Make This Your Home:

The Impact of Religion on Acculturation:

The Case of Canadian Khoja Nizari Isma'ilis from East Africa

By

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of religion on acculturation in a specific community, using the framework presented by Berry. Working from a Canadian perspective, Berry has created a framework that unifies much of the existing research, taking into account factors that impact acculturation prior to migration, such as education, economic status, gender roles, and migration expectations, as well as factors that arise during the acculturative process, such as the views of the new society towards migrants, the acculturation strategy chosen, and the phase of migration. This study uses rich, qualitative data from interviews, supplemented by primary and secondary source material, to focus on a religious community, the Khoja Nizari Isma'ilis from East Africa, who have immigrated to a Canadian setting and appear to have acculturated quite successfully here. Findings demonstrate that religion, including community structures, social resources, and guidance from their Imam, have had a profound and positive impact on the acculturation of Khoja Nizari Isma'ilis from East Africa in Canada. It is hoped that this case will help to fill gaps in the existing body of research and encourage scholars to consider the impact that religion may have as a unique category when considering acculturation, and prompt its inclusion along with the other factors, such as those proposed by Berry, rather than having it subsumed under them, as has typically been the case.

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As modernity advances, the place of religion in the world has come under increasing scrutiny. While it has become clear that the original secularization thesis, which posited the disappearance of religion altogether, has been largely invalidated (O'Toole 44), many remain suspicious of religion and the role it plays in the modern world, particularly in relation to modern challenges. However, others have suggested that religion can play an important and positive role in helping to address these very challenges.

One area in which religion may have an influential role is in acculturation. First employed by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (149, qtd. in Berry 7). Put more simply, acculturation refers to "the general processes and outcomes (both cultural and psychological) of intercultural contact" (Berry 8).

Research on immigration and acculturation has exploded in the past 20 years. There are currently thousands of published studies looking at various aspects of acculturation in a variety of different cultural milieus. However, because the field is still relatively new, there are a number of areas that still require a great deal of research.

To that end, this study will examine the impact of religion on acculturation in a specific community, using the framework presented by Berry. Working from a Canadian perspective,

Berry has created a framework that unifies much of the existing research, taking into account factors that impact acculturation prior to migration, such as education, economic status, gender roles, and migration expectations, as well as factors that arise during the acculturative process, such as the views of the new society towards migrants, the acculturation strategy chosen, and the phase of migration. This study will use rich, qualitative data from interviews, supplemented by primary and secondary source material, to focus on a religious community, the Khoja Nizari Isma'ilis from East Africa, who have immigrated to a Canadian setting and appear to have acculturated quite successfully here.

Generally, it is hypothesized that religion, including community structures, social resources, and guidance from their Imam, has had a profound and positive impact on the acculturation of Khoja Nizari Isma'ilis from East Africa in Canada. It is hoped that this case will help to fill gaps in the existing body of research, particularly the dearth of information on the impact of religion on acculturation, as well as add to a growing body of research of qualitative data and information on acculturation in Canada. Likewise, it is hoped that this research will encourage scholars to consider the impact that religion may have as a unique category when considering acculturation, and prompt its inclusion along with the other factors, such as those proposed by Berry, rather than having it subsumed under them, as has typically been the case.

On Insider/Outsider Issues

In this case, the community I am researching is my own community, and I am in fact a child of the very immigrant population I am examining. As such, it is important to consider the implications of insider research before going any further.

Definitions and Theory

Questions about the position of the researcher as either coming from inside or outside a community became prominent in the 1980s, as a result of "a highly charged debate about the nature of Sikh studies and the contribution and motivation of particular scholars writing on Sikh religion" (Knott 257).   In particular, the personal motivations and perspectives of these scholars were questioned, as were their broad theoretical backgrounds, which were generally either Christian or secular.   Likewise, these theoretical backgrounds were linked to the broadly Christian and/or secular roots of the study of religion in general, resulting in suspicions about claims to neutrality and objectivity.

In this initial questioning of the scholarly framework for religious studies were two main views.   The first, which can be identified as the secular or scientific view, continued to emphasize the scientific, objective nature of the inquiry, arguing that religion must be studied like other ideologies and institutions.   The alternative perspective, which might be considered reflexive, requires more awareness of one's own "intellectual and personal standpoint vis-à-vis others" (Knott 261) and is more in line with Tiele's observation that: "it is an error to suppose that one cannot take up such an impartial, scientific position without being a sceptic; that one is disqualified for an impartial investigation if one possesses fixed and earnest religious convictions of one's own" (qtd. in Knott 260).

Definitions of insiders and outsiders were further muddied with the advent of indigenous ethnography, which has "made it impossible to separate the researcher and the native into two clearly delineated categories" (Sherif 437).   Additionally, the growth of post-modern, post-colonial, feminist theories have required that scholars become more critical of their own

paradigms and the power dynamics associated with them, a shift that has forced a more nuanced understanding of terms such as insider and outsider.

To that end, some scholars have attempted to deconstruct the traditional insider/outsider binary into a more differentiated spectrum of experience. Knott, for example, posits four categories of positioning (262), as follows:

OUTSIDER   INSIDER

Complete   Observer as   Participant   Complete
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Observer   Participant   as Observer   Insider

While this type of categorization can be helpful in delineating one's position as a scholar in the field, "boundaries are blurred with shifting and ambiguous identities" (Sherif 438) and scholars often hold multiple identities simultaneously. Insider-scholars have much to offer in this new paradigm; as noted by Clifford and Marcus "insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding" (qtd. in Sherif 438). Accustomed to more hazy boundaries "the both/and position of the insider-scholar is productive, the reflexive nature of its stance giving it an edge over outsider scholarship" (Knott 269), and providing an example for other scholars of ways to navigate through uncertainty.

Major Challenges

However, while insider-scholars are in some ways better able to cope with the breakdown of the insider/outsider dichotomy, they are faced with their own set of challenges. Based on the theoretical underpinnings of the insider/outsider debate, there are a few major challenges that must be addressed when undertaking insider research, in particular, the impact of one's position as an insider on the research being done, and access to information.

With regards to the impact of one's position, Reid notes that the difficulty for an insider is not finding ways to connect with the community's identity, but rather, how to "disengage from that identity and that way of thinking in order to create and establish [one]self as a researcher" (150). She also remarks that, as an insider, one must make a conscious effort to bracket one's own assumptions, particularly assumptions that there is an agreement about a particular object simply because one is a member of said group. Citing Gadamer, she argues that "one is required, if one is to attain understanding, to treat an object as something foreign and in need of understanding even when it seems familiar" (150). The real challenge for an insider scholar is determining what degree of separation from the community is necessary in order to allow for this type of distance. Reid determined that it was necessary for her to systematically disengage from the community in order to facilitate the 'researcher role' (150), but others argue that this type of distancing is a facile attempt at obtaining some illusory sense of objectivity (Knott 262).

Additionally, there are ethical and methodological issues related to insider research. Conflicts of interest and dual relationships are more likely to occur in an insider context, particularly in smaller communities, such as the one Reid examined, or in the community in question in this paper. Moreover, the validity of the study may be compromised based on the extent to which these issues are present, as well as the level of perceived authority and objectivity that the insider-scholar possesses. Likewise, ethical issues are posed when the insider-scholar has access to information that is not available to outsiders. While it can, at times, be quite beneficial to an for an insider-scholar to have access to information that is unavailable to outsiders, in such situations, the scholar must negotiate between the academic integrity of his or her work and the trust that has been given to him or her as an insider. Reid, for example, was "privy to events and

confidences as a member of the community, and not as a researcher" (152) and had to temper her use of information accordingly, a task she found quite challenging.

It is also important to consider the impact that being an insider-scholar has on one's own position within the community. In Reid's case, research meant distancing herself to the point of alienation, leaving her feeling detached and alone once her research ended. Even more troublesome was her uncertainty that she could reverse this feeling, as indicated in her reflection:

> "Having taught myself to ask different questions and look beyond and behind what I had taken for granted before, I am not sure to what extent I can ever return. I am not sure if, when I finally feel that it is 'safe' for me to take up the mantle of 'active practitioner' once again, it will even fit the person I have become in the meantime" (153).

Likewise, any breech of community codes, spoken or unspoken, by the researcher could seriously jeopardize his or her position within the community, just as a failure to exercise appropriate scholarly protocol might jeopardize one's position in the academic community.

Solutions

While there are clearly a number of challenges when undertaking insider research, there are also a number of solutions that can enable one to conduct such research. The research at hand falls under the realm of social psychology and, as Knott notes, the psychology and sociology of religion are often associated with the secular, scientific view that enforces a clear binary between insider and outsider (262). However, as previously mentioned, ethnography has impacted this binary in all fields of social science, including psychology, and as such, I am inclined to agree with Knott's continuum of insider/outsider perspectives (262), and find myself falling more into the 'participant as observer' category. Furthermore, the research being undertaken in many ways straddles all these perspectives simultaneously and, as such, I am supportive of the overall post-

modern call to "research and write consciously from within [my] context, whether as insider or outsider" (Knott 261).   The acceptance, and constant self-reflexivity and self-conscious positioning it requires, is also found in post-colonial, feminist, (anti-)Orientalist, and post-modern critiques of scholarship, and is a perspective that resonates well with my own background in both religious studies and counselling psychology. This type of self-reflexivity can go a long way towards addressing many of the ethical and methodological issues presented by insider research. In addition to this, researchers must ensure that a certain degree of self-care is also maintained when undertaking research within their own communities, to ensure that personal boundaries and limitations are observed as strictly as professional ones.

History of the Community

Isma'ilism 101

Islam is generally considered to have two principal divisions, Shi'i and Sunni. Sunni Muslims, the larger of the two groups, believe that Prophet Muhammad did not directly appoint a successor to lead the community following his death. Shi'i Muslims, who represent a minority within Islam, believe that the Prophet did in fact appoint a successor, his cousin and son-in-law, 'Ali (Daftary 23). For Shi'i Muslims, 'Ali was the first Imam, an important concept that will be elaborated on later in the paper.

The Isma'ili community divided away from the majority of the Shi'i population over a succession debate following the death Ja'far al-Sadiq, the 5th Isma'ili Imam (d.765)[1]. The Isma'ilis traced the line of Imamate through Ja'far al-Sadiq's eldest son, Isma'il, and on to his

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[1] In the Nizari Isma'ili line of Imams. The number will vary in other Shi'i sects.

son, Muhammad, whereas the Ithnaʿashari (or Twelvers) traced their line through Ismail's brother, Musa al-Kazim (Daftary 35).

Nizari Ismaʿilism is an even smaller sect of Shiʿi Islam, which came into existence as a separate and distinct community in the 8th century. The Ismaʿili line split again following the death of Imam and Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah. While the Caliphate of the Fatimid Empire was officially given to Mustaʿli, many Ismaʿilis leant their support to Mustaʿli's elder brother, Nizar, leading to the creation of the Nizari Ismaʿili sect (Daftary 106-107).

The Doctrine of Imamate and the Significance of the Imam

The importance of the position of the Imam for Shiʿi Muslims cannot be understated. This is particularly true for the Nizari Ismaʿilis, who are the only remaining Shiʿi community with a living Imam. However, while the position of the Imam has always been of the highest importance, the Doctrine of Imamate was not formally articulated until the 8th century. Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq was a learned scholar and was considered a religious authority by both Sunni and Shiʿi Muslims (Daftary & Hirji 57). Along with developing the Shiʿi legal tradition, he is credited with having developed and articulated the Doctrine of Imamate, which, as explained by Daftary and Hirji, is "based on the belief in the permanent need for mankind for a divinely guided, sinless, infallible (*ma'sum*) Imam who, after the Prophet Muhammed, would act as the authoritative teacher and guide for men in all things" (57). The Imam's mandate is not dependent on political power, but rather, was determined by the appointment of ʿAli by the Prophet through "an explicit designation or *nass* under Divine command" (57). Imamate, from that point onwards, "was to be transmitted from father to son by *nass* through the descendants of

'Ali and Fatima" (57), specifically, through their son Husayn and his progeny. This sole

legitimate Imam is considered to be

> "in possession of a special knowledge or *'ilm*, and has perfect understanding of the exoteric (*zahir*) and esoteric (*batin*) meanings of the Qur'an and the message of Islam. Indeed, the world could not exist without such an Imam, who is the proof of God (*hujjat Allah*) on earth. Recognition of the true Imam of the time and obedience to him were incumbent upon every believer (*mu'min*)." (57)

Obviously, there are many implications to the formulation of this doctrine. Initially, it

allowed Ja'far al-Sadiq to consolidate his community, eschew the violent means that would be

necessary were his leadership to be based on temporal rule, and doctrinally separate the Imamate

and the Caliphate (Daftary & Hirji 57). The implications of this Doctrine were even more far

reaching, particularly when considering the position of the Imam in the community that this

doctrine engendered. This position is perhaps best encapsulated by the most recent Nizari

Isma'ili constitution, which was ordained by the current Imam, Aga Khan IV, on December 13,

1986. It states:

> "Historically and in accordance with Isma'ili tradition, the Imam of the time is concerned with spiritual advancement as well as improvement of the quality of life of his *murids*[2]. The Imam's *Ta'lim*[3] lights the *murids'* path to spiritual enlightenment and vision. In temporal matters, the Imam guides the *murids*, and motivates them to develop their potential …. By virtue of his office and in accordance with the faith and belief of the Isma'ili Muslims, the Imam enjoys full authority of governance over and in respect of all religious and *Jamati* matters[4] of the Isma'ili Muslims." (Aga Khan IV, "Constitution" 4 & 5)

Echoing Ja'far al-Sadiq's Doctrine of Imamate, this document re-affirms the power and authority

of the Imam over the Nizari Isma'ilis, and emphasizes his ability to direct their lives both

religiously and temporally. In this sense, the Imam functions not only as a spiritual authority,

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[2] Literally: committed one. In this context refers to Nizari Isma'ilis.
[3] Literally: teaching.
[4] Matters relating to the community, i.e. to Nizari Isma'ilis.

but also as a head of state, whose nation is the international Nizari Isma'ili community. The importance of this aspect of Nizari belief becomes apparent when examining the impact of the Imam's directives on the migration of Khoja Nizari Isma'ilis from East Africa to Canada.

Khoja Nizari Isma'ili History

Following the Nizar/Musta'li schism, the Nizaris were found largely in Persia and Syria, where they set a quasi-state that lasted well into the 13th century, until its primary fortress, Alamut[5], fell to the Mongols in 1256. However, it was during this time, often known as the Alamut period, that Nizari Isma'ilism was first introduced to India. During the 12th to 14th centuries, missionaries known as *pirs* or *da'is*, were responsible for proselytising activities in India. Most Hindu converts to Nizari Isma'ilism were from the Lohana caste. Traditionally addressed as *thakur*, meaning lord or master, these converts eventually became known as Khojas, derived from *khwaja*, the Persian word that corresponds to *thakur* (Daftary & Hirji 166). Over the next six centuries, the Khoja community grew and developed its own traditions but it remained physically distant from the seat of Imamate in Persia and was largely lead by *pirs*, who were appointed by the Imam.

However, this situation changed drastically in the middle of the 19th century. After problems with the Persian Qajar court in 1841, the 46th Nizari Imam, Hasan 'Ali Shah, also known as Aga Khan I, moved with his family to Afghanistan (Daftary & Hirji 189). There he encountered British troops, who were attempting to gain control over the region. In 1842, the British troops in Afghanistan were forced to retreat and the Aga Khan helped them to evacuate and attempted (unsuccessfully) to broker a deal for them in India. For his loyalty, he was granted an annual

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[5] Though exact dates for this period vary, it is generally marked as beginning in 1090, with the seizure of Alamut by the Nizaris, to 1256, when it fell, though occasionally the period is extended until 1270, when the final Nizari outpost in Persia, Girdkuh, fell to the Mongols. See Bartlett.

pension (Daftary & Hirji 190). Though he always hoped to return to Persia, his request was never granted, and he eventually made Bombay his permanent home, establishing a *darkhana*[6] there.

Once established in India, Aga Khan I set about consolidating his community there. In 1861, he "circulated a document in Bombay and elsewhere that clarified the beliefs, customs, and practices of the community and his role as its leader" (Daftary & Hirji 194) and asked those who agreed to them to sign their acceptance of the terms. While the majority of the community readily assented and signed the document, a small group disagreed and brought a court case against the Aga Khan. Ironically, it was the ruling made in this case, which came out in favour of Aga Khan I, that cemented his position as Imam. The ruling "firmly established the religious identity of the Khojas as Shi'i Imami Isma'ilis and confirmed the first Aga Khan's genealogical ties with the Imams of the Alamut period and hence his ancestral rights to the Nizari Isma'ili Imamate" (Daftary & Hirji 194). In light of the previous discussion on the Doctrine of Imamate, this ruling had far-reaching consequences with regards to the position and authority of the Aga Khan and his successors on the Nizari Isma'ili community, as we will see.

Aga Khan I was succeeded by his son, Aqa 'Ali Shah, Aga Khan II in 1881. Though his reign was brief, lasting only four years, he was active in Indian public and political life and, through his involvement in these spheres, he attempted to improve the educational opportunities for Muslims in India. He also began to establish links with Nizari Isma'ili community in East Africa, which has begun to establish itself by the late 1800 (Daftary & Hirji 204).

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[6] The Imam's chief place of residence.

In 1885, Aga Khan II was succeeded by his eight-year-old son, Sultan Muhammad Shah, who became the third Aga Khan. The longest ruling Nizari Imam, he was responsible for ushering his community into modern times. Aga Khan III was very politically active; he was the first president of all-India Muslim league, heavily involved in the development of India's position on independence, and, following World War I, was president of the League of Nations. He was also actively involved in the modernization and the socio-economic improvement of this community, and issued a number of *firmans*[7] dealing with "education, female emancipation and the participation of women in communal life, religious tolerance, matters of personal health and hygiene, economic and professional development, and spiritual growth" (Daftary & Hirji 203). Moreover, in 1905, he issued written 'Rules and Regulations' for his communities in East Africa and India, which effectively served as a constitution and clarified community traditions and hierarchies (Daftary & Hirji 203).

Upon his death in 1957, Aga Khan III was succeeded by his grandson, Karim al-Husayni, Aga Khan IV, who remains the Nizari Isma'ili Imam to the present day. This was a unique appointment, going from grandfather to grandson, rather than from father to son. Aga Khan III explained his decision in his will, stating that

> "in view of the fundamentally altered conditions in the world in very recent years due to the great changes which have taken place including the discoveries of atomic science I am convinced that it is in the best interests of the Shi'a Isma'ilian Community that I should be succeeded by a young man who has been brought up and developed during recent years and in the midst of the new age and who brings a new outlook on life to his office as Imam." (Aga Khan III, qtd. in Edwards 212)

This description by his grandfather was certainly true. Aga Khan IV was born in Geneva and though he spent his early years in Nairobi, he was educated in the West, first at Le Rosey in

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[7] Directives from the Imam to his community, usually in verbal form

Switzerland, then at Harvard (Edwards 203). Modern in both education and outlook, Aga Khan IV continued the improvements begun by his predecessor and, as we will see, brought his community into the 21st century, stronger and more secure than ever before.

Khojas in East Africa

Khojas first began to travel to East Africa in the 17th century, mostly for mercantile purposes, and eventually established a community there, building its first *jamatkhana*[8], in Zanzibar in 1820. Initially a small community, it grew considerably when the largely rural-subsistence farming population of West India moved in search of a "better material life" (Nanji, "North America" 152), following a series of droughts and famines in Gujarat (Daftary & Hirji 204). By early 1914, the Khojas had settled various other regions, including Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Madagascar, South Africa, and Mozambique. In each of these areas, Khojas adapted to local conditions and life under the ruling colonial power, learning the local and colonial languages and assimilating parts of both local and colonial cultures (Daftary & Hirji 209).

Following the First World War, Khojas began to put down more solid roots in their new homelands. They had built their first school in Zanzibar in 1905 and continued along these lines, building the boys' school in Mombasa in 1918, followed by the girls' school in 1919. During this period, the community experienced increasing stability and growth (Daftary & Hirji 227). Institutionalization was continued following the Second World War, but these projects, such as the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust[9], focused more on economic and social welfare.

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[8] Literally: house of the community, i.e. the Isma'ilis' place of worship.
[9] Established by Aga Khan III in 1946, the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust funded schools and cooperative societies in various Isma'ili communities (Daftary & Hirji 227).

With the succession of the new Imam in 1957, the Khoja community experienced further growth. Aga Khan IV continued in the same vein as his grandfather, promoting the community's social, economic, and religious welfare. Along with *firmans* directing the community in personal and spiritual matters, he established the Industrial Promotion Services (IPS) and Tourism Promotion Services (TPS)[10] in 1963, and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)[11] in 1967 (Daftary & Hirji 234). Aga Khan IV also implemented a new constitution in 1962, which reaffirmed the 'Rules and Regulations' established by his grandfather and developed further on institutional structures.

Lessons Learned and Changes Made

Clearly, the migration of the Khojas from India to East Africa had a profound impact on the community. From this first migration experience, they learned a number of important lessons and developed as a community in unique and important ways. As Nanji remarks, "perhaps the most remarkable feature of Isma'ili history in East Africa was the total transformation of its material and social life" ("North America" 152), particularly the way in which the time in Africa underscored the community's existing assets and values.

First, the migration emphasised the importance of family networks. While the community had always had strong family ties, it was family networks, both immediate and extended, that allowed them to survive and thrive in East Africa. Those who migrated earlier supported those who came later, a pattern that would be repeated when the community migrated to Canada.

In East Africa, the Khojas also learned the importance of blending together various backgrounds and cultures. Occupying a middle position in society, initially between the

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[10] These organizations were created to aid tourism, technical training, and industry in Africa (Daftary & Hirji 234).

[11] A non-profit, social development organization that works mainly in Asia and Africa. See Aga Khan Foundation.

colonizer and colonized, and later on as members of the middle class, they learned to accommodate both local and colonial cultures, incorporating various parts of either into their own communal identity. They were also able to learn both local and colonial languages, and establish good relations with other communities. Together, these accommodations allowed them to flourish and succeed in East Africa. However, in order to achieve this success, the Khojas also had to make accommodations within their own community, putting less emphasis on the differences between them that were important in India. All these skills served them well in East Africa, and would continue to be important when they left.

In the process of acquiring this new communal identity, they were also able to shed aspects of Indian social and cultural habits, such as modes of dress, language, and business practices that would hinder their progress, while still maintaining their cultural identity. This occurred partly as a result of directives from the Imam, which will be discussed later, and also as a result of their changing circumstances as a community. For example, the Khojas in East Africa, many of whom were farmers in India, became an increasingly mercantile, entrepreneurial community. This change in vocation impacted their position economically and socially, giving them more disposable income and bringing them into contact with more varied groups of people. These changes, in turn, influenced the manner in which the community constructed its identity and differentiated itself from the Khojas who remained in India, as well as Nizari Isma'ilis elsewhere.

Finally, the establishment of the community in East Africa also marked the beginning of institutional development. During their time in East Africa, the Khojas established prayer halls,

schools, housing projects, hospitals, and economic and social welfare institutions[12].   This increased institutionalization allowed the Khojas both to become more a centralized community and to afford them an important place in the social and economic functioning of East Africa.

History of the Migration to Canada

The mid-20th century saw many changes in East Africa, the most important of which was the creation of new, independent nation-states.   While this was a positive shift in many ways, it created a number of issues, particularly for Asians, who had traditionally acted as a middle group between colonizer and colonized and were seen as economically privileged (Nanji, "North America" 154).   Most Khojas decided to stay in East Africa, as they were encouraged to do by their Imam (Edwards 292), who directed them to become citizens of the newly-formed countries and to help these nations develop (Nanji, "North America" 153).   To that end, the Khojas adapted their position.   They broadened their institutional structure and continued to emphasize educational & commercial growth (Nanji, "North America" 154).   Their efforts were met with much success, and Khojas represented the "largest among Asian groups at the three East African universities by the end of the 1960s" (Nanji, "North America" 154).

It was due to this increased education and professional capacity that Khojas initially began to migrate to the West.   In the 1960s, students began to pursue post-secondary degrees in England, the U.S. and Canada.   Likewise, some members of the community began to feel that they were no longer able to sufficiently progress professionally in East Africa, partly due to higher levels of education, and also as a result of increasing nationalization and Africanization (Nanji, "North

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[12] For more information on these institutions, see above. Also see Aga Khan IV, "Constitution"; Kaiser; Nanji, "Modernization and Change", "North America".

America" 155).   However, the majority of the community remained in East Africa and many students returned or intended to return to their home countries after completing their education.

The situation changed drastically in 1972, when Idi Amin ordered all Asians to leave Uganda, seeing them as the responsible for the country's economic problems. In the chaos that ensued, Aga Khan IV was able to broker a deal[13] which allowed Isma'ilis from Uganda to enter Canada as refugees with relative ease, beginning the main wave of migration. Following this exodus, Khojas from other countries in East Africa began to move as well. Some migrated because the political climate was unstable, others, for professional reasons already mentioned, and finally, as Nanji remarks, "some were unable to make the psychological transition to accepting independent African rule" ("North America" 155).

By 1978, when Aga Khan IV made his first visit to his community in Canada, the Khojas had already begun to establish themselves. The Isma'ili Council for Canada[14] was established in 1973, various other institutions were developed between 1975 and 1978[15], and building on the first purpose-built Isma'ili *jamatkhana* in Canada began in Burnaby, B.C. in 1982 (*Paigham-e-Imamat* 146). By the Imam's second visit, in 1983, the community in Canada was well-entrenched and almost fully acculturated.

Isma'ilis in Canada Today

Rough estimates put the Nizari Isma'ili community in Canada today at approximately 70,000. They are largely middle class, well-educated people, who live in major urban centers

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[13] While there appears to be no formal paperwork regarding this agreement, it is mentioned in several places, including Aga Khan IV, "Hope"; Mansbridge.
[14] The Isma'ili Councils function at local, regional, and national levels and are responsible for running all community institutions.
[15] See Karim; Aga Khan IV, "Constitution".

across the country, with the greatest concentrations in the Greater Toronto Area and the Lower Mainland in B.C. Since migrating to Canada, the community has received a new constitution[16] and has further developed its institutional structure, including recent additions such as the Global Center for Pluralism in Ottawa, whose funding deal was agreed on in October 2006[17], the Delegation for the Isma'ili Imamate, also in Ottawa, which was inaugurated in December 2008[18], and the Aga Khan Museum[19] and Isma'ili Center[20] in Toronto, whose foundation ceremony occurred in May 2010.

What Makes This Case Unique

While all this is certainly an interesting historical perspective on a community, what is relevant to the question at hand is what makes this community unique, particularly with regard to acculturation. In the short 30 or 40 years that they have been here, the Isma'ilis have managed to become CEOs of major corporations, doctors, lawyers, judges, members in the senate, parliament, and legislatures, even members of the Order of Canada (Karim 50-54). Taken individually, none of these achievements is particularly extraordinary. In acculturation research, it is common to find individuals, or even families, who are able to acculturate with this degree of success, and in fact, most studies of successful acculturation are based on just such cases. But to have so many such cases in a community of only 70,000 is certainly rare, perhaps even unique, given the lack of any similar cases in the literature. Moreover, it would seem that this community as a whole appears to have acculturated uncommonly well, so much so that, according to an interview with Aga Khan IV, the Isma'ili community in Canada has become the

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[16] See Aga Khan IV, "Constitution".
[17] See Global Centre for Pluralism.
[18] See Aga Khan Development Network, "Delegation".
[19] See Aga khan Development Network, "Museum".
[20] See The Isma'ili.

"poster child" for Canadian immigration policy and has been asked by the Canadian government to illustrate their process of integration, so that it can be used as a model for other communities (Cayo). It is on this basis that this paper seeks to take a closer look at acculturation in this community.

Acculturation Theory

As previously mentioned, acculturation was first defined as comprehending "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups." (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits 149, qtd. in Berry 7). It can also be defined as the process by which individuals or groups transition from one or more cultures into another (Jamil, Nassar-McMillan, & Lambert 199), or the process of culture change and adaptation that occurs when individuals with different cultures come into contact (Gibson 19). This paper will employ Berry's definition, in which acculturation refers to "the general processes and outcomes (both cultural and psychological) of intercultural contact" (8).

General Acculturation Research

Research that has been done in the past few years has helped to determine how immigrant populations acculturate to their new environment. Across a number of quantitative studies, many factors emerge, the two most common being social support and English language proficiency.

Though stereotypes indicate that immigrants have poorer mental health, studies of the Mexican immigrant population in the United States have shown that this population actually suffers from fewer mental-health problems than the native-born population (Escobar, Nervi, & Gara 69). There is some speculation that this may be related to the recency of immigration

(Jamil, Nassar-McMillan, & Lambert 203) and a more realistic perception of what qualifies as success (Escobar, Nervi, & Gara 70), but it is usually associated with stronger family ties (Escobar, Nervi, & Gara 70). Another study found that social support was the most significant factor in predicting immigrant mental health, followed by pre-migration trauma, family status, and gender (Schweitzer et al. 184-185). Though Côté argues that acculturation is essentially a by-product of individualization (33), Thomas and Choi found that social support activities reduce acculturative stress and that parental social support is the most important predictive factor in determining the level of acculturative stress (139). An additional support for the importance of community social support was a study by Keel and Drew, which indicated that community-based settlement programs provided more positive settlement experiences than government programs (95). Likewise, in attempting to create a measurement of Arab, male acculturation, Barry found that ethnic identity, self-construal, and personal and collective self-esteem were all associated with acculturation (182 - 183).

Similar to the social support finding, one study found that immigrants' acculturation was determined by their reference group. If their reference group was of the same ethnic orientation, they exhibit weaker assimilation of the host culture and stronger association with their culture of origin, whereas those whose reference group is of the dominant culture show the opposite trend (Kosic et al. 810). Another study differentiated between integrated immigrants, who valued maintaining their original culture, as well as creating new social relationships in their new environment, and assimilated immigrants, who formed new relationships and were not overly concerned with maintaining their original culture (Kosic 195). This same study found that the greatest predictors of poor adaptation were separation and marginalization (Kosic 195). Also,

Asian immigrants who scored high on Asian identity and low on acculturation and ethnic affiliation generally had a higher overall quality of life score (Lieber et al. 256).

The other factor that emerged in much of the research was the impact of the level of English language competence on acculturation. For example, one study found that English language competency was a major predictor of acculturative stress, along with marital status, social connectedness, adjustment difficulties, neuroticism, and openness to experience were predictors of acculturative stress (Duru & Poyrazli 108-109). Language acculturation was also found to be important for self-esteem in older Mexican immigrants (Meyler, Stimpson, & Peek 185). Dao, Lee, and Chang found that lower levels of acculturation and English fluency were correlated to a higher risk of depression in Taiwanese youth (293). Kuo and Roysircar also found that English reading ability and socioeconomic status were predictors of acculturative stress (151-152). Similarly, Laroche, Kim, and Hui found that immigrants were acculturated to English Canadian society through English Canadian media use (329).

Though the field is dominated by quantitative research, there have been a few studies that have attempted to encompass the richness of the information in this subject area through qualitative research. From these studies have emerged many of the same findings as the quantitative studies. For example, Keyes and Kane interviewed seven female, Bosnian refugees about their experience of living in the United States and found that the two major themes that emerged were adapting to the new environment and finding a sense of belonging in their new communities (828-829). This study suggested that community programs that help refugees to fit in, as well as language classes, would be beneficial in allowing such people to acculturate to their new environment.

Similarly, Kim et al. looked at the adaptation experiences of 1.5 generation, Asian, college students and found that English proficiency played a pivotal role in their initial adjustment (167). Pre-immigration experiences, acculturation and enculturation experiences, intercultural relationships, and support systems were other major themes that emerged in their qualitative study as relevant to adaptation in a new environment (166-169).

Lam and Chan, in one of the few attempts to look at people who had adjusted well to their new environments, used the narratives of Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong (436). They found that there were some common themes in the narratives of the youth they interviewed, for example, a strong family concept, a drive to acquire knowledge, and faith in life (440-443).

Berry's Model

Unifying the varied findings of other studies into a single, overarching framework has been a challenging task, but it is one that scholars have undertaken. A number of frameworks have been proposed, including "a stress, coping and adaptation framework, an inter-group relations paradigm, and a communication processes perspective" (Noels & Berry 274). However, by far the most comprehensive framework, particularly for the Canadian context, is that proposed by Berry.

As can be seen in Figure 1 (from Berry 10), Berry identifies four acculturation strategies, which are determined by two key factors:

> "*cultural maintenance* (to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered to be important, and their maintenance strived for); and *contact and participation* (to what extent should they become involved in other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves)." (Berry 9)

A group's response to these two key issues determines the acculturation strategy that the group will follow. However, Berry is cognizant of the role that the dominant society can play in the decisions of the non-dominant group; separation can in fact be segregation when it is enforced by the dominant culture, just as assimilation "becomes more like a '*pressure cooke*r'" (10) when it is forced.

Berry clearly favours integration as the best strategy. He notes that integration is usually the most successful strategy, possibly because it incorporates a number of protective factors, or because, "in terms of Fig. 1, integration involves two positive orientations" (24). He also notes that integration may be so successful because many of the studies examining acculturation are done in multicultural societies, which favour integration (24).

Based on the acculturation strategies he proposes, Berry outlines a framework for acculturation research, as depicted in Figure 2 (from Berry 15). This chart represents a proposed framework for study in this field, and combines much of previous research into a single system. As such, it provides ideal grounds through which to examine a particular group's acculturation. On the left are group level phenomena, such as political and economic contexts and social support systems, whereas those on the right are considered to be more individual factors, such as age, education, and coping strategies. The top level of the chart represents factors that pre-date immigration and the acculturation experience, whereas the bottom are factors that arise during the process of acculturation. Finally, the central portion represents the main process of acculturation experienced over time, and the solid and dotted lines represent mediating and moderating factors respectively. While this framework is quite comprehensive, Berry notes that each of these factors can play an important role in the acculturation of a population (16).

ISSUE 1

Is it considered to be of value to maintain one's identity and characteristics?

"YES" ⟷ "NO"

ISSUE 2

Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with larger society?

"YES"
↑
↓
"NO"

INTEGRATION   ASSIMILATION

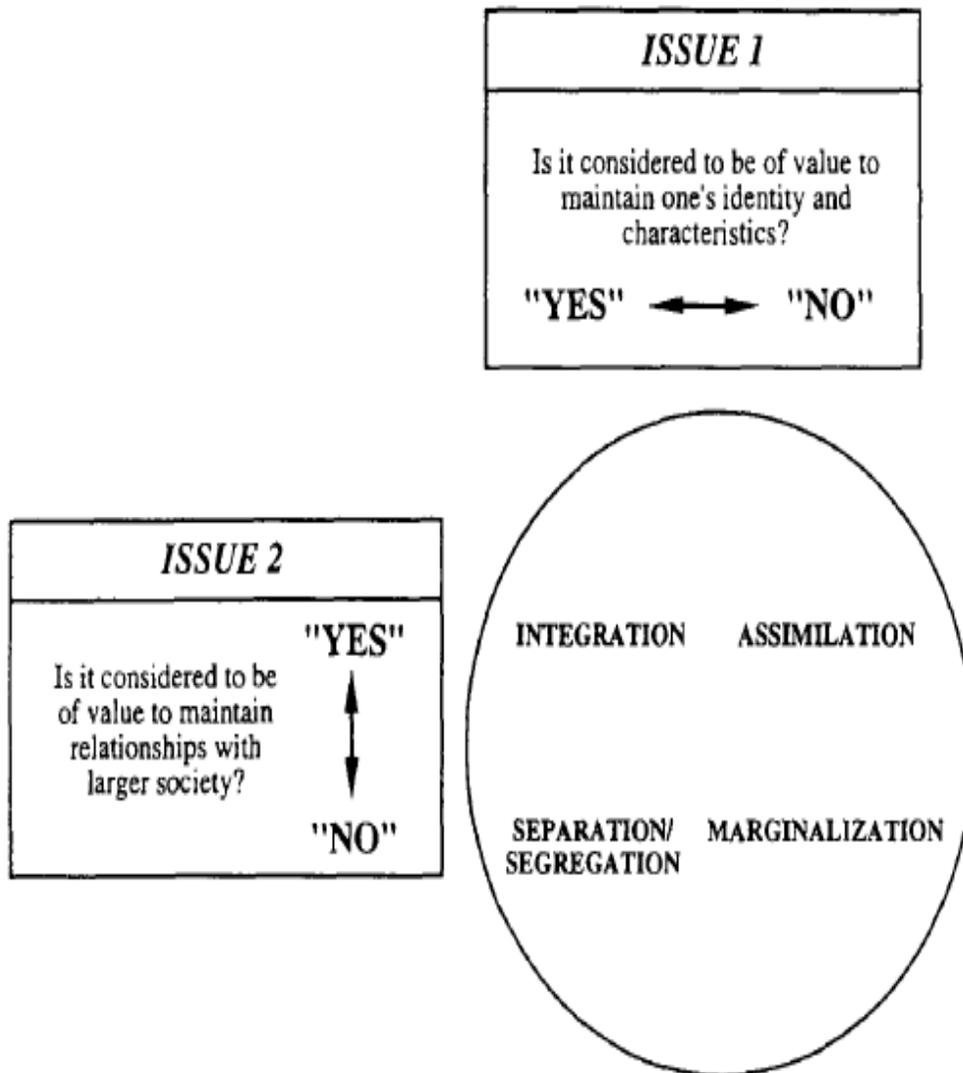SEPARATION/   MARGINALIZATION
SEGREGATION

FIG. 1. Acculturation strategies.

For example, group level factors in the society of origin play an important role in determining a number of pre-existing features, including cultural distance (the disparity between the culture in the society of origin and that in the society of settlement), the voluntariness of migration, and political, economic, and demographic aspects that may impact migration and acculturation (16). Likewise, as previously mentioned, society of settlement can impact acculturation based on their views on immigration (16). Multicultural orientations, as noted, and pluralistic societies are more likely to foster positive acculturation (17).
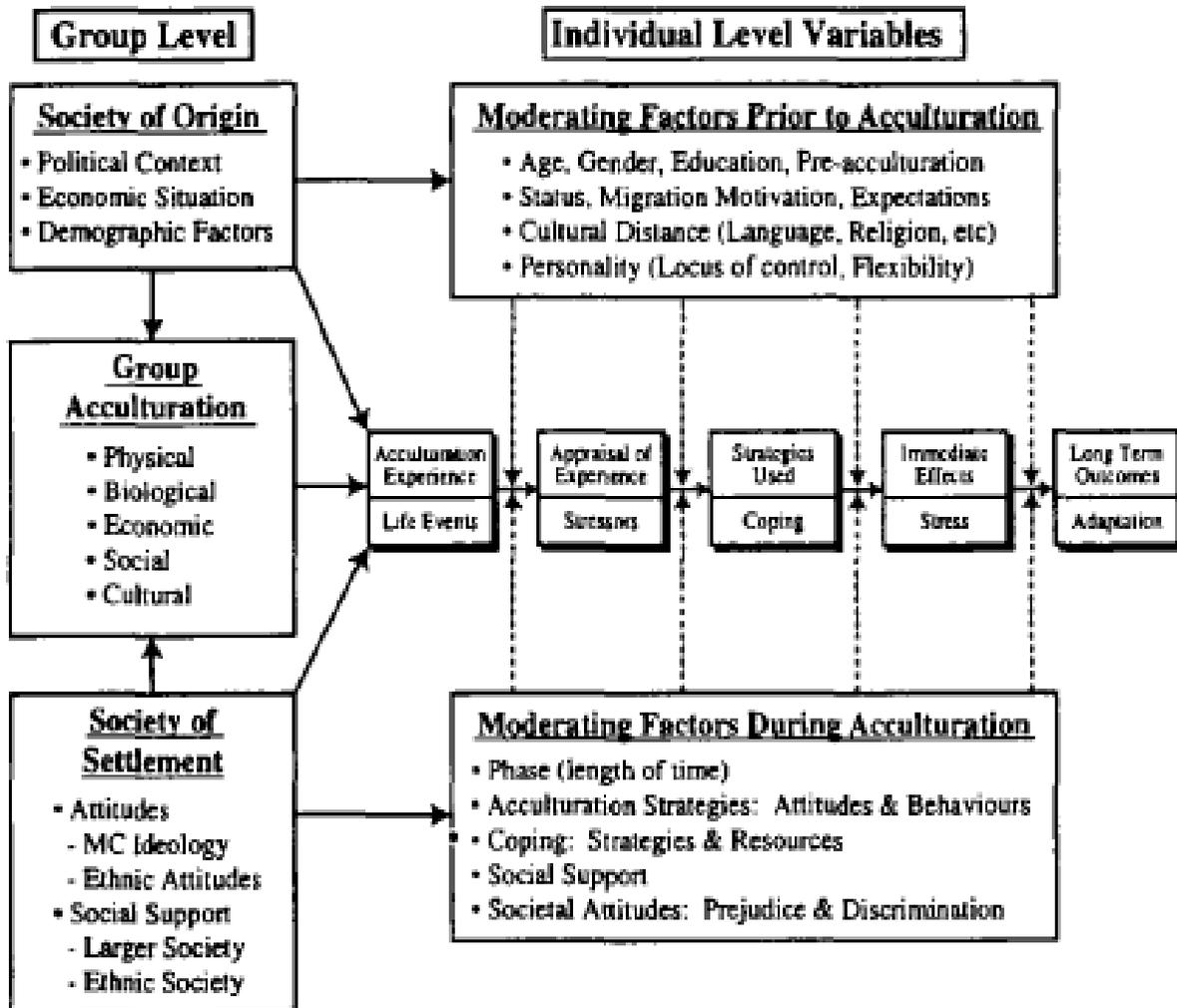
FIG. 2.   A framework for acculturation research.

With regard to individual factors, Berry consolidates a number of key findings. For example, younger people tend to acculturate better than older ones (21), as do men, although women may do equally well depending on cultural distance (22). Higher levels of education, and related factors such as higher economic status, better language acquisition, and less cultural distance, are also related to more successful acculturation (22). Berry also notes that personal factors, such as locus of control, introversion/extroversion, and self-efficacy, can also moderate acculturation, findings are not consistent (23).

During acculturation, Berry observes that the phase of acculturation is normally seen as a U-curve, where "only a few problems are present early, followed by more serious problems later, and finally, more positive long-term adaptation is achieved" (24). Alternatively, phase can be considered more variable, dependent on the nature of problems encountered and the relation of these to personal resources (24). As previously noted, integration is seen as the most successful acculturation strategy, for a variety of reasons, and social support is positively correlated to successful acculturation (24-25). Experience of prejudice, on the other hand, is negatively correlated with outcomes, wherein more experiences of discrimination result in worse acculturation and mental and physical health problems (25).

There are a number of strengths and limitations to the framework proposed by Berry. First, Berry uses psychology as a basis for his framework, a field that is generally considered to be more individualistic and scientifically oriented than, for example, sociology or anthropology. Berry's model does not take into account the varying weight that each factor may have on acculturation. Moreover, the framework clearly shows a bias toward integration as the best strategy, reflective, as Berry notes, of the preponderance of research done in Western, pluralistic contexts. While Berry does employ social psychology as his framework, he is well able to incorporate both group level and individual factors, and allows for varying types of research, both quantitative and qualitative, to be conducted under its aegis. Also, while Berry himself does not give varying weight to different factors, he does recognize that some are better researched than others, and encourages scholars to begin to fill the gaps in order to strengthen the framework he presents. And finally, although the model presented is clearly biased toward a Western understanding, it is excellent for a Canadian example, particularly given that it was developed here. It is therefore a very satisfactory model for the examination of the case at hand.

Methodology

Design

It was determined that in order to be able to fully explore the question at hand, a combination of primary sources, such as speeches and interviews with the Nizari Isma'ili Imams, and secondary source information would need to be supplemented by interview data. Interviews are necessary in this context for two main reasons. First, as a very small minority population, there is insufficient data available to create a strong case without first-hand accounts. Moreover, much of the data that are available, including *firmans*, or directives of the Imam to the community, are accessible only to members of the community and may not be used in public forums, including the research at hand. Interviews allowed for a secondary account of some of this otherwise inaccessible information, and also provided insightful, first-hand accounts of the migration experience in this community.

In order to access the information required, a qualitative method was employed. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative studies focus on the ways in which situations are experienced and the meaning that is given to these experiences (10); they attempt to capture the richness of each description and the essence of each individual's point of view (12). These are qualities that this particular research question required in order to be effectively explored. Additionally, the research conducted fits the criteria set forth by Creswell, specifically, that the question relates to a "how" and that it is a topic requiring exploration and a detailed view (39-40).

Generally speaking, the study took an ethnographic, case-study format. As noted by Abu Lughod, "Case studies are one way of eroding the divide between self and other" (qtd. in Gunn 43). While the case study method is often criticized as lacking generalizability, Gunn notes that

"it is only when we have accumulated a number of just such localized studies that any type of comparative project becomes meaningful, or even possible. At the very least, each individual study can be seen as an incremental improvement in our understanding of cultures and human behaviour— our own, and that of others—and these are surely important achievements, even if incomplete." (47)

In order to effectively seek out the richness and diversity desired, it was decided that conversational (Roulston, "Conversational Interviewing" 127), in depth (Cook 422-423) interviews would be utilized. The conversational nature of the interview allowed for easier discussion of a somewhat sensitive topic by creating a less hierarchical structure and allowing for elements of sociability to create comfort and develop rapport (Roulston, "Conversational Interviewing" 128). It also allowed for greater flexibility in the interview, giving the participant the opportunity to ask questions and shift the topic to a certain degree (Roulston, "Conversational Interviewing" 129). Though this form of interviewing has been criticised for being simplistic and having the potential for manipulation on the part of the interviewer through her interaction in the conversation, it renders more rich and authentic data (Roulston, "Conversational Interviewing" 128), which are necessary to answer the research question at hand. The in-depth nature of the interview also played an important role, in that it allowed participants the opportunity to expand on answers and to take the interview in different, but related, directions (Cook 422-423).

Participants

Six participants were chosen from a pool of candidates for this study. Given the qualitative, small N nature of this design, this provided an adequate range of sampling. The participants were required to be Khoja Nizari Isma'ilis who immigrated to Canada from East Africa[21] in the 1970s, as this was the largest wave of immigration for the community in question. Participants

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[21] Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

were all adults[22] at the time of migration to Canada. They were recruited through word of mouth and emails using community resources and personal networks, keeping in mind ethical constraints around dual relationships.

A separate interview was also conducted as a personal communication from N.E. Kanji, who has held a number of senior leadership positions in the community in Canadian Isma'ili community, including Presidency of the National Council in 1987.

Procedures

Potential participants were sent an email outlining the proposed study, including the guiding questions to be used, and the time commitment required, similar to that found in Appendix A. If the respondent chose to participate, a time and place was established to conduct the interview, which took approximately one hour. Preceding the interview, participants were asked to give informed consent (see Appendix B). Following this, the participant was asked the following exploratory questions:

1. What factors do you think impact immigration and acculturation in general?

2. Describe your own experience of immigration

3. Do you think religion impacted your experience of immigration and acculturation? Explain.

In addition to these questions, participants responses were prompted using verbal and non-verbal probes, such as nodding or statements such as "tell me more about that" (Roulston, "Probes" 127-129). Each of the three specific questions falls into a particular category and serves a precise purpose. The first is a knowledge question (Martella, Nelson, & Marchand-

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[22] Over the age of eighteen.

Martella 290) which will help clarify the participant's understanding of the topic in question. The second question is an experience/behaviour question (Martella, Nelson, & Marchand-Martella 290), which will allow for participants to describe their experiences. And the third question is an opinion/values question (Martella, Nelson, & Marchand-Martella 290) which will give participants the opportunity to discuss their own views regarding the immigration and acculturation process.

All interviews were audio-taped. All tapes were stored in a locked storage cabinet or in encrypted computer files. Tapes will be destroyed following the completion of the research in question, in accordance with the ethical standards set by the Queen's School of Religion's General Research Ethics Board. The interviewer also took personal notes during interviews to aid memory and encourage self-reflexivity.

There was also a short follow-up phone call to debrief on the interview process and respond to any questions or concerns that had arisen.

Analysis

During analysis, audio-tapes were examined for thematic content and compared in order to ascertain thematic similarities across interviews. These were then placed within the framework proposed by Berry, and combined with historical and other documented information about the community in question, in order to determine the veracity of the hypothesis, with specific focus on the function of religion within this framework.

Case Study

Based on the history of the community provided, and the interviews conducted, as well as the acculturation framework described above, it is possible to examine how the Khoja community was able to acculturate so successfully and the extent to which this success was related to religion.

Society of Origin and Moderating Factors Prior to Acculturation

Age. Berry isolates a number of moderating factors that occur prior to acculturation and can help to buffer and facilitate the acculturation process. Age is one such factor and Berry notes that the younger the migrant, the better he or she is able to adapt (21-22), an observation that is proved to be valid in this community. Children and youth who immigrated were certainly more likely to adapt with more ease, being raised and educated in Canada. Interviewees noted that younger siblings who went to school in Canada were able to settle here quite comfortably (Interview 2; Interview 5). However, those who migrated as adults, and represented the majority of the community, were equally adept at succeeding in Canadian society. In fact, most of the examples given in the description of the achievements of Khojas in Canada today are individuals who migrated in their twenties and thirties. For example,

> "Over time we've had top CEOs in Canada who have been Isma'ilis. Like today, Rogers CEO is an Isma'ili. We look into a lot of research areas, we have very successful Isma'ilis there, very successful Isma'ilis in the medical field. ... We've got at least half a dozen Isma'ili authors, Amir Merchant in Vancouver who's written a couple of books and they're quite good; Moez Vassanji; Salima Bhimani, who did a book. ... Then we have Shenaz Nanji in Calgary. She [wrote] Child of Dandelions. Great book to remind kids about what happened in the first 90 days in Uganda. It's fiction, but I'm sure based on the stories she has heard. So there are at least half a dozen fiction authors. Ali Lakhani who's got his publication, the Sacred Web. Of course, Moez Vassanji's wife, Nurjehan Aziz, she's got a publishing company, and publishes a lot of ... authors from other countries who come and live in Canada, a lot of Caribbean authors, East Indian authors, great stuff. She also does ...

the Toronto Review[23]. And so we do have some Isma'ilis in key, prominent places who are involved in the world of ideas." (Interview 3)

Likewise, while some of the more elderly struggled to adapt, the majority have been able to adapt to the Canadian context, initially getting jobs, and then, following retirement, joining seniors' groups or volunteering, both within the religious community and in Canadian society at large. One interviewee, for example, said that "when we came here, it was easier for mom and dad to find work because mom managed to work at the bank, dad managed to get work at a hotel and so we managed to settle here and we've been here ever since" (Interview 5).

Also, the varied ages of the migrants facilitated a stronger sense of community. As one interviewee remarked, "speaking to the older ladies, they take you in, they take you as their child and, you know, so you don't feel left out" (Interview 2). Likewise, older siblings took care of younger siblings, bringing them to Canada and helping them to get an education (Interview 2).

Gender. With regard to gender, Berry's predictions proved to be more accurate. Given that the relative difference between the status of women in the two cultures was minimal, it is not surprising that Khoja women were able to acculturate well in Canada. Reforms and modernization regarding women in this community began early on. Aga Khan III abolished the practice of veiling, encouraged the education of young women, and modernized health care practices, including reforming practices of midwifery (Aga Khan III 188). He also actively encouraged the participation of women in communal affairs (Daftary 202), stating that "the progressive modernization which depends on co-operation and understanding will be impossible unless women are permitted to play their legitimate part in the great work of national regeneration on a basis of political equality" (Aziz 1295-1296). In *firmans* to his community, he

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[23] The Toronto Review of Contemporary Writing Abroad (TSAR), formerly the Toronto South Asian Review.

encouraged families to educate their daughters, and that the education of women should be prioritized because, whereas a man could earn a living through physical labour, a woman required an education. Moreover, that woman would return to her community and share her knowledge with her family and her children, helping to raise the status of the community as a whole. This outlook is perhaps best encapsulated by the comments of one female interviewee:

> "I had a very very good friend. ... She was a Hindu. We were both the same age. In fact, her parents were a little bit more well-off than we were. And yet, when I look at her life and mine, I would never exchange things, simply because at a very young age, her parents got her married off. Didn't think about educating their daughter because to them, daughters are people who just stay at home and look after the children and don't really contribute to the outside society. And with us, with guidance of the Imam, that was not the case. It was very different. We were empowered. We had a say, in my family anyways. We were all four sisters, I was the oldest, and we were always given the opportunity to be a part of everything and encouraged to speak our minds and this is not because we were anything special, it was because of the Imam's guidance. That you know, like the *firman* that he made, that if you have two children, a son and a daughter, and if you were only able to educate one, then it should be the daughter, because if you educate the daughter, you educate the entire family. For my grandmother, that was very important. Her husband died when she was only 26 and she had seven children that she had to raise and they were all female except for one and she sacrificed everything so that her children could get an education. That, to me, is priceless, because had the Imam not given us the guidance, where would we be today? Just like that girl, my friend, who got married and away she went into her home and into the kitchen and having children and nothing to contribute, no identity for herself." (Interview 2)

These comments are echoed by the Isma'ili journalist, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, who remarked that,

> "They [the Imams] have the authority to, with a switch, drive their people to take steps which probably fast-forwards them fifteen hundred years, and they did that with the position of women. In 1921 I think it was, the grandfather of this Aga Khan decided that women, girls, should be educated, and that if there's a girl and a boy in a family and there's only enough money to educate one, you educate the girl, because she brings up the family. And he decided, he was quite right, that if women got educated, modernity and progress was incredibly fast." (*An Islamic Conscience*)

This progress is evident in the accounts of a biographer of the Aga Khans, who noted that:

"Isma'ili women had a pride of bearing, a self-confidence that was evident. Although they attended single-sex schools and did not sit with men to pray, their opinions on community matters were freely given and carefully considered and they were encouraged by their parents to continue their education to university level." (Edwards 277)

This view of the place of women in the world was also modeled by the wives, sisters, and daughters of the Aga Khans, who were well educated and actively involved in community and world affairs. The last wife of Aga Khan III, for example, undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca and was so highly regarded by her husband that when he died, his stated in his will: "I desire that my successor shall during the first seven years of his Imamate, be guided on all questions of general Imamate policy by my said wife Yvette ... Blanch Labrousse, the Begum Aga Khan, who has been familiar for many years with the problems facing my followers and in whose wise judgement I place the greatest confidence" (Edwards 212). The first wife of Aga Khan IV, known as Begum Salima, was also actively involved in the community, often visiting *jamats*[24] on her own (Edwards 277). Yasmin Aga Khan, sister of the current Imam, is also well known for her activism, particularly in the fight against Alzheimer's disease, from which her mother, Rita Hayworth, suffered in her later years (Edwards 300), and Princess Zahra, the eldest child and only daughter of Aga Khan IV, is also heavily involved in the community, taking primary responsibility for the management of the health, education, and planning and building service companies of the Aga Khan Development Network (Aga Khan Development Network, "About Us", par.10).

Education. In education, too, Berry's framework is confirmed. He notes that education is a very important moderating factor; higher levels of education consistently predict better outcomes, likely because education is both a personal resource, as well as a correlate for other

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[24] Isma'ili communities.

resources, such as income, occupational status, support networks, etc. Education can also serve as a pre-acculturation of sorts, allowing a person to become accustomed to language, history, values, and norms that are not native to his or her home environment. In the community in question, education has been consistently stressed, with full-scale reforms beginning during the time of Aga Khan II, who was politically active in this cause, as was Aga Khan III, who built many schools in both India and East Africa. Aga Khan III, especially, saw the important implications of education, and is noted as saying, "I continue to pin a great deal of faith on educational advancement. Illiteracy I saw as a menace to people and Government alike. Poverty and disease were its sinister consequences and accompaniments" (Aga Khan III 75).

Educational aspirations and projects were continued by Aga Khan IV, who announced during his coronation year that his goal was for a good education for every Isma'ili child (Edwards 253). So important was education to him that he once said in an interview:

> "'You know what thrills me, what *really* thrills me?' he asked a reporter from London's *Daily Mail*. 'Well, I believe the community's secondary schools in Dar es Salaam and Kampala have the highest pass rate in school certificates of any Asian school in East Africa." (Edwards 255)

This enthusiasm for education was further emphasized in *firmans*, which encouraged followers to make education a priority, a message that was not lost on the community. As previously noted, the educational effort was intensified following nationalization in East Africa, and many young students even left Africa to pursue higher degrees in the England or North America.

Education was, by far, one of the most discussed topics in interviews. Interviewees consistently noted that "the single biggest thing [was] ... his [the Imam's] insistence that we get an education" (Interview 4). The importance that was placed on education within the

community and its impact on their ability to migrate and acculturate successfully in Canada was

well recognized by many interviewees:

> "The Imam's [Aga Khan IV] guidance and Sultan Mohammed Shah's [Aga Khan III] guidance about making sure that you get yourself a good education and as Hazar Imam[25] said when we were in East Africa, and particularly during the Uganda crisis, he said 'people can take everything from you except what's between your two ears.'" (Interview 4)

> "Right in 1957 when he became the Imam, right from that time, what did he do? I mean his paramount question was that, look, education is important. If you have children, if you have got the means, send them out, let them get education. And that helped. Because the Isma'ilis at that time who were in Africa, they were mostly businessmen, shopkeepers. If their children went into business without getting a proper education or whatever, I think, when, in 1972, when this turmoil happened, they would have had a very rough time, to get out." (Interview 1)

Education, they said, was stressed by their parents. One interviewee noted, "our parents were

very adamant that we were going to get a good education, so they pushed us" (Interview 4).

Another remarked that her father was "of the belief that education, as the Imam put it, is very

very important. He [the Imam] has always encouraged education, from the very beginning,

particularly for women." For her, this emphasis on education "has been pivotal in our *jamat*

being successful wherever they are" (Interview 2). Education was emphasized to such a degree

that even those who did not initially regard it as important eventually changed their minds:

> "I was one of those guys who was just a good sportsman; captain of the cricket team, good musician, but no studies. I thought I would pass. Almost failed in grade 12. Discontinued. My father went to the principal, fought until I got in. That's when I changed. Finished grade 12, got the Aga Khan Scholarship, did a degree in agriculture, specialized in tea plantation." (Interview 6)

Education was also supported by the community as a whole, through institutions built by the

Imams, including schools and scholarships, which allowed the Isma'ilis to obtain better

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[25] Literally: the Living Imam, i.e. Aga Khan IV.

education and higher levels of education than would otherwise have been possible. Isma'ili

children were "all schooled in Aga Khan schools at some point" (Interview 4) and, as one

interviewee remarked,

> "one of the benefits of the Isma'ili community really is that ... they want their students or
> children to get educated. And they have the means or they find the means to send students
> for further education, specifically if their parents do not have the means or they themselves
> do not have the means to go for further education." (Interview 1)

For example, for another interviewee, it was "not just the guidance. Also the opportunity.

He [the Imam] built our schools. He gave me the scholarship[26]" (Interview 6).

Isma'ilis so valued education that it became part of the way they expressed their faith in the

societies in which they lived. For example, one interviewee explained a rule of his

grandfather's:

> "With the exception of the farm workers, because there were thousands, every other person
> who worked for us, whether be it in our stores, in our gas stations, car dealerships or
> homes, all their children had to go to school and my grandfather paid their school fees.
> When I was in secondary school, I had a teacher ... and I told this teacher that I know
> [someone with your last name] who is also a night watchman in our store. And he says "I
> am his son, and your grandfather sent me to school". So, you know, here was our night
> watchman, that I had known all my life, and in [secondary school] his son is my teacher."
> (Interview 3)

This kind of forward thinking is also evident in guidance given by the Imam, who recognized

that having a strong educational background would enable his community to contribute to

society in the future. As Aga Khan IV himself noted in a recent interview, "the quality of our

schools, where the schools were high quality schools, the children sat international exams, which

were recognized abroad, so that when the crisis occurred in Uganda, the people who actually left

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[26] Refers to the Aga Khan Scholarship.

Uganda were fluent in English and had a strong education" (*An Islamic Conscience*). His words

had a profound impact on the Ismaʿilis, including one of the interviewees, who said:

> "I've got a *taliqa*[27] from Hazar Imam, at our college ... half of the *taliqa* in his own hand-writing ... [the Imam wrote] 'By working at Edgerton [College], you may be thinking you are working for yourself. In years to come, I may, my *jamat* may call upon you to serve. So while working at Edgerton, you are also working for the *jamat*. Best wishes. *Khanavadhan*[28].'   So, now, 60 guys from that year, even today, relate to that *firman*." (Interview 7)

Economic status.   This emphasis on education also facilitated higher economic status

following migration. Berry notes that often, difference between economic status in the home

country and the country of settlement resulting in net status loss, as well as problems with

credential validity, can often thwart the initial migratory goal of upward mobility (22). In East

Africa, the Khojas were an economically stable, largely middle-class community of business

people and professionals, supported economically and educationally by communal structures

(Nanji, "North America" 154).   Many of the interviewees reflected on this economic

background, with one, for example, noting that "in the circumstance of parents and my

grandparents, they were what you might consider at that time middle class or upper middle class,

working." (Interview 4).   Another remarked that "the previous Imam, obviously, had the

Diamond Jubilee Trust, and some things like that, which were paramount for the Ismailis in

those early days to get funding for their businesses, etc." (Interview 1). Economic growth was

also a priority for Aga Khan IV, who, along with a good education for every Ismaʿili child, "told

his followers that his aim was for every Ismaʿili family to own their own house" (Edwards 253).

He was also a role model for the community and, as a successful businessman, played the role of

"Imam as financial guru" (Edwards 272). All of this together, meant that "Ismaʿilis remained

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[27] Written directive from the Imam to his community.

[28] A blessing which, loosely translated, means 'may your household be prosperous' and is understood by Isma'ilis to represent a general blessing for the prosperity of the community as a whole.

one of the most economically active and progressive element in the Muslim communities, shopkeepers, manufacturers, professional people" (Edwards 294).

This economic stability ensured that Khojas were able to seek higher education in the West, which ensured fewer difficulties with credential validity upon arrival in Canada. Moreover, because of their entrepreneurial spirit and the example of the Imam, the community experienced less difference between departure status and entry status, and less chance of status loss as a result, as indicated by the interviews:

> "What happened to a lot of us is we took up many mundane jobs. But within a few weeks of that, our skills were recognized, and a lot of us were promoted to higher positions than we had even applied for originally. And that was very very important. So very quickly, the majority of us were earning better wages than the minimum wages." (Interview 3)

Cultural distance and language. Cultural distance, defined by Berry as "how dissimilar the two cultures are in language, religion, etc." (23), was also quite low for the Khojas, due to previously mentioned factors, as well as to general reforms encouraged by the Imams:

> "They [the Isma'ilis] arrived there [in East Africa] with Asiatic habits and an Asiatic pattern of existence, but they have encountered a society in process of development which is, if anything, European-African. To have retained an Asiatic outlook in matters of language, habits, and clothing would have been for them a complication and socially a dead weight of archaism in Africa of the future." (Aga Khan III 190)

Many interviewees noted that "culture shock was not there. It was different [in Canada] but it wasn't a huge culture shock for us" (Interview 3). For some, this was due to early experiences abroad. For example, one interviewee noted that his time in England, where he had gone for college, changed his views in a number of ways, particularly in that "the lifestyle in the west is very different. You have to adapt yourself in the practice of faith" (Interview 1).

In addition, Isma'ilis, particularly young Isma'ilis, all spoke English, in addition to their local and traditional languages, which, as noted in a number of studies[29], can play a pivotal role in successful acculturation. The decision to educate students in English was made quite early on by the Aga Khan IV, who remarked that,

> "education in English ... was a policy decision that I took very early on and it was a very very delicate decision, not only in Africa but even in a country like Pakistan, where Urdu was becoming a national language, etc. We kept our education in two languages, the national language, plus English." (*An Islamic Conscience*)

The message "think in English, speak in English, and dream in English" was emphasized in Aga Khan Schools, where signs displaying such mottos could be found (*An Islamic Conscience*). Many interviewees recognized the impact of their ability to speak English, noting that it was easier for them in Canada

> "because of the language, which he [the Imam] had been insistent that, 'look, English is the language of economy, of business, of the world, so make sure that you educate your children in that language', and that helped the most." (Interview 1)

Another remarked that

> "the Imam's guidance, telling us, making sure that we had the English language, extremely important. That helped us, a lot, when we moved here. Because otherwise, that language barrier, as we see with other ethnic groups, can become very challenging. ... And the Imam was so adamant. 'Teach your children English. Speak to them in English at the house'. It was really a blessing." (Interview 2)

Political and economic climate. However, despite all the advantages that Isma'ilis enjoyed in East Africa, the political and economic climate in there prior to their migration was, as previously mentioned, somewhat precarious. Particularly difficult was Africanization, a practice that gave priority to black Africans in areas such as education and employment, creating

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[29] See page 26.

situations of unequal competition that made it difficult for Asians, like the Khojas, to practice their professions. Nanji, for example, notes that "*Ujamaa* or African socialism reduced the opportunity both for entrepreneurship and for advanced educations" ("North America" 155). This, combined with events in Uganda and increasing tensions and instability elsewhere in East Africa, influenced the community and induced many to migrate.

Interview data support these themes. Interviewees consistently mentioned the changing political situation in East Africa as one of their main concerns, and a primary reason for their departure from their home countries. The shift from a free market economy to a socialist economy meant that "the economy was not doing well, people's properties and everything were being taken away" (Interview 1). Stories of properties being lost abound and people were afraid, particularly after the Ugandan crisis. One interviewee recalls:

> "I was on a government scholarship and I had signed a contract that I had to go back, and I had just finished my bachelor's degree, and I was ready to go, and my father wrote to me, and he said 'the political situation is not that great in Tanzania. If you can, try not to come back.' ... At that time the Tanzanian government was nationalizing, left, right, anything that moved, and so my brother, who had an apartment, one day gets up and reads the paper and finds out that the apartment he had paid for the government had not only been taken over, had not only been nationalized, but he had to start paying rent to the government. As you know, during that time, and the Ugandan crisis brought it all to fore, any shortcomings that the government had, they blame it on the Asians. So for us, it was not a very healthy situation." (Interview 4)

But perhaps the most poignant analysis of the situation, and likely the deeper cause for the migration was that "you didn't have hope there. There was no jobs. You were basically stuck in a rut" (Interview 2).

Voluntariness of migration. According to Berry, these socio-economic conditions can be classified as 'push' factors, increasing the reactivity of the migration and reducing its voluntariness. Often, this can result in negative experiences of migration and reduce a

community's chances of successful acculturation. Certainly, there was a difference in the degree of voluntariness of migration between the Ugandan case, where the Khojas were forcibly expelled from the country, and the rest of the population in question. However, in the case of the Khojas from East Africa, even in the case of the Ugandan Khojas, expectations were largely tempered by prior immigration experiences, having, as previously discussed, migrated from India to East Africa only one or two generations beforehand, as well as other factors already discussed, which functioned as buffers. More importantly, the reaction to the push factors was mitigated by a very important 'pull' factor, which highlighted the proactive, voluntary nature of the migration for many, namely, the work of Aga Khan IV in securing easier passage to Canada.

The agreement with Trudeau, while not officially documented, is well known throughout the community and is referred to on many occasions by both Canadian government officials and the Aga Khan himself. For example, Adrienne Clarkson, the former Governor-General of Canada, refers to the fact that "our country, under the leadership of Pierre Eliot Trudeau, welcomed these people [Isma'ilis fleeing Uganda], who had found themselves in an extremely difficult and dangerous situation in the country they had called home" (Aga Khan IV, "Hope" 1). Likewise, in a recent interview, the Aga Khan noted that he "had a strong personal relationship with Prime Minister Trudeau," who agreed to help if a crisis occurred (*An Islamic Conscience*). Interviewees, as well, consistently mentioned this agreement, quite matter-of-factly, saying, "we all knew, also the Imam had gone out of his way to make an arrangement with the Canadian government and with Prime Minister Trudeau" (Interview 4). Other interviewees noted that:

> "Obviously I think it was the Imam who made inroads, or he made whatever agreements or whatever he must have done with the Canadian government at the time to have Isma'ilis come in into Canada. ... In those days, I think he was a good friend of Trudeau, and he went to the Canadian government at that time, asking for the Canadian government to have Isma'ilis come to the country." (Interview 1)

"Obviously with Imam setting up this arrangement with the government of Canada where they would take five thousand Asians from Uganda, and out of the five thousand, they took four thousand something, and out of which almost ninety percent were Isma'ili. Now the reason for that is that ninety percent of the Isma'ilis had taken Ugandan citizenship and therefore – you know, most people with British passports all wanted to go to Britain, nobody wanted to come to Canada, Canada was a strange place that we knew nothing about. When the word got out that Imam had made this arrangement, Isma'ilis started to applying for Canada. And this is where I [and] some four thousand Isma'ilis showed up within twenty or thirty days in Canada." (Interview 3)

For the Khoja Nizari Isma'ilis from East Africa, their Imam's role in reaching this agreement was seen as an indication that Canada was a nation to be favoured when migrating; in a sense, that it was a country that had been given the Imam's blessing. Moreover, because Canada had been given this approval, many Khojas found that they were more likely to find family and community supports already in place. Interviews consistently found that the choice of Canada as a place of settlement was largely determined by the Imam's guidance. One interviewee noted that:

"Had it not been him [the Imam], right, people would not even know whether Canada existed! People would not even have known, that 'yeah, you can go to Canada', because your thought processes at that time, were that 'boy, this is such a cold place that people were living in igloos, perhaps' and you would never even have imagined that you could come here. ... Right from the get go, right from the very beginning, do you think I would even have known about Canada? I would probably not have known about Canada." (Interview 1)

Khojas were also actively "encouraged" to go to Canada (Interview 6) by their national councils, who filtered down the guidance given from the Imam, as evident from the stories of the migrants:

"Suddenly I had a call from my brother-in-law. ... He was in the council. ... He says 'don't ask me why or how, but you are smart enough. You have to leave your job. ... The rich, people with money, people with education, need to go.' [I said] 'Next year or the year after?' [He said] 'No, immediately. Things are going to get worse.' At that time, the government had just started nationalizing everything. ... Major Isma'ili buildings were

taken over. So he said, 'If you've got questions, the president [of council] is coming next week from the UK. ... go and see him.' ... Then to my brother-in-law, I said, 'should I go to Kenya, should I go to UK, should I go to Australia/New Zealand, should I go to India/Pakistan,' and little bit I said, 'should I go to Canada or U.S.?' He said 'wait until [the president] comes. He might have more information.' By that time, *jamat* buzz was there that the *hidayat*[30] has come from the Imam that's very, very tricky. It won't be said in *jamatkhana*. So when [the president] came I met him in *jamatkhana* and he said 'yes, it's urgent I meet you. Can you come tomorrow?' The president asking you to come tomorrow! I went to see him the next day at about three o'clock ... he said 'I wanted to meet you first. Any youngsters. ... Guidance is given that people with means, substantial means, people with education, should leave immediately.' Later, when I look at that decision, if they closed the borders – they didn't close, but they made it very difficult after we left – they needed resources outside. The best resources are people with means. People with education who could create means easily. So I asked him 'where should I go?' ... He said 'think Canada.'" (Interview 6)

"The Imam had sent out a *hidayat* saying that we should look at moving to Canada for the betterment of our *jamat*'s future, for the progress of the *jamat*'s future. ... It meant that for us, for some of us, that were stuck in this rut, that there was hope. That our children could have the opportunity to get the education, to get through our lives, and then perhaps, to do even more *seva*[31], give back to the community." (Interview 2)

Clearly, based on the interviews conducted, the guidance of Aga Khan IV and the information the community received from the councils played a pivotal role in their decision to migrate to Canada. In this sense, the migration can be seen as a proactive one, where individuals, families, and the community as a whole chose to migrate voluntarily, based on the instructions and encouragements of the institutions and the Imam. This is true even in the case of the Ugandan Isma'ilis, for though they were pushed to migrate by their circumstances, their decision to come to Canada was in many ways voluntary and based on guidance received from the Imam. The voluntary nature of the migration, when considered in this light, can be seen as a contributing factor to the community's successful acculturation in Canada.

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[30] Literally: advice, generally understood by Isma'ilis to be recommendations given by the Imam, usually to community leaders. These are not binding in the same way as *firmans* or *taliqa*.

[31] Voluntary or community service, understood to be selfless service offered to the Imam or to God.

Migration permanence. Once they arrived in Canada, it was clear that the Khojas intended to stay. The Imam had always instructed Isma'ilis to be loyal and productive citizens of the state in which they lived, as reflected in a speech he made in the Philippines in 1967:

> "Let us, therefore put out backs to the wheel and show the state in which we live that we are determined to become first class citizens, nay leaders, not for the futile glory of leadership but to help this country become a better place in which to love and ensure that, even if we cannot reap the fruit of our labour, our children will be born to brighter horizons." (*Paigham-e-Imamat* 90)

Even in East Africa initially, the Aga Khan encouraged his followers to become citizens of the newly-formed countries, as mentioned previously. As one interviewee noted, the decision to become a citizen of Uganda was "100% [based on] guidance. Imam said become citizens of Uganda. We did become citizens ... [and] I think it was not just the citizenship in terms of the piece of paper, but citizenship as this being your country, and participating in building the country" (Interview 3).

Interviewees recounted early guidance in Canada that echoed that given in East Africa:

> "Prior to that [the 1978 visit], Sir Eboo[32] came twice, and he said 'get your *chopri*[33], get your passport'. But Imam's first *firman* was, I still remember, '[I'm] happy to see you here. It's the wish of your Imam to make this your home.' He said five times in the same *firman*. 'I repeat,' at the end, he said 'I repeat, this is where your generations should make their home.'" (Interview 6)

The importance of this initial *firman* cannot be exaggerated. These early *firmans* are considered by many to be a pivotal moment in their migration experience. The title of this paper reflects the momentous nature of this guidance for Canadian Isma'ilis and reflects a sentiment

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[32] Sir Eboo Pirbhay, a well known, high-ranking Isma'ili official
[33] Literally: book, i.e. passport

that was expressed in nearly every interview, though each individual interpreted the message in slightly differing ways. For some, it meant security:

> "when Hazar Imam again in 1978 said 'make Canada your home', the idea of moving around was brought to [an end]. You understood this was home now, you are not going to be moving around, nobody's going to kick you out of Canada. It brought a lot of that comfort, that you weren't going to be kicked out of Canada." (Interview 3)

For others, it marked a clean break from their lives before their arrival in Canada. Up until that point, the Khojas "were like nomads" (Interview 4), as one interviewee remarked; some were even thinking that they "would work for two or three years, save money, and go to India" (Interview 6), or elsewhere. However, this *firman* was seen as guidance to settle firmly and permanently in Canada:

> "He was telling the Ismailis 'don't think backwards, think forwards, and make Canada your home'. So don't even think that 'ok, I'm just here as a refugee and one day I might go back to my country'. He said that, 'no, make this your home'. And sure enough, the Ismailis put roots into the ground and called this their home." (Interview 1)

> "There was a very important *firman* that *Mowla*[34] had made, when he first came in 1978 to Canada, where he said, 'Make Canada your home.' For me, that was always stood in my mind because he was saying to us, 'Don't think about what you had before.' ... So to me, *Mowla* is saying, 'You have to take this and move on and not think about what you had in the past. Now you have to think forward. You have to think about family, your parents, your children.' ... To me, that *firman* really stood out in that he was saying that, 'Now you have to build a foundation here.' Because in East Africa we had already built that foundation so to me he was saying that same foundation had to be built in Canada in order to move on." (Interview 5)

And for still others, making Canada home implied a certain type of citizenship and required that they become full participating members of Canadian society:

> "the idea of citizenship is so important, and for people to understand that it's not just going and voting, but being active. ... At that time, the most important message that was passed on to us was to become citizens of Canada. And by citizenship, it was not just acquiring a

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[34] The Imam, Aga Khan IV.

passport, it meant Imam wanted us to fully participate in this society, to become full members of the Canadian society. And we started volunteering for some Boards at that time, getting some appointments, whatever we could, and so we did start to participate in those things." (Interview 3)

"I believe we have put down roots in Canada simply because there also the Imam has told us, 'Make Canada your home.' What that meant was precisely that, make Canada your home, integrate into the Canadian society, make a contribution to Canadian society." (Interview 4)

Even publicly, the Aga Khan made clear how much he admired Canada. For example, in 1983, at the foundation ceremony for the first Isma'ili Center in Canada, in Burnaby, B.C., he acknowledged

"the understanding and cooperation that has been so generously extended to my community. It is a demonstration of the tradition of religious tolerance and the right of freedom of worship, which are both allowed such eloquent expression in Canadian society." (*Paigham-e-Imamat* 146)

Clearly, based on the success of Khojas in acculturating to Canadian society, this praise of their country by their leader was certainly not lost on them.

Community psyche. Finally, the success of this particular community may be due to its personality. Berry notes that flexibility, represented by adaptability and mutual accommodation, is a key factor in this regard (20) and, as Nanji notes, "flexibility ... was a historically conditioned, built-in trait" ("Modernization and Change" 137) for the Isma'ilis. Aga Khan III himself also noted in his memoirs that "Isma'ilism has always survived because it has always been fluid. Rigidity is contrary to our whole way of life and outlook" (185). However, "this fluidity is controlled by the Imam" (Nanji, "Modernization and Change" 137), and it is through this lens that all the changes in the community must be considered.

Society of Settlement and Moderating Factors During Acculturation

Society of settlement.   First and foremost, a major factor in allowing the community in question to acculturate successfully was the Canadian context. As Berry notes, a multicultural context and positive ethnic attitudes can determine the degree of successful integration that is possible for any given community (17). The purpose of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act is "to increase inter-group harmony and the mutual acceptance of all groups in the country ... [and] to avoid assimilation by encouraging all cultural groups to maintain and develop themselves as distinctive groups within Canadian society" (Noels & Berry 276). Clearly, based on previously cited quotes of Aga Khan IV that extol Canada's freedom and accommodation, the Multiculturalism Act has played an important role in the acculturation of the Khoja community.

In some ways, Canada is as unique a case as the Khoja community itself, and it is clear from the interviews conducted that Canada was and is held in high regard by these immigrants. As one interviewee remarked:

> "we had a very unique experience in Canada. And that speaks for Canada also, that when we look at multiculturalism in Canada, we were one of the very few Western countries where it is successful, where I can live anywhere I want to, work anywhere, based all on my ability. So, you know, it's a meritocratic society, with everybody having equal rights. ... [In Canada, I am] accepted for who I am rather than what I have in terms of money." (Interview 3)

The same interviewee told the following story, which took place during the Ugandan crisis, and in many ways illustrates the nature of Canada, as compared to other countries involved in Uganda at the time:

> "Britain made it as hard as possible for people to get their claims processed or documents processed. So the British High Commission in Kampala would open at nine in the morning, close at noon, re-open at one-thirty, close three-thirty. Thousands of people lined up. ... And, at about day forty-five or so, the U.S. government put a full page ad in the

newspaper saying they will take so many doctors and so many engineers to go to the U.S. ... Also, about that time, Canada announced that they were going to take five thousand people to Canada. So the Canadian High Commission, put out an ad in the newspaper saying 'we are going to open at six in the morning.' Most of us thought that this was a big joke because all the other embassies opened at nine, but since we were accustomed to lining up in the middle of the night, we went and lined up, and sure enough, at about seven o'clock, they opened their doors. And they didn't close them for lunch. And they didn't close them till they had processed all the people for that day. Not only that, they had kept chairs for us outside, to sit on. The day I went for my interview, a battalion of tanks was coming by and you could see – where the Canadian High Commission was located, it was in the IPS building, and all the other embassies were lower down – and you could see all the guards pushing people ... out of all the embassies. And here were Canadians, saying to everybody 'come on in'. And Mike Malloy[35] stood in front of this glass panel and he said, 'nobody's going to do anything to you', and one of the battalion ... points its gun at the window, and of course then they took off." (Interview 3)

Stories like this, along with the experiences of the community in Canada, have made the Khojas very loyal to their new home:

"The Canadian society allows you to be integrated without compromising or giving up your faith or your values. And while there are a number of people in the *jamat*, and I'm not criticizing, who have moved back to East Africa, I would never move back. I don't think the society there is – granted, while there are some pockets of development, that are excellent and all that – but if you look at it in terms of psychological security, physical security, opportunities for my children, who are pretty young, I don't think I would want to move from Canada." (Interview 4)

Phase. Phase, or the length of time one experiences acculturation, is also an important factor, and is determined by the nature of experiences and problems encountered, which change over time (19). Berry cites that these problems are "initially language, obtaining employment, and housing, followed by establishing social relationships and recreational opportunities" (24). Also related to phase of migration are factors such as social support (25). In this community, the phase of acculturation was quite short and interview data reflects communal strengths and highlights the ease and rapidity with which the Isma'ilis were able to acculturate in Canada.

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[35] An official at the Canadian High Commission.

As previously noted, the language skills in this community were already present. While employment presented a challenge for some, the strong educational background of the community and their familiarity with English eased this difficulty. As one interviewee noted, "I think the only reason I ended up getting a job during the recession time was because I spoke the language" (Interview 2). Another remarked: "because they [the Khojas] had managed to get an education, it was easy for them to migrate, easy for them to find a job" (Interview 1). As previously mentioned, there was also a certain degree of ease in having credentials recognized, and therefore few members of the community remained in low-wage positions (Interview 3).

In cases where credential recognition was a problem, the community often stepped in to help. For example, following the Ugandan crisis, a number of Ugandan refugees who had been medical students were having a difficult time being accepted into Canadian universities. Together with the Immigration Department, the community contacted the Chancellor of McMaster University, who agreed to meet with the students and, upon realizing their calibre, happily accepted them into the medical program at his university (N. E. Kanji, personal communication, June 15, 2010).

Likewise, the community support available to these immigrants provided them with important insight into the Canadian job market:

> "at *jamatkhanas* we learned about who was getting a job, who wasn't getting a job, how to go about getting a job, what are the places to go and apply for jobs and all these wonderful things we would learn at *jamatkhana*." (Interview 3)

These same community and family structures provided them with support and many individuals initially housed with friends or extended family that arrived before them, until they were able to find a job:

"When I first arrived, I landed in Toronto and my brother already was studying at the University of Toronto and he had an apartment. So he was able to give me accommodations and my parents were able to give me some pocket money until such time that I was able to get a job, which fortunately it didn't take me long – it took me about 3 months; I got a job, and I was on my feet." (Interview 4)

The community even played a role in helping members to get jobs. Often this was done through word-of-mouth referrals or insights (N. E. Kanji, personal communication, June 15, 2010). In other cases, the community was directly involved. For example, one interviewee recounted getting his first job at an insurance agency because he was able to use both personal and community resources to get two hundred names for referrals. As he put it, "the whole *jamat* was involved" (Interview 6) in helping him get the position. Likewise, those who were less educated often found employment in Isma'ili owned businesses (Interview 4; Interview 6).

Guidance from the Imam also played an important role, in the early settlement process, for example, with regards to housing. As one interviewee said,

"Both my husband and I worked very hard to make Canada our home and after we moved here, we bought our home a year later, and two and a half years later we paid it off. Because when Hazar Imam said make Canada your home, and then he said, every *murid* must own a home, my husband and I decided that we were going to do that. We bought a home and paid if off in two and a half years. Because when Imam says you must own a home, it doesn't mean the bank has to own it." (Interview 2)

Another interviewee recounted the following story, which came up in a few of the interviews, and clearly demonstrates the impact of the community on issues such as housing:

"in the early 1970s, Millwoods[36] was opening up. The city was offering lots to first-time home buyers, and if you stayed there for 10 years in that house, half the money was forgiven. So we set up little committees, and we would help people in the *jamat* who qualified, to go out and buy homes under this scheme, because it made economic sense to do that." (Interview 3)

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[36] A neighbourhood in Edmonton, AB.

This rapid acculturation also contributed to the sense of accomplishment for the immigrants. One interviewee, for example, remarked that owning a home

> "really made an impact for us because that was the first step towards our progress. ... Back home we didn't own anything. ... Somebody else owned it and we just rented because there was no way that we could have been able to afford any of that. And owning a home made us feel like this was something, a great achievement, the beginning, one step forward, progress." (Interview 2)

Community institutions were also actively involved providing economic aid and opportunity. Aid and welfare funds were set up almost immediately. Moreover, upon guidance from the Imam, who did not want to lose a generation of entrepreneurs, small business loan guarantee programs were established with CIBC and the Bank of Nova Scotia. Members of the community also worked together on various projects, such as joint real estate ventures (N. E. Kanji, personal communication, June 15, 2010).

Most importantly, the strong social support network provided by the religious framework of the community, particularly *jamatkhanas* and the institutional structures described above, created a sense of community and belonging that greatly impacted the community's experience of migration. As one interviewee remarked, "I think that sense of belonging is probably the biggest factor because you don't feel that you're lost. You do know that there is somebody who is there to help you out" (Interview 1). This sentiment was echoed in nearly every interview:

> "I personally think that in terms of the ability to settle, the Isma'ilis really had it very, very easy, I think. ... When we came into Edmonton, I remember that the *jamat* was hardly a thousand strong or maybe less than a thousand strong, or something like that. But still, when I came here, at least there were those thousand people here. In my situation when I came here, I had the help from the rest of the *jamat* here. ... The *jamatkhana* was already there. ... The first thing that you do normally is find out where is the *jamatkhana*, so that at least you go to the *khane*[37] and you know you have the sense of belonging, and that's a

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[37] Literally: house. Colloquial term, short form of *jamatkhana*.

huge thing, to know that you have a sense of belonging. ... The community ... the infrastructure ... was such to give you the support ... you did not have to go to government or to any other agency to get it. It was your own community, from volunteerism, which gave you the support that you needed to be able to get settled very, very quickly and then on top of that, to be able contribute again to the others who are coming here and to the people who already are here as well." (Interview 1)

"The role of the Councils in establishing *jamatkhanas*, where really we were able to help each other then, which really goes to the ethic and value of our faith, and things that we had grown up with in East Africa. We had grown up with those ethics, those values, and we had grown up with those institutions and respect for the institutions, and the role of institutions in guiding us. ... The most important thing was the establishment of *jamatkhana*. That allowed us all to succeed together. This is the place where really brotherhood was at its best, where we celebrated people's successes, we learned about people's failures, and everybody was trying to help each other. The community of the early 1970s, was very special. Every Isma'ili who came at that time, everybody got to know them very quickly, because we were very small, and everybody went out of their way to help each other. ... Now, had there been no *jamatkhanas*, we would have not met most of the community, other than trying to advertise through a newspaper or whatever, but there we were able to meet, and guidance came from the institutions. ... I have some Hindu and Sikh friends, and their experience has been quite different, because they had to do it all on their own. There was no support, there was no Guruduara here, there was no Hindu temples there, so when people came here, they relied on people who they knew to help them." (Interview 3)

This sense of community also afforded them the opportunity to establish social relationships:

"*Khane* is something that is very important simply because when you're engrossed in your daily lives, trying to make things work, making ends meet, going to *jamatkhana* was a huge outlet, because you could socialize there, you can, without having to really spend money, fit in; because ... we don't smoke, we don't drink, we don't go out partying, those are not some of the things that we are comfortable with, so like minded people can only come together in *jamatkhana*. [It was our] only social outlet really. Getting to know people, doing *seva*. It helped because out there, fitting in was difficult. In here you felt comfortable. [It was] a strong knit community because the *jamat* was small, everybody knew everyone, you felt like you were contributing." (Interview 2)

"The comfort of knowing these people, [of knowing] that a little bit of east Africa, a little bit of Uganda, was here with me, and that gave you comfort, and it wasn't a small - you know, it was a large enough number to create that comfort, and also meeting your spouses and all that, created all that comfort. Whereas a lot of my Hindu friends, their children ... could not find boyfriends and girlfriends within the community, because the structure was so small. So the establishment of *jamatkhana* is really the most important thing that happened for our community. And that happened immediately." (Interview 3)

"I think the councils and the board and everything, whatever services they have put in place, those kinds of services have really helped the community settle. I think that it really helped. They really kind of made it easier for us to settle. For instance, if I had an issue with, say, my children. ... I would go to *jamatkhana*, share it with my friends and get some feedback ... versus feeling very alone and not knowing where to go to. ... The other thing that I found really helpful was that, for my kids, they had a community. They weren't alone. They would do things within the community. ... They felt they belonged somewhere. ... For me the community always played an important role in that sense, where I always felt that we belonged somewhere." (Interview 5)

Likewise, the community structure provided the Khojas with recreational opportunities. One interviewee, who was an early appointee of the Council in Edmonton, recounted starting up a bingo tournament after Friday prayers (Interview 6). He also set up sports practices and began Isma'ili sports tournaments, which initially started between Edmonton and Calgary in 1972 and then expanded to include Vancouver in 1973. The experience of this initial tri-city tournament was recounted by another interviewee:

"A bus full of people came from Vancouver, a bus full of people from Calgary, and our first banquet was *biryani*[38] and *dandia*[39]. And the idea of doing that was to meet other Isma'ilis from other cities, and learn experiences from them as to what they were doing and to really keep in touch because we were still a relatively small community." (Interview 3)

Recreational activities also included religious festivities, which brought the whole community together in celebration:

"Our first *khushiali*[40] was in Orange Hall and we all fit in, we did *khushiali* there maybe for two or three years and look at the size of Orange Hall today. ...We all fit in here and we played *dandia* and *rasra*[41], we brought *biryani* there, and that was 1972-1973 *khushiali*." (Interview 3)

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[38] A traditional Indian dish, generally served on festive occasions.

[39] A traditional Indian dance.

[40] The two major religious holidays specific to Isma'ilis are referred to as khushialis. Saligrah Khushiali occurs on December 13 and marks the birthday of Aga Khan IV and Imamat Day Khushiali occurs on July 11 and marks the date of his coronation as Imam.

[41] A traditional Indian dance.

These recreational and social activities were started quite early on in the settlement process, and many of them, such as the sports tournaments and the religious festivities, continue today. All of these communal structures together ensured that the Khoja Nizari Ismailis from East Africa were able to acculturate in a very short span of time.

Racism.   There were some challenges, however, in the acculturation process.   Racism, for example, was experienced by some:

> "Racial discrimination at that time, especially in Alberta, was very high. You could apply for a job, talk to them over the telephone and if you didn't have too much of an accent, they felt like, 'oh, okay, we will hire you', and then you go there and look at, one look at you, and your brown skin colour, and the job was taken already." (Interview 2)

> "I think there was a whole migration of Asians at the time so there was this big racism that was going on in the 1970s. ... Trying to just rent a home or buy a home, there was a big issue. ... I did odds and ends jobs because, again, racism was a big thing, they wouldn't give you a decent job." (Interview 5)

However, as one interviewee remarked, while "there was racism, it was never public, it was never a state policy" (Interview 3), as compared to racism in East Africa. Another noted that because of their experiences in East Africa, "by the time you come to Canada, and then you get a bit of the racism happening, you're able to deal with it better because you know this kind of thing [racism] should not be stood for" (Interview 5). Therefore, it appears that, by and large, this community felt that they experienced minimal prejudice in Canada. In fact, according to some, it was quite the opposite. One interviewee even suggested that the Ugandans were

> "kind of a novelty in this country. We were the first group of coloured people to come here, and so, the racism didn't exist in the form of racism, initially we were a novelty. So people were willing, would go out of their way to help you. There would be stories about us in the newspapers, and TV, about this community coming and settling here. Even the bus driver, [on] Fridays when we would go to *jamatkhana* by bus and if you were East

Indian, [and] you were carrying *nandi*[42], the bus driver would say, 'do you know where your place of worship is?' And we would say, 'I'm not sure which building'. And he would say, 'I'll show you exactly'. And he would stop the bus in between two bus stops, let you out, and tell you exactly where the building was." (Interview 3)

Acculturation strategy. Finally, with regard to acculturation strategies, it is clear that this community opted for integration as its strategy of choice. As previously noted, this strategy is only possible in societies that foster mutual accommodation, something that the structure of Canadian society and its multiculturalism framework encourage, a trait that has been recognized by Aga Khan IV ("Hope" 48, 53), particularly in his choice to establish the Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa.

The Khojas chose to be involved in both their religious community and the wider Canadian society. Well aware that they were not well known in the broader Canadian society, the community went about "branding" itself, making its "Isma'ili Muslim" identity known (N. E. Kanji, personal communication, June 15, 2010). This was accomplished through a number of projects meant to familiarize Canadians with the community. For example, in 1985, the community hosted a debate tournament in Ontario that was very well attended and received by local schools and universities. For the community, the tournament was doubly successful, because an Isma'ili team made it to the finals and, in a show-down against the team from Queen's University, won. Likewise, the community began a 10km run for charity in 1985, which was so successful that the local Track and Field association decided to make it an official event on their annual calendar. Experiences like this fostered a greater sense of pride in the community, while simultaneously creating a more solid identity for itself within the wider society (N. E. Kanji, personal communication, June 15, 2010).

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[42] Food offering taken to *jamatkhana*.

Interviews, too, were filled with examples of the Isma'ilis' dedication to being a part of Canada and their insistence on contributing to the broader community, while still maintaining their communal identity. Many see this as an expression of their faith, noting that,

> "The Muslim faith, and particularly ... in the Ismaili faith, ... you do well for yourself, and having done well for yourself, you are in a position to be able to do well for your family, well for the community, the Ismaili community, and well for the outer community within which you live." (Interview 1)

Moreover, for many, contributing to Canadian society was simply another way of following the guidance of the Imam. Many interviewees mentioned that as part of the agreement with Trudeau, the Aga Khan had promised that his community would not be a burden to Canadian society, but rather, that it would be of benefit to Canada (Interview 1; Interview 4). Within the community, the Imam went even further, telling the leaders that "wherever we are, whichever society we live in, we must make a disproportionate impact on the society we live in, in relations to our numbers" (Interview 4). For this particular interviewee, the community achieved that goal:

> "If you look at it objectively, there is Canada and let's be honest, we are no more than seventy, maybe between seventy and a hundred thousand [Isma'ilis in Canada]. But if you look at our influence, our collaboratives in all fields of human endeavour ... and you have to ask yourself ... if you really look at it, numbers, I mean, what is seventy thousand out of thirty million? And yet, we do have an influence and ... my personal take is this is what the Imam was referring to when he says we should be able to make a disproportionate impact compared to our numbers. Anywhere around the world ... if you look at it in terms of our economic well-being, our educational status, we as a community, I think, are much better off than the society in which we live." (Interview 4)

The Isma'ilis also note that contributing to their societies has long been their legacy, wherever they have been:

> "Wherever the Ismailis have gone, the benefit has not only been ... to the Isma'ili community, but the provision of that has been – and that is what the Imam has been

wanting all along – is that, the community within which the Isma'ili community lives also benefits out of it." (Interview 2)

It has also been the tendency of the Aga Khan to become involved in the societies where his community is found:

"I mean Tanzania used to be a country where the Isma'ilis flourished because, not just because of the guidance for us, but also because the Imam, wherever Isma'ilis are, gets involved in the political system as well. He invests there, puts schools there, hospitals; he has a huge influence on the population in general. I mean, back home [in East Africa], everyone knew who the Aga Khan was because he made an impact and all the schools and hospitals [were built by him]." (Interview 2)

Canada has been no exception to this trend, with a plethora of new institutions being built here[43].

Moreover, the Khoja Nizari Isma'ilis strive to contribute to Canadian society in any way they can:

"They have built businesses here, and when they have built businesses here, those businesses have employed five, ten, fifteen hundred Canadians. That is obviously giving employment to the Canadians. That is how we are building the country. And not to mention the philanthropy that is going on with the Ismailis as well." (Interview 1)

Indeed, philanthropy is one of the major ways in which the community has sought to integrate itself and contribute to Canadian society:

"Look at our [World] Partnership Walk. The first time we did it in 1986 in Edmonton, we had about two hundred people participate in it. We raised maybe seven or eight thousand dollars. So, Vancouver was the first place, it started in 1985[44], Edmonton was the second city in 1986 to do it. By the time I finished as convener ... from eight thousand dollars in five years we'd gone to seventy thousand dollars. What was even more impressive was that seventy-five percent of that money came from non-Ismailis. ... Being also able to sit on several different boards and committees, like for example, the latest thing was the Mazankowski Heart Institute, I was asked to sit on that as a fundraiser. We were raising 30 million dollars from the Edmonton community but you recognize that you are part of the

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[43] See page 23.
[44] According to Karim (51), the first walk took place in 1984.

Edmonton community, you are somebody who can contribute and build those things."
(Interview 3)

In these ways, the Khoja Nizari Isma'ili community from East Africa has been able to successfully integrate into Canadian society and has provided a model for successful acculturation.

Beyond Berry

Given the above evidence, the impact of religion in the acculturative process of the community in question is clear when considered in light of Berry's categories. However, it is equally clear that Berry's framework alone is not sufficient to account for religion in this case. While much of the interview data can be subsumed under Berry's categories, what is not evident in these categories is the fundamental role that the Imam plays in guiding and unifying for the community in question, above and beyond the limits of the framework at hand. Isma'ilis see themselves as "privileged in getting the guidance" (Interview 6), a notion that is best illustrated using the interviewees' own words:

> "At the end of the day, I think it is not just the support of the community, it is the Imam at the head of the community which has provided guidance, which has provided direction, and which is the central glue for the whole of the Ismaili community. ... A number of Ismailis, particularly who have come to Canada, I think they have come here with the strength of the guidance of the Imam, and not just the guidance of the Imam but the Imam making it possible for them. Opening those doors. Otherwise I doubt it would have happened. ... I think the Ismaili community is, in my mind, fortunate enough to have a central figure like an Imam, who is there to guide them, not only through their lives in terms of the spiritual aspects of life, but also for the secular aspects of life." (Interview 1)

> "The guidance of the Imam was very important and had it not been for that guidance, for that aspect of my faith, I don't think I would have managed ... the only thing that really kept my sanity was my prayers. That's what kept my two feet on the ground. ... And *Mowla* was always with me. He's there throughout and if he's asked us, or told us, to move to Canada then there has to be a light at the end of the tunnel. ... *Shukar wa*

alhamdulillah[45] that I am an Isma'ili and we have the guidance of our Imam because I don't know where we would be today without that." (Interview 2)

"I think it comes down, if I'm being entirely objective, it comes down to our belief in terms of the leadership and authority of the Imam. ... I am convinced that without the unifying leadership and authority of the Imam and the guidance he gave at different points in the settlement process, I don't think the community would have done as well as it did. ... Remember we were uprooted twice, once during our grandparents' generation, then ours, and psychologically that can have a tremendous impact ... that psychological uncertainty. What the Imam provided was what I would call the equivalent of a security blanket. You knew although you were in a foreign country, although you were having difficulty, you knew that you could rely on him for guidance, rely on him for spiritual satisfaction, and balancing the spiritual with the temporal. ... If you really look at other communities, they are also successful, but it is not as pervasive as it is in our *jamat*, and I believe that the reason for that is the unified leadership of the Imam. If not [for that] I'm convinced that because of cultural differences, our lot would not have been different from the other communities." (Interview 4)

"To me, *Mowla*'s *firmans* and the direction that we have gotten from him, that direction I think has led the whole community to where it is. ... For me personally, I think if I didn't have Imam's direction, I think it would have been harder." (Interview 5)

This emphasis on the role of the Imam and the importance of his guidance to the community in many ways helps to explain why the picture of migration and acculturation appears so rosy for this community. The experience was certainly difficult in many ways and the acculturation process is not unmarred by moments of nostalgia for East Africa, as we can see in some of the interviewee's responses. However, by and large, members of this community found that the process of acculturation was, in many ways, made easy through the guidance of the Imam and the support of the community. As such, discontent is not a major theme when the migration is discussed, particularly given that it is being examined in hindsight. In light of how well the community has adjusted to life in Canada and how difficult political and economic conditions had become in their countries of origin, few, if any, feel regret about leaving East Africa. As can

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[45] Literally: Thanks and praise be to God.

be seen in their responses, most are simply grateful for having the opportunity to come to Canada and for the leadership and direction of the Imam which made this migration possible.

Conclusion

Based on the above evidence, it is clear that religion has had a profound impact on the immigration of Isma'ilis from East Africa to Canada and their subsequent acculturation here. As demonstrated by social psychology's understanding of acculturation and interview data from Isma'ilis who experienced the migration, religion, particularly in the form of community structures, social resources, and directives from the Imam, has had a marked impact on nearly every moderating factor prior to migration, and has also impacted factors during the settlement process. Community structures and social resources, including educational and economic institutions, facilitated the community's transition to Canada. Additionally, guidance from the Imams, which, based on the Doctrine of Imamate and the sentiments of interviewees, is of the utmost importance to the Isma'ili community, played a decisive role not only in the creation and maintenance of the institutions mentioned, but also in shaping the direction and character of the community in question. Religion, then, has had a distinct and positive impact on this community's position in Canada and has allowed them to thrive in Canadian society, so much so that Berry's model might be improved by adding religion as a separate category or moderating factor.

It is hoped that this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field and will provide insights into a previously unstudied and very successful population. Obviously, as previously noted, given the unique nature of the case in question, it is not likely that the results will be widely generalizable. However, it is hoped that they will provide a grounds for further

research focusing on successful acculturation and prompt researchers to expand their field of study into the impact that religion can have on this process.

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Appendix A

Sample Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Salima Versi and I am a student at Queen's University, working towards my Masters in Religion and Modernity. I am currently in the process of completing my thesis under the supervision of Dr. Forough Jahanbakhsh, and I am recruiting participants to help me look at the impact of religion on the acculturation of Khoja Nizari Isma'ilis who migrated to Canada from East Africa.

Participants will be interviewed and will be required to commit approximately two hours of their time for the interview process. There will also be a brief follow up phone call to debrief on the interview process and respond to any questions or concerns that may have arisen.

If you would be willing to be interviewed for regarding your experience of migration and acculturation, please contact me at 1sv5@queensu.ca or 613-453-3266.

Thank you,

Salima Versi

Appendix B

Sample Information and Consent Form

Project title: Make This Your Home: The Impact of Religion Acculturation: The Case of

Canadian Khoja Isma'ilis from East Africa

Researcher: Salima Versi

Supervisor: Dr. Forough Jahanbakhsh

Sponsoring institution: Queen's University, School of Religion

Description of study:

This study will examine the impact of religion on the acculturation of the Khoja Nizari

Isma'ili population in their migration from East Africa to Canada.

You will be required to give one interview of approximately two hours during which you will

be asked about your experience of migration and acculturation, with specific focus on the impact

of religion on these processes. There will also be a short (10 – 20 min) follow-up, during which

you will have the opportunity to add to or clarify anything said in the initial interview. All

interviews will be recorded on a digital recorder.

There are no known risks associated with this study. Participation is voluntary and you are

free to withdraw at any time. You are not obliged to answer any questions that you find

objectionable or which make you feel uncomfortable. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet or

in secure, password-protected computer files. All research data are to be destroyed upon

completion of the study.

All identifying information will be kept separate from interview data and tapes, and your

identity will not be known to anyone other than the researcher and supervisor. Should, for

whatever reason, your identity be deduced by anyone other than the aforementioned, you will be

given the opportunity withdraw your data from the study. Should you choose to do so, your

tapes will be returned to you.

You may contact the investigator, a departmental representative or the General Research

Ethics Board (GREB), if you have any questions, concerns or complaints about the research

procedures.

Researcher – Salima Versi: 1sv5@queensu.ca

Supervisor – Dr. Forough Jahanbakhsh: jahanbak@queensu.ca

Head of Unit GREB – Dr. William Morrow: morroww@queensu.ca

I have read this Letter of Information, have had any questions answered to my satisfaction and

will keep a copy of this letter for their records.

Name: Signature: Date:

_____   _____   _____

By initialing this statement below,

____ I am granting permission for the researcher to use a tape recorder

Appendix C

Timeline of Events (from Daftary & Hirji; Karim)

YEAR	EVENT
570	Birth of the Prophet Muhammad
599	Birth of Ali b. Abi Talib (the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law and first Nizari Isma'ili Imam)
605	Birth of Fatima (daughter of the Prophet, wife of Ali)
610	Prophet Muhammad receives his first revelation
632	Death of the Prophet
656 – 661	Caliphate of Imam Ali
661	Death of Imam Ali
732 – 765	Imamate of Ja'far al-Sadiq; Articulation of the Doctrine of Imamate
765	Death of Ja'far al-Sadiq; Succession dispute and the creation of the Isma'ili sect
1036 - 1094	Imamate of al-Mustansir
1094	Death of al-Mustansir; Succession dispute and the creation of the Nizari Isma'ili sect
1090 – 1256/1270	Alamut Period
12th – 14th centuries	Da'is are sent to South Asia
1446	The Nizari Imams settle in the village of Anjudan in central Persia
1800	Isma'ili families begin to settle in Zanzibar
1804	Hasan Ali Shah (later Aga Khan I) is born in Kahak
1820	First jamatkhana in Zanzibar is built
1830	Aqa Ali Shah (later Aga Khan II) is born in Mahallat
1841	The forces of Aga Khan I are defeated in a series of battles with the Qajar forces and Aga Khan I is compelled to leave for Afghanistan
1842	British troops in Afghanistan are forced to retreat; Aga Khan I helps them to evacuate and attempts (unsuccessfully) to broker a deal for them in India
1861	Circulation of document in Bombay and elsewhere that clarifies the beliefs, customs, and practices of the community and the role of the Imam
1866	The 'Aga Khan Case' heard by Sir Joseph Arnold in the Bombay High Court, who rules in favour of Aga Khan I
1877	Aqa Ali Shah's son, Sultan Muhammad Shah (later Aga Khan III), is born in Karachi
1881	Death of Aga Khan I; succeeded by eldest son, Aqa Ali Shah, Aga Khan II
1885	Death of Aga Khan II; his son, Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, becomes the 49th Imam of the Nizari Isma'ilis at the age of eight
1905	Aga Khan III issues a written set of 'Rules and Regulations' for the Isma'ilis of East Africa; First Aga Khan School in Zanzibar built
1914	By this time, Isma'ilis have begun to settle in various African regions
1918	Aga Khan School for boys built in Mombasa
1919	Aga Khan School for girls built in Mombasa
1935	Aga Khan III celebrates his Golden Jubilee and establishes a network of institutions

1936	On December 13, Shah Karim al-Husayni (later Aga Khan IV, the present Imam) is born in Geneva
1946	Aga Khan III celebrates his Diamond Jubilee, establishes the Diamond Jubilee Trust
1954 – 1955	Aga Khan III Platinum Jubilee is celebrated and further social initiatives are set up
1957	On July 11, Aga Khan III dies and is succeeded by his grandson, Shah Karim al-Husayni, Aga Khan IV
1960s	Isma'ili students in East Africa begin to go abroad for post-secondary studies
1962	Aga Khan IV issues a new constitution for Isma'ili communities in Africa
1963	Establishment of Industrial Promotion Services (IPS) and Tourism Promotion Services (TPS)
1967	The Aga Khan Foundation is established by Aga Khan IV
1970s	Political tensions increase in East African and Isma'ilis begin to migrate, many to Canada.
1972	Idi Amin's edict forces the Isma'ilis out of Uganda. Aga Khan IV makes an arrangement with Trudeau's government and many migrate to Canada.
1973	Isma'ili Council for Canada established; Aid Fund established to assist the *jamat*
1975	Industrial Promotion Services (IPS) Loan Guarantee Program is set up to help Isma'ili businesses
1978	Aga Khan IV makes his first visit to the *jamat* in Canada
1980	Aga Khan Foundation Canada is established
1982	Foundation ceremony for the first purpose-built Isma'ili *jamatkhana* in Canada takes place in Burnaby, B.C.
1983	Aga Khan IV's Silver Jubilee; visits his Canadian *jamat* for the second time
1984	First World Partnership Walk takes place in Vancouver, B.C.
1985	Ismaili *Jamatkhana* and Center is opened in Burnaby B.C. by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Aga Khan IV; first 10km run held in Toronto
1986	Shi'a Imami Isma'ili Muslim Constitution is ordained
1992	Aga Khan IV visits the community in Canada
2005	Aga Khan IV visits the community in Vancouver and Toronto
2006	Funding agreement for the Global Centre for Pluralism is signed in October
2007	Aga Khan IV celebrated his Golden Jubilee
2008	Aga Khan IV visits his *jamat* in Canada; Delegation for the Isma'ili Imamate inaugurated in Ottawa in December
2010	Foundation ceremony for the Aga Khan Museum and Isma'ili Centre in Toronto held in May