

The Social Life of the Ismailis in the Islamic East

Majid Hameed Rasheed¹

University of Baghdad, College of Education Ibn
Rushd for Humanities, Department of History
majedhameed698@gmail.com

Suaad Hadi Hassan Al-Taai²

University of Baghdad, College of Education Ibn
Rushd for Humanities, Department of History
suaad.hadi@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Corresponding author: University of Baghdad, College of Education Ibn Rushd for Humanities, Department of History Email: majedhameed698@gmail.com

Abstract

The Ismailis in the Islamic East were able to form a society that had its independence, which distinguished it from others, whose life proceeded according to one system, and it aimed at common goals. Strong ties of gender, language, religion and a general feeling of solidarity exist among its members. The Ismailis have established in their country a purely Ismaili society whose members adhere to the Ismaili doctrine, and work to defend their doctrine and spread it on the widest scale. In the countries of the East, Al-Hassan Al-Sabah worked to organize the Ismaili society in a precise manner that would ensure its long survival. This organization was one of the most important things this leader cared about. He knew that a society like his, which was distinguished by the revolution against the Abbasid Caliphate and the Fatimid Caliphate alike, must live in safety and brotherhood must prevail in it so that it can stand on its own two feet. The Ismaili society consisted of several layers, and they had social customs and traditions that did not differ much from what was prevalent in the Islamic society of the East, especially with regard to holidays and religious and social occasions.

Keywords

Money, Wives, Holidays, China, Mosques, Women, Marriage

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Introduction

The Ismaili sect in the countries of the Islamic East has social customs and traditions like the rest of the Islamic sects and other religions. These Ismaili social customs and traditions are consistent with those of other sects or differ according to circumstances and the place in which they settle. The Ismailis had their social customs according to the place in which they lived with the remaining oriental societies with a slight difference in their religious and legal practices. Ismaili social customs differ between each section of the sect, where the Nizari customs differ from the Musta'li ones, because most of the Nizari Ismaili sect live in Persia and Central Asia. While the Musta'lis are found in India, each section of them follows the customs and traditions of the society with which they mix. In China, for example, the Tajik Ismailis practice the social ceremonies of that place. The marriage ceremonies of the Ismailis differ in Persia, Central Asia and India. As well as the practice of Ismaili religious rituals such as celebrations of Islamic holidays such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha and other holidays. They also practice religious rituals specific to each section of the various Ismaili sect. Through their presence in the Islamic East, they were able to form societies that influenced and were affected by customs and traditions with the oriental societies with which they fused. The research dealt with important topics, including the most important layers of the Ismaili society, such as the rank of Sheikh of the Jabal, senior preachers, preachers, rifaq and others. The research also discussed their most important customs and traditions, the most prominent aspects of their social life, their religious and social occasions, and the political and social role of women.

First: The Classes of The Ismaili Society

With the death of Imam al-Mustansir Billah in the year 487 AH / 1094 AD, and the advocacy of al-Hasan al-Sabah as the Imamate of Nizar ibn al-Mustansir Billah, the spiritual leadership of the Ismaili da'wa was transferred to him in Persia and Khorasan. He became the head of the new call. Al-Hasan Al-Sabah believes that the door to education and learning was opened wide, by saying: "Knowledge of God does not come with reason and consideration, but with the teaching of the Imam. Because most people in the world are wise, and every person has a look at the path of religion. Of the sects over others. And everyone would be equal. Because all people are religious in the eyes of reason. However, the path to objection and denial is open, and some need to imitate others. This is the doctrine of education." (Al-Juwayni, N.D). Al-Hasan Al-Sabah divided the Ismaili society into several classes, including:

1. The first class: the class of Sheikh of the Jabal: It is the most common and most widely known rank, and only the great leaders were granted this rank. Abd al-Malik bin Attash was the first sheikh of the Jabal, because he was the first to own castles in Persia, and al-Hasan al-Sabah, the second sheikh of the Jabal, and the leader and organizer of the new call. The title "Mawlana" or "Our Master" has become a term for it. No one else had these two titles. The spiritual identity of the da'wa became better woven into its theoretical image. Sinan Rashid al-Din was the third sheikh of the Jabal in the Levant (Al-Juwayni, N.D; Ghaliib, 1965). It is worth noting that al-Hasan made the position of "chief of the new da'wa" restricted to those devoted to the Ismaili school of thought who had reached their highest rank. He did not give the principle of inheritance any consideration in his enjoyment, and there is no evidence for that from his appointment of one of those loyal to the call who are dedicated to obeying their doctrine and their leaders (Al-Juwayni, N.D).

It seems that al-Hasan was seeking to establish a stable state and therefore worked on the supremacy of Ismaili principles and legal mandates among his followers. He spread among his followers a demonstration of austerity, piety and preservation of Islamic law. That is why we find him killing his son for accusing him of drinking alcohol, and killing his other son for accusing him of murder, as he expelled a man from the castle of Alamut because he used to rejoice with his pipe as his women used to spin wool to feed from the labor of their hands (Al-Juwayni, N.D).

2. The second rank: the rank of senior preachers: These elite are among the great preachers who bore the greatest burden of preaching the da'wah, and sided with Al-Hasan Al-Sabah. Most likely they were military leaders. At the forefront of them is Kia Buzurg Umid, who will assume the presidency of the Nizari state (518-532 AH / 1124-1137 AD), succeeding al-Hasan al-Sabah, and upon his will (Al-Juwayni, N.D). The number of its members does not exceed three whom Al-Hasan bin Al-Sabah fully trusts, because he divided the world into three sections and placed at the head of each section one of these three preachers (Hassan, 1934). So he placed in the Levant Province,

the Quhistan Province of Khuzestan and the Rudbar Province, south of the Caspian Sea, a great caller. Al-Hassan did not leave any freedom and independence for these people, but remained the head of the thinking to which everyone is subject (Al-Bustani, N.D).

3. The third rank: the rank of preachers: The preachers in the Ismaili call represent the most active and distinguished men, and they are the ones who bear the most serious and greatest responsibility. They are the base upon which the organization is based in attracting those who respond to the call, and on their efforts the circle of adherents and supporters expands (Hijab, 1982). The relationship between the preachers and the imams was based on mutual benefit between the two parties. The imams depend on the preachers to consolidate their political position and extend their influence over the people, and the preachers obtain in return influence and fame, fiefdoms and huge money (Qadi al-Numan, N.D) (Al-Kirmanani, N.D). This was leading to the imam getting rid of the preacher, as Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi did by getting rid of his preacher Abdullah al-Shi'i and his brother, who doubted his affair. Likewise, Al-Muizz li-Din Allah isolated his leader, Jawhar Al-Siqilli, after his arrival in Cairo, for fear of his influence, which would bring him victory over the Qarmatians (Tamer, 1982). From the above, it is clear that the relationship between imams and preachers, and the development of that relationship, if the imam finds that the preacher has become an obstacle on his way towards monopolization and tyranny by rule, so he immediately gets rid of him.

4. The fourth rank: the rank of rifaq: These people have taken some of the foundations of this doctrine, and they have also delved into the sciences. They represent the lower religious class of preachers, and they are not authorized to call, but they serve as the incubator from which preachers graduate if they prove the ability and ability to take on this task (Brown, 1954). The rifaq used to make up the lower religious classes of authorized preachers. Thus, the rifaq are considered an important repository for preachers, so that the authorized caller does not choose from among them until he proves his ability and validity to carry out the call and understands its aims and objectives (Sharaf, 1950).

5. The fifth rank: The Fedayeen: They are the strong arm of Al-Hassan Al-Sabah in particular, and the Ismailis in general, to whom credit is due for the terror that afflicted the enemies of the Ismailis (Hijab, 1982). It seems that the fedayeen were famous for the organized assassinations they carried out, to the extent that the orientalisists called them "Assassins". As the sect had a secret body made up of exaggerated guerrillas whose members believed in the ability to kill whoever they wanted to kill, whoever he was, so the word Assassins became a common name in most European languages, meaning the killer, or specifically the one who kills stealthily or insidiously. And often his victim is a public figure, and this case indicates that the Ismaili "Nizari" system left a strong impact on Europeans in the Middle Ages (Lewis, 1986).

Not only did the Fadaawis call the Hashashin by the orientalisists only, but Eastern historians also called them the term Hashashin as well, such as Ibn Maysir and Abu Shama calling the Nizaris the title of Hashishah (Abu Shama, N.D; Ibn Maysir, 1981). The Feda'is were brought up from an early age confined to the homes of the chiefs under the watchful eye of the preachers, teaching them that their peace depends on the redemption of themselves and that the slightest violation would be a reason for them to be punished and responsible forever, and if they did not appear to disobey them, their reward would be Paradise (Al-Bustani, N.D).

6. The sixth rank: The Adherents: They are the ones who accepted the Ismaili principles, showed obedience and loyalty, and did not require them to penetrate into religious concepts, or know the secrets of the Ismaili sect. Some put them in order earlier than the command center (Brown, 1954). Their main job is to shake people's beliefs and spread panic in their souls.

7. The seventh rank: the respondent: It is the last rank of the religious disciplines of the Nizari, and it appears that they are the common people or the novice believers (Alayan, 1970). From this it is clear that al-Hasan was able to make the Ismaili community a cohesive force, thus he was able to form an Ismaili community whose secrets are known only to a few. On the one hand, the great majority of these few submit themselves blindly. On the other hand, Al-Hasan was able by forming the guerrillas to establish the pillars of his state, and to get rid of his enemies and those who oppose him. Al-Hassan Al-Sabah, like the Ismailis, was interested in the number seven, so he made the limits of his religious call seven, the limits of his spiritual call and the ranks of the call seven, and the Ismailis continued in this way after Hassan during the period of their rule (483-654 AH/1090-1256AD).

Second: Social Norms and Traditions

1. Holidays and Anniversaries

There are many holidays and occasions for Muslims in every part of the Islamic world, so the general public in the Islamic East celebrate religious holidays (Al-Fiqi, 1999), such as the month of Ramadan, and then they celebrate its nights by reciting the Noble Qur'an and praying Tarawih. They also celebrated the Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, so people would go out on the morning of the Eid in their new clothes to the mosques to perform the Eid prayer and distribute the fitrah to the poor and needy (Ibrahim, 1935; Al-Fiqi, 1999).

Ismailis celebrate the two main Islamic holidays, Eid al-Adha (Qurbani Eid), Eid al-Fitr or Ramadan (Richu), and the Eid al-Adha prayer. It is followed by a huge festive meal in front of the local house of the congregation (Jama'a Khana), where each head of the house shares food on this occasion. The last day of Ramadan is also celebrated with a large gathering and group prayer in the congregation's house (Daftary, 2013). Among the religious feasts is Eid al-Ghadir, and Moez al-Dawla Ibn Buwayh was the first to celebrate this feast in the year (352 AH / 963 AD) (Ibrahim, 1935). It is worth noting that the Ismailis had many holidays, so they celebrated the Islamic New Year or Muharram and the birth of the Prophet (12 Rabi' al-Awwal) (Metz, undated).

As for the fasting of Ramadan according to the Ismailis, it was accompanied by some ceremonies in Iftar and Suhoor (Ibn Al-Mamoun, 1983, Al-Maqrizi, 1988). One of the most important religious occasions is Ashura, which is a day of mourning for the Ismailis in the East because it coincides with the tenth day of Muharram, the anniversary of the killing of Imam Hussein bin Ali (peace be upon them) (Al-Qalqashandi, 1987 AD), the birth of Lady Fatimah (20 Jumada al-Akhir), and the birth of Imam Ali (13 Rajab) and the birth of Hussein (15 Ramadan) (peace be upon them) (Ibn al-Mamun, 1983; al-Maqrizi, 1991), and the birth of Al-Imam Al-Hadhir (Maqrizi, 1988). In the countries of the Islamic East, the festival of Al-Sadq was celebrated, which is a festival of fire, and they lit it all night long, singing and dancing around it (Dhaif, without date), and it is one of the well-known Persian holidays in the countries of the Islamic East (Al-Qalqashandi, 1987).

They also celebrated Nowruz, which is one of the greatest and most important feasts, because they say: "On this day, God has finished creating the creatures, and in it He created the planet Jupiter" (Kamal al-Din, 1975). The day of Nowruz for the Persians represents the beginning of the beginning of the year, which is the beginning of the summer solstice, which they preferred over the winter solstice, because it is the time for yields to be realized, and it is the most appropriate for raising the abscess in it (Yaqout al-Hamawi, 1995). Among the important holidays for the Persians is the festival of the festival, which for them is of great importance and the interpretation of its name is "love of the soul." The Persians mention that the sun appeared to the world on this day and that on this day God created the earth and created the bodies (Al-Biruni, 1923; Dhaif, N.D). The people of the Ismaili sect in China celebrate two main occasions in Xinjiang, namely Nowruz, or "Shokun Bhor" meaning New Year, and "Belek" which literally means "flame of humiliation." Like the Feast of All Souls, this occasion commemorates the memory of the deceased, and Nowruz is set on March 21, while Belek is celebrated on the fourteenth of the month of Bert, or the eighth month of the Islamic calendar. According to the Iranian lunar calendar, Nowruz, known in Sarcoli as Shed Shader, that is, cleaning the house is an indication of the beginning of the New Year (Daftary, 2013). From this it is clear that the most important holidays in the Islamic East, whether they are the religious holidays of Muslims or the holidays of other religions, and the ancient Persian holidays, which indicates the tolerance of Islam and its leaving non-Muslims the freedom to practice their religions.

One of the important holidays for the Nizari Ismaili sect in the Islamic East is the "Feast of Resurrection," which they celebrated on 17 Ramadan 559 AH/8 August 1164. Hassan bin Muhammad bin Buzurg ordered Umid to set up a pulpit in the square of the square below Alamut so that his qiblah would be in the opposite direction to the Qiblah of the people of Islam (Al-Juwayni, N.D; Daftary, 1994), then he called the people of his state to meet in the castle and erected four large flags in four colors white. And red, green, and yellow (Al-Qalqashandi, 1922; Al-Juwayni, N.D) on the four sides of the pulpit, then ascended the pulpit and delivered a sermon in which he said that before them he opened the door of his mercy and mercy to Muslims and to them as well. He called his own followers and lifted the burdens and duties of Sharia from them (Al-Juwayni, N.D), then Al-Hasan bin Muhammad Omid came down from the pulpit and prayed two units of the Eid prayer, then called the people to break their fast and ordered his companions to play and rejoice (Al-Juwayni, N.D; Al-Hamadhani, 1983).

2. Family Celebrations

As for family celebrations, including marriage, they took place in a way that reflected luxury and wealth. When the daughter of Sultan Malikshah, Turkan Khatun, got married to the Abbasid Caliph Muqtada al-Muqtada (476 AH / 1083 AD - 487 AH / 1094 AD) in Baghdad, a lot of gold and silver was spent on her wedding ceremony. He moved the bride's dress on one hundred and thirty camels decorated with Roman brocade, and most of the loads were gold and silver. However, Turkan Khatun was unsuccessful in her marriage to the Caliph, so he left her to the maidservants, so she sent to complain to her father, the Sultan, who summoned her to him, and she returned to her father, where she died of grief and sorrow (Ibn Al-Atheer, 1997).

Among the manifestations of the East in luxury and wealth is the marriage of the daughter of Abi Kaligar, the governor of Tabaristan, to Sultan Masoud of Ghaznawi. I was wedded to him on a bed as if it were an orchard, with three trees of gold, their leaves of emerald and turquoise, and their fruits of sapphires. Surrounding these thirteen trees were pots of daffodils and varieties of roses and basil, all of them of gold and silver, filled with amber and camphor (Al-Bayhaqi, 1982).

The Ismaili wedding celebrations in the countries of the Islamic Orient, which are surrounded by local customs, societal conditions and traditional practices among sections of the Ismaili Khoja in South Asia, China, Afghanistan and other places in Asia. It allowed the marriage of minor girls, while preventing widows and divorced women from remarrying. Not specifying huge amounts of dowries practiced by some Muslims, and paid by the groom to the bride upon signing the marriage contract. As for the Bohra Ismailis in India and South Asia, marriage is governed by Islamic law defined by Qadi al-Nu'man in his book Daa'im al-Islam. The marriage ceremony is performed by the worker who acts as a representative of the absolute da'i, whereby the groom, the bride and their parents must renew the oath of allegiance (or covenant) to the da'i before granting permission to marry. Dissenters from the group do not obtain permission to marry, nor to marry their children (Daftary, 2016).

The Ismailis, the Bohras or the Tayyibis, rarely practice polygamy, while they accept it in theory. Unlike the Nizaris, the Bohras do not usually marry outside their own groups, and the Bohras have retained many Hindu customs in marriage rituals (Daftary, 2016).

As for the Ismailis in China, they follow some rules and procedures in marriage. The rule followed and the duty is for the parents to pay the expenses of their children's marriage, starting with the request of the girl's hand until the conclusion of the wedding ceremony is the parents' responsibility. The two families negotiate, without involving the newlyweds, the dates of the engagement and wedding, the amount of the dowry, and the number of invitees from each party to the two parties. And the last item in this etiquette to be followed before the actual wedding, is to beg for approval for the prospective marriage. Three days before the party, the families of the groom and bride prepare a joint feast for those who have lost a relative in the last twelve months. After the heartfelt feast, the mourners give their consent to the celebration by tapping their fingers on the drum or tambourine periodically (Daftary, 2013).

3. Social Etiquette and Practice

Ismailis in the Islamic East follow a system of social etiquette in their daily lives. In terms of greeting rituals, in China, Ismaili Tajiks respect religious leaders, and treat the elderly politely. Saluting an older person by calling him or her by first name without using appropriate kinship titles (eg grandfather, mother, uncle, aunt, etc.) is considered disrespectful. The rules of conduct require the younger person to kiss the hand of the older one, and this courtesy is responded to by the elder kissing the forehead of the younger one. As for the Sheikh, the appropriate way to greet him on all occasions is by kissing his hand (Daftary, 2013).

As for private and public social occasions or gatherings, Ismaili males lavishly praise their women and show them respect. For example, the best places in the house are reserved for women at wedding ceremonies and funeral banquets, and they are greeted at the door and taken to the place designated for them first. When distributing food, the women's sector in the home is also served first (Daftri, 2013).

On the decrees of circumcision in the Islamic East that were enacted by the Fatimid Caliph Al-Mu'izz Li-Din Allah and established its rules in the Maghreb in the year (315 AH / 962 AD), it has become a tradition in many of the Islamic countries in the East, which the Ismaili sect later inherited

(Qadi al-Nu'man, N.D) . It is likely that the Ismaili countries were affected by the manifestations of these family celebrations in marriage and circumcision, and imitated them as a means of propaganda and acquiring people, and the desire of the rulers of these lands to appear in the appearance of luxury and greatness on the one hand, and strength and dread for their enemies on the other hand.

Funerals are another important form of social life rituals and have a complex set of rules, as well as the application of general Islamic religious rituals related to washing the body and praying for the soul of the deceased. The Ismailis perform a ceremonial practice the night after the burial, and this is a distinctive Ismaili practice that helps, it is believed, to facilitate the departing soul's journey to its final resting place. Before transporting the body from the house to the burial, the family burns incense and closes the daylight outlets to clear the path to the junctions. If the deceased was a single girl, the sheikh or the caliph performed the marriage ceremony, where he would symbolically marry her from one of the five wooden pillars in the traditional Ismaili house. In this way, it helps the parents of the deceased to complete their duty to marry their children in this world. Unless the news of the death is kept secret until after the funeral, every relative of the deceased is expected to attend the memorial rites. As for the one who hears the news of the death late, he must compensate for his absence from the funeral by making a later visit (Daftary, 2013).

As for the social councils, the most important in the cities of the Islamic East are the preaching and stories councils. In these councils, the influential stories in the hearts of the common people were evident. The Islamic Mashreq witnessed preachers who influenced the people with their abundant knowledge in jurisprudence, principles, hadith, Sufi poetry, and rhetorical ability (Al-Fiqi, 1999).

Preaching councils spread, and mosques continued to preach until schools were established, such as the regular schools established by Nizam al-Malik in 457 AH / 1064 AD and the Abu Hanifa School (459 AH / 1066 AD) (Hassan, 1934). Jalal al-Din Hassan ordered his followers to build mosques and public baths in every Nizari village in the year 608 AH / 1211 AD. He also asked the jurists, from the outskirts of Khurasan and Iraq, to take charge of the affairs of the judiciary, rhetoric and similar religious matters in his domain, so he honored and honored them (Al-Juwayni, N.D).

As for the public places in the countries of the Islamic East, some of them were held in which some means of entertainment and sports such as shooting and horsemanship (Ibn Al-Jawzi, 1992). Sultan Malikshah was adept at riding horses and playing with ball (Al Rawandi, 1960). As for the Ismailis, there were few public places for their entertainment and entertainment, perhaps because they were busy spreading their da'wah, consolidating their influence, and getting rid of their enemies. Al-Hasan bin Al-Sabah prohibited all kinds of entertainment in castles, singing and the flute. And if he heard someone singing or playing the flute, he ordered that he be killed. However, Aladdin, the leader of the Ismailis, took care of decorating the Alamut fortress, so he established gardens in the nearby plains that were the center of the kings of Daylam for his picnic (Al-Hamadhani, N.D).

4. The Role of Women in the Ismaili Society

Women represent an essential element in the political and civilized life of any society. The Muslim woman was able to prove her worth in all fields, whether political or social. The Ismaili country witnessed many events, especially that this period witnessed the two most important threats that threatened the Islamic world, namely the Crusader danger, whether in the West or the East, and the Mongol danger. In the midst of these events, women had a significant and tangible role in the course of those events. The Ismaili sect were and still are limited to one wife (Al-Hamdani, N.D.).

We cannot look at the conditions of women and their living conditions in the Ismaili tradition with a limited view. As women were able to reach high positions and gain appreciation from rulers, and this is evidenced by their role in the Fatimid state. As we find the mother of the Caliph Al-Mustansir participating in managing the affairs of the state (Ibn Maysir, 1981), and we do not forget the role of Sitt al-Mulk and her management of the country's affairs after plotting a plot to kill her brother, the ruler by the command of God (Ibn Adhara, 1985).

As for the Nizari call, we find that the wife of Abd al-Malik bin Attash, the leader of the Nizari, was trapped with him in the fortress of Shahdez in (500 AH / 1106 AD) and patiently endured hunger and deprivation. When she found that there was no escape or hope for salvation, she threw herself over the mountain, committing suicide and grief (Ibn Al-Atheer, 1997; Al-Juwayni, N.D). From the foregoing, it is clear that the position of women among the Ismailis was of great importance, no less important than the rest of the position of women in the rest of Islamic and non-Islamic societies.

In the Ismaili sect, women had a prominent position in society, both east and west.

Conclusions

At the end of this research, the following results were obtained:

1. The Ismaili society was divided into religious classes or ranks, starting with the rank of Sheikh of Al-Jabal in the first rank and ending with the seventh rank, which is the rank of the responders.
2. The multiplicity of feasts and occasions for the Ismailis in the Islamic East.
3. The Ismaili community in the Islamic East is concerned with family celebrations such as marriage.
4. Ismailis in the Islamic East follow a system of social etiquette in their daily lives, such as the rituals of greeting, peace, dealing with adults politely and how to deal with public gatherings.
5. The Ismaili society in the Islamic East and in its various countries had a role for Ismaili women in all political, social and economic fields.

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