

# Succession Crises Among the Dawoodi Bohras: The Latest Scenario Playing Out Before the Mumbai High Court<sup>1</sup>

By

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## Introduction

Succession disputes among the Bohras are nothing new.<sup>2</sup> Most recently, a bitterly contested disagreement broke out in the *dā'īs* family after the death of the fifty-second *dā'ī*, Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn, on Jan. 17, 2014. Mufaḍḍal Sayf al-Dīn, the second son of the deceased *dā'ī*, outfoxed his step-uncle Khuzaima Quṭb al-Dīn and got himself acknowledged as the fifty-third incumbent by an overwhelming majority of the community. Khuzaima, an aspirant to that position, had no alternative left except to counter claim the succession for himself. Mufaḍḍal immediately dismissed him from the high rank of the late *dā'ī*'s *ma'dhūn* (assistant), which he held for close to fifty years. It should be noted that Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn appointed his half-brother Khuzaima to that rank immediately after his accession to the *dā'ī*ship in 1965 as instructed by his late father, Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn. Khuzaima, unable to muster significant support from the community, filed a civil case against his nephew Mufaḍḍal in the High Court of Judicature at Mumbai on March 28, 2014. The case came for hearing before the judge Gautam Patel in 2015. Both the plaintiff and the defendant were cross examined. However, before the

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<sup>1</sup> This is a summary of a long and comprehensive paper.

<sup>2</sup> In Islamic heresiographical literature and its technical terminology, the Bohras are classified as Shi'a Ismā'īlī-Musta'īlī-Ṭayyibīs. See Table I.

case was concluded Khuzaima, suffering from cancer, died on March 31, 2016. Therefore, his eldest son Ṭāhir Fakhr al-Dīn succeeded his father as the fifty-fourth *dā'ī* of a small group of his followers known as the Qutbī Bohras. On June 27, 2016, Ṭāhir filed a petition in the High Court of Mumbai stating that he being the legitimate successor to his father's position, be replaced as the plaintiff in the abovementioned civil case. The defendant Mufaḍḍal was given three months to respond before the new petition could be heard and acted upon by the judge. As far as I know, there is no further development. This leads us to the question of succession guidelines in the Ismā'īlī theological literature.

### **The doctrine of succession:**

Theoretically the issue of succession to the headship of the *da'wa* among the Bohras is firmly anchored in the Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī doctrine of the imamate. The main difference between the doctrine of the imamate and that of the *dā'ī*ship is that the former is hereditary, while the latter is not. The institution of *dā'ī muṭlaq* (the *dā'ī* with full authority), was established around 526/1132 in Yemen following the Fāṭimid caliph-imam al-Āmir's (r. 495-524/1101-30) death in Cairo. The latter was assassinated by a group of Nizārīs. Since al-Āmir's son al-Ṭayyib, an heir to the throne and imamate, was an infant, °Abd al-Majīd, the cousin of al-Āmir, ruled Egypt as a regent. However, in 526/1132, he proclaimed himself caliph-imam with the title al-Ḥāfiẓ li-Dīn Allāh. Fearing for the infant's life, Ṭayyib's supporters removed him from the capital.<sup>3</sup> Al-Āmir had sent an official letter (*sijill*) announcing the birth of his son Abu'l-Qāsim al-Ṭayyib in Rabī' II 524/ Marh-April 1130, a few month before his murder, to the Ṣulayḥid Queen Arwā in Yemen. Consequently, the Queen, in her capacity as the *ḥujja* (of the previous caliph-imam) in Yemen, severed her ties with the mother organization and declared her independence from the Fāṭimid

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<sup>3</sup> His whereabouts are not recorded in history books.

Egypt. She then appointed the *dāʿī* Dhuʿayb b. Mūsā al-Wādiʿī as *dāʿī muṭlaq*, representing the *daʿwa* of the hidden imam al-Ṭayyib. With this episode of the twenty-first imam, al-Ṭayyib’s occultation (*ghayba*), begins the second period of *dawr al-satr* (era of concealment), wherein the imams were hidden from the eyes of their followers.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that this event resembles the previous occurrence in the history of the Twelver Shīʿa, also known as the *ghayba*. Following the death of the eleventh imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī in 260/874, his infant son Muḥammad, the twelfth imam went into hiding (occultation).<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the chain of *al-duʿat al-muṭlaqīn*, beginning with the *dāʿī* Dhuʿayb (d. 546/1151) continued in Yemen for four centuries until the death of the twenty-third *dāʿī*, Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. Idrīs b. al-Walīd in 946/1539. By this time the Ṭayyibī community in Yemen had dwindled due to adverse political circumstances while its mission on the west coast of India flourished. Hence, both the headship of the *daʿwa* and its headquarters were transferred

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<sup>4</sup> The first period of concealment was the pre-Fāṭimid phase, from the imam Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl until the emergence of the Fāṭimid Mahdī in North Africa. The Ismāʿīlīs held that the hierohistory of mankind, consisting of seven cycles (*adwār*), rotates between *satr* and *zuhūr*.

<sup>5</sup> There is a marked difference in the Mahdī/Messiah belief between the Ṭayyibīs (Bohras) and the Twelvers. According to the former the future Mahdī will emerge from the progeny of al-Ṭayyib and establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. The latter, on the other hand, hold that the twelfth imam did not die. He has been concealed by God from the eyes of mankind. His life has been miraculously prolonged until the day when he will manifest himself by Allāh’s permission and rule the world with equity and justice. They further believe that during *al-ghayba al-ṣuḡhrā* (the lesser occultation), he remained in contact with his followers through his agents (*wukalāʾ*). But during *al-ghayba al-kubrā* (the greater occultation), which extends until today, he is still the Lord of the Age (*ṣāhib al-zamān*), but no longer in direct communication with his community.

to this new safe haven. The local Hindu converts to Ṭayyibī faith became known as the “Bohras.”<sup>6</sup>

The following study concentrates on the succession crises among the Dawoodi Bohras in Gujarat and the surrounding regions from 974/1567 to the present. The study is divided into two parts: historical background, and theological considerations.

### **Historical Background:**

Our scrutiny of the sources demonstrates that the question of succession to the *dāʿī*ship, similar to the succession to the imamate, is fraught with human emotion, personal tensions, and other mundane factors. The issue was not free from internal family intrigues and personal ambition of an individual. There are clear guidelines for the qualifications of the *dāʿī* and a manual on how to conduct the affairs of the *daʿwa* with equity and justice – a “mirror for princes” type of text. But these have not been brought to bear in the succession crises the community has faced. Consequently, during the early period of just over thirty years, i.e., between 997/1589 and 1030/1621, two major schisms occurred. As a result the Bohra community was divided into three groups that exist until today. The Dawoodis represent the bulk of the community. They number over a million and besides the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent they are scattered across the Middle East, Western Europe, North America and South Asia. They are followed by the Sulaymanis – the majority of whom live in Yemen, where their headquarters also is.<sup>7</sup> The Sulaymanis’s deputy in India resides in Hyderabad. The third group is the Alavis, who number approximately eight to ten thousands and are headquartered in Baroda. It is worth noting that both the schisms, the

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<sup>6</sup> Its etymology derived from Gujarati means to do trade. Most of the Bohras were petty merchants.

<sup>7</sup> The Sulaymanis had very few followers in India and in 1088/1677 their *dāʿī*ship passed on to the Yemeni family of Makārima. Since then it has remained in that family with a few interruptions.

Sulaymanis and Alavis, were caused by the disgruntled and ambitious grandsons of the twenty-fourth and twenty-eighth *dā'īs* respectively under enigmatic circumstances. Both the dissidents, Sulaymān b. Ḥasan, and °Alī b. Ibrāhīm, appealed to the court of the Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahāngīr, but failed to prevail against the arguments and evidences presented by the Dawoodi defendants.

Yet, there was another way to challenge the authority of the reigning *dā'ī*. One example will suffice. In 1175/1761 Hibat Allāh b. Ismā'īl al-Majdū°, a distinguished Ismā'īlī scholar, claimed that he was in direct contact with the hidden imam through the latter's *al-dā'ī al-balāgh* (a rank higher than that of *dā'ī muṭlaq*), °Abd Allāh b. Ḥārith. He further claimed to have been appointed by the hidden imam to the rank of *al-ḥujja al-laylī* (a rank very close to the imam). These high-sounding claims implied that the existing *da'wa* was supplanted and the reigning *dā'ī muṭlaq* should yield his position to Hibat Allāh. Initially, his father Ismā'īl b. °Abd al-Rasūl, a learned person,<sup>8</sup> including a few leading °*ulamā'*, supported his claim. However, he proved to be a hoax, was chased from place to place, caught and brought back to Ujjain. In a *mêlée* that followed his nose was amputated as a mark of disgrace. By now, the Hibtias have faded away.

The most serious crisis that threatened the very existence of the community occurred in 1256/1840. Although it was averted by an astute move on the part of prominent *mashāyikh*, it has ever since haunted the thoughts of the learned and reformists. The forty-sixth *dā'ī*, Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn, died suddenly in 1256/1840, in Surat, at the young age of thirty without the public pronouncement of his successor. He was suffering from piles, but some suspected that he had been poisoned. Since his *ma'dhūn*, Hibat Allāh Jamāl al-Dīn, was in Jamnagar, four leading °*ulamā'*, led by °Abd-e °Alī °Imād al-Dīn, kept the information from the community and decided

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<sup>8</sup> He is the author of a well-known Ismā'īlī *Fihrist* (a detailed catalog of extant Ismā'īlī manuscripts).

to nominate °Abd al-Qādir Najm al-Dīn, the then holder of the rank of *mukāsir* as *dā<sup>c</sup>ī nāẓim* (care-taker *dā<sup>c</sup>ī*), for administrative purposes only. It was agreed that he would abstain from claiming the spiritual position of the *dā<sup>c</sup>ī* and its title *dā<sup>c</sup>ī muṭlaq*. It seems that the agreement was carried out faithfully at first. However, once he was settled securely in that position he pursued a policy of weakening the position of the °*ulamā*° and *mashāyikh*, and started appointing his immediate family members to all ranks of the *da<sup>c</sup>wa* hierarchy. The circulation of the so-called “Imami Letters,” with their mysterious contents and threatening tone as early as 1264/1847-48, indicates the growing opposition to his policies. The question that the *naṣṣ* had terminated was considered so grave that in 1293/1876 five eminent °*ulamā*° left India for Mecca on a search mission for the hidden imam. Making Mecca their base, they travelled to other holy places throughout the Arab countries and Turkey in pursuit of the imam whose advent they believed was imminent. Two years later in 1295/1878, the leading °*ulamā*° in Surat, headed by Ibrāhīm Ṣafī al-Dīn, the son of °Abd-e °Alī °Imād al-Dīn, set up a consultative council, called *ḥilf al-faḍā’il* (alliance of excellence). Their rationale was to guide the community in religious matters and to safeguard the Islamic *sharī‘a*, since religious education in the seminary school, Sayfī Daras was discontinued.<sup>9</sup> During the later period of his reign, °Abd al-Qādir divided the *da<sup>c</sup>wa* territory, i.e., the towns and villages where Bohras were concentrated among his seven sons as if it was his private property.<sup>10</sup> They enjoyed full discretion over their rights to collect money from the community by way of religious dues and other means. As a consequence of this ill-conceived policy the income of the *da<sup>c</sup>wa* at its headquarters in Surat declined. °Abd al-Qādir and his successors were obliged to borrow huge sums of money on interest. In fact, a court case

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<sup>9</sup> It was founded by the forty-third *dā<sup>c</sup>ī* Abd-e °Alī Sayf al-Din in 1229/1814.

<sup>10</sup> He had four wives and numerous children.

was filed against the forty-ninth *dā'ī* for failing to pay his debt. Although °Abd al-Qādir had nominated his son Ḥusayn to succeed him, he was unable to execute his will due to his sudden death in a cholera outbreak while he was visiting Ujjain. Therefore, he left the administration of the *da'wa* in the hands of his brother °Abd al-Ḥusayn Ḥusām al-Dīn who held the rank of *ma'dhūn* and was present in Ujjain. In short, °Abd al-Qādir managed the affairs of the *da'wa* with tact, shrewdness and bribes to survive in office during the turbulent years of his long reign of forty-six years, but the dignity of the office was permanently impaired.

All the evidence suggests that the genesis of the present crisis and power struggle that exploded in the late *dā'ī*'s family, as described above, goes back to Ṭahir Saif al-Dīn and his extravagant life style, greed for worldly wealth and love of beautiful women. He consummated four marriages and had over twenty offspring. By the mid-nineteen-seventies the number of this clan had multiplied geometrically. Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn, the eldest son, was born in 1906 through his first (or second) wife Ḥusayna, while his youngest son Khuzaima was born in 1940 through his last charming and well educated wife Āmena. The latter married Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn on two conditions: first, that her son should also be groomed as a potential *dā'ī*; second, that the Sayfi Mahal, a luxurious residence located on the Malabar Hills overlooking the Indian Ocean, be transferred to her son's name. This was the tacit understanding between Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn and his late father. Hence, on his accession to the *dā'ī*ship in 1965 he appointed Khuzaima, his half-brother, as his *ma'dhūn*. Moreover, he did not nominate anyone as his successor during his long reign of almost fifty years. From time to time news leaked out that a tug of war was brewing between the partisans of Mufaḍḍal and the supporters of Khuzaima. In 2010 (?) Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn, while in London, had a stroke that incapacitated him physically and his speech was impaired. Mufaḍḍal and his cohorts not only controlled the

movements of the late *dā'ī* during the last years of his illness but also the religious establishment. Subsequently, he demonstrated that he was the anointed successor. Because of this public display, soon after his father's death, Mufaḍḍal got himself acknowledged by the overwhelming majority of the community. It is obvious that Khuzaima was outwitted and outmaneuvered by his nephew Mufaḍḍal. Failing to get substantial support from the community, Khuzaima had no alternative but to make a counter claim for his own succession. Thereafter, he filed a civil suit against Mufaḍḍal as indicated above.

Now, let us return to Ṭāhir Sayf al-Din who was also the architect of an unprecedented radical shift in the policy of the *da'wa*. He was a despot and managed extremely tight control over the community both in religious as well as mundane affairs. He ruthlessly crushed all criticism and opposition to his authoritarian administration with the deadly use of excommunication (*barā'at*) and death threats. In short, numerous court cases were filed against him. The most celebrated were two: the Chandabhai Gulla Case of 1917 and the Burhanpur Durgah Case of 1925. Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn, the defendant, in the first case, was accused of embezzling money from a registered charity trust. During the court hearings his defense counsel, made bombastic and fantastic claims on behalf of the defendant. Let me quote some relevant excerpts:

The Mullaji Sahib is the representative of God on earth, and as such, is infallible and immaculate ... According to these tenets, the Mullaji is the master of the mind, property, body and soul, of each of his followers; that these followers are bound to obey him implicitly, and cannot question any act of his; that he is entitled to take any property from his followers, whether trust or private, and if the former, to alter and cancel the trust, and that there cannot be any such thing in the Dawoodi Bohra community as a permanent irrevocable trust ...



It is worth noting that not even the Fāṭimid caliph-imams, who ruled North Africa and Egypt for more than two centuries, ever asserted such claims. In 1949, Home Minister of Bombay (Mumbai) Province, Morarji Desai, got the Legislative Assembly to pass the Prevention of Excommunication Act. It was aimed at protecting reformist members of the Bohra community, who were ostracized by the High Priest and denied access to mosques and graveyards. Desai remarked that the Mullaji is running a government within a government. He further stated while one might evade paying government taxes, the Bohras cannot escape from the Mullaji's clutches as their religious ceremonies of marriage and death will not be performed unless they pay the overdue religious taxes and tender public apology.

His successor Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn continued the same policy. Consequently, in 1977 a commission was appointed by the Citizens for Democracy to investigate the alleged infringement of human rights of reformist members of the Dawoodi Bohras in the name of the High Priest. It was headed by N. P. Nathwani, a member of the Indian Parliament. Hence, its report, known as the Nathwani Commission Report, was issued in 1979 with a number of recommendations to the Central and State governments. It states:

Our enquiry has shown that there is large-scale infringement of civil liberties and human rights of reformist Bohras ... even in purely secular matters, are subjected to *Baraat* (excommunication) resulting in complete social boycott, mental torture and frequent physical assaults...An excommunicated member becomes virtually an untouchable in the community, and besides being isolated from his friends and nearest relatives, is unable to attend and offer prayers at the Bohra mosque. Even death does not release him from the taboo, for his dead body is not allowed to be buried at the community's common burial ground.

The commission further pointed out that it is the deadly combination of religious and economic power which creates a huge problem not merely for the reformists but for

all members of the Bohra community and for the State as well. Problems of such magnitude may require drastic remedies consistent with the principles of democracy and the fundamental rights guaranteed by articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution of India.

It was expected that the above report on the excesses of the Mullaji's authority would have created enough adverse public opinion so as to have a sobering effect on Sayyidna. But the experience proved to the contrary. There was no change in his methods to bend or break the opposition. Hence, fourteen years later another commission was constituted by the Human Rights Commission of India and the Citizens for Democracy. It was headed by the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court, D. S. Tewatia and Kuldip Nayar, President of the Citizens for Democracy. Their report known as "The Report on the Violation of the Human Rights of Dawoodi Bohras," was issued in 1993, only to be filed in a library and gather dust on its shelves.

### **Theological Considerations:**

The Ismā'īlī doctrine of the imamate is scrutinized in the works of some major thinkers, such as al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (d. 363/974) and his contemporary al-Sijistānī (d. after 361/971), al-Naysābūrī and his contemporary al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020).<sup>11</sup> Al-Naysābūrī's treatise *al-Risāla al-mūjaza al-kāfiya fī ādāb al-du'āt* (A Treatise on the Etiquette of the *Dā'īs*), composed during the last years of the Fāṭimid caliph-imam al-Ḥākīm (r. 386/996-411/1021) is analyzed in detail.<sup>12</sup> It has special consideration for the question at hand, because it was composed at a critical juncture, the troubled times and turmoil in the *da'wa*. It is a code of conduct and a

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<sup>11</sup> It is omitted from this summary for the sake of brevity and oral presentation within the allotted time.

<sup>12</sup> It is edited with English translation and a critical introduction.

normative guide for the Ismāʿīlī missionaries (*duʿāt*). It is obvious that this code of conduct was brushed aside as if it did not exist.

### **Conclusion:**

The *daʿwa* during the Yemeni period faithfully served the mission of the hidden imams and kept the community alive and vibrant through the study of its earlier legacy, and augmentation of its past heritage. Its existence throughout the Yemeni period was precarious since the collapse of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty in 532/1138. The *daʿīs* lived very simple lives and cared for the community. They were selected on the merits of learning, piety and sacrifice in the cause of the *daʿwa*. It also goes to the credit of the Yemeni *daʿwa* that during its long period of four centuries it did not splinter on the question of succession. Of course, most of the Indian *dāʿīs* – prior to 1840 also lived simple lives and cared for the welfare of the community. However, since 1840 the headship of the *daʿwa* and its hierarchy has been hijacked and monopolized exclusively by one family as if it is their hereditary possession.

There was an unprecedented economic prosperity of the Bohras towards the last decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The main reason for that affluence was that some enterprising individuals succeeded in obtaining lucrative contracts from the British administration. Many of these rich individuals were also acclaimed philanthropists. They not only built mosques, madrasas, sanatoriums, jamatkhana and lodging-houses for the pilgrims and travelers, but also established numerous charitable institutions for higher education and helping the needy. The best example is Adamjī Pīrbhai, one of the richest. Because of his huge donations during the time of famine and natural calamities, irrespective of one's religion and humanitarian causes he was conferred with the title of "Sir" by the British government. In fact,

the forty-ninth *dāʿī*, the father of the fifty-first *dāʿī*, also honored him with the title “*Rafīʿ al-Dīn*” (of exalted faith).<sup>13</sup>

Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn, the grandson of ʿAbd al-Qādir Najm al-Dīn, assumed the helm of the *daʿwa* in 1915 under mysterious circumstances. He was in in his mid-twenties and had worldly ambitions. His eyes were set on the community’s charitable institutions and *waqf* properties. His ulterior motive was how to control and take them over. Hence, he was accused of interfering with the Chandabahi Trust in Mumbai and embezzling money. The said trust was registered with the charitable commissioner in 1907. This court case was filed soon after his accession to power in 1917 by none other than the Mullaji’s youth friend Ibrahim, son of Sir Ādamji. It is worth noting that another childhood companion of the Mullaji in Surat, Fayḍ Allāhbhāʿi al-Hamdani, a learned Ismāʿīlī scholar,<sup>14</sup> testified against the latter in the above case. In 1938 when Muslim Waqf Act was introduced, Sayyidna’s own lawyer, Bhulabhai Desai confessed that:

Mullaji Saheb has forced his follower Bohras to transfer charitable properties of the community in his name and is about to do so in cases of many more properties. Mullaji Saheb in the last seven years got six hundred mosques and sixty Gallas (shrines with collection boxes) under his control by various coercive methods.

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<sup>13</sup> It is a very crude irony of fate that Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn, the son of the forty-ninth *dāʿī*, excommunicated the family of this great philanthropist, who had lavishly entertained the preceding *dāʿīs* (including Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn before he became the *dāʿī*) in his own residence and establish numerous charitable institutions and later on maneuvered to buy the very residence which became known as Saifi Mahal.

<sup>14</sup> He came from a distinguished learned Hamdani family, originally from Yemen. His father Muḥammad ʿAlī b. Fayḍ Allāh al-Hamdani was among the *ʿulamāʾ* who had left India in their search for the hidden imam.

In short, he usurped all *waqf* properties worth more than several crores of rupees, and made the community his slaves since the Bohras were obligated to address themselves as “slaves of the Sayyidna .”<sup>15</sup> This total transformation occurred during the colonial period of the British Raj as some members of this trading community with enterprising skills prospered in their undertakings of business and government contracts. In hindsight it should be stated that this transmutation of the *da<sup>c</sup>wa*’s spiritual mission into a tyrannical rule and extorting money from the community in name of religion occurred during the last century. What is striking is that the relationship of mutual benefit that developed between the colonial rulers and the *nāẓim*’s family continued into the post-independence era and until the present day. Various factors, including large donations to the political parties and government bureaucrats, have played an important role.

Let me conclude this paper by mentioning Aligarh University. In 1946, Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn made large donations to this institution, and in exchange the university conferred on him honorary degree of Doctor of Theology. A few years later, in 1953, he was made Chancellor after making a huge donation. The Chancellorship was renewed thrice and he remained the Chancellor until he died. After that the Chancellorship was conferred on his son, the succeeding *dā<sup>c</sup>ī*. When Mufaḍḍal was firmly settled in his position he too was appointed the Chancellor with a donation of a few crores of rupees.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> His children took on fancy titles as princes and princesses (*shāhzāda*, or *shāhzādī*), while the community members were obliged to write as the slaves of the Sayyidna (*‘abd-e Sayyidna* - for males, and *amat-e Sayyidna*- for females).

<sup>16</sup> Let me add here a personal note. I was invited by the said university last year to deliver a lecture on the *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* (The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity). But when they discovered my publication of two articles critical of the succession dispute, the invitation was abruptly withdrawn without any explanation.

## Appendix I

### Spiritual genealogy of the Bohras and their Imams<sup>17</sup>

Prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632) ----- °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib/*Waṣīy* (Legatee, d. 40/661)

#### IMAMS

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|---|-------|---|
| 2. Ḥusayn (d. 61/680)   |       | 1. Ḥasan (d. 49/669)  |
| 3. °Alī Zayn al-°Ābidīn (d. 94/712)   |       | (ḤASANIDS)  |
| 4. Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/732)   | ----- | Zayd's uprising (d. 122/740)<br>(ZAYDĪS)  |
| 5. Ja°far al-Şādiq (d. 148/765)   |       |   |
| 6. Ismā°īl (d. after 136/754) (ISMĀ°ĪLĪS)<br>( <i>dawr al-satr/occultation/hidden imams</i> ) <sup>18</sup> | ----- | Mūsā al-Kāzim (d. 183/799)  |
| 7. Muḥammad b. Ismā°īl ( <i>al-maktūm/hidden</i> )  |       | °Alī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818)   |
| 8. °Abdallāh  |       | Muḥammad al-Taḳī (d. 220/835)   |
| 9. Aḥmad  |       | °Alī al-Naqī (d. 254/868)   |
| 10. Ḥusayn  |       | Ḥasan al-°Askarī (d. 260/873)<br>Muḥammad al-Muntaẓar -occultation<br>(ITHNĀ °ASHARĪS/TWELVERS) |

FĀṬĪMIDS (*dawr al-zuhūr/when the imams are manifest in our midst*)

11. al-Mahdī billāh (d. 322/ 934)
12. al-Qā°im bi-Amr Allāh (d. 334/ 946)
13. al-Manşūr billāh (d. 341/ 953)
14. al-Mu°izz li-Dīn Allāh (d. 365/975)
15. al-°Azīz billāh (d. 386/996)
16. al-Ḥākīm bi-Amr Allāh (d. 411/1021) ----- DRUZES split

<sup>17</sup> According to the Ismā°īlīs, °Alī was a *waṣīy* and the line of the Imams begins with Ḥasan. Conversely, the Twelver line of the Imams begins with °Alī. Al-Şādiq was thus the sixth imam and Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓar was the twelfth Imam.

<sup>18</sup> There is a debate concerning the number of hidden imams and their genealogy. For the latest see Abbas Hamdani and Franņois de Blois, 'A Re-examination of al-Mahdī's Letter to the Yemenites on the Genealogy of the Fatimid Caliphs,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1983, pp.173-207.

17. al-Zāhir li-<sup>°</sup>zāz Dīn Allāh (d. 427/1035)

18. al-Mustanşir billāh (d. 487/1094)

19. al-Musta<sup>°</sup>lī billāh (d. 495/1101) (MUSTA<sup>°</sup>LĪS) ----- Nizār (d. 488/1095) NIZĀRĪS/KHOJAS split...  
found in Iran and Syria

20. al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh (d. 524/ 1130)

21. al-Ṭayyib (b. 524/1130) ... *dawr al-satr*/occultation =MUSTA<sup>°</sup>LĪ-ṬAYYĪBIS split and established themselves  
in Yemen

Fāṭimids caliph-imams continued in Egypt, but not recognized by the Musta<sup>°</sup>lī-Ṭayyibīs in Yemen

al-Ḥāfiẓ (regent, then caliph-imam, d. 544/1149) ... ḤĀFIẒĪS

al-Zāfir (d. 549/1154)

al-Fā<sup>°</sup>iz (d. 555/1160)

al-<sup>°</sup>Āḍīd (d. 567/1171) ... End of the Dynasty by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn/Saladin

## SUCCESSION OF MUSTA<sup>°</sup>LĪ-ṬAYYĪBĪ DU<sup>°</sup>ĀT MUṬLAQĪNS

### In Yemen

1. Dhu<sup>°</sup>ayb b. Mūsa al-Wādi<sup>°</sup>ī (d. 546/1151) ... became the *dā<sup>°</sup>ī* in 520/1126 following the death of the *dā<sup>°</sup>ī* Yaḥyā b. Lamak; in 526/1132 he was appointed as *dā<sup>°</sup>ī muṭlaq* by the Ṣulayḥīd Queen Arwā (d. 532/1138) on behalf of the hidden Imam al-Ṭayyib.

Successin of the *dā<sup>°</sup>īs* continued until the 23<sup>rd</sup> *dā<sup>°</sup>ī* Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn (or Ḥasan) (d. 946/1539)

### In India

24. Yusuf b. Sulaymān (d. in *Ṭaybah, Yaman* in 974/1567) ... the first Indian *dā<sup>°</sup>ī* ...

25. Jalāl b. Ḥasan (d. 975/1567)

26. Dā<sup>°</sup>ūd b. <sup>°</sup>Ajabshāh (d. ca. 997/1589)

27. Dā<sup>°</sup>ūd b. Quṭb (d. 1021/1612) ----- Sulaymān b. Ḥasan

DĀ<sup>°</sup>ŪDĪS/DAWOODIS

SULAYMĀNĪS split ... headquarters in Yemen

28. Shaykh Ādam Ṣafi al-Dīn (d. 1030/1621)

29. <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Tayyib Zakī al-Dīn (d. 1041/1631) ----- <sup>°</sup>Alī Shams al-Dīn b. Ibrāhīm

<sup>°</sup>ALAVĪS split ...headqurters in Baroda

Nāgoshia (vegetarians), split in1204/178, extinct

30. Alī Shams al-Dīn b. Ḥasan b. Idrīs d. al-Walīd (d.1042/1632)

40. Hibat Allāh al-Muʿayyad (d. 1193/1779)

In 1175/1761 a group called HIBTIAS/HIPTIAS appeared ... now extinct

46. Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn ... died suddenly in 1256/1840 without explicit pronouncement of his successor ... a major and unprecedented crisis ... How was it resolved?

47. °Abd al-Qādir Najm al-Dīn (d. 1302/1885) was nominated by a group of four eminent °ulamāʾ as a *Nāẓim*,

for the administration of the *daʿwa* without any claim to spiritual authority and its title *dāʿī muṭlaq* ... when firmly settled, he deviated from the agreement with the °ulamāʾ ... Repercussions:

i) circulation of the so-called imāmī letters, as early as 1264/1847-48, indicated the growing opposition to his policies ...

ii) in 1293/1876 five eminent °ulamāʾ left India in search for the imam

iii) in 1295/1878, the leading °ulamāʾ in Surat headed by Ibrāhīm Ṣafī al-Dīn b. °Abd-e °Alī °Imād al-Dīn set up a consultative council (hilf al-fadāʾil) to guide the community in religious matters and to safeguard the Islamic *sharīʿa*, since religious education in Sayfī Dars (seminary school) was discontinued. His authoritarian policies during the administration of 46 years ... (this family controls the *daʿwa* from 1885 until today)

48. °Abd al-Ḥusayn Ḥusām al-Dīn (d. 1308/1891)... brother of °Abd al-Qādir Najm al-Dīn

49. Muḥ. Burhān al-Dīn (d. 1323/1906) ... son of °Abd al-Qādir Najm al-Dīn ... succumbed to the opposition

and acknowledged in a document that he and his two predecessors were merely caretaker *dāʿīs* (*nāẓims*) ...

now onwards the community was polarized between the supporters of the religious establishment and the opposition/reformists ...

Beginning of overt dissension in the community ... *daʿwa*'s financial difficulties ... court case against him for failing to repay the debt...

In 1897, °Abd al-Ḥusayn Jīwājī, came to Nagpur and claimed that he was in direct communication with the hidden imam, & established there a colony called Mahdibag/Mahdibagwalas/Atbāʿ-*e* Malak (Badr) ... a small group from them believed that *dawr al-satr* was over and *dawr al-kashf* had begun; therefore it was no longer necessary to observe the Islamic *sharīʿa* ... a small group from them has survived until today ...

50. °Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn b. °Abd al-Ḥusayn Ḥusām al-Dīn (son of the 48<sup>th</sup> and cousin of the 49<sup>th</sup>) (d. 1333/1915)

51. Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn b. Muḥ. Burhān al-Dīn (grandson of the 47<sup>th</sup>) (d. 1385/1965) ... he was the architect of a new

policy, authoritarian rule, centralized administration with an iron grip over the community ... built a large financial empire ... usurped all waqf properties ... unleashed a "reign of terror" and claimed fantastic power and authority ... 28 court cases against him ... the most famous are: Chandabhai Gulla Case of 1917, and Bhanpur Durgah Case of 1925... his followers have to acknowledge themselves as *°Abd-e Sayyidnā* (slaves of the High Priest)

52. Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn b. Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn (d. 1435/2014) (son of the 51<sup>st</sup>) ... continued the same policy...



In 1977 an inquiry commission, known as Nathwani Commission, was appointed by the Citizens for Democracy to investigate into the alleged infringement of human rights of reformist members of the Dawoodi Bohras in the name of the High Priest.

In 1991 another commission led by Tewatia, Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court, was appointed by the Citizens for Democracy to investigate into the alleged infringement of human rights of reformists in the name of the High Priest.

53. Mufaḍḍal Sayf al-Dīn (son of the 52<sup>nd</sup>) ... he out maneuvered his uncle and got himself accepted as the

successor ... there is no evidence that he was nominated by his father. Hence, his step-uncle Khuzema Quṭb al-Dīn (youngest son of the 51<sup>st</sup>), out of frustration, filed a civil jurisdiction suit against his nephew Mufaḍḍal Sayf al-Dīn in the High Court of Judicature at Mumbai on March 28, 2014, claiming the succession for himself ... the hearings started after a long delay, but he died on Mar 31, 2016, and nominated his eldest son Tahir as his successor ... he assumed the title Fakhr al-Din and on June 27, 2016, he filed a petition in the Bombay High Court that he, being the legitimate successor to his father as the fifty-fourth *dā'ī*, be replaced by his late father as the plaintiff in the abovementioned case. The defendant, Mufaḍḍal Sayf al-Dīn, was given three months to respond before the new petition could be heard and acted upon by the judge.

Or (Quṭbi Bohras)

53. Khuzema Quṭb al-Dīn (d. 2016)

54. Ṭāhir Fakhr al-Dīn (r. 2016-)