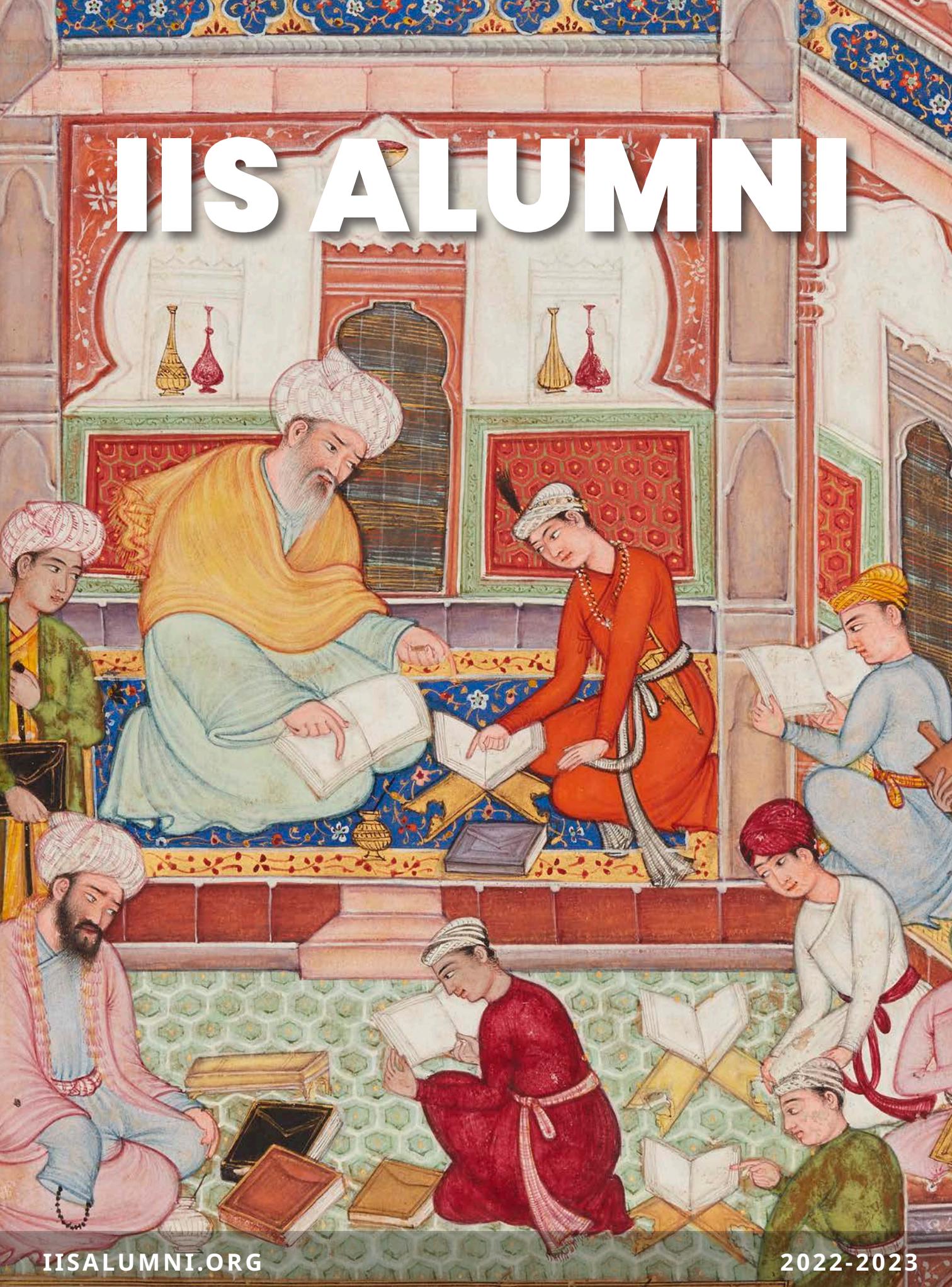


# IIS ALUMNI



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Front and Back Cover: A School Courtyard (detail), folio from a manuscript of Akhlaq-i Nasiri (Ethics of Nasir) by Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 1274), Pakistan, Lahore, 1590–95, opaque watercolour, ink, and gold on paper, H.23.9 cm x W.14.2 cm © The Aga Khan Museum, AKM288.8

# From The Director

I am writing this message to you having been in post as Director of the IIS for six months – although it feels much longer. My first several weeks at the Institute have included meetings and events during which time I have met all staff and the student body. I have learned about the incredible work in which the IIS is engaged, and I am simply amazed by both our people and our products.

My connection with the IIS began decades ago when I joined as a Research Associate in the late 1990s. I spent a year in London, when IIS was based in Victoria, as a research fellow and teaching a course on gender in Islam. While I admired the work of the IIS at the time, my life trajectory would take me back to the USA where I have spent the majority of my academic career.

Coming back to London, at this time in the life of the IIS, to the beautiful Aga Khan Centre, has truly been a privilege. As you are aware, we are in the process of developing a refreshed Strategic Plan which we hope will see the IIS through the next decade. As part of this process, we will be looking at our organisational structure as well as the human and financial resources that will be required to successfully implement a Board approved strategy.

We will continue to push forward with our exciting research and publications agenda, development of curricula and making our curriculum digitally available, the running of our two graduate programmes and various other bespoke human resource development initiatives for our Jamati constituencies including the delivery of a range of exciting short courses (IIS Short Courses), analysis of manuscripts, capturing oral histories, as well as launching a series of short videos, podcasts and blogs throughout the year. Watch this space!

**Professor Zayn Kassam**  
Director | IIS

We continue to strive for excellence and aim to institutionalise best practices across the Higher Education Sector. The reports produced by the Digital, Climate Change & Sustainability, and Student & Alumni Engagement working groups of the IIS' Board will be operationalised in the months to come.

We are thrilled to announce the AKC Graduate Student Conference, the first of its kind which will be held in September, which aims to showcase student-led research at the AKC and facilitate intellectual dialogue within the AKC community about student research initiatives. Exciting times are indeed ahead. Our achievements at IIS are possible because of our amazing bedrock – our staff, students, alumni, and other partners.

I would like to offer my gratitude to our staff for the amazing work that they continue to do to help IIS achieve not just its objectives, but also to reach new heights. And, to our alumni body, I offer my gratitude for your support of IIS and look forward to a sustained relationship with you as we continue to strive for academic excellence and service to the global Jamat. I continue to remain proud of you, our alumni, whether you are working directly in Imamat institutions or not, I am sure that the insights you gained from your education at IIS are reflected in all that you do.



# From The Alumni Relations Coordinator

Dear IIS Alumni,

I am pleased to present the 2023 edition of the IIS Alumni Annual Magazine. On behalf of the Alumni Relations Unit (ARU), I warmly welcome all new alumni and wish you success in your future endeavours. Our dynamic alumni network has grown to 734 members, spanning over 38 countries.

As a fellow graduate of the IIS, I am honoured to serve in a unique position where I can facilitate meaningful connections and foster a strong alumni network that serves the mutual interests of the Institute and the alumni community. It is rewarding to be the bridge between the Institute and its alumni, many of whom have achieved remarkable career accomplishments and emerged as outstanding leaders in their respective fields and communities.

In 2022, we adapted to the digital shift by expanding the range of digital channels and touch-points to interact and engage with alumni. The ARU has introduced a monthly e-newsletter to share the latest happenings at the IIS. The virtual Annual General Meetings organised by the Asian, European, and North American chapter groups received positive feedback and significant attendance.

Our alumni research grant has been particularly popular, and we have received more applications than ever before. In 2022, we awarded six grants, including three for conference presentations, two for field research, and one for a monograph publication. Additionally, five internships were created for GPISH 2022 graduates.

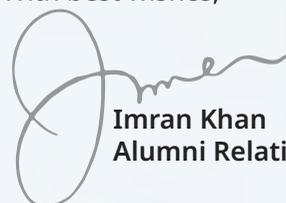
Looking forward, we have several exciting initiatives planned, primarily focusing on enhancing the benefits and services provided to alumni. We aim to implement a hybrid Annual General Meetings model as we transition from digital to in-person events. We are also thrilled to announce the launch of two new memorial research grants in collaboration with the Department of Graduate Studies. In addition, we are introducing an alumni recognition programme that will acknowledge IIS alumni who have demonstrated exceptional accomplishments.

It is important to emphasise that the success of all our initiatives critically depends on your active involvement. I encourage you to stay connected with the IIS and with each other, attend events organised by chapter groups, volunteer your time and talent, and share your ideas and suggestions on how we can better serve the alumni community.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to all alumni who have contributed to the 2023 alumni magazine. This edition highlights the diverse activities, updates, and fantastic work IIS graduates do in various fields, positively impacting their communities and beyond.

Please reach out to us at [alumni@iis.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@iis.ac.uk) with feedback.

With best wishes,



**Imran Khan**  
Alumni Relations Coordinator



# 2022 Year in Review

IIS Alumni Association

## North American Chapter Group

Total:300

GPISH: 75

STEP: 173

Other: 52

## Asian Chapter Group

Total:289

GPISH: 97

STEP: 174

Other: 18

## European Chapter Group

Total:140

GPISH: 93

STEP: 21

Other: 26

## Alumni Research Grants

- Field Research | Sufi Shrines in Sindh, Pakistan
- Presentation | International Mountain Conference, Austria
- Presentation | Oceans as Archives Conference, Amsterdam
- Presentation | The CEES Annual Conference, Indiana
- Publication | Monograph Routledge Series on Islam and Human Rights
- Field Research Study | University of Oxford

## Alumni Internship Placements

- Central Office for Poverty Elimination (COPE), Lisbon.
- Oral History Project, Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.
- Aga Khan Foundation, Tajikistan
- South Asian Unit, Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.
- Aga Khan University, Pakistan

## Annual General Meetings

# 3

### North American Chapter Group | 25 – 26 June

Theme: Leadership and Resilience  
Keynote Address: Dr Karen Bauer

### Asian Chapter Group | 20 – 21 August

Theme: Exploring the Continuity of Ismaili Heritage  
Keynote Address: Professor Raj Isar

### European Chapter Group | 24 – 25 September

Theme: Climate Change: Impact & Actions  
Keynote Address : Rozina Kanchwala



100+  
Jobs Posted



50+  
New Members



60+  
Events Posted

## Alumni Engagement Initiatives



**Alumni Lecture Series**  
ECG & ACG  
January 2022



**Open Mic Social**  
NACG  
Feb 2022



**Virtual AGM Weekend**  
NACG  
July 2022



**Meet and Greet**  
ECG  
December 2022



**Leadership Elections**  
Oct 2022

# Meet The Chapter Leadership



**Ferina Bhaidani**  
STEP 2013  
President



**Karishma Patel**  
STEP 2019  
Secretary

## Asian Chapter Group

This year as representatives of the Asian Chapter Group, we aim to encourage the Alumni voice and choice in the programmes we plan for our members. In addition to this, we are looking for ways to create opportunities and spaces for our alumni members to interact and exchange knowledge, experience and best practices. Lastly, we aspire to create awareness about the Alumni opportunities so as to motivate our fellow chapter group friends to pursue it for further professional growth.

## European Chapter Group

Our aspirations for the European Chapter Group draw on our desire to strengthen bridges between IIS and its alumni. We aim to promote meaningful dialogue, exchange of ideas, and intellectual and professional collaborations amongst alumni based across the UK and Europe. This will be achieved through diverse opportunities, events, and meetups in hybrid settings.



**Afsana Jiwani**  
STEP 2017  
President



**Shafaat Saleem**  
GPISH 2021  
Secretary

## North American Chapter Group

As NACG leaders, our aspiration is to find unique ways to foster networks and community in a post-COVID world. The last few years have led to much social isolation and physical distance, which has caused many of us to have lost connections with our fellow alumni. Therefore, we would like to find ways for alumni to connect more regularly. We plan to do this through a hybrid Annual General Meeting (AGM) and host additional sessions for alumni, for collective education and growth. Lastly, we aim to engage chapter members for more involvement in the types of programming provided.



**Naveed Nanjee**  
GPISH 2014  
President



**Nadir Wazir**  
STEP 2018  
Secretary

# Exploring Interfaith Studies and Fellowships Across Europe



**Fatima Jiwani** | STEP 2022

Fatima Jiwani is a Harmony scholar at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David's International Federation for Interfaith and Inter-cultural Dialogue and is completing her final year of Professional Doctorate in Interfaith Studies.



Religious studies as a field has been my lifelong passion. After working as a STEP teacher in India for eight years, I wanted to explore the field further. That is when I found the 'Professional Doctorate Inter-religious Studies Programme' at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David. I was awarded a full scholarship and found my place among the 'Harmony scholars' at the university's International Federation for Interfaith and Inter-cultural Dialogue (IFIFICD).

After moving to Wales in February 2019, I thoroughly enjoyed exploring Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic theologies to understand their interconnections. Through the IFIFICD, I presented my papers at a few university conferences. Additionally, my research project on 'Interfaith Education in Muslim Confessional Schools' was accepted as part of the curriculum of a master's course at my university. Further, I believe fulfilment is experienced when theoretical understanding meets practical application. Searching for an opportunity to experience interfaith initiatives practically, I applied for two interfaith dialogue fellowship programmes that awarded me with full

scholarships: the King Abdullah International Centre for Interfaith and Inter-religious Dialogue (KAICIID) and Dialogue Perspectives.

The KAICIID Fellows programme is a game changer in the arena of interfaith dialogue. It is a unique intergovernmental organization, consisting of a dual governance structure, a Council of Parties made of States (for example: Austria, Spain, Saudi Arabia), the Holy See as a founding Observer and a Board of Directors (made up of religious leaders), which brings together policymakers, religious leaders, and experts to the dialogue table to find common solutions to shared problems. Their Advisory Forum has over 60 religious leaders from the world's major faith and cultural traditions, enabling them to connect and network with communities from all over the world.



It is a capacity development and networking programme with inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue training. The one-year hybrid training includes three in-person sessions held in Portugal and Nepal. Out of 500 applicants worldwide, I was selected as one of 25 participants for the prestigious 'International Fellows Cohort 2021-22', with participants from 22 various other nationalities making it a global community of religious and cultural backgrounds. After the training, the fellowship supports each participant in organising an interfaith initiative in their respective contexts. In October 2022, I organised a three-day hybrid event named 'Youth Interfaith Walk' in Mumbai, India, that brought together young adults from different religions and cultures.



The Participant analysis of the walk reported "an enhanced understanding of different religions and social cohesion among the participating youths of different religious communities". The experience helped me practise the skills I learned during training, and I feel confident and empowered to work further in developing interfaith projects. The intense year-long training culminated with a graduation ceremony in Lisbon, giving us access to the vast alumni network. I highly recommend this programme to everyone involved in religious and interfaith work.

My second fellowship was the 'Dialogue Perspectives' programme. With the support of the Federal Foreign Office in Germany and the Leo Baeck Foundation, Dialogue Perspectives has been funding and training future leaders from various fields such as academia, culture, politics, and business to become experts in new, socially-oriented interfaith-worldview dialogue. In 2021-22, my cohort comprised of

students and PhD candidates from seventeen European countries. As part of the training, participants travel to three destinations for two seminars and one conference that showcases their work at the end of the year.

I travelled to Potsdam, Luxembourg, and Berlin for the first year. The seminars and excursions helped me understand the root causes, processes, and impact that vices like anti-Semitism, indifference and ignorance can have on humanity. It has helped me learn how to interact with and engage in difficult conversations, reflect on my own identity and strengths, and think about my contribution to society. After a successful first year, participants are invited to participate in the successive year too. For my second year, the first two seminars were held in Bonn and Krakow, and I look forward to the final conference in Berlin again in June 2023.

I was also part of a group of a few selected alumni of the Dialogue Perspectives programme who were invited to participate in the 'European Leadership Workshop' organised in Brussels. In October 2022, as part of the training, we visited the European Parliament building and were given various sessions by the representatives of the members of parliament (MEP) on the different causes they were advocating and their processes. We were trained in advocacy to understand European Union policies that we would further explore during the year. I was also able to share my research in a workshop.

Mowlana Hazar Imam mentions that conflicts and communal disharmony occur when we do not know the 'other'. Ignorance and indifference can lead to the human mind sometimes creating fearful caricatures of someone they have never met. In the future, I look forward to curating interfaith projects which can create safe spaces and develop interfaith understanding and positive dialogue between people of different religious communities. With my work, I hope to bring about pluralistic attitudes among young adults, which can be catalysts in initiating friendships and strengthening communal bonds.

# Alumni Research Grant

The Alumni Research Grant (ARG) aims to support the academic and professional development of IIS alumni who wish to present papers, publish their work, or undertake further research following their studies at the IIS.



**53 Grants**

GPISH 35 | STEP 15 | WTEP 3



Publications

4



Online Courses

4



Presentations

31



Field Research

14



## Otambek Mastibekov

GPISH 2013

**Research:** Delivering a talk on 'The Perception of Intellect, Soul and Spirit Amongst the Tajik Ismailis: A Comparison of Ibn Sīnā and Rūmī'

To achieve an objective, there are many steps for someone to pass to comprehend their thoughts and ideas. Three of them are inevitable, however. The first is a given natural talent or knowledge; the second is personal passion and effort; and the third is material or moral support.

Many people worldwide have attained the first two but still do not reach their objectives due to lacking the third one. These people suffer when talent, knowledge and efforts are there, and goals are not achieved. But one must consider how the world suffers when great minds are not heard and used due to the lack of a small material commodity or moral support.

We, alumni of the IIS, are fortunately immune to that problem. This is partly thanks to the full scholarship we receive to study at the IIS, and further for our Master's degrees from other universities, some up to PhD, and partly thanks to the alumni grant. This grant enables us to participate and share our thoughts in national and international conferences and events. Delivering a talk on 'The Perception of Intellect, Soul and Spirit Amongst the Tajik Ismailis: A Comparison of Ibn Sīnā and Rūmī', at the Central Eurasian Studies Society 23rd Annual Conference, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA, 19-23 October 2022, was an excellent opportunity for me to illustrate the Central Asian Ismaili heritage in world intellectual milieu.

## Zehra Shalwani

GPISH 2019

**Research:** Formulating an illustrated map of Sufi Shrines in Sindh, Pakistan.



As a GPISH graduate, I was highly inspired and intrigued by the course given by Dr Ali Asani, where we studied the role of Sufi pīrs in the spread of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. Coupled with this course, I read Dominique Sila Khan and Michel Boivin's work on South Asian identities and the history of Sufism in Sindh. Hence, using the skills learnt during my MSc studies at King's College, London, I began formulating an illustrated map of Sufi shrines in Sindh. This map helped me understand how the various sufi silsilas are spatially and geographically connected, and this has opened more

opportunities for the intellectual and professional pursuit of exploring religious tourism and promoting it to a global audience.

I am highly indebted to the IIS for the continued encouragement of alumni in their ethnographic research, publications and participation in conferences. This map is an opportunity for further study, documentation, and analysis of Sufi literature produced in different silsilas across Pakistan. The plan is to document and map more sites, have publications and record these sites in Virtual Reality.



### Sul-tonbek Aksakolov

GPISH 2013

**Research:** Field research at the Oxford Centre for Global History focused on the Russian holdings of the Bodleian Library.

The IIS Alumni Research Grant encourages its alumni to participate in several activities. More importantly, the grant connects them to the IIS and encourages them to contribute to its research and educational mission. As an alumnus of the IIS, GPISH 2002, I received this grant to conduct field research in libraries and archives in the Russian Federation in 2011, which enabled me to collect data for my PhD dissertation on 'Islam in Soviet Tajikistan: Religious Figures and the Practice of Islam'.

Last year I received a portion of this grant as support for my visiting Research Fellowship at the Oxford Centre for Global History from October to December 2022. During this time, I conducted research in the Russian holdings of the Bodleian Library, presented the findings of my study on 'Soviet Orientalist Studies and Non-titular Nationalities in Central Asia: The Legacy of Pamirovedenie' at a seminar series organised by The Oxford Society for the Caucasus and Central Asia (TOSCCA).

Through this opportunity, I have also benefited from research at the Aga Khan Library and also presented a paper on 'Secular Archives as New Sources on the Ismailis of Central Asia: Analysis of the State Reports and Records from Soviet Badakhshan' at the Ismaili Studies Conference: 'The State of the Field' organised by the IIS in November 2022.



### Shayesteh Ghofrani & Aleem Karmali

GPISH 2006 | GPISH 2009

**Film Production:**

Nasir Khusraw and his peregrinations.



Nasir Khusraw's *Safarnāmah* (Travelogue) provides a unique eyewitness account of the Muslim world of the 11th century. Yet, his travels are relatively unknown, unlike Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo, inter alia. We decided to collaborate on an educational project about Nasir Khusraw and his peregrinations.

The aim of this project is twofold. First, to bring the *Safarnāmah* to the attention of non-academic audiences by presenting his travelogue as a documentary film. Secondly, to show the changes in our world, especially in the Muslim world, over the past millennium. The documentary will follow Nasir Khusraw's route and focus on change in the major cities and the environment.

To produce just such a film is a massive undertaking, requiring a significant budget. To seek funding for such a large-scale project, we created a short documentary demonstrating the film's style and highlighting the topic's pertinence. We focused on Isfahan, and the sites he described there. In comparing Isfahan then and now, some of the topics we focus on are the motivations and experiences of those who travel, the impacts of climate change on the natural and built environment, and the role of globalisation in creating more diverse societies.

The Alumni Research Grant offered us some initial funding to start this project, allowing us to pay camera operators to film various sites in Isfahan and two interviews in the United States with Prof. Sheila Blair, a prominent art historian, and Dr Mohammad Reza Tavakoli Saberi, who has written about his own journey in Nasir Khusraw's footsteps.

## Annual General Meeting Asian Chapter Group

**Date:** August 20th and 21st 2022

**Keynote speaker:** Professor Raj Isar

**Chapter Leaders:**

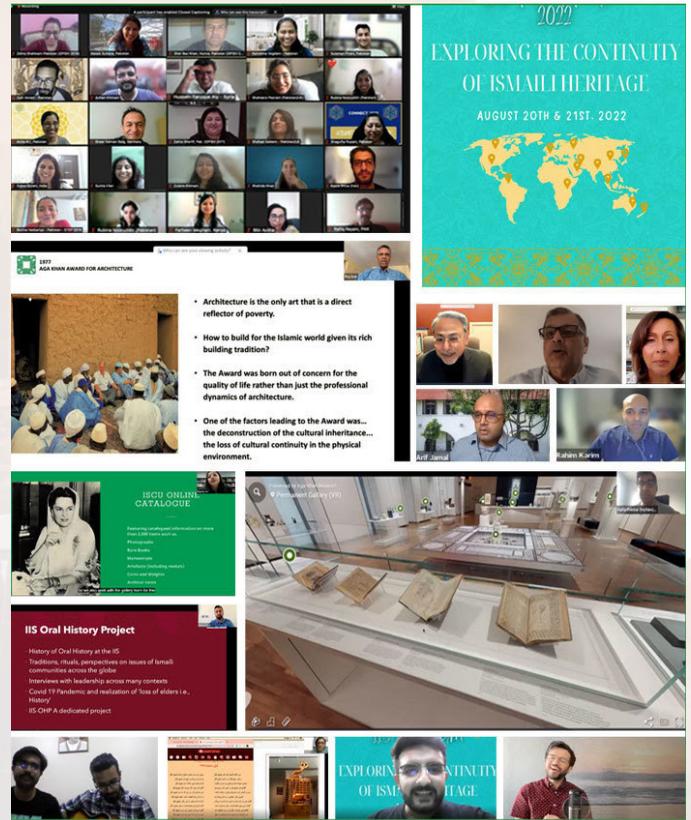
Malaik Sultana & Farheen Meghani

The Asian Chapter Group's Annual General Meeting 2022 was held virtually on the 20th and 21st of August 2022, themed on "Exploring the Continuity of Ismaili Heritage". The AGM featured a virtual tour of the Aga Khan Museum, an Alumni Symposium, live musical and poetry performances of diverse cultures, and a keynote speech from Raj Isar from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. The event had 48 participants from 12 different countries including alumni from countries outside of the Asian Chapter Group, making it a truly international event.

The first day began with an introductory welcome from the chapter leadership, followed by a vision of the Alumni body and the benefits of a virtual AGM. There were also icebreakers run by alumni participants and a keynote speech from Raj Isar on unpacking Ismaili Heritage through the lens of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. The Alumni symposium featured 7 presenters and 3 moderators, who presented on various topics related to Ismaili Heritage, including investigating Nizari Quhistani's Poetry, music as a medium of expression of faith, and Ismaili heritage sites in Gwadar, Pakistan.

The second day included a team-building activity run by Alumni, followed by a presentation on the IIS Special Collections Unit and Oral History Project. The highlight of the day was a virtual tour of the Aga Khan Museum, where participants were able to understand certain artefacts in relation to Ismaili history. The event concluded with a leadership session by the IIS Board of Governors and diverse performances by Alumni participants.

# Exploring the Continuity of Ismaili Heritage



“ It was fascinating to learn about the huge impact of artefacts. Understanding the organizational aspects such as storage techniques was a new addition to my knowledge. Also, understanding how we can actively contribute to supporting our institutions in preserving our history is significant.”

- AGM Attendee

## Annual General Meeting North American Chapter Group

**Date:** June 25th - 26th 2022  
**Keynote speaker:** Dr Karen Bauer  
**Chapter Leaders:**  
 Alyssa Lalani and Sofia Ali

# Leadership and Resilience

The North American Chapter Group Annual General Meeting was held virtually on June 25th and 26th, 2022. The theme selected for this year's event was Leadership and Resilience, which aimed to inspire and equip alumni with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the challenges of today's world.

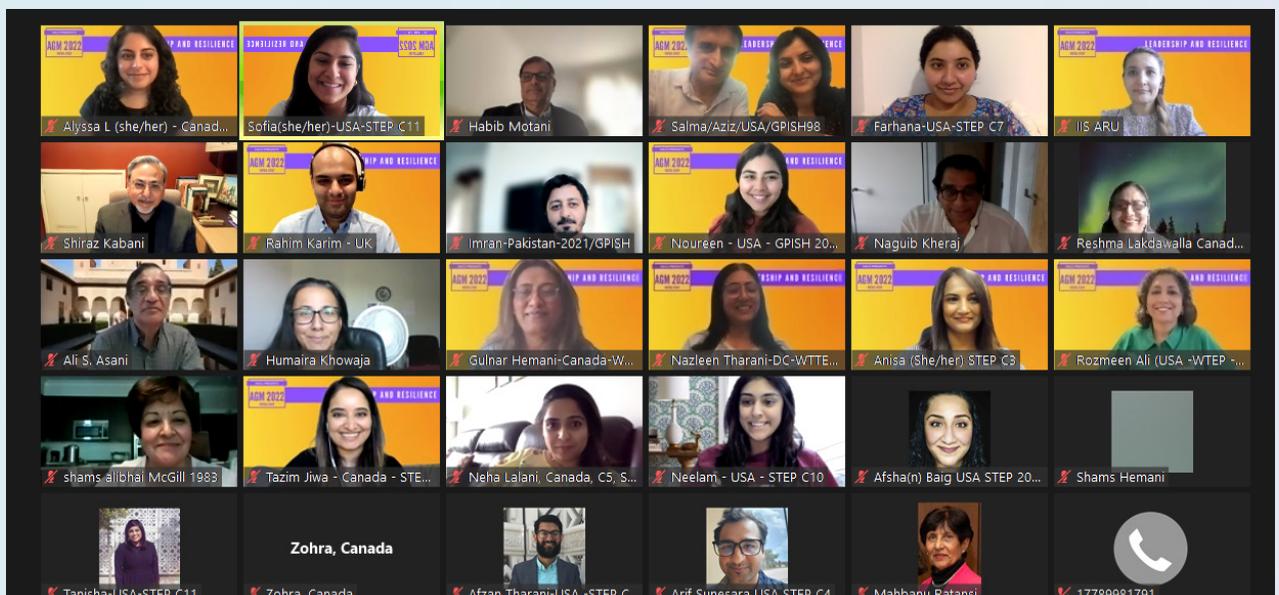
The event was well attended, with 58 participants from Canada and the USA. The two-day event was packed with engaging and informative sessions that allowed alumni to learn, connect and engage with their peers.

Day one featured a keynote address from Dr Karen Bauer, two alumni workshops, a panel discussion on academia, and a social networking evening hosted by the chapter group leadership. Day two included a film viewing, a discussion on climate change realities and a meet-and-greet with the IIS Board of Governors. Dr Shiraz Kabani provided updates on the latest developments at IIS.

The AGM 2022 was well received by attendees. A survey was conducted to capture their experiences and feedback, which received excellent responses.

**“** The AGM was very well organised and the sessions I attended were great! I loved the raffle prizes and the range of experiences that were offered, and that you had the option to attend whichever ones you were able to. I think marketing earlier might have resulted in higher attendance, although having an online AGM right after 4 days of online CPD was difficult, and I understand the screen fatigue. I hope we can be back in person next year.”

- AGM Attendee



# Climate Change: Impact & Actions

## Annual General Meeting European Chapter Group

**Date:** September 24th - 25th 2022

**Keynote speaker:** Rozina Kanchwala

**Chapter Leaders:**

Saima Khakwani & Alisha Merchant

The European Chapter Group Annual General Meeting was held virtually on September 24th and 25th, 2022, focusing on the theme "Climate Change: Impact & Actions." The meeting aimed to discuss the current challenges of global warming and climate change, their impact on our lives, and the actions we can take as individuals and as a community to lessen their burden.

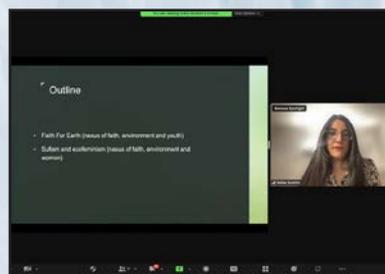
The alumni symposium featured graduates of the IIS who are actively engaged in the field of climate change, sharing their knowledge and expertise. Additionally, it included the IIS Board of Governors' meet and greet session with alumni, providing an opportunity for the alumni to ask questions about the Institutes' strategic plan. Day one of the AGM concluded with a keynote address by Rozina Kanchwala, an accomplished GPIISH alum with nearly fifteen years of global academic and work experience in the environmental sector.

Day 2 of the AGM was dedicated to the presentations by alumni on topics related to sustainability and reducing carbon footprint as a community. It also featured Aryn Merchant as guest speaker whose work is recognised globally in the field of climate change. The event received widespread acclaim from the alumni, who appreciated the sessions and the opportunity to connect with fellow alumni.



“ Thank you for organising the AGM on a topic that’s the need of time. Excellent speakers and panalists. Enjoyed Aryn Merchant’s data-loaded presentation a lot. Also having alumni symposium is a great idea. Looking forward to in-person AGM next year”

- AGM Attendee



# The Power of Recording

## The IIS Oral History Project



Rizwan Karim works on the IIS Oral History Project at the Ismaili Special Collections Unit. If interested to contribute to the IIS OHP as well as for questions, queries, and suggestions, please drop a line at [rkarim@iis.ac.uk](mailto:rkarim@iis.ac.uk)

My maternal grandfather sent a “voice message” to my mother when he went to Peshawar from Hunza in Gilgit Baltistan region of Pakistan with his son in late 1970s. The voice message was an audio cassette with descriptions of his first-time travel outside his birthplace, his son’s house in the city and updates on his failing health. I grew up seeing my mother listening to it repeatedly and shedding tears as she missed her father who passed away long before I was born.

I had never met the man, but listening to his voice made me feel like I have grown up in his presence and it gave me an opportunity to take a peek into a very different world. Such is the power of sound recording. Although we lost that cassette long ago, I have recorded the memories of my mother who is well into her 80s now. As a result, I have produced a historic document of my family history and the same of my community, its rituals, traditions, significant events and the changes it has seen in the second half of the last century, in an elderly Ismaili woman’s voice and perspective. Hopefully, it will remain with us as a repository of our family history for the next few generations, a little longer than my grandfather’s cassette tape, thanks to the advancements in digital technology.

With this context in mind, let me tell you about the IIS Oral History Project (OHP). The IIS OHP of the Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU) is a venture to preserve local histories as well as the intangible cultural heritage of the diverse Ismaili communities around the world. The project is an endeavour to record and present the stories, memories, and experiences in the voices of individuals who have heard (from their elders), witnessed and participated in significant events that have shaped the global Ismaili communities today. Oral history as a research method is not new to the IIS as much of research has been undertaken of recording testimonies, oral traditions, and in-depth interviews with the communities and its leadership. There is, however, an additional emphasis on collecting memories of elders following the losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



• Dr Janealam Khaki, one of the graduates of the first IIS academic programmes, Waizeen and Teacher Training Programme receiving degree in 1983 at the University of London, Institute of Education. Diwan Sir Eboo Pirbhai (late) can also be seen on the extreme left. Image credit: Dr Janealam Khaki

The main objective of the IIS OHP is to establish a digital research resource on diverse themes of the contemporary history and heritage of the Ismaili communities through recorded memories of the community members to be accessed in various ways by historians, scholars, and the leadership as well as the members of the community (and the public) interested in this era of Ismaili history.

Through the IIS OHP, we aim to capture and present the regional and historical diversity of Ismaili communities around the world. The immediate focus is on those contexts that have been 'doubly marginalised'.



• A girl playing a ball game during the spring festival known as Khidir ayyom (Nawruz) from the 'Pamir' photo album (c. 1930s), part of the IIS Ismaili Special Collections Unit. Image credit: ISCU.

We are focusing on several strategic areas including experiences of significant events, traditions, customs and rituals, institutional memories, migrations and settlements, encounters among faith traditions, literati, women, oral literature and the challenges of modernity and urbanisation in the lives of Ismaili communities.

There are two components of the project. The first is of capturing voices through recorded interviews. In addition to conducting recorded interviews, we are planning to develop a user-generated multimedia content portal to receive stories in text and audio-visual form from communities with digital access. The second component is of preserving, processing, and presenting the data captured through recorded interviews.

In addition to preserving, we aim to present these stories through a variety of media that include accessible articles, podcasts and other similar audio-visual products using voices as well as the digitised memorabilia of photographs, letters and documents that are shared by the narrators to enrich and contextualise their narratives.

Given the geographically disperse nature of the Ismaili communities and the diversity in languages and faith traditions complemented by the broad scope of the project, we need volunteers and professionals with specialised skills to achieve the objectives of the IIS Oral History Project. Among our volunteers, we look particularly towards our alumni to assist us in this important and time-critical endeavour. Time-critical because we are losing our heritage and histories as our elders depart, as the African proverb says, "When an old (hu)man dies, a library burns to the ground". We have lost a great deal of this library already, but it is time we started working together to capture and preserve what is left of our indigenous histories, rituals, traditions, folklore, and devotional literature. Start from your family histories and you will find plenty of ways to connect with your communities at large using your knowledge, expertise, and skillsets through the IIS Oral History Project.

If interested to contribute to the IIS OHP as well as for questions, queries, and suggestions, please drop a line at [rkaram@iis.ac.uk](mailto:rkaram@iis.ac.uk)

# Farhad Daftary Doctoral Scholarship Programme

The IIS awards Farhad Daftary Doctoral Scholarships each year to suitable candidates interested in pursuing doctoral research on a topic related to the Institute's core research areas. Established in 1997, the IIS Doctoral Scholarship Programme has awarded more than 53 scholarships to date.



**Abdul Wahid Khan**

University of Oxford  
GPISH 2021

**Title:**

**The Blessings of the Commons for the Local Community (and More-than-Humans) of Chitral, Pakistan and the Influence of (Neoliberal/Nationalisation) Projects: An Apocalypse of a Culturalandscape.**

Much of the literature in the environmental sciences, environmental economics, and geography on the commons is tied to Hardin's "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968), which claims that people are selfish and will exploit and destroy shared natural resources to the maximum benefits. Other Western scholars have engaged with the idea of the commons, including the groundbreaking work of Elinor Ostrom (1990). Still, there is far less scholarly work from local people who are part of the 'commons' managed by smaller communities. Such an external perspective on the commons has resulted in the nationalisation and privatisation of the commons, which contend that the local communities would destroy the resources otherwise.

This is the case in Chitral, Pakistan. Using the theoretical lenses of Rural Political Ecology and More-than-Human Geography, this study looks at local agropastoral communities' long-lasting management of the commons in Chitral and their respectful coexistence and interdependence while critically engaging with the power dynamics and politics of gender and clan in managing commons. This study aims to explore the local epistemology and ontology of the muzhayo/commons and develop a theoretical framework to help understand the indigenous affiliation of the Chitrali people with their landscape. This research uses mixed methods, including individual and focus group interviews, participatory observations, and bureaucratic ethnography, collecting oral histories, archiving research, counter community mapping, and poetry and musical expression.

The study will also contribute to broader policy objectives about the disputes on the nationalisation of the shared land between the state and locals and within the community. Furthermore, this project explores the influence of neoliberal projects of green grabbing and nationalisation of the commons on the local people, their culture, livelihood, and the More Than Humans of Chitral amidst the threats of climate change to these vulnerable communities.



### **Uzair Ibrahim**

University of Exeter  
GPISH 2021

#### **Title:**

**Amid Worlds Seen and Unseen:  
The Imam, the Ghayb, and  
History in South Asian Shi'i  
Islam**

Narratives about things unseen form a fundamental part of the worldview of Muslims. This dissertation focuses on one such narrative: that of Za'far the jinni, who is believed to have offered his services to Imam Hussain during the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE. First told, apparently, in a critical sixteenth-century Persian text explicating Shi'i martyrology, the story becomes an important one for the elegiac poetic genre of Urdu marsiya as it flourished in the nineteenth century.

This dissertation thinks that the narrative of Za'far opens avenues to imagine new questions of (1) intertextuality by focusing on the textual and literary history of the narrative; (2) engagement of Muslims with the ghayb, especially as regards the ideas of imamate, tradition, and faith; and (3) academic study of Islam, particularly pertaining to making sense of the ghayb without acquiescing to the secularising frameworks that govern modern academia, by disrupting commonly reified ideas of time and history.

Using textual as well as ethnographic data that follows the narrative of Za'far across multiple points in time from the seventh century through the present, this dissertation argues that the ideas of history and time need to be creatively reformulated in order to expand our understanding of the lived experience of the ghayb among the Shia of South Asia.



### **Anika Kabani**

University of Oxford  
GPISH 2022

#### **Title:**

**Negotiating Muslimness: The  
U.S. humanitarian immigration  
regime and the shaping of the  
ideal Muslim subject**

My research explores how the U.S. engages with Islam and the practice of Islam in, through, and beyond the humanitarian immigration legal regime — and how this management of religion is negotiated by precarious immigrants of Muslim heritage. I will investigate if and how the U.S. promotes certain types of religious practice and identification through asylum adjudications.

This will be done textually, through an analysis of relevant immigration case law, decisions, and legal precedent, to suggest what constitutes ideal Muslim subjectivity in the U.S., and praxeologically, through ethnographically engaging with how these representations are understood, mobilised, and negotiated by actors within the immigration legal system, and beyond formal legal settings.

I will follow the cases of 10-15 asylum seekers of Muslim heritage from intake until after decision both in and beyond formal legal settings, in order to understand if and how the U.S. state 'creates' and promotes an American Islam amongst asylum seekers of Muslim heritage. This research will thus yield conclusions that are relevant to discussions of the regulation of religion through secular governance and the impacts, intended and otherwise, of such regulation on the religious lives of people of Muslim heritage in the U.S.



# AURAT MARCH

## Between success and failure



Shafaat **Saleem** | GPISH 2021  
Shafaat holds MSc in International Social and Public Policy from LSE. She is a development and policy enthusiast, with extensive experience in programme delivery and policy development for social change in faith communities worldwide.

First held in 2018, Aurat March is a women-led social movement that annually brings thousands of people to the streets in various cities of Pakistan. As Irfan (2021) explained, it is a socio-political collation against patriarchal norms that restricts women and marginalised communities from occupying the same space as men. The demands of the march differ from region to region and include but are not limited to healthcare rights, equal wages for all genders, the criminalisation of domestic violence, and justice for the victims of rape, abuse, honour killings, harassment, etc. (Zahid, 2021). The Aurat March has attracted increasing backlash and resistance over the years.

The movement has been condemned and questioned by many socio-political groups. It has faced violent threats and severe allegations of blasphemy, immorality, and obscenity (Asher, 2020; Javed, 2021). These allegations call it an anti-Islamic and immoral act in the name of women's rights (Hussain, 2022). Despite the backlash, the size of the Aurat March has grown each year. The question, however, is how successful has it been?

The question of the Aurat March's success, relevance, and impact remains central to its critics and advocates. The question of its success is, moreover, inextricably tied to what success and failure mean for the advocates of the Aurat March.

The academic discussion on social movements suggests several nuances around the success

and failures of social movements. A social movement has been defined as a 'conscious, collective, organised attempt to bring about social change' (Mottle, 1980). Accordingly, social change determines whether the movement is successful or not. In such a case, analysis often points to the attained policy or organisational change as the marker of success (Gamson, 1975). However, social change is a more complex phenomenon that cannot be confined to policy or organisational changes (Giugni, 1998). For example, in 2021, the Aurat March focused on reforming three Acts: the Anti-Rape Ordinance 2020, the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010, and the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 (Ahmed, 2021)

The movement has faced significant challenges in the implementation of reforms. But failure at the policy level does not necessarily imply the movement's failure. It has been argued that the Aurat March has created awareness and initiated unprecedented policy debates around these issues (Ahmed, 2021). Participants and supporters of the Aurat March regard this as a success. Hence, policy change is not the sole determinant of success. Additionally, the impact of social movements has moved 'beyond the classic characterisation of movements' success as obtaining a change in laws/policies' (Bernstein, 2003).

Social movements have both political and cultural goals. Subsequently, both cultural and institutional

changes are significant in examining social movements. The argument raises another critical question of how we define or measure a cultural shift. To cater to this complexity, one must think beyond the conventional categorisation of movements as success or failure (Bernstein, 2003).

Firstly, success and failure should be theorised as non-static, undefined, and timeless experiences, not as one-time events or policies. Secondly, not all movements have defined policy goals, and may have multiple goals that change over time. These goals retain different interpretations and repercussions in varying contexts. Correspondingly, the outcomes can be achieved in various ways, leading to cultural effects, socio-political mobilisation, or policy outcomes, depending upon the contextual landscapes.

For example, slogans such as *mera jism meri marzi* (my body my choice) or *Khud Khana Garam Karlo* (heat your food yourself) seek change in all spheres of life, including public and private, social and political. The slogans raise voices against the atrocities of patriarchy in different contexts. The implications of patriarchy also differ in varying contexts. Hence, many slogans are context-specific and will not be relatable to those who do not encounter those issues. Thus, the agenda's multidimensionality and context-specific nature show that the Aurat March's impact cannot be measured by looking at one context or a policy change. Such an approach would be reductant and limited in capturing success in the bigger picture.

As Sawyers and Meyer (1999) explain, ideological mobilisation and strategic unification in the face of repression can lead to several socio-cultural impacts that might not be visible in the policy processes. In the case of the Aurat March, the platform for discussions on previously unspoken issues such as consent, sexual agency, and LGBTQ rights is progressing in the right direction. As stated by one of the organisers: '[A] backlash should be seen as a diagnosis of how far the message is spreading. The loudest voices are always the angriest voices' (Azmat, 2022). The goals of the Aurat March go beyond policy changes, and 'the change we seek is not just institutional. We want to cultivate social change and build a political platform that all women, trans people, and non-binary persons can feel a part of' (Zahid, 2021).

The conclusion, therefore, convinces us to re-think the idea of success and failure. The success of the Aurat March is a subjective phenomenon. Policy changes do not guarantee cultural changes and cannot be the marker of a social movement's success. Likewise, cultural and social changes may not always be visible in policy changes. Consequently, the success of the Aurat March cannot be attributed to one specific aspect. Whether a social movement has succeeded or failed thus relies upon the subjective interpretation of the actors involved and affected.

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# IIS Alumni Internship Programme

The Alumni Relations Unit (ARU) launched the IIS Alumni Internship Programme in 2006. The programme aims to provide professional development opportunities for IIS GPISH graduates by organising internship placements, primarily within AKDN and Jamati institutions. The internship programme strives to enable GPISH graduates to gain professional experience and, where appropriate, facilitate their return and reintegration into their home countries and societies.



**Nishat Taranum**  
GPISH 2021

Aga Khan  
University Institute  
for Educational  
Development |  
Pakistan

My 2022 internship at the Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED), Karachi, in collaboration with the IIS, was an excellent opportunity to learn and better understand the Institute's culture and gain hands-on experience in the field of education research. The internship brought a greater understanding of what I had learned in the classroom setting and gave me the prospect of applying it to real situations.

I learned that whatever I have studied, I enjoy doing it. Another beneficial experience was the friendly and supportive working environment ensured by my mentor, Dr Dilshad Ashraf, and the AKU-IED team augmented my knowledge. The internship was a worthwhile experience and has prepared me to a great extent for my professional career.



**Saher Ali**  
GPISH 2021

The European  
Settlement  
Programme  
FOCUS | UK

My experience as a programme support intern within the unit of the European Settlement Programme at FOCUS proved to be fundamental in helping me progress in the refugee-supporting space in the UK. It helped me develop a crucial understanding of some of the essential policies that exist in the UK surrounding the asylum-seeking process and refugee settlement.

Moreover, through the internship programme, I also gained an opportunity to broaden my knowledge of several charity organisations that work in the refugee space to provide a diverse range of support to asylum seekers and/or refugees. The internship experience was unique and the first platform through which I could complement my academic learning in this area with practical knowledge.

Following my Master's programme in Migration Studies from the University of Oxford, I found this internship experience crucial in providing an entry point into the refugee sector. It helped me develop ground-up knowledge of the asylum system in the UK and Europe and the challenges faced by asylum seekers/refugees. In addition to being a constant exercise in critical thinking, the internship experience has honed my research, communication and writing skills, which will be highly significant for my future career path.



**Shaheera  
Pesnani**  
GPISH 2021

South Asian  
Studies Unit  
(SASU) IIS | UK

My experience as a Research Assistant with the South Asian Studies Unit (SASU) at the IIS was exciting and enriching. During my three-month internship, I had the opportunity to expand my existing research on Gwadar, Pakistan, by tracing the migration patterns and oceanic connections of the Ismaili community in the western Indian Ocean region. Moreover I also drafted and contributed to entries for the forthcoming Encyclopaedia of the Ismailis. The internship honed my research, writing and critical thinking skills. It allowed me to network with scholars and professionals working on the Indian Ocean region and heritage studies.

The internship has also contributed to my engagement and added value to my current art history research fellowship with the Indian Ocean Exchanges, supported by the Getty Foundation. I am grateful to Mr Hussain Jasani for facilitating and offering an internship relevant to my interests and academic background while contributing to existing scholarship on Ismaili studies.



**Urooj**  
GPISH 2022

Ismaili Special  
Collections Unit  
(ISCU), IIS | UK

I completed my three-month internship with the Oral History Project under the Ismaili Special Collections Unit at the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

Working with the Oral History Project offered me a multitude of skills and knowledge that contributed to my personal and professional development. These skills include researching, interviewing, writing, recording, transcription, cultural competence, historical knowledge, and communication.

Through the process of conducting oral history interviews, I was able to nourish my research skills by identifying and locating interviewees, as well as conducting background research on topics related to the project. Moreover, the interviewing process also provided me with valuable skills, such as active listening and asking open-ended questions.

In addition, in terms of the technical aspects of the oral history project, such as recording and transcription, I was able to hone my technical proficiency with audio recording and editing software, as well as my typing and transcription skills. My experience with the Oral History Project specifically, and the Ismaili Special Collections Unit in general, has been a very humbling and rewarding experience. It is fascinating to hear stories and witness the way these stories and memories are narrated by individuals, as if you are living those lives with them as they go back in time to reminisce about their lives. It has been a great learning experience.

## Ismaili Special Collections Unit delivers a course on the Study and Preservation of Heritage Material



**Naureen Ali** | GPISH 2013

Naureen is a Cataloguer and Adlib System Officer in the Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU). Her work focuses on collection care and cataloguing along with managing the ISCU online catalogue.



The Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU) recently delivered a short course titled, 'Studying and Preserving Manuscripts and Other Heritage Materials of the Ismaili Communities' in collaboration with the Department of Community Relations (DCR). Designed and taught by ISCU team, the course was led by Dr Wafi Momin and covered a vast range of topics related to heritage preservation, study and management such as codicology of Arabic, Persian and Indic manuscripts relating to Ismaili studies, significance of coinage in Ismaili studies, management of community archives, the importance of photographs, oral history theory and practice, cataloguing and collections management systems, inscriptions, collections care including preservation, handling training and digitisation initiatives along with a discussion on challenges faced by the participants relating to heritage management and preservation.

A participant, Nausheen Hoosein, reflects on her experience below:

"Participating in this five-day short course not only provided me with the historical and theoretical aspects of heritage work, but also with best practices in handling, collection care, and cataloguing. A particular highlight of the week was the various handling sessions in which we were offered the unique opportunity to engage first-hand with a range of rare materials including photographs, Fatimid-era coins, and Arabic, Persian and South Asian manuscripts held at the

Ismaili Special Collections Unit at the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

Another interesting feature of this short course was the field trips to the British Museum and the British Library, through which we were able to apply our knowledge and skill sets to other collections of heritage materials. What was particularly relevant was the work these institutions are doing in the preservation, display, and dissemination of heritage materials, including oral history."

The fourteen attendees of the course included ITREB representatives from Canada, USA, Tanzania, UK, Congo, Pakistan, Kenya, Iran and two Art History PhD students as well as interested members from the Ismaili community. The main course faculty included members of ISCU team including Dr Wafi Momin, Dr Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev, Dr Karim Javan, Naureen Ali and Rizwan Karim who are all IIS alumni.

The course also included external speakers such as Dr Ulrike Al-Khamis (Director and CEO of AKM) who delivered a session titled, 'Museum's Approach to Heritage Materials'. An external session on oral history was also delivered by Dr Mary Stewart, Curator of Oral History and Deputy Director of National Life Stories at the British Library where she delivered a presentation titled, 'Oral History at the British Library' regarding the importance and methodology of oral history.

## NEW IIS GRADUATES



**Anika Amin Kabani**

MSc Social Anthropology  
University of Oxford

**Anum Hossain**

MSc Early Childhood Development  
University College London

**Ayso Milikbekov**

MSc Migration Studies  
University of Oxford

**Dilrabo Khujanazar**

LLM FT Human Rights Law  
Queen Mary University  
London

**Fariah Bakhsh**

MA Education  
University College London

**Karim Alwani**

MA Governance, Development  
and Public Policy  
University of Sussex

**Shaba Shabbir**

MSc Disability, Design and  
Innovation  
University College London

**Sumair Nizamuddin**

MPA Development, Technology  
and Innovation Policy  
University College London

**Urooj**

MSc Social and Cultural  
Anthropology  
University College London



Ali **Bhimani** | Anusha **Hudda** | Anusha **Rayani** | Bahram **Wakili** | Fariza **Sheralieva** | Farnaz **Lotfi**  
| Ganjina **Atobekova** | Ganjina **Shamirova** | Gulbegim **Sohibnazarova** | Hafeeza **Murji** |  
Himmat **Safarmamadov** | Issa **Khan** | Junaid | Maryam **Khan** | Mizhgona **Okhonniyozova** |  
Moosir **Mohammad** | Najiba **Temurshoeva** | Nazia Sajid **Karmali** | Noshaba **Akber** | Parwiz  
**Ahangar** | Rehana **Hafeez** | Riya **Narsinh** | Shajia **Mithani** | Shohansho **Rakhmatulloev** | Sofiya  
**Hemdani** | Somi **Aziz**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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A School Courtyard, Folio from a manuscript of the Ethics of Nasir (Akhlaq-i Nasiri), Fol.149r. Artist (painter attributed): Kahim Karan. Author: Nasir al-Din Tusi, Persian, 1201 - 1274. © The Aga Khan Museum.

### Page 3:

Professor Zayn Kassam. Director of the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS). Image provided by the Department of Communications and Development, IIS.

### Page 4:

Imran Khan. Alumni Relations Coordinator. Image provided by Imran Khan

### Page 6:

Chapter Group Leadership. Images provided by Ferina Bhaidani, Karishma Patel, Afsana Jiwani, Shafaat Saleem, Naveed Nanjee, Nadir Wazir

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Otambek Mastibekov (top) Image provided by Otambek Mastibekov. Zehra Shalwani (bottom) Image provided by Zehra Shalwani.

### Page 10:

Sultonbek Aksakolov (top). Image provided by Sultonbek Aksakolov. Shayesteh Ghofrani & Aleem Karmali (bottom). Images provided by Shayesteh Ghofrani & Aleem Karmali

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ACG, ECG, NACG AGM photos with alumni, speakers, and guest faculty. Images provided by ARU, IIS.

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Abdul Wahid Khan(left). Image provided by Abdul Wahid Khan

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Nishat Taranum (top) Image provided by Nishat Taranum. Shaheera Pesnani (below) Image provided by Shaheera Pesnani

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Saher Ali (top) Image provided by Saher Ali. Urooj (below) Image provided by Urooj.

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### Page 23:

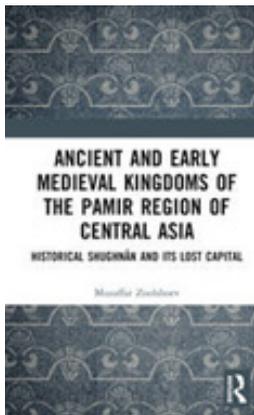
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**Designed and Published by:**  
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## Alumni Publications in 2022



### Ancient and Early Medieval Kingdoms of the Pamir Region of Central Asia

Muzaffar Zoolshove | GPISH 2004

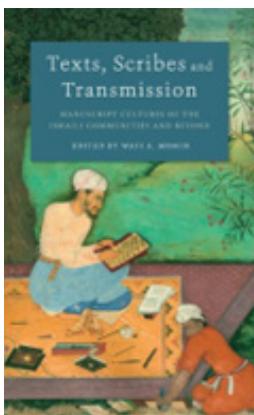
This book covers the ancient and early medieval history of the lesser-known Shughnān region in Central Asia's mountainous Pamir area. It draws from a variety of sources, including Greek, Chinese, Persian, and Arabic texts, as well as personal accounts and oral history from the area. The book provides an overview of the Shughnān kingdom using historical, archaeological, linguistic, and ethnographic data. Additionally, it attempts to identify the location of the town of Kūhān, the 'first capital' of Shughnān. The study examines numerous archaeological sites and offers potential candidates for future research. This resource is ideal for scholars and students interested in the history and archaeology of Central Asia, particularly the Pamir region.



### The Fatimids 2 | The Rule from Egypt

Shainool Jiwa | MCGILL 1984

The Fatimids, a prosperous Muslim dynasty (909-1171), were known for their spiritual and political authority through their Imam-caliphs. Their conquest of Egypt in 969 led to a flourishing Mediterranean empire with refined systems of administration, governance, and inclusivity. Fatimid Cairo became a cultural and intellectual center due to their patronage of arts, architecture, and scholarship. This book explores the figures and events that shaped the Fatimid empire, from their capital in Cairo to their eventual downfall under Saladin, and their lasting legacy with the Ismaili communities today. Drawing from primary sources, this engaging work covers two centuries of the only sustained Shi'i caliphate in the medieval Islamic world.



### Texts, Scribes and Transmissions

Wafiq Momin | GPISH 2006

The past few decades have seen a burgeoning interest in the manuscript cultures of the Muslim world. The study of manuscripts has brought to light new perspectives on the transmission of texts and larger questions of cultural practices passed down within the learned circles of premodern Muslim societies. The intellectual and literary heritage of Ismaili communities, who form a branch of Shi'i Islam, has until recently been preserved in private and largely inaccessible libraries. This open access volume brings together studies offering insights on different aspects of manuscript cultures

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