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Identity, History and Trans-Nationality in Central Asia

The Mountain Communities of Pamir

Edited by **Dagikhudo Dagiev and
Carole Faucher**

First published 2019
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-0-8153-5755-1 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-351-12426-3 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by codeMantra



Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

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- 8 Abdullah Jan has made a huge effort to reconstruct the history of Ismaili *da'wa* in Gilgit-Baltistan in his book.
- 9 The term *pir* is referred to a 'spiritual director' or 'spiritual guide'.
- 10 For further information on this, see S. H. Nasr ed. (1991), *Islamic Spirituality (Manifestations)*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.
- 11 Dr. Azizullah Najib Hunzai has done a commendable research on ceremony of *Charagh-Rawshan*, in 2009. He compared ten manuscripts and identified the Sufi, *Ithna'ashri* and Ismaili elements carefully. According to his findings, this ceremony is the outcome of Ismaili, Sufi and *Ithna'ashri* interface in the Central Asia.
- 12 Allama Nasir al-Din Hunzai has authored a book explaining the *ta'wil* of the symbol of light ritually enacted in the *Charagh-Rawshan* ceremony. Allama Nasir al-Din has also strengthened the tradition of Nasir-i Khusraw in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, culturally, intellectually and spiritually through writing poetry, promoting spiritual music and translating some of Nasir's books into Urdu.
- 13 *Muqarnus* is an Annual, dedicated to visual cultures of the Islamic world.
- 14 Nasir's work, *Jami' al-Hikmatayn* is based on this theme.
- 15 Nasir's leanings towards a meditative study of nature and more practical approach to life makes his world view closer to that of Aristotle than to that of Plato who is less concerned with nature and more interested in the world of ideas.
- 16 The human body and its external senses function only as a medium to the actual experience of the sensory pleasure which occurs at the level of rational soul.
- 17 In the 17th chapter of *Zad al-Musafirin*, Nasir's theory of Divine writing and speech contains crucial aspects of his epistemology.
- 18 The term '*ta'wil*' refers to a process whereby the inner meaning of the Qu'ran and internal purpose of creation is accessed.

9 Religious identity in the Pamirs

The institutionalisation of the Ismā'īlī *Da'wa* in Shughnān¹

Daniel Beben

One of the most conspicuous aspects of the culture and identity of the Pamiri peoples today is the prevalence of Ismā'īlī Shī'ism within the region. Yet the prominence of Ismā'īlism in the Pamirs in the present day is matched equally by the uncertainty that surrounds the question of the date and circumstances of its introduction. While both scholarship and the oral traditions of the Pamiri peoples ascribe a foundational role in the introduction and spread of Ismā'īlism in the region to the 11th-century Ismā'īlī poet, philosopher and missionary (*dā'ī*) Nāṣir-i Khusraw, the subsequent history of the Ismā'īlī mission or *da'wa* in the region in the centuries following his death remains almost entirely obscure (Beben, 2017a). Alongside Nāṣir-i Khusraw, the Ismā'īlīs of Shughnān also maintain oral traditions concerning the role of a legendary figure by the name of Shāh Khāmūsh, who, along with several companions, is likewise credited with a later role in the establishment or re-establishment of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in the region (Gross, 2013). By contrast with Nāṣir-i Khusraw, whose historical role as a representative of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* is well-attested, the figure of Shāh Khāmūsh and his historical identity is far more ambiguous. A closer examination of the evidence reveals a much more diverse and equivocal array of narratives connected with this individual that circulated in the past, in comparison with those that are reflected in public memory today.

Alongside the scholarship on Nāṣir-i Khusraw, a number of studies have examined the role of the Ismā'īlī religious leadership (known as the *pīrs*) in the more recent history of the Badakhshān region. In particular, recent studies have highlighted the critical role the *pīrs* performed in the political life of the community in the tumultuous period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the Badakhshān region was partitioned between the British and Russian Empires (Elnazarov and Aksakolov, 2011; Iloliev, 2013; Khariukov, 1995; Khodzhibekov, 2015; Mastibekov, 2014; Shokhumorov, 2008). In part owing to the more extensive documentation available from this period in the colonial archives, this phase in the history of the Pamiri Ismā'īlī community has received a far greater level of attention in comparison with earlier periods. Consequently, there remains a vast gap in the current historiography on Ismā'īlism in the Pamirs, as the period between the

career of Nāṣir-i Khusraw and the introduction of Russian colonial rule in the late 19th century remains almost entirely unexplored. Yet much of the scholarship on the history of the *pīrs* in Badakhshān is nonetheless marked by an implicit or explicit attempt to project the image of the institutional structures found in the colonial-era documentation back into the distant past, even to the time of Nāṣir-i Khusraw himself, imagining it to have remained relatively unperturbed by external forces in the interim. While the lack of attention given to earlier periods may be justified in part by the scantiness of the sources, nonetheless the assumptions offered in the current literature of a more or less direct continuity between Nāṣir-i Khusraw and the institutional structures recorded in colonial-era documentation is unwarranted and merits a closer examination of the evidence.

In this chapter, I will examine the earliest available evidence directly attesting to the presence of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* in the Pamiri districts, focusing particularly on the Shughnān region. I offer here two primary arguments regarding the nature of this process. First, I will explore a series of developments that occurred between the 17th and 19th centuries that enabled a dramatic expansion of the *daʿwa* in the Shughnān region and in the neighbouring Pamiri districts. While this expansion may not mark the *origin* itself of Ismāʿīlism in this region, I argue that it does mark a significant change in the *status* of the *daʿwa* there. This change entailed the cementing of a close relationship between the *pīrs* and the political authorities of Shughnān, which led to the enduring institutionalisation of the authority of the *daʿwa* in the region. Hence, rather than the archaic institution it has often been portrayed to be, I argue here that the institutionalised status of the *pīrship* in Shughnān found in colonial-era sources can be dated to no earlier than the 18th century. Second, I demonstrate that this process of institutionalisation was accompanied by a shift in the narrative traditions associated with Shāh Khāmūsh and his companions that discursively transformed them and their historical role in the introduction of Ismāʿīlism in the region.

Origins of the Ismāʿīlī tradition in Shughnān

One issue that has served as an obstacle towards a better understanding of the history of Ismāʿīlism in Shughnān concerns the terminology connected with the territory of Badakhshān itself. In contemporary parlance, the territories of Shughnān and neighbouring Rūshān are considered an integral part of the Badakhshān region. Yet historically this was not always the case. The sources from the pre-Mongol era employ the name Badakhshān to refer to only one among a series of independent kingdoms within the territory of present-day Badakhshān (Moezzi, 2012). While in the Mongol era the term Badakhshān appears to have gradually extended to cover the bulk of the territory of present-day southern or Afghan Badakhshān, the more northerly Pamiri districts remained politically, culturally and terminologically autonomous. This is an important distinction to make when considering the

history of the Ismāʿīlī tradition in the region, as references to Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *daʿwa* efforts in Badakhshān and subsequent references to Ismāʿīlī activity in Badakhshān in the medieval period are often applied anachronistically in scholarship to the present-day understanding of that term, and not to the more limited sense it held in previous times.

Judging from his own works, the period of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's exile in Badakhshān and of his *daʿwa* career there appears to have been concentrated primarily in and around the Yungān district, with no mention of any visits to the Pamiri districts. Following the career of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, there are no further references to Ismāʿīlī activity in the Badakhshān region for several centuries, and it is not until the 14th century at the earliest that references to an Ismāʿīlī presence in Badakhshān begin to appear in Ismāʿīlī sources; moreover, subsequent references to Ismāʿīlī activity in the region in both Ismāʿīlī and non-Ismāʿīlī sources likewise refer only generically to Badakhshān and not to the Pamiri districts (Beben, 2015:233–255). Among the more precise references to Ismāʿīlī activity in this period is the account of the early 16th-century Ismāʿīlī uprising against the Timurid rulers of Badakhshān given in the *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī* of Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dūghlāt, who describes the revolt as being centred in the town of Rāgh, in present-day Afghan Badakhshān (Dūghlāt, 1283Sh./2004:346–347). It must be emphasised that the Pamiri districts were largely outside the purview of the Central Asian sources of the late medieval period, and it is entirely possible that an earlier Ismāʿīlī presence there may have gone unrecorded. Yet further inquiries into this area remain purely speculative, pending the availability of additional sources.

The earliest known direct reference to Ismāʿīlī activity in Shughnān appears only in the 17th century, found in the *Baḥr al-asrār* of Maḥmūd b. Amīr Valī Balkhī. The *Baḥr al-asrār* was completed in 1050/1640, having been commissioned by Nadr Muḥammad Khān, the Uzbek ruler of Balkh, and relates a number of campaigns by the Khān to extend his authority into the eastern reaches of the Balkh region. Balkhī relates that for a period of 40 years the territory of Shāhdārā (*sic*: Shākh dara) of the Rūshān region (*sic*) was engulfed by the forces of 'Shī'ism and innovation' (*tashayyu' va ibtadā'*), which had been carried thence from Darvāz (Balkhī:276b). According to Balkhī, all traces of this movement were extirpated by Nadr Muḥammad Khān in a campaign launched in Shawwāl 1044 (March–April 1635), and the region was restored to Sunni Islam (*tajdīd-i shī'ā'ir-i ahl-i sunnat va jamā'at dar ān mamlakat dā'ir va sā'ir gardīd*); he notes, however, that the sect persisted in the regions of Chitrār and Bāshghur, which remained beyond the remit of the Khān.²

As seen from the accounts in the *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī* and the *Baḥr al-asrār*, the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshān appear in the Central Asian sources of the 16th and the 17th century almost solely within the context of revolts against Timurid and Uzbek rule.³ In this regard, the Ismāʿīlīs may be reckoned as one among a series of messianic insurgent movements in the mountainous

regions of the Indo-Central Asian borderlands that resisted the centralising impulses of early-modern empires, including the so-called 'Kafirs' (Bartol'd, 1973:21–22) and the Rawshaniyya of the Hindu Kush region (Andreyev, 2000; Arlinghaus, 1993), and the Nūrbakhshiyya of Kashmir and Baltistān (Bashir, 2003) who, like the Ismā'īlīs, were subject to repression by Ḥaydar Dūghlāt. Beginning in the 18th century, however, a series of political developments in Central Asia and the Badakhshān region took place that permitted a dramatic shift in the scope and status of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*, which enabled it to move from a primarily oppositional role to a politically and socially institutionalised one.

Badakhshān in the 17th and 18th centuries

Before discussing further the evidence for Ismā'īlī activity in this period, it will be necessary to outline some of the more general political history of Badakhshān in this era, in order to provide the context for understanding the shift that occurred in the status of the *da'wa* in the second half of the 18th century. For the history of Badakhshān in the 17th and 18th centuries, we are largely dependent upon a single source: the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*. The *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān* as known in its published editions is a work in two parts: an original portion completed in 1223/1809, whose authorship is disputed (Bezhan, 2008), and a continuation penned by Faḍl 'Alī Bek Surkh-Afsar in 1325/1907, which continues the narrative down to the colonial partition of Badakhshān and the annexation of the northern Pamiri districts to the Russian Empire. The narrative of the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān* begins in 1068/1657–1658, in which year it is related that the people of the city of Yaftal, having tired of the oppressive rule of the Qaṭaghānid Uzbeks, rose up in revolt and solicited Mīr Yārī Beg Khān, a Naqshbandī shaykh of the Dahbīdī lineage, to travel from Samarqand and become their leader (Badakhshī and Surkh-Afsar, 1997:1b–2a). Despite periodic challenges to his rule, both internal and external, Yārī Beg Khān remained the ruler of Badakhshān for the next 50 years, until his death in 1118/1706–1707, and he obtained a patent confirming his rule in Badakhshān from the Uzbek ruler Subhānqulī Khān (Badakhshī and Surkh-Afsar, 1997:5b). Among the accomplishments attributed to him is his capture of the *khirqā-yi mubārak* (Grigor'ev, 2007; McChesney, 1991:222–231), a cloak reputed to have belonged to the Prophet Muḥammad that Yārī Beg Khān seized from a group of rival Dahbīdī shaykhs who were traveling with the cloak to India (Badakhshī and Surkh-Afsar, 1997:6a–7a). Yārī Beg had a shrine built for the cloak in the town of Jūzjān, later renamed Fayḍābād ('blessed abode') in reference to the cloak's presence there.

Yārī Beg Khān's long reign is portrayed in the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān* as a sort of mythic golden age of unified rule in contrast with the fratricide and fragmentation that characterised the reign of his descendants. Upon his death in 1118/1706–1707, Yārī Beg Khān divided his kingdom among

his eight sons, establishing an enduring appanage system that remained in place down to the end of the 19th century (Ibid.:7a–7b). Mīr Yārī Beg was succeeded in Fayḍābād by his oldest son, Shāh Sulaymān Beg, who successfully fended off an invasion led by the dynasty's long-standing opponent, Maḥmūd Bī, the ruler of neighbouring Qunduz. Following Sulaymān Beg's death in 1125/1713–1714 the region entered a period of fratricidal conflict between Yārī Beg's remaining sons, from which his sixth son Ḍiyā' al-Dīn emerged victorious in 1130/1717–1718. Ḍiyā' al-Dīn ruled in Fayḍābād until his death in 1148/1735–1736 and was succeeded in that position by his son Mīrzā Nubāt, who ruled until his own death in 1161/1748. The remit of their authority, however, was much reduced in comparison with Yārī Beg Khān, and Fayḍābād remained but one of a series of competing power centres throughout Badakhshān.

Upon Mīrzā Nubāt's death in 1161/1748 control over Fayḍābād came under the control of Mīr Sulṭān Shāh, the grandson of Yārī Beg's second son, Mīr Yūsuf 'Alī, whose lineage had been one of the chief rivals of the line of Ḍiyā' al-Dīn (Ibid.:28a). Mīr Sulṭān Shāh subsequently became embroiled in a series of conflicts with neighbouring powers. Among these were a series of conflicts fought with the rulers of Shughnān, which I will discuss further below. Mīr Sulṭān Shāh also fought a series of campaigns against the region of Rāgh, a semi-independent principality located between Badakhshān and the independent Pamiri principality of Darvāz that is also mentioned in the *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī* as the centre of an Ismā'īlī uprising in the early 16th century. The rulers of Rāgh had alternated between Darvāz and Badakhshān in their allegiance and payment of tribute. The ruler of Rāgh in the time of Mīr Sulṭān Shāh, Shāh Yādgar, had previously submitted tribute to Darvāz but desired to switch his allegiance to Fayḍābād (Ibid.:40a–42a). This move angered the Darvāz Shāhs, who launched a punitive expedition against Shāh Yādgar. Mīr Sulṭān Shāh in turn assembled an army in support of his new ally and succeeded in expelling the forces of Darvāz from Rāgh, after which Shāh Yādgar is said to have remained a loyal subject to Fayḍābād, at least for a time. Nonetheless, this incident marks the beginning of a long series of increasingly assertive interventions by the rulers of Darvāz and Shughnān into the politics of Badakhshān.

The *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān* first addresses the presence of the Ismā'īlīs in its account of a campaign led by Mīr Sulṭān Shāh in 1165/1751–1752 against Chitrār, another independent principality to the south of Badakhshān along the border with the Indian subcontinent (Ibid.:43b–45b). In sharp contrast with the narratives of other military campaigns, the account of the Chitrār campaign is cast in explicitly religious terms. Declaring that 'If God is just he will grant me victory',⁴ Mīr Sulṭān Shāh launched his campaign against the 'false, abominable Shī'ī Ismā'īlīs (*ahl-i shī'a-yi shanī'a-yi bāṭila-yi ismā'īliyya*) who reside throughout the realms of Badakhshān and Chitrār'. The Chitrār campaign concluded with a resounding victory for Mīr Sulṭān Shāh, after which he travelled personally

to Chitrār to bask in his success. It is related that he retained 3,000 slaves for his personal retinue and took 15,000 captives in total. The campaign is marked as one of the crowning achievements of Mīr Sulṭān Shāh's reign and was followed by successful campaigns against Kulāb and elsewhere (Ibid.:46b–47a). In the following years Badakhshān became the destination for a number of prominent scholars, poets, and administrators who travelled from India and elsewhere to serve in Mīr Sulṭān Shāh's court (Ibid.:49a–53a; Papas, 2004).

Before long, however, the fate of the kingdom of Badakhshān would meet with a devastating reversal, as it was subjected and rendered tributary by the rapidly expanding Afghan Durrānī Empire under Aḥmad Shāh (Grevemeyer, 1982:56–64). The curtailment of Mīr Sulṭān Shāh's authority that accompanied this invasion was crowned by Aḥmad Shāh's capture of the *khirqa-yi mubārak* and its removal to Kabul.⁵ This development clearly marked a demoralising blow to Mīr Sulṭān Shāh, with the loss of the *khirqa* symbolising the sharp reduction in his authority. This humiliation was followed by a devastating defeat at the hands of Qubād Khān, the ruler of Qunduz. After his death, Mīr Sulṭān Shāh's attenuated realm was inherited by his son, Mīr Muḥammad Shāh. Mīr Muḥammad Shāh also suffered a series of humiliating defeats at the hands of Qubād Khān and was even held as a prisoner in Qunduz for a time (Badakhshī and Surkh-Afsar, 1997:62a–65b). But most importantly for our discussion, Mīr Muḥammad Shāh's reign also saw the rise of a much more assertive kingdom of Shughnān to his north, to which I will now turn.

The rise of the Shughnān hill-state

As noted above, references to Shughnān in the medieval sources are extraordinarily sparse. The few references available from Arabic geographical sources in the pre-Mongol era sparingly describe Shughnān only as an independent kingdom to the north of Badakhshān.⁶ Among the latest references to the presence of an independent kingdom in Shughnān is found in the work of Al-Bīrūnī, who in his *Kitāb taḥqīq mā li'l-Hind* (c. 1030) mentions the presence of a kingdom of the “Shughnān Shāh” bordering on the realm of Kashmir (al-Bīrūnī, 1910:206). In the wake of the Mongol conquests, however, there are no further references to an independent polity in the region until after the establishment of the Yārī Beg kingdom in Badakhshān, when a Shughnān ‘hill-state’ once again appears in the sources. A number of observers have been misled by the claims of this new polity to archaic origins. As I will discuss further below, the rulers of Shughnān in this period traced their lineage back to a legendary figure by the name of Shāh Khāmūsh, for whom dates have been proposed ranging from the 12th to the 16th century. Nineteenth century travel accounts report that the rulers of Shughnān, along with the Yārid dynasty and the rulers of neighbouring

Darvāz, Chitrār and elsewhere, also adopted the earlier Badakhshānī tradition of a claim to descent from Alexander the Great, stretching their imagined origins even further back into antiquity.⁷ But while some scholars have displayed a tendency to accept uncritically this claim to a primordial past, in fact textual and epigraphic evidence attesting to the presence of an organised polity in Shughnān in the early-modern period becomes available only from the late 17th century onwards.⁸

It is almost certainly not a coincidence that a renewed process of state formation in Shughnān occurred following the establishment of the Yārī-Beg kingdom in neighbouring Badakhshān. Despite the claims by these rulers of Shughnān to archaic origins, comparative studies on the process of state formation in mountainous regions show such formations to be notoriously unstable, and generally dependent upon state formation in neighbouring low-land regions, with whom highland rulers often simultaneously hold both a conflictual and symbiotic relationship.⁹ Highland states often also adopt a sort of mimicry of the cultural and political traditions of their more powerful lowland neighbours, who in turn rely upon the highland rulers as clients for policing their borders and securing trade routes, and occasionally as providers of military labour. Such a client relationship between Badakhshān and the Pamiri districts appears to have been established early on during the reign of Mīr Yārī Beg, of whom the *Tadhkira-yi Muqīm Khānī* relates that he recruited a body of mountaineer troops (*jama'ī az gharcha-yi kūhistānī*), most likely referring to Shughnānīs or Darvāzīs, for use in his campaign against Maḥmūd Bī of Qunduz (Munshī, 1380 Sh./2001:225). Hence, the emergence of this new hill-state in Shughnān may be considered as a classic case of ‘secondary state formation’, spurred by the consolidation of political authority in Badakhshān under the Yārids, whose kingdom was the first independent polity to have been established in Badakhshān since the Timurid annexation in the mid-15th century.

The relationship between the rulers of Shughnān and Badakhshān in this period perfectly illustrates the dualistic nature of the relationship between highland and lowland authorities; while the client relationship between the Yārid dynasty and Shughnān facilitated the process of state formation in the latter, in subsequent decades the rulers of Shughnān became more powerful and posed an increasingly potent threat to Badakhshānī authorities. Shughnān first makes an appearance in the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān* during the rule of Mīr Sulṭān Shāh, when its rulers (not yet named) are said to have formed an alliance with the rulers of neighbouring Darvāz (Badakhshī and Surkh-Afsar, 1997:29b–30a). Darvāz in this period, according to the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*, was ruled by a confederation of brothers, all sons of a certain Shāh Gharībullāh.¹⁰ Together the forces of Shughnān and Darvāz launched an attack against Mīr Sulṭān Shāh in 1162/1749. Mīr Sulṭān Shāh suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of the Darvāz and Shughnān Shāhs, who took a large portion of his army, along with his brother, Mīrzā Burhān al-Dīn, into

captivity. Mīr Sulṭān Shāh was forced to send a peace delegation to Darvāz in order to plead for the release of his brother and the other captives. The narrative of this delegation provides some insight into the nature of the religious environment in the Pamiri districts in this period, and hence merits a more detailed analysis (Ibid.:31a–32b).

The delegation was headed by a certain Mullā 'Azīm Ākhūnd Muftī, who appears to have been a high-ranking religious official of Badakhshān. Arriving in Darvāz, Mullā 'Azīm Ākhūnd displayed great respect to Tughma Shāh, ruler of Qal'a-yi Khumb, the capital of the region. Tughma Shāh returned the display of respect and invited Mullā 'Azīm Ākhūnd to join him in a gathering of notables and *'ulamā* in his court. During this gathering, a religious debate arose among the assembled. Mullā 'Azīm Ākhūnd was invited to join the discussion and showed remarkable talent in his debate with the Shāh's scholars. His performance greatly impressed Tughma Shāh, who invited Mullā 'Azīm Ākhūnd to return the following day and every day thereafter. Finally, having developed a strong rapport with Tughma Shāh, Mullā 'Azīm Ākhūnd entreated him to release Mīrzā Burhān al-Dīn and the other captives, after which the delegation returned successfully to Fayḍābād.

This account is important for our discussion for what it reveals regarding the religious environment in Darvāz and Shughnān in the mid-18th century, a period for which little information is otherwise available. The account from the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān* shows the rulers of Darvāz in this period to be adherents of Sunni Islam, but also portrays them as relatively naïve and inexperienced in matters of the faith, and easily impressed by Mullā 'Azīm Ākhūnd's display of religious knowledge. Broadly speaking, the inhabitants of Darvāz and Shughnān throughout the text are depicted as being brave and daring in their military prowess, but of a demonstrably lower level of cultural development, illustrating a common motif in writings about highland peoples among their neighbours.¹¹ The narrative of the delegation in its broad outlines invites a comparison with conversion narratives found in accounts from earlier periods, which typically employ the motif of the courtly debate found in the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*.¹² While the narrative in this text is undoubtedly constructed so as to demonstrate the intellectual prowess of Mīr Sulṭān Shāh's court over that of his rivals in Darvāz and Shughnān, it nonetheless provides a window into the relatively more recent process of Islamisation in these regions in comparison with Badakhshān, as well as the possible receptivity of these regions to external religious influences, factors which would play a critical role in the spread of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in these regions in subsequent decades.

The legendary traditions of Shāh Khāmūsh in Shughnān

As noted briefly above, the rulers of Shughnān from the 18th to the early 20th century traced their lineage to a figure known as Shāh Khāmūsh, who is said to have come to Badakhshān from Iran with several companions at some

indeterminate time in the past and to have established a tradition of sacred kingship in Shughnān.¹³ A shrine belonging to this figure is also found in the town of Mūminobod in the neighbouring Khatlon province in southern Tajikistan. The most detailed biographical narrative of Shāh Khāmūsh is found in Faḍl 'Alī Bek Surkh-Afsar's appendix to the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*. Surkh-Afsar, who claims to have taken his account of this figure from a source titled *Kitāb-i shajarat al-sādāt*, describes him as a sayyid descended from Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (Badakhshī and Surkh-Afsar, 1997:118a–126b). The account makes no mention of Shāh Khāmūsh having any connection with Shī'ism or Ismā'īlism, but rather describes him as a disciple of the renowned Ḥanbalī Sufi shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (d. 561/1166) and a spiritual (*uvaysī*) disciple to Junayd Baghdādī (d. 298/910), and hence situates him firmly within the Sunni Sufi tradition. Yet, as we will see, other sources from the 19th and 20th centuries also refer to this figure as a bearer of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*. As I will outline below, the shifting narratives connected with this figure attest to the expanding influence of the *da'wa* in this period and the intertwining of Ismā'īlism with more archaic indigenous institutions and traditions.

What may be the earliest reference to the figure of Shāh Khāmūsh is found in the 16th-century Persian *tadhkira* of Ḥasan Nithārī Bukhārī, the *Mudhakkir-i aḥbāb* (completed 974/1566–1567). In his account of Sulaymān Shāh, the Timurid governor of Badakhshān, Nithārī mentions that he is a sayyid on his father's side, whose lineage can be traced back to a certain Mīr Khāmūsh (Nithārī Bukhārī, 1377 Sh./1999:64). No further information is given regarding this Mīr Khāmūsh and it is unclear if it refers to the same figure found in the later Badakhshāni sources; however, the correspondence of the names and geographic context, along with the emphasis on his sayyid lineage, indicates that the same individual is intended. If this is the case, this suggests that the descent claim advanced by the rulers of Shughnān may emulate an earlier genealogical tradition of sacred kingship connected with Shāh Khāmūsh in the Badakhshān region dating back to Timurid times.¹⁴

Narratives regarding Shāh Khāmūsh are found in two additional local histories from the early 20th century.¹⁵ The first of these is a work titled *Tārīkh-i Shughnān*, written in 1912 by Sayyid Ḥaydar Shāh, son of Mubārak Shāh of Parshinev, at the request of the Russian scholar Aleksandr Semenov.¹⁶ The second is a history written in 1930 by two schoolteachers in Khorugh, Qurbān Muḥammadzāda (Ākhūnd Sulaymān) and Muḥabbat Shāhzāda (Shāh Fiṭūr), titled *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān* (not to be confused with the earlier text by the same name discussed above).¹⁷ Despite its name, the work is in fact a local history of Shughnān from the early 19th century to the establishment of Soviet power. While the details of these two accounts cannot be considered at length here, it suffices to state that although their narratives differ in some significant ways, in their broad outlines both sources concur in recounting the coming of Shāh Khāmūsh from Iran, his overthrow of the oppressive fire-worshipping kings who ruled at Qal'a-yi Bar-Panj (the pre-Soviet capital of Shughnān) and his establishment on the throne

of Shughnān. Significantly, neither mentions any connection between Shāh Khāmūsh and Ismāʿīlism.

European travel accounts from Badakhshān from the late 19th century present a more diverse array of narratives concerning Shāh Khāmūsh and his confessional identity. T. E. Gordon, who travelled through Badakhshān in 1876, relates the following account:

According to Shighni accounts, the family of the Shah of Shighnan originally came from Persia, and the first arrival from that country (said to have been between 500 and 700 years ago) was the Shah-i-Khamosh, who was a Syud and a Fakir. The country was at that time in the hands of the Zardushtis (ancient Guebers - fire-worshippers), a powerful and learned race. The Shah-i-Khamosh commenced to teach these people the Koran. There were already at this time Musulmans in the neighbouring country of Darvaz, and many of them flocked into Shighnan as followers of the Shah-i-Khamosh. In about ten years he had converted large numbers of the people, and a religious war commenced, which ended in this leader wresting the kingdom from Kahakah, the ruler of Shighnan and Roshan under the Zardushtis, the seat of whose government was then at Balkh. After this the teaching of the people continued, and in ten years more all had been converted to the Shiah form of the Muhammadan faith.

(Gordon, 1876:141)

The testimony of Gordon's informants concerning the arrival of the followers of Shāh Khāmūsh into Shughnān from Darvāz and the ensuing 'religious war' with the 'Zardushtis' of Balkh demonstrates several curious parallels with the report by Maḥmūd Balkhī (cited above) on the coming of the Ismāʿīlī 'heretics' to Shughnān from Darvāz in the 17th century and the subsequent conflict with Nadr Muḥammad Khān, the Uzbek ruler of Balkh. These parallels may indicate an intertwining between the memory of these events with the narrative traditions surrounding Shāh Khāmūsh. As Iloliev has demonstrated in several studies (2008b; 2015), the term Qahqahah (or Kahakah in Gordon's rendition) frequently appears in Ismāʿīlī conversion narratives from Wakhan and elsewhere in the Pamirs as a generic title for an oppressive ruler who is defeated in a contest with a saint or holy man.¹⁸ Iloliev suggests that the etymology of this term may be traced to the Turko-Mongol term Qaghan (or Khan), which in the case of Gordon's narrative further suggests a link with the figure of the Chinggisid Uzbek ruler Nadr Muḥammad Khān.

Gordon's account is echoed nearly verbatim in the work of Henry Trotter, who likewise describes Shāh Khāmūsh as 'a Mohametan of the Shiah faith' (Trotter, 1878:216). Trotter also records that the shrine of Shāh Khāmūsh was located in the vicinity of the fortress of Qal'a-yi Bar-Panj, which served as the capital of Shughnān down to the early Soviet era. Yet

a very different account is given by Ney Elias, who travelled through the region a decade later:

The family of the Shighni Mirs trace their origin to a certain Shah-i-Khamosh, a Darwesh and Sayed of Bokhara, who appears to have first converted the people to Sunni Mohammadism, in his capacity of Pir, and then to have become Mir over them. Long afterwards the people became Shiah, though the family of the Mirs remained Sunni till the last. When Shah-i-Khamosh lived I have not been able to ascertain, and there are no written histories in the country.

(Elias, 1886:47)

Elias' account would seem to most closely correspond with what the historical record suggests: that Shāh Khāmūsh, to whatever degree he may be associated with a historical figure, was probably not in his earliest narrative incarnation seen as a purveyor of Ismāʿīlism, and that the influence of the Ismāʿīlī *da'wa* came to be felt in Shughnān only in later times. As further attestation to this, it may be noted that the earliest historical account of the Ismāʿīlī *da'wa* in Badakhshān, the *Silk-i guhar-rīz* (discussed further below), makes no reference whatsoever to Shāh Khāmūsh or his companions, nor are any references to them found in earlier Ismāʿīlī literature produced in Badakhshān or elsewhere. Taken as a whole, the variations in the reports found in accounts from the 19th and early 20th centuries suggest that the oral narratives connected with Shāh Khāmūsh and his companions underwent a dramatic alteration in this period, in effect transforming them into Ismāʿīlī *dā'īs*, and hence nativising and legitimating the *da'wa* in the Shughnān region by discursively intertwining it with a local tradition of sacred kingship. This process has reached its fruition in Shughnān today, as oral traditions there almost universally celebrate the figure of Shāh Khāmūsh and his companions as purveyors of the *da'wa*.¹⁹ Below I will attempt, insofar as the evidence will permit, to outline the historical process by which this intertwining of the Ismāʿīlī *da'wa* and the ruling class of Shughnān may have occurred.

Shāh Vanjī and the Ismāʿīlī *Da'wa* in Shughnān

As noted above, the reduction of Badakhshāni authority at the hands of the Afghans provided a ripe opportunity for the rulers of Shughnān to expand their own authority. This shift became most apparent beginning with the figure of Shāh Vanjī, the first ruler of Shughnān mentioned by name in the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*, who appears during the reign of Mīr Muḥammad Shāh and whose rule in Shughnān covered roughly the final two decades of the 18th century. Following Mīr Muḥammad Shāh's humiliation at the hands of Qubād Khān, Shāh Vanjī took the opportunity to launch a devastating campaign against Badakhshān, capturing the city of Fayḍābād itself

for some time (Badakhshī and Surkh-Afsar, 1997:65b–67a). Although the Shughnānīs were eventually repelled, Shāh Vanjī and his successors continue to appear as thorns in the side of the rulers of Badakhshān throughout the remainder of the narrative of the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*.

The power of Shāh Vanjī and the Shughnān Shāhs in this period also profited from a close relationship with another emerging power on their northern and western borders: the Khanate of Khoqand (Levi, 2007). The Khoqandi ruler ‘Ālim Khān (r. 1799–1811) employed a large number of troops drawn from the mountainous regions surrounding the Ferghana valley in his army, echoing the earlier practice of the use of Pamiri military labour by the rulers of Badakhshān. According to the *Tārīkh-i Shahrūkī*, ‘Ālim Khān formed two special military units composed entirely of mountaineer troops (known under the title *Ghalcha*), one comprised of soldiers from Qarātegin and the Vakhsh valley, and another of troops drawn from Darvāz, Rūshān, Shughnān and Chitrār (Khūqandī, 1885:42–43). As outsiders to the Uzbek tribal system, these units were renowned for their personal fealty to ‘Ālim Khān and played a decisive role in several of his campaigns against Bukhara and in the Qazaq Steppe. A later ruler of Khoqand, Muḥammad Khudāyār Khān (r. 1845–1858), also brokered the marriage of one of his sons to the daughter of the ruler of Shughnān.²⁰

It is with the ruler Shāh Vanjī as well that we find the first signs of a relationship developing between the rulers of Shughnān and the Ismā‘īlī *da’wa*. The *Tārīkh-i Shughnān* reports that although he himself was not an Ismā‘īlī, Shāh Vanjī nonetheless purified the land of all those who opposed the Ismā‘īlī faith and compelled the fire-worshippers of Shughnān to flee to Yarkand, after which he ruled the territory of Shughnān with complete justice.²¹ A more complete account of the relationship between Shāh Vanjī and the Ismā‘īlī *da’wa* is given in an earlier text titled the *Silk-i guhar-rīz*, which was authored c. 1835 in the town of Munjān (in present-day Afghan Badakhshān) by a representative of a family of Ismā‘īlī *pīrs* who traced their lineage to a legendary *dā’ī* by the name of Sayyid Suhrāb Valī (depicted anachronistically in the text as a disciple of Nāṣir-i Khusraw).²² While the *Silk-i guhar-rīz* has been known to scholarship since the early 20th century, at least by name, its significance as a source for the history of the Ismā‘īlī *da’wa* in the Badakhshān region – in fact the earliest known narrative source to exist on the subject – has only recently come to be appreciated. The core of this text presents a hagiographical narrative of the life of Nāṣir-i Khusraw and his coming to Badakhshān; consequently, due to its ‘legendary’ nature the text was widely derided by Soviet scholars as containing merely a collection of fantastical stories without historical value. While the value of the text as a hagiographical work in its own right has now come to be better appreciated (Ioliev, 2008a:27–46), there are also a number of other valuable elements of the work that have remained overlooked. In particular, in a later section of the work the author presents a series of narratives about the career of his grandfather, Khwāja Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, who by his account

was the head of the *da’wa* in Badakhshān in his day. This section of the text contains a wealth of previously untapped information on the history of the *da’wa* in the 18th century. Most importantly for our purposes, the *Silk-i guhar-rīz* reports that Khwāja Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ appointed his chief deputy, Khwāja Salmān, as the “*khalīfa* of Shughnān and of Shāh Vanjī,” suggesting a position as a sort of spiritual tutor to the latter (*Silk-i guhar-rīz*, 108). The text adds that both Shāh Vanjī and the Shāh of Darvāz pledged their fealty to Khwāja Salmān, and all their territories became subject to his *da’wa*. Khwāja Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ also appointed another of his deputies, Khwāja Badal, as *khalīfa* to the valleys of Shākh dara and Ghārān in Shughnān, where previously there was no community of believers (*aṣlān dar ānjā mu’min nabūda*) (Ibid.:112–113).

The explicit reference by the *Silk-i guhar-rīz* to the previous lack of an established Ismā‘īlī presence in the Shākh dara region is striking when considering the reference noted above in the *Baḥr al-asrār*, which testifies to the history of an Ismā‘īlī-led revolt in the region approximately 150 years prior, along with its suppression by Uzbek authorities. These earlier events receive no mention in the *Silk-i guhar-rīz*, which instead casts Khwāja Salmān’s and Khwāja Badal’s mission as marking the introduction of the *da’wa* into the region, suggesting the lack of an institutional continuity within the *da’wa* with earlier efforts in the region. The primary difference between the mission of Khwāja Salmān and Khwāja Badal, and previous *da’wa* efforts in Shughnān, was its lasting success, which was predicated upon cooperation with the political authorities of the region. Consequently, the relationship established between Shāh Vanjī and the *pīrs* marked a significant step in the institutionalisation of the Ismā‘īlī *da’wa* in Shughnān. As many comparative cases have demonstrated, for example in Europe during the era of the Protestant Reformation (Boettcher, 2004), religious conversion and patronage of new religious forces often accompanies new assertions of political autonomy and centralisation. Hence, it is likely that the rulers of Shughnān in this period saw an opportunity in the spiritual and intellectual resources of the Ismā‘īlī *da’wa* to bolster their own claims to authority and autonomy apart from the neighbouring Sunni-ruled states. This opening in Shughnān also came at a time that new political and economic resources were accruing to the Ismā‘īlī imāmate in Iran, hence further bolstering the capacity of the *da’wa* to extend its influence into new regions (Beben, 2017b).

Crisis and migration

Finally, it should be mentioned that the process of the institutionalisation of the Ismā‘īlī *da’wa* in the Shughnān region was also facilitated by another, much more adverse series of developments that began in the 19th century, namely the heightened persecution and forced migration of many Ismā‘īlīs from Badakhshān into Shughnān in this period. Afghan authority over Badakhshān remained largely indirect down to the 1820s, and hence did not

result in any of the widespread persecutions of Ismāʿīlīs that are attested in later periods. To the contrary, the curtailment of Badakhshāni authority at the hands of the Afghans appears to have provided the space, at least for a time, for a significant expansion of Ismāʿīlī activity in the region in the late 18th century. This situation changed quite dramatically in the second quarter of the 19th century, beginning with the invasion of Badakhshān by Murād Beg, the ruler of neighbouring Qunduz, in 1829 (Noelle, 1997:80–85). Murād Beg singled out Ismāʿīlīs, as well as Hazāras and other Shīʿī communities, as targets for slave raids. Consequently, the establishment of the relationship between the *daʿwa* and the rulers of Shughnān over the previous half century proved to be remarkably fortuitous, as the remote valleys of Shughnān and the surrounding districts provided a zone of refuge for Ismāʿīlīs fleeing from Afghan territory. Subsequent incursions by Afghans, Bukharans and others further facilitated the flight and resettlement of Ismāʿīlī populations from the southern regions of Badakhshān into northern highland areas in the Pamirs. These developments were noted by the British explorer John Wood, who travelled through Badakhshān a decade after Murād Beg's conquest:

The last Tartar invaders were Suni Mohamedans, all of whom conceive themselves bound to wage interminable war with the other sect, for the purpose of converting them to the orthodox belief; and of this privilege it is well known they have never ceased to avail themselves. What has been the result? Shiahism, extirpated in the open country, has sought and found refuge in the most inaccessible depths of the neighbouring mountains, in cold and hungry glens, that can only be entered during the summer months. Accordingly we find that in the open valley of the Kokcha the inhabitants are Sunis, though every Tajik hill-state around it is of the opposite creed. Nor can the people of the vallies have been long of their present belief, since Murad Beg, in his *chapows* or forays has more than once accused certain districts of an inclination to lapse into heretical opinions, and... marched off all the inhabitants to the slave-market of Bokhara.

(Wood, 1872:192)

Consequently, the 19th century witnessed a protracted process of migration of Ismāʿīlīs from the region of Afghan Badakhshān into Shughnān and the more remote northern valleys of what is today Tajik Badakhshān in an effort to escape persecution from the Afghan authorities. Many of the leading families of religious officials in the Shughnān region trace their origins to towns in Afghan Badakhshān. In the early 20th century one of the descendants of Khwāja Badal, Sayyid Aḥmad, the *pīr* of Shākhudara and one of the most powerful Ismāʿīlī religious leaders of Badakhshān in this period, was interviewed by the Russian ethnographer Alekseĭ Bobrinskoĭ, who noted that Sayyid Aḥmad's ancestors had migrated to Shākhudara from the town of Munjān in Afghan Badakhshān (Bobrinskoĭ, 1902, 11). The authority of the

pīrs in the Shughnān region came to be further institutionalised in the late 19th century under the colonial supervision of Tsarist Russia, as Russian officials working in the region developed a particularly close relationship with some of the *pīrs* and relied upon them as intermediaries in their administration of the region.²³ The *pīrs* of the line of Khwāja Badal and other families from Munjān remained major landholders in Shākhudara down to the Soviet era (Bakhramov, 1957). Reportedly, some elders in the Shākhudara region still spoke the Munjī Persian dialect as late as the 1920s (D'iakov, 1975, 172).

In conclusion, it may be noted that the rise of the Shughnān hill-state and its subsequent patronage of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* can be considered within the context of a larger pattern of political decentralisation that marked the history of Central Asia and the eastern Islamic world in the 18th century. These developments have been more broadly described within the framework of a general economic and political crisis, or 'decline'; and indeed, from the perspective of metropolises such as Isfahan, Delhi or Bukhara, such a description for this period is doubtlessly warranted.²⁴ Yet from the perspective of previously marginalised forces such as the hill-state of Shughnān, or the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa*, this same process of decentralisation also provided a unique opportunity for growth and expansion, the legacy of which is the enduring prevalence of Ismāʿīlism among the Pamiri peoples down to the present day.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Jo-Ann Gross, Shaftolu Ghulamadov, and the editors for their helpful feedback on this chapter.
- 2 Bāshghur here most likely refers to the territory of Bolor in the eastern Pamirs, which borders on Chitrār and is attested as a center of Ismāʿīlī activity in later sources; on this region, see Abaeva, 1975, pp. 158–168.
- 3 Among other references to possible Ismāʿīlī activity in this period, Ḥafīz-i Tanīsh reports that shortly after his conquest of Badakhshān in 1584, the Uzbek ruler ʿAbdullāh Khān also faced an uprising against his rule by Shīʿī rebels who were said to have been harassing the Sunni population of the region (*akthar az vilāyat-i Badakhshān-rā... dar takht-i dābt va ḥūta-yi tasarruf-i tawāʾif-i qizilbāshiyā va fīraq-i yāghiyā-i awbāshiyā ast*); see Ḥafīz-i Tanīsh, f. 239a. On this incident see also Burton, 1997, p. 54. Ḥafīz-i Tanīsh's reference to these insurgents as "qizilbāsh" may indicate a Safavid connection with the rebels, but more likely it is intended simply as a generic term of derision for Shīʿas. A short time later, the Jesuit priest Benedict de Goes traveled through Badakhshān on a mission to make contact with reputed Christian communities in China and found the region to be in a state of turmoil on account of an insurgency against "Abdulahan" led by a group he describes as the "Calcia." See Goës, 1866, pp. 559–561. Goes' reference to the "Calcia" is among the earliest attestations of the term Ghalcha, an exonym employed in reference to the Pamiri peoples.
- 4 *Mīr Sullān Shāh ad-ā-yi ān namūd ki agar ayzad bar haqq zafar manāsib-i ḥāl-i man bi-ayand khaṭṭa-yi mulk-i Chitrār-ra bi khīz-i tasakhīr āvaram.*
- 5 The events surrounding the capture of the *khirqā* by the Afghans are elaborated upon by the 20th-century chronicler Fayḍ Muḥammad Kātib Hazāra, who relates in his *Sirāj al-tavārīkh* that its capture by Aḥmad Shāh occurred in 1182/1768–1769; see Kātib Hazāra, 2013, p. 42. There is a discrepancy here

- between the *Sirāj al-tavārikh* and the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*, as the latter reports that Mīr Sulṭān Shāh died in 1179/1765–1766.
- 6 For instance, see Ibn Ḥawqal, 1873, p. 349; al-Ya'qūbī, 1892, p. 292. See further Bosworth, 1996, pp. 495–496.
 - 7 On these traditions see Abashin, 2003, pp. 61–86. On the earlier Mongol-era Badakhshāni tradition connected with Alexander the Great see Beben, 2015, pp. 101–113.
 - 8 On the history of Shughnān in this period see Èl'chibekov, 1984; Iskandarov, 1996, pp. 67–89; Kalandarov, 2004, pp. 28–126; Odilbekova, 1975.
 - 9 For an overview of this phenomenon see Scott, 2009, pp. 111–116.
 - 10 On Darvāz in this period see also Kisliakov, 1945, pp. 98–100.
 - 11 One may compare the presentation found in the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān* with the observations of the 7th-century Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang, who writes of the inhabitants of Shughnān: “The people are rustic and bold by custom, being cruel in slaughtering and making theft their profession. They do not know about ritual and righteousness and make no distinction between good and evil. They hold wrong ideas about future calamity and happiness, and they fear disasters in their present life.” See Xuanzang, 1996, p. 33.
 - 12 On the theme of the ‘court debate’ in conversion narratives see DeWeese, 1994, pp. 167–179.
 - 13 On the narrative traditions concerning Shāh Khāmūsh see also Gross, 2013, pp. 164–192.
 - 14 Archeological studies on the reputed shrine of Shāh Khāmūsh (located in the town of Mūminobod in the Khatlon province of present-day Tajikistan) suggest that this structure also dates to the Timurid era; see Ghoibov, 2001. Thomas Welsford has demonstrated that local allegiances to Timurid authority persisted in the Badakhshan region long after the Uzbek conquest at the end of the 16th century; see Welsford, 2013, pp. 189–192. The longevity of Timurid-era traditions in the region may also be reflected in the persistence of the kingship narratives connected with Shāh Khāmūsh and their adoption by the rulers of Shughnān.
 - 15 A slightly earlier source that has not been available to me is a poem written by Sayyid Farrukh Shāh b. Yūsuf 'Alī Khān in Shughnān in 1290/1873, outlining the genealogy of the rulers of Shughnān. A summary of its contents is provided in Èl'chibekov, 1973. For the manuscript of the work see Bertel's and Bakoev, 1967, p. 89 (MS 1962/3).
 - 16 This work has been published in two versions. The first is a Russian translation by Semenov titled *Istoriia Shugnana* (1916). The second is a Cyrillic-script Tajiki edition published by Nazardod Jonboboev and Ato Mirkhoja as *Ta'rikhi mulki Shughnon* (1992). The autograph manuscript of the work is held in the Semenov archives in the Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan; see Dodkhudoeva and Dodkhudoeva, 1999, p. 44.
 - 17 Muḥammadzāda and Shāhzāda, 1973. For the unique manuscript of the work see Bertel's and Bakoev, 1967, p. 37 (MS 1961/1).
 - 18 While some scholars (Scott, 1984) have pointed to the references to ‘Zardushtis’ or ‘fire-worshipping’ kings in narratives such as these as evidence for the ‘survival’ of Zoroastrianism in the greater Badakhshān region until recent times, it would seem rather that this terminology was employed simply as a motif by Ismā'īlis of the region in reference to Sunni Muslim rulers who repressed the *da'wa*, in effect equating opposition to the *da'wa* with unbelief.
 - 19 In one common formulation, Nāṣir-i Khusraw is credited with the initial introduction of Ismā'īlism in the form of the Fatimid *da'wa* into the Badakhshān region, while Shāh Khāmūsh and his companions are credited with the introduction of the later Nizārī dispensation into the region, in effect ‘updating’ the tradition established by Nāṣir-i Khusraw. This claim is advanced, among other

- places, in Daftary, 2007, p. 452. However, while this presentation does reflect some of the present-day oral traditions among the Pamiri Ismā'īlī community, it is entirely unsupported in the written sources that Daftary cites here, including the *Tārīkh-i Shughnān* and the *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*.
- 20 A brief account of the marriage and of Muḥammad Khudāyār Khān's diplomatic embassy to Shughnān, which mentions the claims of the Shughnān Shāh to descent from Alexander the Great, is given in Maḥzūn-i Gharīb, ff. 612b–614a. I am grateful to Yasemin Gencer for her assistance in obtaining scans from this manuscript.
 - 21 *Shoh Vanjihon jame'i mardumon, ki az gha'iri mazhabi ismoilī budand, onhoro firor karda, vale khud ismoilī nabuda, va otashparaston az Shughnon firor kard ba Yarkand raftaand va Shoh Vanjikhon ba adolati tamom bo mardumi Shughnon guzaron karda*; Muborakshohzoda, 1992, p. 9; Ḥaydar Shāh, 1916, p. 7.
 - 22 On this text see further Beben, 2015, pp. 344–402. I have cited here an unpublished typescript edition of the text produced by Qudratbek Elchibekov, which is housed at the library of the Institute of Ismaili Studies. The figure of Sayyid Suhrāb may in fact be associated with a historical figure who actually lived in the 15th century, who is associated with a text from this period titled the *Ṣaḥīfat al-nāzirīn*. A separate study on this text and the figure of Sayyid Suhrāb is currently in preparation.
 - 23 The relationship between the *pīrs* and the Russian colonial state, as well as the consequential strengthening of the *pīrs*' authority, finds its parallels in similar relationships with sacred lineages established by other colonial states, most notably the British Empire in India. For a comparative study of this phenomenon see Ansari, 1992.
 - 24 For recent debates over the question of ‘decline’ in 18th-century Central Asia see Levi, 2012; cf. Ron Sela, 2011, pp. 117–140.

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10 Forgotten figures of Badakhshan – Sayyid Munir al-Din Badakhshani and Sayyid Haydar Shah Mubarakshahzada

Muzaffar Zoolshoev

Introduction

This article concerns the biographies of Sayyid Munir al-Din Badakhshani and Sayyid Haydar Shah Mubarakshahzada, public and religious figures active in Badakhshan during the first decades of the 20th century, whose roles and legacies have been largely ignored by historians and experts of religion. Despite the lack of sufficient historical data containing detailed information about their life and activities, it has been possible to collect fragmentary information by conducting interviews with the older generation in Badakhshan, as well as to find shards of useful data in archives and published sources covering the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, and thereby attempt to construct their biographies.

For reasons that are mainly political and ideological, the personalities of Sayyid Munir and Sayyid Haydar Shah have largely remained unknown until the break-up of the USSR (1991). Those few sources that do cover their lives and activities contain contradictory information, and almost half of the oral sources collected in Badakhshan depict the two figures in a negative light. This can be explained not only by the ideology of the Soviet state which marginalised and suppressed the role of religion and its representatives but is also due to the religious stance the two men adopted against the established religious authorities of the time, the *pirs*,¹ and their willingness to introduce changes into religious rites through the introduction of the Panjebhai movement² in Soviet Badakhshan during the early 1920s.

Panjebhai voluntary associations initially spread among the Ismailis of South Asia (or British India) in the second half of the 19th century. In Soviet Badakhshan, however, the Panjebhai groups spread during the early 1920s and their introduction coincided, or was associated, with the visit of the high-profile Ismaili emissary from Bombay, Pir Sabzali Ramzan Ali (d. 1938) in 1923. During those years, the advocates of the movement in Badakhshan introduced changes to both the religious and social life of believers. For instance, they sought to introduce widespread religious education and attempted to simplify some religious rites. However, the introduction of certain initiatives (such as the introduction of the new *panj tasbih Ali-i*