festivals, public holidays and such like. The family neither had a shared estate as such, nor a business, but the spirit of co-operation and unity was kept alive amongst them. Recently, 'c' was asked to vacate his post with the replacement of an African. Fortunately he managed to find another job which helped 'a' and 'f' from having to support 'c' and his family. Moreover, the three sons 'a', 'c' and 'f', together contributed money to Ego and his wife (who has died just recently) to visit their daughter in Nairobi almost

annually. Also, during the Congo crisis, the daughter 'e' had to stay in Kampala for several months. Her brothers looked after her quite cheerfully, although she was already married and was no longer their 'responsibility'.

In recent years, especially after 'f' discovered that things were going to become more and more difficult for the Asians, the family decided to pull together. Their brother 'd' had well settled in Canada by then and invited 'f' for a holiday. This helped 'f' in making his final decision in leaving Uganda. About a year later 'd' and 'f' were able to call 'c' who was already finding it difficult to sustain his new job in Kampala. As soon as 'c' had joined them, General Amin announced his decree asking all the Asians to leave Uganda. This, no doubt, shocked all the Ismailis in particular, since most of them possessed Ugandan passports. Ego's wife was unable to withstand this shock and died a month after 'c's departure for Canada. His eldest son 'a' was the only one to whom Ego could now turn. This son was declared to be Britain's responsibility by the Ugandan government, although 'a' had always believed that he was a Ugandan citizen. Unfortunately he was late in applying for a passport and this had not been issued to him. The British had to accept the decision of the Ugandan government and Ego and his son 'a' finally left for Britain. Ego lived with his daughter 'g', where she is teaching, for nearly ten months while his son 'a' and his family have been settling down in their new 'country of adoption', a new predicament in which the Ismailis of East Africa have found themselves in recent times. About two months ago, Ego went to visit three of his sons, i.e. 'c', 'd' and 'f' in Canada. He can either stay with them or return to England and join his sons 'a' and 'h' and his daughter 'g'. He is already seventy-two years old and can retire wherever he chooses.

We have examined at micro-level the structure and organisation of a typical Ismaili family within the domestic domain, and have

observed its evolution over three generations. We saw how, in Ego's days, he was obliged to share his household and estate with two of his married brothers and the widowed mother. In fact, the joint family acted as a single social unit and estate, providing all the needs for every member of the family in the previous generation. Only when the mother died did the family actually split as independent nuclear units. As Ego had to give up his business which too had split from his original extended family, then did they begin to live an independent life. In fact, educational and professional skills acquired by his children enhanced the split of the major family and strengthened the bond within the nuclear family. Once again, as Ego's children got married, they in turn established their own nuclear families. The family shared little in the way of finance, but nevertheless acted as one large family estate when any particular member needed any assistance. The large extended family unit did not interfere with any member's striving for a better life. This enabled 'd' to migrate to Canada long before the rest had conceived of doing so; the youngest son 'h' was helped in buying the property in England which was hardly ever used by the brothers who had actually contributed the finances; finally, when 'f' had needed some money for running his industry, the others stood by him. After getting the money, 'f' was not obliged to share out the profits which he made. He merely repaid the loan to the brothers who had lent him the capital. The family helped one another in case of a particular need felt by any member within it. But at the same time, the members were independent of duties and obligations imposed on them by the mere act of borrowing. The family expected one another's help and accepted it too, when it was offered. This was the social change the community had made over the last few decades.

It is most apt to make a few general remarks based on observations about various contributions the members of the community make in different aspects of their community and social life. From the example of Ego's family, we saw that Ego had to struggle very hard to provide for the basic needs of his family and how his wife gave him

substantial support by maintaining the up-keep and welfare of their children and becoming the bread-winner until Ego could get an employment for himself. In order to offer his family a better life in future, Ego had to make a choice between either sustaining a recognised social position within the community or giving up such prestigious demands laid upon him and declare himself financially bankrupt and bear the consequences of social humiliation which was attached to this. He did not let his eldest son join him in the business 'to save his face', but instead let him complete his secondary school education. For this he needed more money to pay the school fees, and moreover no-one was willing to employ him even as a paid worker or as an assistant in their business, since that was a mark of obligation not usually offered to a man who had proved himself a failure. His wife, and later his eldest daughter, took up the responsibilities upon themselves and their income provided the whole family with sufficient resources to live on. Since the family did not depend on other relatives or other well-established individual members of the community, soon Ego's chances of getting a job for himself improved and in fact he too started earning. Certain benefits provided by the community, like reduction of school fees in his children's case and free medicines, helped him to some extent. This raises the question of community resources and how these are built. In the earlier part of the chapter, we had noticed that the Ismailis make a few financial contributions in their communal life, especially while performing various religious rites and obligations in the jamāt Khāna and pay the tithe (dasond) once a month. The money raised this way is redistributed by the Aga Khan (Imam), to various communal institutions and the society with its intricate administrative network re-channels these funds to the appropriate departments of social welfare and provides aid to the members according to the individual's income and particular needs and circumstances. H.S. Morris has called this arrangement in the community as having a resemblance of a "welfare state within a state" [18]. In a general sense, the contributions are used for the welfare of the whole community, and

for "the upkeep of the jamāt Khānās and their staff, setting up Ismailis in business and make provision of houses for their members" says Trimingham, adding "whilst they provide bulk of the support for East African Muslim Welfare Society" [19]. The Ismaili community has opened a number of communal schools this way, through their own efforts of fund raising and private contributions, and it was through this that EAMWS first came into being. In 1945 in Mombasa, the late Aga Khan first founded the EAMWS. The outcome and achievements of EAMWS have already been discussed elsewhere. The present Aga Khan also has started the Aga Khan Foundation, which awards a number of handsome scholarships and grants to any candidate, Ismaili or non-Ismaili, and has community projects for the betterment and progress. In Trimingham's own words again, I quote, "The Ismailis who regard East Africa as their permanent home, have in their own interest sought to help African Muslims and enabled Muslims as a whole to present a united front ... They founded the EAMWS and have been its guiding force in leadership and finance ... They have thus brought leaders together in friendly co-operation. If they are to survive within the surging tide of emergent Africanisation they realise that the rights and interests of settled non-indigenous people like themselves must be harmonised with those of the Africans [20].

This statement, as we shall see later, is an interesting observation, made about the Ismaili society, particularly considering the 'surging tide' of events in Uganda in 1972, which led to the en masse expulsion of all Asians, Ismailis included. We shall also examine the degree of effort made by the Ismailis in their attempt to harmonise their interests with those of Africans. As a single minority group with not a very sizeable population, the Ismailis have genuinely tried harder to foster a better understanding of the African majority among whom they chose to settle. No doubt, by the very ascribed social position they have always had of being members of a privileged class, they have not totally succeeded in accomplishing this end. Moreover, with the British policies of separate development for Africans and

Asians, the class differences have prevailed for generations. Bearing in mind all the intricacies in the process of socialisation in both their domestic and politico-jural fields in the East African community as a whole, and the complexities involved in social relationships, we shall proceed to the next chapter which grapples with the more abstract and the theoretical problem of social change in view of recent developments in the socio-economic and political framework which has affected the Ismailis as a communal group within the larger Asian sector which in turn has had its effects on the whole of East African society. In this chapter we have examined the basic family pattern of the Ismaili society and we have seen its impact on the social structure in a broad sense. We have also seen the bureaucratic structure of leadership within the community which is based on the sound advice and guidance of the Imam in the modern ideological framework. Thus the Imam of the Ismailis is an innovator whose basic concern is to provide maximum change within the community without letting the members lose their values and beliefs. An Imam is an innovator who brings about qualitative changes, not merely quantitative alterations. Barnett has said that the essence of change lies in the restructuring of the parts so that a new pattern results, a pattern the distinctness of which cannot be characterised merely in terms of an increase or decrease in the number of its component elements [21]. In the most definite sense, Ismaili society has changed from what it used to be around 1866, before its social identity was clearly defined, to what it is now, under the guidance of the fourth Aga Khan. Having briefly analysed social institutions and social relationships within the members of the community, we shall examine social development in the more current situation, in the following chapter.

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C H A P T E R V I

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CURRENT SITUATION IN EAST AFRICA

In the previous chapters we exained the positive efforts that the Ismaili society has made in East African countries, especially in the last few decades of changing political circumstances, when the community has given its fullest support in implementing various governmental policies which have not always been to the society's own advantage. As distinct from other Asian communities, the Ismailis have offered their unflinching loyalty to the emerging African leadership and committed themselves to a considerable extent to identifying themselves with the indigenous population, at least in their political allegiance. The Times reports as early as 1953, long before independence, that "Ismailis have been warned by their leader that the future of Asians in the East African territories lies in Africa, not in India" [1]. Earlier still, in 1923, when Indians were to be regarded as 'second-class citizens of Kenya' the late Aga Khan is said to have been strongly against this [2]. An appeal was made by him to the Viceroy inviting his attention to the extreme gravity of the situation and requesting his timely intervention in order to prevent counter-resistance by the Indian community in Kenya. Indians were in danger of violence from the white settlers at that time. When Sir Robert Coryndon was the Governor of Kenya, the Aga Khan sent a telegram to the Indian community, counselling constitutional action, as the first illegal step on their part meant disadvantage to their cause [3]. The colonial government was, therefore, made to change its anti-Asian policies, since all Asians were united in demanding equal rights with European and other settlers.

Examining all these events, it becomes clearer that Ismailis, although regarded as Asians in this case, were in a unique position. In a survey carried out on Racial Problems in Africa, it is explained: "As so often happens, many Hindus demand the spiritual right to be loyal to Mother India, and at the same time they demand full citizenship in the country where they have settled to work and make money. The Muslims, especially the Aga Khan's community, are much less prone to this attitude" [4]. It was also realised by the British officials, that "as a big employer

of labour and as a stimulating influence in commerce", an Asian made "an important contribution to the country's economy" [5]. Moreover, it was felt that Asian craftsmen were particularly useful because the number of trained African technicians was still small. Lord Hailey has seen the distinct position of the Ismailis during the colonial government and has said, in his statement: "Ismailis have stood aloof from any inter-communal movements of agitating against Europeans in alliance with Indians and Africans in which, on the whole, Asians have taken very little part" [6]. His observation regarding the aloofness of the Ismailis based on the events of 1920's when the British policy was geared towards consolidating all Indians and towards setting-up common schools for them which were to be controlled by the advisory committees, consisting of government officials and Indian nominees, which were to be appointed by the British officials in each of the East African territories. The Ismailis clearly backed out from proposals for such common schools. Aga Khan III wrote to Sir James Duboulay, Viceroy of India on 8th March, 1912, explaining that there were "real and historical causes" that made his people in Africa insist on separatism. He emphasised that they "did not want any grant for their schools from Government", but they would not go to any such mixed schools. As already seen elsewhere, the Ismailis had well settled down in East Africa and had put in considerable effort, building their own schools and in fact, these had already acquired a fairly high standard in their quality of education which was given within them. Besides, new values of modern requirements were already being cultivated by the Aga Khan among his followers. In short, the community's efforts of breaking itself away from its socio-cultural and historical past, namely as one of the off-shoots of the wider Asian community, was beginning to be known, generally. For want of a better term, we had called it 'de-Indianisation'. This is an important phase in the settlement of the Ismailis in their new environment where the community made conscious efforts to eradicate its past and assume a new social identity. Time and again, we find the <u>firmāns</u> of the late and the present Aga Khans reminding their community to adopt 'Western material culture' but return 'Islamic spiritual life'. East African

Ismailis were ethnically 'Asian' and therefore were steeped in cultural heritage typifying the behaviour of other Asians. They shared many cultural and social features with other Asian communities. To state a mere example, they had very strong family ties and the wider extended family unit was closely-knit as a single corporate group sharing numerous responsibilities and having many obligations within the unit. We have already examined how this family pattern changed in course of time.

Although Ismailis resembled many other Asian communities on several other points, it is interesting to note the differences as well, for which one needs keen observation and insight in their attitude to life, their day to day activities and development. The late Aga Khan describes Ismailis as being in the "process of development which is, if anything, European-African. To have retained an Asiatic outlook in matters of language, habits and clothing would have been for them a complication and socially a deadweight of archaism in the Africa of the future" [8]. On its face-value this statement has caused adequate misrepresentation of the Ismailis as viewed by numerous non-Ismaili writers whence, Ismailis are often branded as "the epitome of western culture in an Asian milieu", and quite mistakenly regarded as violators of Asian tradition by the Hindus and the conservative Indian Muslims [9]. As a matter of fact, the late Aga Khan in one of his firmans to the community shows disapproval of imitating the West and losing Indian culture, especially language. The congregation, or the jamat, he said "is taking the course of its own destruction by abandoning its Asiatic identity because no assimilation with Europeans is ever possible, not even share in their privileges like the highlands in Kenya ..... " [10]. Christianity was guarded against and no blind imitation of the west was commended by the Imam. Certain Ismailis were naming their children by 'Christian' names (as opposed to Muslim ones), which he said was based upon a naive view. Such a mistaken view would cause the whole community to be held in ridicule. The sudden renouncement of the mother-tongue could also cause "mental illness or psychological disorder", he warned them, in no less strong terms [11].

The process of modernisation or de-Indianisation of East African Ismailis is already explained and can be seen in another light, that of Islamisation. In a recent speech given by the present Aga Khan he says: "If Islam aspires, as I believe she must, to recapture the glories of the past, she must be ready to adapt - I do not say abandon - her own traditions to the entirely different circumstances of today. If we fail to do this, not only shall we fail to progress ourselves, but the younger generation will become disillusioned and fall prey to alien and materialistic creeds, which have nothing whatever in common with Islam" [12]. Time and again various writers have observed this dual nature of Ismaili loyalty, as it is said "Ismailis were constantly reminded by the Aga Khan of their Islamic tradition and civic obligations: it was they who contributed money to complete the mosque at Kibuli and Wandegeya, the centres of Sunni worship in Kampala, and it was they who first opened their hospitals and their schools to other ethnic groups" [13]. The late Aga Khan is still remembered as one whose ideal dream was to carry out Pan-Islamic development and his favourite slogan was 'with time changes must come'. His grandson, the present Aga Khan, commenting on Islam in Africa, retrospectively points out that Islam had made several converts amongst three entirely different races, African, Indian and Arab. "In a continent torn by racial rivalry, Islam was thus bound to meet with serious obstacles. The very universality of our Faith won adherence among all races, but their political hatred of each other prevented them, until quite recently, from joining together in promoting their common creed. In earlier stages, any kind of social or economical co-operation was almost impossible. For a generation at least, all developments in East Africa had been community development". [14]

Both the recent Aga Khans have been consciously aware that "Islam was in danger of suffocation through the twin pressure of tradition and inertia", to quote from the same speech, when rapid progress in the field of education and industry was made by other non-Muslim communities. Thus, the East African Muslim Welfare Society and the Muslim Association of East Africa were established which provided a

link between the principal races and catered in each territory for health, religious, educational andpolitical needs of the Muslims. The late Aga Khan conceived of organising the Muslim Welfare Society as early as 1937 in a Muslim Conference in Nairobi and subsequently in 1945, under his chairmanship the society was formed at Mombasa. Since then, he has contributed a pound-to-pound grant to every Muslim project, with the result that by 1957, the EAMWS were able to build 150 mosques, 147 schools, three secondary schools and a Teachers' Training College, not to mention the Muslim Institute of Technical and Commercial Training in Mombasa which was almost entirely donated by him in 1949.

Ismailis, on the other hand, by the process of 'de-Indianisation' were beginning to assume a new identity which was truly a combination of 'Islamisation' and 'Westernisation'. Just as Prophet Muhammad had told the Muslims that in pursuit of knowledge, ilm, they should even go to China, if necessary, the Aga Khans told their followers to place progress first in their daily endeavour. "Our social customs, our daily work, our constant efforts must be brought into line with the highest form of possible civilisation. At its greatest period, Islam was at the head of science, was at the head of knowledge, was in the advanced line of political, philosophic and literary thought. Today we are in our middle ages. We must get out of it and begin our new era with strength and with will-power for the coming development of our people" [15]. Thus, borrowing of certain trends from the West and abandoning certain features from traditional Islam was a notable tendency to be found in the Ismaili society as a whole.

Let us examine specific instances in which the Ismailis have adapted themselves better than other Asian groups. From a social survey carried out in Dar-es-salaam, Tanganyika, in 1956, J.A.K. Leslie, reveals some interesting facts about the non-Africans, particularly the Ismailis, living in a crowded part of the city, namely Kariakoo. In August, 1956, when the research was carried out, the Indians living in Kariakoo were nearly equally divided between the Hindus and the

Ismaili Khojas but most of the latter were born in Dar-es-salaam. However, there were more than twice as many entirely uneducated Hindus as Ismailis. In fact, 61% of the Hindu males had had no education whatsoever, whereas the Ismailis had only 26% in this category. Again, only 21% of the Hindu males were literate in Swahili, an African language, as against 45% of the Ismaili males. The figures were almost the same for literacy in English. In Gujerati there was a much smaller margin of difference, where 60% of the Hindu men and 66% of the Ismaili men were both literate in this language. The Swahili newspapers were almost unread by the Hindus, but a small number of the Ismailis claimed to read them; both read the Tanganyika Standard, an English language daily newspaper, and about 21% of the Hindus still read newspapers in their own language about India. The Ismaili families had been longer in residence in Dar-es-salaam and twice as many of them had parents present in Dar-es-salaam. Seventy-five per cent of the Ismailis had been in Dar-es-salaam for 6 years or more and only 62% of the Hindus. The figure for the Hindu females dropped to 28%, compared with the Ismailis' 57%. [16]

This confirms our earlier observation that the Ismailis had migrated to East Africa with a definite aim of settling. The high percentage of women indicated that they had brought their wives from the sub-continent of India, unlike the other Asians who had maintained strong cultural, socio-economic and kinship ties with their homeland. For the Hindu Asians, living in Kariakoo was merely a temporary residence where they could earn enough money to send to the rest of their kinsmen in the country of their origin and return there. Ths Ismailis had no such ties in India and were constantly reminded by their Imam to adapt themselves in East Africa which was to be considered as their new home.

Initially, at the beginning of the century, when there were probably about 40,000 Asians in the whole of East Africa, there was little government provision made for Asian education. It is said that the first Asian school in Kenya was one established by the Unganda Railway Authority, and it was taken over by the government as late as in 1912. In Tanganyika, a small school for the Asians was started after

the First World War, without any Government assistance. A number of private schools came into existence in Uganda by 1920. Thus, East African official educational facilities for the Asians were extensively supplemented by the efforts of voluntary agencies, principally religious and communal bodies [17]. Almost without exception, the schools in East Africa were rigidly segregated along racial lines. Since the British Government did not consider herself responsible for Asian education in the early twenties, the Asians were compelled to build for their future. It was declared that the official policy of the British Government was to protect and guard the interests of the 'natives', hence the administration and financing of non-African education was entirely left in the hands of the Asians and the British had taken care of European children. The Ismailis, with the purpose of permanent settlement in mind, thus began to organise their educational system throughout East Africa on the basis of self-help and separate development.

For instance, in Education Commission, which was held as early as in 1919, Abdul Alidina Visram, an Ismaili businessman, reports that Ismaili Girls schools were already in existence in Nairobi and Mombasa. It can safely be assumed that the boys schools were established even earlier. Moreover, Aga Khan school syllabuses were the same as in European schools, it is reported so, in 1928. Altogether the community had established over 50 nursery, primary and secondary schools in Tanganyika itself, six of which were in Dar-es-salaam alone. In Tanganyika in 1959, for example, there were fifty-one Indian Public Schools, fifty-four Aga Khan Schools, and sixteen schools associated with other communities. In 1952, in Uganda, there were seventy-seven primary aided schools, of which forty-one were Indian Public Schools, thirty-one Aga Khan Schools and five government-controlled Asian schools. To start with, each of these Aga Khan schools were mainly financed by the Fund for Education kept aside, consisting of private donations by individual Ismailis. It is of remarkable importance also to note that in 1957, Aga Khan schools which were already racially integrated had Swahili, an African coastal language, introduced as a second language.

Although emphasis was placed on communal schools rather than common Indian schools and Ismaili communities resisted amalgamation with other Indian communities, they did not totally limit enrolment. If there were openings, non-Ismaili students were admitted; in 1940, for example, Indians and Africans both attended Aga Khan schools. Nor were any restrictions placed on Ismailis attending other schools. Guided by the broadmindedness of the Aga Khan, and his willingness to grant individual freedom to those seeking education, the Ismailis then, were able to expand and develop their school system in ways they believed most beneficial to their people. The Aga Khan's financial support was a factor of major importance before Ismaili schools were eventually given grants-in-aid [18]. Several observers noted that Aga Khan schools which eventually received grants maintained impressive and commendable standards [19]. Many members of the community claim - with some justification - that their classrooms, laboratories and sports facilities are the best in Tanzania, at least from a research carried out recently there. Certainly they have produced excellent results in the annual Senior Cambridge School Certificate examinations [20].

Generally, community-run schools were self-financed and although they provided secondary education to thousands of youngsters, the fees tended to be relatively higher than in government-assisted schools. Thus, the children of poor parents were often unable to profit from these facilities, except where a provision for bursaries was made as among the Ismaili community. Moreover, the quality of education provided in community-run schools, with the outstanding exception of a few such as the Aga Khan secondary schools in Tanganyika, tended to be distinctly inferior to those supported by the government. Government schools, relatively speaking, on the other hand,offered so few places to the bulk of the Asian children. Organisation of the Ismaili educational facilities on a communal basis can be paralleled by the organisation of other social services also on similar lines among the Ismailis of East Africa, in their early phase of settlement.

The first Aga Khan dispensary was, therefore, built at Dar-es-salaam in 1929, providing free medical treatment. Built on Mirchwele Street,

it was officially opened in January, 1930. The opening ceremony of H.H. Aga Khan Charitable Dispensary, as it was named, was performed by the Acting Provincial Commissioner, E.C. Richards. During the opening speech, Mr. Richards said that "the provision of the institution was a striking illustration of the progressive spirit of the Shia Ismailia community in Dar-es-salaam". He added: "The dispensary itself is a model of neatness. Over £500 had been spent in equipping it with modern surgical instruments and drugs. An amazing array is maintained on the well-arranged shelves and in compact glass vases. Nothing has been overlooked, even to the basket scale for weighing the babies, and the Ismaili community is fortunate in possessing this up-to-date dispensary. There are four rooms and the waiting room is furnished with comfort and taste. There is also an operating room with a convertible leather settee" [21]. Medical facilities were free to all Ismailis and the expenses were paid by the Aga Khan at the rate of £60 per month. In 1939, a ten-bed maternity home was opened where over 250 maternity cases were attended annually in Dar-es-salaam. By 1962, H.H. Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismailia Health Administrator for Tanganyika, as in other East African territories, was established according to the new Ismaili constitution. Thus, medical facilities were extended in up-country towns Mbeya, Iringa, Kilosa, Morogoro, Dodoma, Tanga, Moshi, Arusha, Musoma, Mwanza and Bukoba. In 1964, Aga Khan Hospital, similar to Platinum Jubilee Hospital in Nairobi, was opened in Dar-es-salaam costing at least £140,000 with maternity, medical and surgical wards together with laboratories and Departments of Physiotherapy, X-ray, Out-Patient treatment, Dental clinic and Blood bank [22]. At present, most of the full-time doctors and many trained nurses are Ismailis. An insurance scheme has been started whereby a patient is covered for a treatment of two months upon a payment of Shs. 60/- per year. The Hospital is open to all and is regarded as a 'monument of the ideal racial partnership' as is the one in Nairobi [23].

Let us consider some historical details as to how communal development came about in East Africa. It is mentioned earlier that in

Uganda (and in Kenya), there was a resistance by the European settlers in giving equal opportunity to Asian development and in the Devonshire White Paper of 1924, the British finally declared that in the interest of Uganda, African 'natives' were to be given 'paramount importance', hence Asians were to be regarded as secondary in all the developmental programmes which were to be carried out. As the first step, in 1900, to implement this policy based on the Buganda Agreement, some 92 square miles of freehold land had been allocated to mission societies and by 1922 certain contributions were made towards African education. Indian schools, on the other hand, received no grants-in-aid. In 1925, the Governor in Kenya announced the intention of introducing compulsory education for Europeans. When Indians protested, no mention of European education was made in the actual Ordinance in 1931 [24]. However, in Kampala, by 1924, there was a small number of private schools managed by mixed Hindu-Muslim Committees and by the followers of the Aga Khan. These ran classes in a mosque or a temple or a room at the back of a shop without any supervision from the Colonial Government. It is significant to note that when, in 1925, the Government set up an Advisory Council after amalgamating two privately managed Indian schools (one of them being an Ismaili school), no Ismaili was nominated on the committee. Obviously, the communal separatism which had existed among the Asians of East Africa, was not realised or understood by the British administration. In 1938, the Ismailis were denied the allocation of sports field to be added to the ground on which their school stood, although in that very school one-third of the places were kept open to the other Indian, African and European children. As early as 1932, the Ismailis had also been applying to the Land Officer for plots of land to build hostels for children from up-country and there were only three secondary schools in the whole country. The problem was shelved, although every year that passed added urgency to its solution. The Advisory Council had paid no heed to this request until after the war in 1946, when for the first time reductions of rentals were made for communal schools. Capital and maintenance grants were eventually made

to a few of the self-made schools. In 1953, out of 100 Indian schools in Uganda which were educating 11,294 children, 31 belonged to the Ismailis alone, as a single community.

From this historical perspective we can see that one of the primary interests of the Ismailis in matters of social organisation was the establishment of a successful educational system. Supported by the late Aga Khan, and implemented by the desires of the Ismailis themselves, education in East Africa was to become an instrument of social and political change, as well as an effective means for meeting the needs of the private individual, the local community and the larger East African unit. We noted that in the Education Commission held in 1919, there is mention made of Ismaili Girls Schools already in existence in Nairobi and Mombasa. It is already reported that Muslim Welfare Association which later turned into the East African Muslim Welfare Society was formed as early as in 1937 in Mombasa, a region where there was a concentration of Arab and African Muslim population. A year later, in 1938, the Arab Girls School was opened in Mombasa, the first of its kind for Muslim girls. From the other face already mentioned before, Aga Khan schools followed the same syllabus as the European schools, allowing additional time for religious instruction rather than letting other subjects suffer. Therefore, by comparison, the Ismaili schools were different from other Muslim schools, which were Qur'ānic-orientated and where education was steeped in Islamic and Arabic traditions. Their main aim was to enable pupils to read and learn the Qur'ān giving them very limited choice of other subjects on the whole. As the Ismaili education system developed to a reasonable standard, and as the Colonial Government decided to give small grants to the Aga Khan schools, the late Aga Khan then diverted his attention to the development of education for the rest of the Muslims in particular. Thus, in 1948, he succeeded in opening the Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education (MIOME), a college for Muslim students for technical and commercial subjects. This was done with the help and support of the Governor, Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya. It had 103 students by the end of 1953. By 1954, there were two other Asian

technical high schools in Nairobi and Mombasa with 725 students. There was a Technical Institute in Dar-es-salaam since 1958. Kenya Polytechnic was opened in 1961 as a landmark of proper Technical Education. However, MIOME was still the first Institute to ever cater for Technical Education for a few Asian and mostly African Muslim students. In Tanganyika, Aga Khan schools were already open to non-Ismaili Indian and some African pupils since 1940 when multi-racial schools were not yet thought of as a possibility in the British colonial ruled East Africa. This fact is too often under-estimated as of major significance showing Ismaili allegiance to East African population as a whole.

We have seen the steady progress the Ismaili schools have made right from the initial stage when they were purely based on communal support to the stage where they have achieved grant-in-aid and are considered as having a high standard of education with modern amenities and well qualified teachers. This advice for systematic achievement was given by the Aga Khan also to all the other Muslims in East Africa. In a speech delivered on 16th November, 1957, at the Annual General Meeting of the East African Muslim Welfare Society in Mombasa, he emphasised the importance of plotting a course for the next five years as of the very first stage, so that the society could measure its achievements in terms of the established plan and see how successfully it has been carried out. "You could perhaps set up a Board of Inspectors which would tour your schools and send in regular reports on the education which is being offered, the response of the students, and also on the maintenance of the buildings and the health of the children" [25]. This system of supervision as existed in the Ismaili community, was felt to be of utmost necessity in the rest of the Muslim community. He added that the Society should aim at getting the education programme recognised by the various East African Governments and thereby benefit from Government educational grants. "This can be achieved as in Uganda, if our standards meet Government requirements" [26]. Reflecting on the same point, he again spoke at Karachi University on 29th January, 1958, on the subject of Islam in Africa. He said that Government support for education in the Muslim schools was by no means automatic. Higher standards had to be reached before they could qualify for official

recognition and financial support. "This can only be achieved if there is an over-riding will to modernise the whole approach of Islamic teaching and attitude to our way of life" [27].

A month later, on 12th February, 1958, he spoke at the capital of East Pakistan, namely Dacca, revealing his own standpoint on the need of synthesising Islam and the West. According to the decision made in Dacca, Islamic teaching was to become compulsory in the schools. Provided it was carried out carefully, the Aga Khan expressed his doubts, as are evident from his comment that "its benefits will not be fully experienced if that religious instruction is too hidebound by dogmas of the past. There is no need to discard the great traditions of our Faith. There is every need to adapt and invigorate them in the light of the quite altered circumstances of today" [28]. Addressing about 40,000 people in Dacca that day, he added: "We should not be afraid of material progress. The less advanced nations need its fruits desparately in their fight against poverty and disease. If Muslims will accept this need, and at the same time ensure that the living essence of their Faith infuses every field of human activity, you will rediscover the ancient glories of Islam" [29].

Another observer, Robert J. Bocock, of the Ismaili society and its unique structural position states that the existence of a living Imam has meant that Ismailis have been more flexible in adjusting to changing conditions in the last hundred years or so, for whereas other Muslims have held a fairly literal interpretation, the Ismailis have been able to refer to another authority, in addition to the Koran and the Hadīth (canons), that of a living person. He remarks that from the 1920's up to the present the Ismailis in East Africa have been a separate group from the other Indians, Muslim and Hindu, and in matters of finance and the administration of their community, have been pace-setters [30].

Much has been known in the West about the Jubilee celebrations the late Aga Khan held, which are viewed from the outside merely as events of ostentatiousness and pomp. After each of the celebrations some financial project was introduced in the community from the proceeds of

the collections for the Aga Khan. In 1935, an insurance company was started. Public in nature, the Jubilee Insurance Company provided a spur to the Ismaili economy, and assured its own success, through the extension of loans both to Ismaili and non-Ismaili citizens in Tanganyika. Interest rates were reasonable, being set at the normal six per cent, to be charged both to Ismaili and non-Ismaili alike. The Company offered long-term loans, thereby enabling the middle and lower income groups in the Ismaili community to begin or further expand an individual business enterprise. The result was a dispersion of capital creating a broader economic base. And since wealth was a symbol of prestige in the British ruled colonies, the changed distribution of economic power had other than purely economic effects and monetary advantages; social mobility was more easily attainable. In 1946, the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust Company came into being. It received aid from Aga Khan III who gave DJIT the money he was given as a gift during the Diamond Jubilee. In 1948, the Aga Khan initiated the 'Home for All' Project which was set up in Mombasa in the form of a Building Society; the first in Tanganyika was set up in 1952, under the name of the Chagombe Construction Company in Dar-es-salaam; In Uganda the Building Society started in about 1955. The aim of the Building societies was to enable the Ismailis to carry out their duty to obey the Imam and buy their own houses by 1960. About 80% of families managed to buy a house with quite a few others already having their own homes. The following table gives the statistics of the Houses built under the 'Home for all' project, per territory, as reported in 1964:

Territory	No. of Building Societies	Houses, Bungalows, or Flats
Kenya	4	488
Tanganyika	20	453
Uganda	1	84
Zanzibar	1	26
	TOTAL:	1051

In addition, the loans were given to individual Ismailis for

building homes. Donations were also made to Zanzibar Relief Fund to aid those who were affected by the Revolution in the early 1960's.

Another outcome of the last of the late Aga Khan's Jubilee was the construction of Platinum Jubilee Hospital in Nairobi (and later the Aga Khan Hospital in Dar-es-salaam). In the opening speech made by Mr. J. Macbridge, the Administrator, the significant point he made was that it was entirely an effort of one single community whose leader is the present Aga Khan who carried out his late grandfather's project and since it is open to all, it stands as 'a living monument to the ideal of racial partnership' as has been stated earlier [31]. Since the Hospital is of a very up-to-date standard with a Nurses' Training School and facilities for post graduate training of doctors, it stands in the forefront of medical institutions in East Africa. Moreover, Kenya citizens pay only half the charges. Therefore, the cost of running it has been quite substantial. Ismailis have contributed towards its cost and quite a number of them all over East Africa had initially joined the Hospital Insurance Scheme. Prince Sadruddin, the paternal uncle of the present Aga Khan and the younger son of the late Aga Khan, who is also the High Commissioner for Refugees in the United Nations, had donated Hospital Insurance policies to all Ismaili teachers in the whole of East Africa which covered them initially for five years, for free medical or surgical treatment in the Nairobi Platinum Hospital. Today the Hospital, having an efficient Nursing Training Centre, offers excellent nursing opportunities to East African girls without their having to go abroad.

Ismailis have yet another accomplishment to be proud of. In the course of time, the Asian involvement and monopoly over the retail trade and commerce was found to be less welcome and was disapproved of by the African traders as they themselves were keen on taking over the retail trade from the Asians and they were gaining confidence and training in this field. The Ismailis thought of contributing to the three East African national policies by diverting their resources towards investment, thus enabling the process of industrialisation in the three developing countries. This resulted in the formation of

Industrial Promotion Services, IPS. IPS started in the 1960's at about the time of the East African independence, marking a new stage in the communal strategy. It drew on accumulated community resources and attempted to foster partnership between the Ismaili, the governmental and the expatriate capital. At first it operated only in East Africa, but has since extended its activities to the Congo (now Zaire), the Ivory Coast and Pakistan. In 1966, Kjellberg reported that there were nine IPS projects in Tanzania alone, ranging from the production of chemicals to suitcases. The total capital of the IPS then amounted to £900,000 which was going to be raised to £1,200,000 or more within the next five years [32]. The main aim of the IPS was to generate more capital, both locally and abroad, mainly from developed countries. It is also designed to be a partner in social and industrial progress - "a partner of local and foreign businessmen, a partner of governments and institutions" (Aga Khan). It was hoped that the IPS would guide and promote investment in East Africa, 'along the lines which are suggested by the government', in collaboration with government institutions as well as local and foreign private enterprises. It should be noted that the Governments of Tanzania and Uganda had their own National Development Corporations, whose activities were of public enterprise and therefore, were much more extensive. The Government of Tanzania dealt not only with industry, but also with commerce and agriculture and held some shares in the IPS.

In 1969, the Government of Tanzania launched another 'umbrella body' for Tanzanian tourism called Tanzania Hotels Investments Ltd. 'in a bid to gear its entire tourist industry to modern conditions'. It was a subsidiary of the National Development Corporation and as such it was expected to participate in a certain Bahari Beach Hotel which was being promoted by Tanzania Development Finance Company and Industrial Promotion Services [33]. Just within a year, the Ismaili community launched a new organisation under the name of Tourism Promotion Services (TPS). The aim, it was stated, was to do for tourism what IPS did for industry, namely "to mobilise various resources and

combine them with all available expertise to develop the tremendous tourist potential of East Africa" [34]. The initial plans of TPS included the establishment of an East Africa-wide chain of hotels and lodges, to be financed jointly by communal concerns and foreign interests, together with the participation of various East African Governments. Since then, the TPS had erected several Hotels all over East Africa, and had literally renovated various Safari lodges in the East African game-parks which attracted tourism considerably as one of the major sources of revenue for East Africa. Through TPS and such other institutions Ismailis felt a genuine sense of contribution to the growth of the fast expanding East African economy.

Besides, the Aga Khans have also established their Foundation Trust, which has enabled a number of East African students to pursue Higher Education, either locally or overseas and this has, in turn, benefited the Governments in a definite sense. Incidentally, the community was overtly praised by the Minister of Finance in Kenya in his message to the Ismailis in 1967, "I have been heartened to note the confidence and loyalty demonstrated by members of the Ismaili Community since Kenya became independent, particularly their help in developing the economy of our country" [35]. He then referred to the 14-storey building of the IPS in Nairobi as a visible evidence of Ismaili enterprise. It is particularly interesting to note his gratitude to the community when he observed that though many young Ismailis had travelled overseas to continue their advanced studies, once having acquired their degrees and diplomas, many of them have returned to Kenya, where their professional skills are greatly needed. This is very much in accordance with the Firmans of the Aga Khan who always told the young students to return to their countries after their completion of education overseas.

With the formation of such large scale industrial projects such as the IPS, the Ismaili students began to move away from the independent professions of law, medicine and dentistry towards economics, mathematics, statistics, banking, accountancy, hotel management, textiles, engineering and the sciences, as professionally and technically qualified Ismailis began to have more job opportunities

opened to them in the management, industrial and commercial sector. This amounted to Ismaili commitment to industrialisation (and later tourism), both as owners of participant capital, and as a team of skilled and professional workers.

Until very recently, the Aga Khan and all official organs of the community had strongly discouraged migration to Britain and other western countries and exerted pressure on young educated Ismailis to return home. In fact, a number of them did return and took up the East African citizenships. This explains why comparatively very few of the educated East African Ismailis could even qualify to come to Britain along with the other 'Asians' who held British passports, during the recent crisis, namely the en masse expulsion of Ugandan Asians since August, 1972, and the Kenyan Exodus of 1967-1968. Most of the professional, skilled and semi-skilled Ismailis had become 'stateless' under the decree by General Amin in Uganda and were absorbed under the United Nations mandate, being declared refugees, and therefore migrated to the United States, Canada and other countries who were willing to have them.

Despite the pressure on the young Ismaili students by their Imam to return to East Africa, several other factors conspired to make them less willing to return 'home' after having qualified abroad. Firstly, the three East African countries began to localise and Africanise the jobs. The result was, some of the 'Asian' graduates including those from East African Universities, began to find it increasingly difficult to obtain any form of employment, as preference was only being given to 'African' candidates. Secondly, after independence, and as a result of Arusha Declaration in Tanzania, the private property and business were nationalised. This caused a sense of panic among wealthy Asians. In Uganda and Kenya, withdrawals of trading permits and exorbitent increase in the cost of trade licences was introduced. A further point was the high taxation and stringent exchange control over sending capital overseas, and the general tendency among the committed Asians which forced them to rethink their future position in

East Africa. In August, 1970, the Tanzanian government announced that no foreign exchange would be granted for education overseas unless the subjects concerned were not taught in Tanzania. Education became much more African-orientated with the eradication of Asian languages and the acceleration of Swahili as the medium of instruction, right at primary level at school. Lastly, there had also been a significant reduction in the facilities for higher education, made available to 'Asian' students, although, by becoming citizens of the independent governments, the Asians had committed themselves as much as the Africans.

In Uganda, too, similar changes in national policies took place in the late 1960's. We may recall Dr. Obote's speech, on the introduction of the Common Man's Charter on Uganda's Independence Day, 9th October, 1969. He stated that it was considered sensible to give all people of Uganda, belonging to different religions, full freedom of worship and to accept each and every citizen, irrespective of his religion, and above all to give all citizens equal opportunity in the great task of nation-building. The then President added further that he was grateful to the Christian and Muslim leaders who had worked for unity and a prosperous nation, undivided by religious differences [36]. However, even in Uganda, a 'citizen's' racial origin in seeking employment began to count as a determining factor. In Uganda, two joint-writers had pointed out: "Even among citizens, in actual practice the allocation of secondary school places has tended to be governed more by race than by merit", so is reported, in an educational survey [37]. Thus, a large number of Asian children, who previously would have gone to government and grant-aided schools, now had to seek places in unaided, by far inferior, newly-established community or private schools. In Tanzania as well as Kenya, the previously established government and government-aided Asian secondary schools had been required to increase their intake of African children. Under this policy, the proportion of African children admitted to such schools was raised from 33 per cent in 1966 to 80 per cent in 1970. In Uganda too, the proportion of Africans in the former Asian schools had been rising steadily, but the changes had been slower than in Kenya and Tanzania. This is because

there had been a rapid expansion of secondary school facilities on the whole in Uganda, in the post-independence period. Besides, some very high quality African schools had already been in existence in Uganda over the years, initially established by the local government and run by the missionaries.

The number of Asian students going overseas for their education continued to increase, and in recent years there has been a fairly sharp rise in the numbers settling overseas. Research conducted into the migration of talent from East Africa and the 'brain drain' which has occurred recently shows that in 1965 and 1966, no less than 33 per cent of the Asian students from Tanzania studying abroad had settled there, while less than 25 per cent returned to Tanzania; the rest were either continuing their studies or indecisive as to what to do. It was thought that all in all, less than half of those studying overseas would eventually return to East Africa. A significant number of these Asian students were East African citizens who had opted to settle abroad because of their feeling that they would face restricted job and promotion opportunities at home, in view of changing politics. Asian students, most of whom were pursuing scientific and professional courses, and could be absorbed anywhere for their acquired skills, by their settlement abroad, have caused considerable loss and setback to the East African economy.

During the late 1960's some of the Ismaili students, along with the other Asians, bearing all the recent changes in East African politics in mind, began to settle abroad, in Britain, other European countries, the U.S.A. and Canada. Their newly acquired skills in various professions and industrial enterprises were sufficient for them to obtain employment in Britain and other Western countries a few years ago. Moreover, their settlement abroad involved more job security at the time, as compared to similar opportunities that were offered back at home, had they to follow their Imam's earlier guidance too closely or literally. In fact, their decision to stay abroad and not to return 'home' resulted in serious conflict in their minds. As time went by

and their very social capital and welfare projects which they had accumulated and established in the form of schools, hospitals, investments in industry, housing etc. began to be nationalised and transferred to governmental control, they eventually began to lose any hope or desire of returning to East Africa. The Ismailis, therefore, began to settle and marry in Britain, France, Canada, U.S.A. and elsewhere. Quite a number also married outside their own community. At any rate, marrying outside the community is possible among the Ismailis, though such a practice is infrequent. A small number of non-Ismailis have been accepted into the community after marrying the Ismaili spouses. Others have left the community to join their partners, and to these individuals, Ismaili membership is of very little significance. Their children are brought up in an entirely different tradition from themselves and are hardly aware of their Ismaili parents' ethnic or religious background or heritage. Many of the students being girls looked to the educational prospects of their children, now that the schools were being removed from Ismaili control. The nucleus of former Ismaili students has thus been augmented by the arrival of families already formed, especially in the late 1960's, for by no means all the Ismailis had been given local citizenships in spite of having applied even if they had decided to return home to East Africa. Thus, there have been several 'layers' of Ismaili migrants for instance, in Britain: the early student population, most of whom were parentally financed and orientated towards the professions, in some cases towards family businesses; then the students, financed by the community or by themselves through articles or part-time employment. These too, have tended to settle down in Britain having been long removed from their home countries. Then came some well-to-do families who settled mostly in London, bringing with them a portion of their assets. Lastly, (and these are relatively few, as compared with other Asian migrants in Britain), poorer, less skilled men and their families, who have left East Africa almost in panic in the early 1970's owing to political crises [38].

Along with the East African Asian migrants (before the Ugandan Asian expulsion and the Kenyan Asian exodus), came vast amounts of capital, even in spite of the imposition of exchange control restrictions. Much of it has been invested in the London property market, such as banks and building society deposits, insurance policies, unit trusts and company stock. In quite a few cases, the actual owners of the capital were not in Britain, but it was entrusted to children and other kinsmen who had already settled here. However, it is interesting to note that on the whole very little East African capital has gone to finance Ismaili commercial enterprise in this country. This corresponds with the fact that the Ismailis have a very different occupational structure from that of the rest of the Asian population here. A considerable part of the Ismaili population still consists of students. Others who have professionally qualified have been practising their skills without having the benefit of wealthy kin in East Africa whose exported resources they might manage in London. Some others who have rich resources in East Africa, however, prefer to practise their skills here, for in the professions they have obtained training, career prospects are largely determined by progress they make in the years immediately after qualification. Above all, there are also some signs of significant change of attitude to things communal which has reduced intensity of collective solidarity among individual Ismailis here. Ismailis in Britain no longer have to share the array of community facilities, in the form of denominational schools, Aga Khan hospital, jamātkhānas, sports amenities, orphanages and hostels, retirement homes and social security funds. In Britain, Ismailis are less inclined to 'belong' in the way they do to a highly organised socio-economic structure of the Ismaili community back in East Africa. Such a structure does not exist in Britain for the lack of its need. The Ismailis in Britain aretherefore highly mobilised towards establishing relationships with non-Ismailis, whether other Asians of other sects or religions, or with the indigenous British.

It is rightly said that the Ismaili exclusivism in East Africa was

related to the aspiration to share in the benefits conferred by the community. Moreover, the collective use of resources led to an increasing rate of expansion of those resources, hence producing an ever-more powerful inclincation to belong and conform with the Ismaili values which were outwardly expressed in religious terms. The Ismailis in East Africa are by far more ethnocentric than their counterparts in Britain. Unlike other Asian immigrant groups here, one hardly finds the Ismaili ghettoes anywhere in Britain. A large number of them live in London but are scattered widely across it. The jamāt in Britain was officially constituted as early as 1954 when a jamātkhāna was set up, and a Mukhī and Kāmadia were appointed, and the Ismaili council was created which is stationed in a certain area in the West End. But there were many fewer Ismailis in Britain then than there are now. In spite of their growing numbers, especially after the two major East African crises when some Ismailis have been compelled to leave Kenya and Uganda, the official organs of the community have strongly discouraged migration to Britain. In the most recent estimate available, they are reckoned to be about six to eight thousand in all, including women and children [39]. This figure also includes Ismailis from all over the world, namely the three East African countries, the sub-continent of Indo-Pak and few from South Africa, Zambia, Ruanda, Burundi, Zaire (previously Congo) etc.

It is definite that very few Ismailis have qualified to enter Britain, even in spite of wanting to settle here as the other Asians have done, when Kenya restricted its policies over the Asians who were holding British or other passports. By then, most Ismailis in Kenya were essentially Kenyan citizens and hence they were not directly affected. This proves why so few Ismailis had arrived during the Kenya Exodus in 1968. Similarly, only a few have arrived from Uganda since the August, 1972 decree made by General Amin. The Ismailis did not qualify to settle in Britain, since they did not have British passports. They were mostly declared 'stateless' and have been absorbed by other European and Western countries, including Austria, Sweden, New Zealand and a few African countries who had offered to take the Asian 'refugees' so declared by the United Nations. General Amin has made it somewhat

easier for some of the Ismailis to leave Uganda and come to Britain or migrate to Canada and elsewhere. His first announcement came on 6th August, 1972 for the Asians with British passports to leave Uganda within the three months commencing from 9th August, 1972. But in less than a fortnight he announced that all Asians, including the Ugandan citizens, had to leave. Ugandan Ismailis found themselves in a real predicament upon this decree. As they were forced to get their political status re-verified they stood in long queues outside the Ugandan passport and Immigration Department. To their amazement they discovered a loop-hole on their passports which they were not aware of as they had believed it had guaranteed them the status of Ugandan citizens.

It so happened that the Ismailis, like all other Asians, were British subjects before Independence. As they finally decided to stay in Uganda, soon after Independence, unlike the rest of the Asians, they applied for Ugandan citizenship in large numbers as it was then offered to them. One of the requirements for obtaining this 'new' status was having to renounce their previously held, namely British, nationality, which had given them also a permanent residence permit, especially to those who were born in Uganda. This was, however, cancelled by the Independent Government and a new Citizenship Certificate, along with a new Ugandan passport was issued to the applicants. The latest argument the Ismailis faced in 1972, ten years after Independence, was that the Asians had wilfully renounced their British nationality after obtaining the Ugandan citizenship, and thus it was considered 'non-valid' since Uganda claimed to grant only a single political status and not a dual nationality. This was obviously neither within their power nor understanding at the time. The British Home Office, by the time had notified the applicant of Her Majesty's acceptance of the applicant's renunciation of British nationality and returned the necessary documents, some time had elapsed. In some cases, therefore, the date of application for Ugandan citizenship was made before the receipt of the renunciation certificate. The Ugandan Asian citizens discovered that the administrative problem between the two governments concerned, namely the British and the Ugandan, suddenly jeopardised their whole political status after ten years. Moreover, the

Ugandan government was far from consistent with its argument of late renunciation, as in some cases it had accepted this very thing that the officials were later instructed to do during the 1972 Crisis. Once again, came another decree expelling all Asians, citizens and non-citizens before the three months which were granted as notice for evacuation had expired.

The British intervention and sympathy somewhat resolved this problem for a few Ismailis who were allowed to come as dependants of the British passport holders. This enabled a few of the Ismailis among other Asians, to come and join their relatives as dependants. Otherwise, most of the Ugandan Ismailis were declared 'stateless' and are now scattered all over the world. The bulk of them had been officially accepted by the Canadian government and a few by the American government with a few more having been allowed to settle in countries which offered to take limited numbers of new Ugandan Asian immigrants. These include New Zealand, Sweden, Belgium, France, Austria, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and certain Latin American countries like Brazil, Mexico and British Guyana. Certain African countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Malawi and Zambia have also offered to absorb a few of these 'stateless' Asians. Some others were given temporary refuge in a variety of countries, including India, Pakistan, Italy and France.

The Ismailis celebrate their New Year Day on 21st March each year as was described in the last chapter. This day, called Navroz is significant for another reason too. Usually, new appointments of various Council officials, of Mukhis and Kamadias of different jamatkhanas are also made on this day. In the year 1973, from the names announced in the jamatkhanas, it became clear that the East African Ismailis are scattered all over the United States, Canada, Britain and Europe. There seem to be major jamatkhanas in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary (in Alberta), Paris, Brussels, Geneva and London. Besides there are minor ones and in Britain they are in Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Bournemouth and a few other towns and cities not known of with precise details. Not all these cities have Ismailia Councils,

though. It is said that the major cities in the European world have territorial councils under the supreme council stationed in Paris. In Britain, such a territorial council is station-ed only in London. Recently, the ex-Mūkhī of a certain major city in Britain was appointed on the territorial council in London.

In that city, about four to five years ago, a few students and one or two families used to gather at an Ismaili University lecturer's private residence. They met every Friday evening and recited their prayers together. Gradually, these students increased in number with some of them having one or two kinsmen joining them; others got married in London or abroad and had their wives joining them. The living-room of this Lecturer, who acted as the Mūkhī, was not big enough to accommodate all these individuals who had joined in. It was, therefore, decided to rent a hall in one of the Community Centres in that city for which the London Ismailia Council provided the necessary grant. Since then, the Ismailia community has been meeting, now twice a week, on Fridays and Sundays, for religious, cultural and social activities. Last year, a young medical consultant was appointed as the new Mūkhi and since there are quite a few women students and Ismaili nurses and wives who work and live in that city, to be fair to them a Kāmadīanī, a female official in her own right, was appointed as the Mukhi's counterpart.

It is not surprising to find that the Mūkhī alone (who is married and not his wife who would normally have been the Mukhīanaī), holds the office. The Kāmadīani who is a single woman, sits next to him at the pāt facing the jamāt (congregation). Had she been married it would still make no difference. Her husband might be loosely called Kāmadiā, as is the Mukhī's wife, who is sometimes addressed as Mūkhiānī, merely as a term of respect used by the members of the jamāt, outside their ceremonial role. In small jamātkhānas all over the world this tends to be the practice and there are numberous examples where a mūkhī and a kāmadianī hold the ceremonial offices and are designated the right to do so by the Imam himself.

There were about fifty to sixty Ismailis in all, in that city and its nearby towns and suburbs, when the above were appointed two years ago.

With the arrival of the Ugandan Ismailis the number had almost doubled. But recently, it has dropped again to about ninety to one hundred individuals because some of the Ugandans as well as other East African Ismailis have proceeded to Canada to join the rest of their families and to settle there permanently. Ismailis try and attend the jamāt khāna whenever possible. For instance, Birmingham Jamāt khāna caters for the whole of the Midlands and Ismailis are known to come from Walsall, Kidderminster, Tamworth, Nuneaton, Dudley, Stafford, Warwick, Leamington Spa, Coventry, Nottingham and a few places nearby, where they commute from on the jamāt khāna evenings.

Similarly, the jamāt khāna in Glasgow was initially a small scale meeting-place which a few Ismaili medical students started. This drew other students from Edinburgh, Newcastle and Darlington. About three years ago, it was reported to have about twenty members in the jamāt, including four women students, two married women and two or three children.

Until recently, the London jamāt met at the Ismailia Cultural Centre in a certain area in the West End. As the number of Ismailis grew in the metropolitan area it was impossible to hold major festivals of the community at the Centre. Hence, various public halls are hired to have meetings and the main jamāt is decentralised. The Imam has not encouraged to build a new jamāt khāna to accommodate all the members in London. An example could be cited to illustrate the Ismailis' adjustment and adaptability in the way they conduct their religious services at one or more of the public halls. For lack of convenience, they do not remove their shoes as they normally would do before entering a traditional jamāt khāna. No food offerings are brought by them to put on the pāt as is described in Chapter V. Although the Imam's photograph is placed on the wall, it is soon removed and put away after the religious service. Very often they sit on the chairs and offer their Du'ā (prayers) whereas 'at home' they would have sat down crosslegged on the carpets, without their shoes. For the benefit of the young generation brought up here, all ceremonies are conducted through the medium of English, using the Ismaili terminology for specific rites.

Thus, the Du'a is recited, Firmans are read, Ginans are sung and Tasbih is said or offered, during the course of a typical evening in an Ismaili jamat khana in Britain and the rest of Europe, Canada and the United States. Usually the mukhi and the kamadia officiate at the religious ceremony and under ordinary circumstances they sit side-by-side behind the pat in the male section, with their wives sitting together in front of the female section of the hall, as mukhiani and kamadiani. In small jamats, however, there is only the mukhi and the kamadiani, with either or both of them married (or not married), but certainly not to each other. They sit next to each other in a small jamat khana at the pat placed in the centre of the hall. The rest of the jamat may either sit mixed, men and women, having no sort of dividing line between them segregating them into two sections, depending on where the jamat khana is situated and what the local tradition and customs of the people are, generally.

This system of joint officialdom of mukhi and kamadiani had initially started in school children's majlis or improvised jamat khanas. To mention a few specific examples, in Kampala, the Aga Khan Boys Hostel had established its own jamat khana where the students gathered every evening to pray in a section of the dining-room on the Hostel premises. A mukhi and kamadia were appointed. The Aga Khan Girls' Hostel was later built which was about six miles away in another part of the city, which installed its own jamat khana, where a mukhiani and a kamadiani were in charge. At Makerere University, the Ismaili students started having their jamat khana; this was registered in the local council, where they appointed a mukhi and a kamadiani, and they met at the College Mosque. The University already had an Anglican and a Catholic chaplancy before the Muslims had established their mosque.

At first, the jamat khana ran quite smoothly but as the month of Ramadhan approached, when ideally Muslims have to fast, they objected to the Ismailis occupying the mosque for their prayer, and again adapting it to their particular faith and requirements. Some of the orthodox Muslims stressed that the Ismailis were heretics as they did not bathe themselves ritually, before entering the Mosque. In fact, it was held

against them that they even wore socks (although they removed their shoes), and that the women were praying together with the men in the same hall. The President of Makerere Muslim Students Society and the Mukhi of the Ismaili students got together and tried to resolve these conflicts. They eventually decided that the Ismailis should alter their prayer-time to suit the needs of the other Muslim students, especially during Ramadhan. Nevertheless, it was known that more Ismailis than the Muslims ever made use of the Muslim Mosque during the whole year, despite the proportion of Muslim students which was three or four times higher than that of the Ismailis. It might be stated here that in Uganda, and the rest of East Africa, there is one Muslim out of every seven of five others. In fact, the ratio of the Ismailis to the rest of the population is almost negligible, for there were about six to seven thousand Ismailis in all in Uganda, out of eight or nine million people in the whole country around that time.

The Ismaili students were conspicu-ous on the university campus for yet another reason. As explained earlier, not a single other Asian community had as many individuals who had become local citizens and were hence admitted at Makerere or other East African universities. Although there were about 100,000 Asians in all in Uganda, in about 1965, they were about fifteen times as many as the Ismailis. Very few of these Asians studied locally. Moreover, for the first time in 1948, had Makerere University College offered an intake of Asian students, although it was established since 1920. Since then the Asians, particularly the Ismailis, benefited from this opportunity. The government had realised the necessity of reserving these facilities for its own elite-class of citizens. Thus, the fees charged to non-citizens after independence, at all the three autonomous universities in East Africa were raised considerably. Therefore, relatively fewer non-citizen Asians enrolled, most of them preferring to go overseas, where the wealthy class could afford and in their opinion, the training and skill acquired commanded greater international recognition [40]. Later, currency restrictions were introduced and Tanzania stopped supporting the Asian citizens from pursuing their education abroad, unless their course of study was not

available in East Africa. Because of this, some more non-Ismaili Asians joined Dar-es-salaam University. It was still not surprising to find that the Ismailis were the most dominant communal group among the Asian student population at all the three Universities of East Africa. Moreover, the Aga Khan had given substantial grants to each of these universities and had also encouraged religious adherence and cultural activities of the Muslim students on the whole, which also included the Ismailis. On one occasion, addressing all the Muslim students at Makerere University, he urged them to work in the new climate of harmony, for the traditional sectarian differences, he said, were fast becoming archaic and irrelevant. He said not 'to rub salt into historical wounds' in the present era of rapid change [41].

From all these empirical data based on observation and gathered from informants one can conclude that the contemporary Ismaili society of East Africa presents an unusual challenge to an anthropologist. As an 'Asian' communal unit, Ismailis neither belong to the East nor are divorced from it. They are not a typical social unit of a larger 'Muslim' community, on the other hand. Above all, they have failed as a group which had always intended to stay as permanent settlers in the three now independent countries of East Africa, the countries of their adaptation, not of their origin, perhaps. Nevertheless, their efforts as a single community in wanting to identify itself with the independent African states have been considerable. However, the basic racial distinction which ran throughout the post-colonial and the modern African development has affected their total assimilation with the indigenous African population. By virtue of their closely-knit internal group solidarity and adaptive changes, the Ismaili society presents an uncompromising challenge to the student of social anthropology (and other related subjects), for it is by no means an easily comprehensible social unit which can be defined and analysed in simple terms.

As a religious and communal unit undergoing social change, it has passed through three different systems of change, almost simultaneously. Firstly, it had to break away from its cultural and ethnic background,

which we have called 'de-Indianisation'. Secondly, by social adjustments it managed to belong to one of the major religious groupings in East Africa, which also included the indigenous African population and it attempted to become more and more 'Islamised' by introducing prayer in Arabic and by taking an active role in Muslim welfare projects. But the fact remains that the Muslim community on the whole is more than just a religious grouping. Islam incorporates both a defined social system and has a prescribed code of conduct and religiously binding laws. The contemporary situation which demanded rapid change and a need to modernise itself placed yet further pressure on the Ismaili social system. Thus, as a third alternative, the Ismailis found it highly advantageous to 'westernise' themselves. They reorganised themselves on western lines to counter-act any external pressures laid upon them by the ruling powers. This has resulted in their lack of total involvement in any of these three social categories. As discussed earlier, in the third chapter, the Ismailis neither belong to the stereotype image of an 'Asian' community, nor are they a standardised 'Muslim' community. They resemble a 'state within a state' but are far from a bureaucratised, impersonal and socially stratified, since under the umbrella of their faith they reckon they are all equal in the eyes of their Imam, or their spiritual leader. All these three stages of change were possible in their case, by the very nature of their social structure. The presence of the innovator at the apex of their social pyramid, in the person of a living Imam, facilitated their society to cope with the contemporary need for change, at the same time giving the members some direction in which to turn. By remaining within the system the Ismailis have incorporated these changes; they have continually pleaded their allegiance to the Imam and offered him almost complete obedience. One of the outcomes of this has been that the Ismailis have learnt and welcomed modern bureaucratic structure and developed financial skills which has enabled them to handle politics, both of the colonial British and of the African governments. They have also built contacts with the advanced businessmen from the developed countries, through IPS, in the capitalist

world. This has been a deliberate attempt made by the successive Aga Khans to educate the Ismailis in the capitalist world, and to re-mould their lives, basing it on the technologically advanced world of the West. It should, however, not be overlooked that such guidance and leadership have not been offered to them living in the other half of the world whose ideologies are more socialistic in nature. There the Ismailis are told to fit in with the accepted pattern and political framework. The Ismailis have changed in certain specific fields. By concentrating on the basic necessity of educational advancement of the whole community, they have kept it within the traditional Islamic framework of primitive communism, of increasing the ilm, (knowledge, social awareness), of making it relevant to changing demands of society. Thus, they have learnt to accept change as part of social process and are not opposed to it.

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C H A P T E R V I I

CONCLUSION

A number of questions can be raised on this anthropological description of the East African Ismaili society with respect to its institution of leadership and how the life-style of the community has changed. What is the value-system of this religiously defined community and how is this related to its internal organisation, especially in an era of rapid change in the external political environment? To what extent has the basic character of the society changed and for that matter, what has been the nature of 'change' for us to be able to understand a particular direction, if any, in which the society is moving? Considering the fact that the Ismaili Community living in East Africa is merely a minority group, steeped in a variety of social and cultural traditions, what is it that has enabled it to go through various stages of growth that have been described in the preceding chapters? Why did it have to go through these various phases (viz. de-Indianisation, Islamisation and Westernisation or modernisation) in this particular order and in so doing what has been the outcome of these processes of change? A community such as the Ismailis had set out to mobilize itself socially, in a new environment and 'succeed' in its goal of permanent settlement. Bearing in mind the latest political events in the three East African countries how has the society been affected because of its present predicament and to what extent has it 'succeeded' or 'failed' in its commitment? On the basis of all these questions arising, what predictions can be made about Ismailis living elsewhere from the example of those living in East Africa? Moreover, under the hereditary leadership of altogether forty-nine Imams, having concentrated here on the recent phase of just four of the latest Imams, i.e. the four successive Aga Khans which has been the scope of this thesis, what generalisations can be made regarding the 'status-role', 'structure' and 'function' of leadership from within the discipline of social anthropology? How far can the empirical data presented in this thesis help one to make these generalisations?

I could not have answered all these questions satisfactorily in

such a short thesis. In the introduction I had already pointed out the difficulties in writing an anthropological description of one of the most challenging societies, i.e. the Ismaili society living in East Africa. I had also emphasized the necessity of having to consult many other sources like history, sociology, political economy, psychology as some of the chief ones. To a certain extent, this thesis serves only as an introduction to the study of the Ismailis, which does not render itself easily to a scholar in social anthropology for its very complex character. Besides, if one decides to confine oneself in a rigid and traditional manner within the limitations of any one single discipline, one finds a lot of discrepancies in such an analysis or description. Many previous writers, no doubt, have attempted to study the East African Ismailis, as is evident from their various works which have been cited in this thesis. But it is important to note that almost all these writers have written as if the problem of spatial and temporal limitations did not matter a great deal in their particular analyses of the Ismailis. In fact, many have not considered these factors adequately enough.

In my discussion of the problem of 'social field' I have deliberately raised this important question and used H.S. Morris's concept of 'plural society' as a reference point (see Chapter III) [1]. I have first of all pointed out that the Ismailis are a fascinating example of a society which belongs all at once to at least three different social layers or fields, in response to Morris's discussion on the concept of 'plural society'. As a member of the overall 'Asian community' from a sociological point of view, it is related to other communal groups in a kind of 'federal' structure. Ismailis, however, have remained aloof from the wider Asian community and have not succumbed to the general normative behaviour pattern laid down by the Asians who as a community had migrated from the sub-continent of India to settle among the indigenous population of Africans, which was then being ruled by imperial Europe. The Ismailis, unlike other Asian groups, protested against the colonial authority's policies and insisted on their separate development. Once this had been achieved, they invariably broadened their social system and welcomed members from other communities crossing

the boundary of their 'Asian' identity. Their educational policies were initially based on denominational schools, to name one specific instance of their several welfare projects. They later began to accept non-Ismaili as well as non-Muslim, in other words, other Asian and African children, before multi-racial schools were even conceived of, in the pre-independent East Africa. Moreover, by doing so, they had no ulterior motives of conversion of non-Ismaili or non-Muslim members into their fold. Ismailis also worked as a spearhead for the welfare of all Muslims of which they were only a constituent part. This included a large number of African Muslims, larger than their own little community. They established a number of Muslim mosques but contributed also towards the education of other non-Ismaili Muslim youngsters who had no schools of their own to go to. At that time education by other known denominational communities (viz. the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches) was in full force. But non-Christians who joined these were obliged to accept their religious doctrines.

But, unlike various Christian churches, the Ismailis were not interested in proselytization, nor have they ever been so inclined for a number of centuries known, since the fall of the Fatimid monarchy in 1094 A.D. and the decline of the Nizari period in about 1256 A.D. as has been recorded in the history chapter, in Chapter II. Ever since the pīrs had been migrating to India and the dāis had been proselytizing in Chitral and Hunza in the Himalayan regions and elsewhere, no major conversion movements have been heard of, in this vast, yet scattered religious community. The reader is referred to Chapter II on the historical background, and also Chapter III where this question has been discussed in some detail. In the general survey of Ismailis (Chapter III) the nature of the contemporary Ismaili groups as widely dispersed minority communities spread over thirty-two different countries only emphasises the unmanageable size and character of this vast single community united by its faith, for a straightforward anthropological analysis of any single group living in a small area such as East Africa.

Ismailis of East Africa have three different social identities as

has been already explained. Firstly, they are a component of the 'Asian' community at large. Secondly they are Muslims and the third category they essentially belong to is their membership of the Ismaili community in a wide sense. Therefore, the concept of 'plural society' as has been developed by H.S. Morris, falls short in a sense, since he implies that a member of a plural society can only belong to one major group at a time [2]. The East African Ismailis are not such a compact little community without having these important and direct connections with other communities in the wider world. On the contrary, they are firstly only a fraction of the whole community of Ismailis organised in a variety of ways, under the sole leadership of their Imām-e-Zamān. Again, the nature of the community today should be viewed with respect also to its social development over centuries, ever since the concept of Imamat and the doctrine of Ismailism itself came into being. It is as old as Islam. When Prophet Muhammad had died in Mecca around 630 A.D. it was the precise moment when the Imamat first started with the establishment of Ismaili doctrine. Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, was then revered by a group of followers who considered him as their first Imam in whom they saw both religious piety and secular leadership. His son Husein became the next Imam and this hereditary tradition of Imamat started.

Besides, to talk of the Ismailis as a caste-like group or a state-like unit within the territories of East Africa, as many other writers including sociologists and anthropologists have done, seems to me a very simplistic way of dealing with a complex anthropological problem [3]. In this thesis I have merely raised this issue of defining the Ismailis. I suggest no clear-cut solution to the problem of analysis or methodology that should be used. But here I wish to point out that to many scholars, social anthropology has simply meant an ethnographical survey of a small scale or a simple society or perhaps a study of a single social phenomenon within a complex society. An array of labels has been used for various studies by anthropologists over the years. Some of these labels I shall state here are picked at random from various anthropological

literature, in fact used by various writers on the study of Ismailis. They are: tribe, caste, patrilineal or matrilineal descent, divine or charismatic leadership, welfare state, community, sect, cult etc. One realises how very few of these sociological and social anthropological labels can be selected in describing the East African Ismailis with any standard of accuracy. An important point arises out of this observation. Can a society be studied anthropologically, which does not have many of the social categories or particular features that anthropologists are so accustomed to using? To take a specific example similar to that of the wider Ismaili community, can the Roman Catholic community be studied by anthropologists and if so, why has this task not been undertaken by many? How far is it feasible to study the Jewish community within a global framework?

Admittedly, this thesis has got a 'holistic' character and I must emphasise here, that I have purposely selected this perspective to counter-act the narrow dimensions chosen by many of my colleagues who have all, time and again, simplified this unusual religious-based community, as if it was a compact unit or a corporate group living in confinement within a specific area or a defined territorial framework. I want to seek the true nature of this society. It is important in my opinion, to consider this question seriously, before undertaking any detailed analysis of any particular fragment of this vast community living in an area of the world at a given point in time, which my predecessors have failed to do. The physicists or pure scientists' theory of relativity does suggest some validity in this case. In my very first and the introductory chapter, I had stressed the question of methodology and this should be continually borne in mind by the reader as a last note also after finishing reading the rest of this thesis. It was pointed out that the reader must consider what my study leaves out, rather than what it accomplishes. Ismaili society is one of the most complex and a challenging kind, and in a short analysis in the form of this thesis one cannot hope to cover many aspects of such a vast community. Hence, in this holistic approach I have taken, the thesis seems to be lacking in some central or integral theme. Besides, in my

opinion, social anthropology does demand a spatial-temporal framework as I have mentioned already, within which a particular society which is to be studied can be placed. Here again, I have had to bring in the question of relativity and show that this society cannot be studied strictly within a defined spatial boundary or temporal limitation, without distorting it or over-simplifying its own particular characteristics, especially that of its belief-system and doctrine which forms the very foundations within its social boundary. A society with its history or evolutionary past cannot be studied within a synchronic scale; on the other hand, it cannot be studied in total isolation from its ethnographical character without first specifying that it is a component part or segment of an expansive or a large ideological movement which has spread across many territories and ethnic boundaries, and it continues to do so, wherever its members have decided to migrate or reside permanently.

Once again, I must make another concrete point about the question of spatial-temporal dimension in this very thesis, on the Ismailis living in East Africa, during the Imamat of the four successive Aga Khans. When I began writing this thesis, East Africa was a corporate unit comprising three major countries. Although, different in political leadership, since each of these countries was already under an independent elected government, their basic features were very similar. Hence, the Ismailis residing in these three different countries had more or less the same experiences and features to share. But in a very dramatic way this situation has changed within a short span of about three or four years. Tanzania has worked out its own politico-economic ideology, that of African socialism, if one cares to define it. Kenya has leaned towards mixed economy and Uganda has had its <u>coup d' état</u> which has had its most direct effects on the country's present economy and government. The recent expulsion of 'Asians' from Uganda has highlighted a major political event which has shown a dramatic significance on the question of the Ismailis as they are basically one of the groups of Asians. This major event was not foreseen by me and indeed it could not be called imminent when I first undertook this study. Since this historical event in late

1972, I have had to alter my entire thesis which was based on an assumption that Ismailis were one of the most adaptable and successful minority groups to have settled permanently throughout East Africa. The announcement of General Amin's decree changed the entire standpoint of my thesis. I was, therefore, compelled to write Chapter VI to outline the present position of the Ismailis, especially of those from Uganda. For this I have very little research material available and have almost entirely relied on my own evaluation of this major turn of events and have gathered my data from many informants and some of the members of the community who became victime in this recent expulsion. Of course, my other source of information, for this particular chapter is the press itself, both in Britain and in Uganda. Luckily, I was actually visiting Uganda from July until September, 1972 and saw the pageantry of events that took place, at least while I was there, as effects caused by General Amin's decree on all the citizens and residents of Uganda.

In a certain sense, an entire chapter on the current situation which roughly covers only about five years in East Africa, might seem out of proportion, since my emphasis on the challengingly wider spatial-temporal dimension keeps recurring throughout my thesis. A community with a history of over thirteen hundred years might not seem to have a lot to do with the events of merely five years that in a too relatively small area of the world, since we also know the fact that the members of this very community are spread over thirty-two other different countires. But this is where the reader must not lose sight of my initial theoretical consideration given to Gluckman's treatise on social change based on 'encapsulation' and 'structural duration', concepts already explained in the introductory chapter [4]. The events in the last five years can, therefore, be considered only in relation to all the East African Ismailis' success or failure of permanent settlement in the three constituent countries. It has not been necessary to describe the Kenyan exodus or the Tanzanian nationalisation in detail as the case of Ugandan expulsion has demanded. The first two events mentioned have had some effects on those Asians who were involved but in the case of Uganda,

all the Asian citizens with or without Ugandan passports were evacuated in the events of 1972. Hence, my detailed analysis in Chapter VI. Moreover, it is often assumed that Britain has absorbed all the 'refugees' from Uganda, but actual eye-witness accounts show that this has not been the case. The shrinking size of the Ismaili community in Britain indicates that many of these expelled members have neither been eligible to stay in Britain permanently, nor shown any desire to do so. In fact, many have preferred to join relatives in other Western countries like Canada and European or Scandinavian countries; also the Third World countries where Ugandan passport-holders were given rights to stay under the mandate of the United Nations. Since the Ugandan events, Ismailis have spread out even more widely in the last couple of years. This is evident from their bureaucratic structure of leadership which has emerged recently in these new areas. Ismailis now have district and territorial councils also in the United States of America and Canada. The reader might realise that if another world-wide Ismailia conference were held today, many more delegates would be represented from these new countries of their settlement like in the two WISE conferences mentioned in an earlier chapter.

This raises the question of social change, which is part of the title of this thesis. What nature of change has occurred in the Ismaili community? Is it of an 'organic' type or merely an 'oscillatory' kind [5]? Has the basic character in the organisation of the society changed? Has its status-role of leadership or the basic Ismaili doctrine changed at all? What is the role of the Imam in the Ismaili society today? To what extent can we define his role as the causative factor of change in the society? Does he change, while causing the community to change?

Barnett's book on Innovation - the Basis of Cultural Change which has already been mentioned in Chapter V is a piece of interesting literature and I wish to make a few further points from his study here. He says: "In defining an innovation as something that is qualitatively new, emphasis is placed upon reorganization rather than upon quantitative variation as the criterion of novelty ..... The essence of change,

however, lies in the restructuring of the parts so that a new pattern results, a pattern, the distinctness of which cannot be characterised merely in terms of an increase or decrease in the number of its component elements .... Irrespective of whether or not quantitative changes are entailed, all innovations are qualitative departures from habitual patterns" [6]. We have already noted that the Ismailis had to assume a state of concealment (taqiyyā) of their belief, lest the other conflicting groups persecuted them. But when it became possible for them to establish openly their new social identity through the Court Case in Bombay in 1866 [7], they became known as a clearly defined social group with a certain social structure based on their doctrinal principles or value-system. Can this be called a doctrinal change or merely a change in the organisation of the community?

Barnett makes another very relevant remark which, in a way, answers the question raised and I have quoted it here: "Institutional explanations of change, like institutional explanations of correlations, must assume a psychological foundation in the motivations of the people who initiate and support the changes" [8]. Applying this statement in the case of the Ismailis, we see why "psychological foundation in the motivations of the people" made it possible for the Ismailis to reform themselves without causing a revolution. Their motivations are imbibed in their doctrinal and psychological beliefs, in the acceptance of secular and religious authority of the Imam which provides them with sufficient conditions to want to please him. Since the Imamat is continuous, whatever the Imam-e-zamān tells them to do, gets carried through with the tremendous amount of drive which they inherently possess within the very structure and basis of their society. Barnett further expounds on this idea, and says that it is important to bear in mind that innovators do treat human beings as they do other objects in nature. They manipulate the psychical and psychosomatic attributes of themselves as they do the material aspects of the rest of their experience. "They treat persons not only as objects but as volitional, feeling, vascillating elements. The manipulation of these intangibles is, indeed, the height of innovative ingenuity" [9].

It is important to discuss here the spirit of innovation in the Ismaili society and the nature of the Imamat as being interwoven within their very social philosophy. We had discussed the doctrine of the Imamat in their ideological teachings as well as in their social existence. We had also examined the dual function of the Imamat as being of a corrective mechanism which prevents change from losing its pace and toppling over into indirection and on the other hand, its catalytic function which provides a secure base for rapid change. We had viewed this with consideration of Gluckman's equilibrium model in Chapter I. In Barnett's analysis of the basis of cultural change, an important observation of direct relevance to my study of the Ismailis is made by him, which is quoted here: "Under authoritative political systems the emphasis is upon the establishment of a dogmatic social philosophy. The dependent subjects are urged or coerced into submission to the dictates of those in control in accordance with a theory which apothesizes the paternalistic virtues of the select few and minimizes the intellectual abilities of the masses. Often the parent-child parallel is manifest or latent in this philosophy. The leader-elders know what is best for their spiritual children" [10]. This ideally resembles the position of the Imam as that of 'spiritual father' and since there are no elders who share this authority with him he wields tremendous influence on his followers in a 'paternalistic' and persuasive way; the terms of affection and philosophical nature are used also in return for him. He is referred by them as 'Spiritual Father and Mother', thus assuming the roles of both parents, and he is believed to possess divine substance, called the nūr, which is supposed to have derived from Allah as has been explained in detail in Chapter III. Those who obey his firmāns (commandments) without question or sceptical doubt are rewarded by the sight of Imam's Nūrāni dīdār, a state of highest spiritual elevation. Moreover, the Calvinistic nature of the Ismaili doctrine where success in the worldly affairs is considered essential, rapid social change or innovation is the obvious result of such a theological basis of the society.

Lastly, Barnett points out the role of competition in societies

which have an innovator. It is productive and provides potent incentive for increased effort, but it also distinctly enables new kinds of effort to achieve greater shares of the rewards. "It stimulates innovation as well as prolonged and intensified effort along conventional lines", as he points out, adding, "It can do this, not only in struggles for economic rewards, but in contests for favours, prestige, adherents and power. Sometimes the competition is strictly individualised. On the other hand, it may require the co-operation of individuals organised into political parties, clubs, sects, factions, schools of thought, or ethnic groups" [11]. All these quotations are selected here to point out the direct application of the ideas contained in them to our concrete example of the Ismaili society.

In this short thesis, we have seen how a non-distinctive minority group of Ismailis living in India, during the Imamat of the first Aga Khan who arrived among them from Iran, has achieved a degree of success in renovating itself. The epoch of the last four successive Aga Khans in the social history of the Ismailis can be singled out as the most significant phase. However, we must not overlook the recent stage of their development without relating it to similar phases in their long history of the Imamat. This period, of the Imamat of the four Aga Khans, should be encapsulated with the whole history of the Ismaili community, which stretches back to over thirteen hundred years of Imamat within this community. As a student in anthropology, I have tried to write this thesis as a mere introduction to this challenging community, which has numerous aspects which render themselves in such a manner that no clear-cut methodology can be used, as is already used by other scholars, or is to exist within the discipline of social anthropology alone.

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