

INTRODUCTION

Beyond Territoriality

The organizational dynamics of the Isma'ili Muslim community raise important questions about the nature of citizenship and political identity at this moment in history. They present a basic challenge to theoretical and popular understandings of the state, of globalization, and of Islam. They point to a transformation in the relationship between territory and allegiance, a fundamental shift in the possibilities for sociopolitical organization. The Isma'ilis are widely scattered across the planet, but their community's institutional infrastructure is highly centralized and provides for subjects a vast array of services, symbols, and social spaces. Isma'ili institutions penetrate deeply into participants' lives; they suffuse the fabric of their daily activities. In this way, the complex of Isma'ili forms, processes, and structures seems to represent a new possibility for transnational social organization, for sociopolitical participation beyond the nation-state, for citizenship without territory.

The Isma'ili community is neither national nor ethnic; it is bound neither to a territorial unit nor to a government; it is politically anomalous while it enjoys, in many contexts, legal recognition and autonomy; at its foundation is religion, and yet it provides for its members a staggering set of secular structures. While in some cases these services are provided in addition to those provided by the state, in others, where the state is either unwilling or unable, they are provided in the place of state infrastructure. Thus in some settings Isma'ilis live and move within a centralized, nonnational, nonterritorial polity from which they derive the central emblems of their identity. They enjoy both material and symbolic benefits from their membership in this transnational network.

This book is an exploration of the complex and intricate details of global Isma'ilism. But it is also a meditation on the nature of sovereignty and political subjectivity and on their historical transformations. Through an examination of the implications of the Isma'ili transnational complex, I seek

to raise questions about certain aspects of human sociopolitical organization, to examine the *longue durée* of identity and territoriality through the example of a community in which long-distance consolidation of its membership has been central for over a thousand years. The time-depth of Isma'ili organization presents exceptional possibilities for the examination of the effects of empire, capital, and the nation-state on the construction of community across (rather than within) territory. My interest here, however, goes beyond political forms alone; the scale of the inquiry is at once more intimate and less quantifiable. I also seek through the lens of the Isma'ili community to explore the role of the personal, the subjective, the phenomenological in transnationality and human organization. Thus this book is also an excavation of shifts in identity, citizenship, and affiliation in the context of rapidly changing social worlds.

Locating the Subject: Isma'ili Lives and Selves

It is individual lives, in my view, that most clearly demonstrate the meaning of historical conditions and social change. For that reason there might be no better place to begin the intellectual exploration of Isma'ili globalization, and Isma'ilis' engagement with globalization, than in the home of my oldest Isma'ili friends, Sher Ali Khan and Sultan Ali Khan, in the Hunza valley of Pakistan's Northern Areas.

When I read the news on September 23, 2008, that the Islamabad Marriott had been destroyed, I feared the worst. For several years Sher Ali had been working as an assistant and bellhop in the front office of the hotel. Almost every time he called me it was from work. So as I looked at images of the building in flames, I was unable to suppress a growing feeling of certainty that he had burned in that inferno. I tried to reach Sher Ali immediately.

Unable to track him down, I tried throughout the day, without success, to find his older brother, Sultan Ali. And finally, at the end of the day, I got through to Sultan's cell phone: Sher Ali was on his way home from work when the blast happened and escaped unharmed. I could not bear to imagine the alternative. Shortly thereafter, the boys' mother, deeply unsettled, asked them to travel the long distance back to the village. Within days, they had returned to their settlement, where they remained for a time, in the company of Isma'ili family and friends.

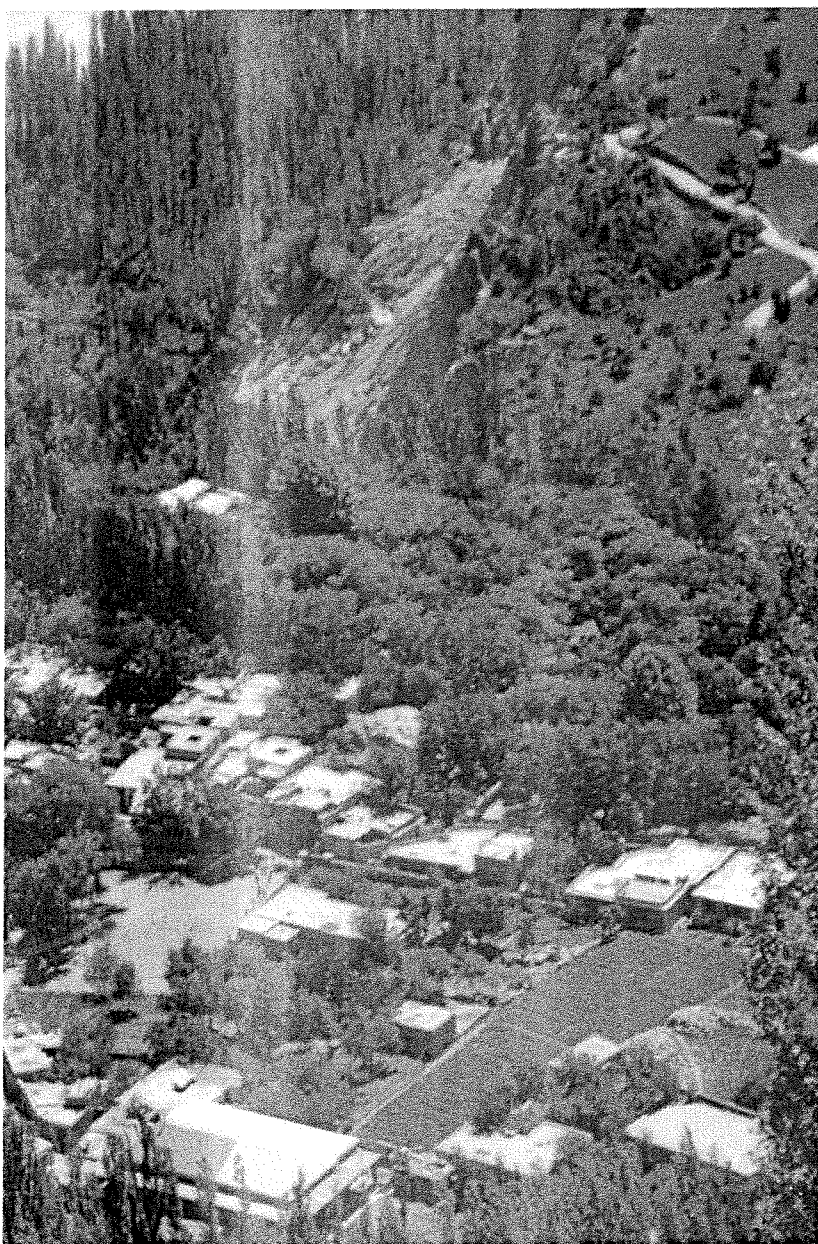
It had been a long time since I first met the two brothers, and they had come a long way from their homes. Sher Ali was about eleven and Sultan

Ali about sixteen when I first met them and their family, fifteen years earlier, in a small hamlet adjoining the village of Altit in the Hunza valley. Altit is itself adjacent to Baltit, now also called Karimabad, the traditional capital of Hunza (though no longer its administrative center). Hunza is in the heart of the Karakoram Range of the Pakistan Himalaya, an area of high, glaciated mountains. Most of its residents speak Burushaski, a language unrelated to any other on earth. And almost all of them are Isma'ili.

Through numerous periods of ethnographic fieldwork during the course of those fifteen years, I learned that the social fabric of daily life in the village in which Sher Ali and Sultan Ali grew up, along with all of the villages surrounding it, is pervaded with the structures, discourses, and institutions of global Isma'ilism. Nothing competes with it. And it penetrates the most basic details of space, place, language, and life course. Karimabad itself, for instance, was renamed for the current imam, Prince Karim Aga Khan. His visits have taken on the stature of myth in the narratives of the villagers' lives: every detail—where he stood, where they stood, where his helicopter landed—is cherished, told, and retold. Every week the villagers of Karimabad and Altit listen in their *jama'at khana*s (houses of worship) to the *far-mans* (edicts or dicta) of the Aga Khan; these edicts govern the moral blueprints by which they live their lives. Sultan Ali and Sher Ali, who used to volunteer most days as “scouts” in the *jama'at khana*, even claim to have received their names at birth from the Aga Khan, in his distant home in France. Sher Ali, Sultan Ali, and all adult Isma'ilis in the village pay to the Aga Khan a tithe of 12.5 percent, a long-standing and time-worn Isma'ili custom.¹ Their lives are governed, in addition to the law of Pakistan, by the law of a global Isma'ili constitution.

The brothers and their family have long participated in a rural development program in which the men join a “Village Organization” and the women join a “Women's Organization.” These structures, as we will see below, provide a forum for local participation in a global network and socialize the villagers to basic ideological tenets of liberal modernity, entrepreneurial capital, rational humanism, and civil society. All villagers donate part of their earnings to the organization, which provides for them a wide variety of services. The development organization, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme of the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), in turn is a subsidiary of the Aga Khan Development Network, or AKDN. On its encouragement, hillsides are greened with new trees, fields are irrigated, small businesses established, hotels built, roads constructed, bridges completed, livestock vaccinated. In these villages, the Aga Khan's network has also built schools





*Altit, Hunza, Pakistan,
from the path to Melishkar-
Duikar, the settlement's
high pastures.*

of remarkably high quality that have attracted international teachers, fostered scholarships for international study, and funneled talented students into universities created by the Aga Khan. When Sultan Ali's mother fell ill, which has happened often, or when his wife needed treatment for diabetes, they sought assistance at the excellent Aga Khan Health Services hospitals and clinics in the immediate area. When the traditional fortresses of Altit and Baltit fell into disrepair, the Aga Khan Foundation funded massive renovations.

Growing up, Sher Ali and Sultan Ali, along with their many siblings, had daily contact with Isma'ilis from North America, Africa, and Europe as well as other parts of Pakistan, who were working as staff members for the Aga Khan Foundation. Their presence, much more than the presence of global tourists, engendered and reinforced in the whole village an awareness of the simultaneous existence of Isma'ilis elsewhere, of a transnational community with which the villagers believe themselves to share something fundamental. Their contacts with the global network are diverse, constant, and immediate. Sher Ali and Sultan Ali's immersion in global Isma'ilism has also indirectly opened up the possibility for them to be global in other ways as well and exposed them to new potential modalities for the accumulation of wealth. Two of their older brothers, Dildar Khan and Nuruddin Khan, work in tourism, and Sultan Ali is working on creating a simple hotel in one of his village's traditional pastures. Sher Ali, for his part, befriended a young Afghan Isma'ili woman, who also worked at the Islamabad Marriott before the explosion and before she migrated to Québec. As these examples illustrate, the connections forged by membership in the global Isma'ili community span oceans, cross borders, enter the realm of intimacy, introduce subjects to the workings of capital, and determine livelihoods.

But global Isma'ilism, and the interaction of Sher Ali and Sultan Ali with it, is at once more complex and less utopian than the initial description suggests, and is intimately tied up with empire and the expansion of markets. It was the channels opened up by European imperialism that created the opportunity for the construction of a more broadly global Isma'ili ecumene; the British in particular played a key role in fostering the formation of a diaspora around the rim of the Indian Ocean. Out of that diasporic population emerged the Khoja elite, who form the imam's inner circle of advisers and direct the development projects in Altit, Baltit, and elsewhere. The British Empire also enabled the construction of a strong connection between the Aga Khan, then based in Bombay, and the northern limits of

the raj, in places like Hunza. And it was, as we will see below, the British Empire that bestowed upon the figure of the Aga Khan his particular role in the community of Isma'ilis and that in part produced the notion of a single Isma'ili community.

The Isma'ili institutional forms and initiatives that so suffuse the social fabric in Altit, Baltit, and all of the surrounding communities operate under the banners of "development" and "progress." These structures, comprising the building blocks of an expansive, transnational assemblage, seek to instill in the local population at the very peripheries of Isma'ili society the values of "participation," "democracy," and "civil society"—not to mention "prosperity." But they also serve to bring those populations into active participation in the Isma'ili community, incorporate them into its transnational flow, and contribute to its consolidation as a single society under a single leadership. They provide a local forum for participation in a transnational network and play some role in socializing those borderland societies to values associated with capitalism, modernity, and liberal individualism. And they serve to inculcate isolated Isma'ili societies with enthusiasm for the modern values and practices that are espoused by its central directorate.

Two of the central questions I explore in this book: What does it mean to say that Sher Ali and Sultan Ali participate more in the institutions of transnational Isma'ilism than in any other political or social form? And does globalization produce new types of citizens?

Theorizing Isma'ili Lives

In her recent exploration of the changing dynamics of sovereignty, Saskia Sassen (2006) asks what the emergence of global "assemblages" will mean for the territoriality of power and the future of citizenship. She speaks cautiously of "changes in the relationship between citizens and the state" (2), of "multisided, transboundary networks and formations which can include normative orders" (3), and of newly emergent "alternative notions of membership in a community" (305). At the center of her analysis is a concern with a weakening of "the exclusive authority, both objective and subjective, of national states over people, their imaginaries, and their sense of belonging," which "facilitates the entry of nonstate actors into international domains once exclusive to national states" (299). Running through this, however, is a concern with the continued primacy of the nation-state despite

its profound alteration and a rejection of the triumphalist language all too often deployed to herald the end of the nation-state and usher in the era of the global (see Tsing 2000).

Sassen's use of the notion of assemblage (see also Ong and Collier 2004), her focus on the perduring role of the nation-state in global process, and her questions surrounding the relative configurations in the constellation of territory, authority, and rights serve an analysis of the complex, unruly, and polycentric nature of global Isma'ilism very well. Isma'ilis certainly embody the fundamental repositioning of citizenship that she observes. And Sassen's theoretical emphasis on the tenacious persistence of the state as a conduit or channel for global processes effectively illuminates the long and messy engagement between Isma'ilism and the colonial and national states in which its followers and leaders have been situated.

The very repositioning of the relationship between subject and polity is at stake here. For Isma'ili subjects like Sher Ali and Sultan Ali, the complex of global Isma'ili institutions is certainly an "alternative" to the nation-state. But the state remains; it does not disappear. And all Isma'ilis live in sovereign territorial units, just as they follow the Isma'ili constitution, serve on Isma'ili councils, and pay tithes to the Isma'ili imamate. At the same time, the Isma'ili ecumene, while functioning in part as an "alternative" or "parallel" sphere for citizenship and membership, cannot be accurately characterized as a utopian, egalitarian escape from all strictures of political power. As Sassen observes, emergent global assemblages may enact their own normative codes and disciplinary orders. Foucault's (1991) concept of "governmentality" is thus also relevant here, for transnational bodies are certainly in the business of governing, often through the very types of rationalities, practices, and disciplines Foucault described. What they govern, however, and how they do it seem to represent something new. The modalities and spatialities of the relationship between global assemblages and their subjects reveal fundamentally altered historical configurations of power and participation: a "shift from centripetal scalings framed through the master normativity of the nation-state to centrifugal cross-border assemblages of territory, authority, and rights" (Sassen 2006: 403).

The Basics

Before the histories of Isma'ili globalities can be rendered theoretically legible, a sketch must be drafted of the basic contexts in which Isma'ili subjects and institutions are situated. The picture, as presented here, is neces-

sarily partial and shamelessly simplified, but it will help us build an analytic framework to apply to Isma'ili historical process. Though cursory, it is the backdrop to Sultan Ali and Sher Ali's lives, at the core of their village's life-worlds, but it did not exist in its present form at the time of their parents' birth.

The Isma'ili community formed in the eighth century in a schism over the rightful succession to the imamate, much as the Shi'a and Sunni sects had split earlier. While the formation referred to under the rubric of Isma'ilism split into a number of smaller groups during the last millennium (i.e., Druze, Da'udi Bohras, or Musta'lian Isma'ilis), the Nizari Isma'ilis who follow the Aga Khan as their imam remain the most numerous. Throughout their history the various structures named "Isma'ili" maintained with relative consistency a somewhat oppositional stance toward the established powers of the Islamic world. Beginning in the tenth century, significantly, the Isma'ilis established a territorial state, the Fatimid Empire, which included much of North Africa, southern Europe, and western Asia. They built the city of Cairo, and their religio-political network stretched from Africa to India. As the Fatimid Empire fell, another schism produced what became the Nizari state in Iran, with its network of fortresses connected by intensive communication. The radical Nizaris repeatedly launched covert attacks on the various dynasties of the era, especially the Seljuqs, for which they gained the epithet "Assassin," from which the English word derives. The Mongol invasions in the late thirteenth century destroyed the Nizari state and dispersed the Isma'ilis far and wide. As I will explain below, establishing a direct connection between these medieval roots and modern Isma'ilism is difficult; nonetheless, Isma'ili institutions work to claim continuity with them.

Isma'ilis are very widely scattered across the planet. There are Isma'ili communities in Pakistan, India, China, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, several East African countries (including Kenya and Tanzania), Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Portugal, and a number of other nation-states. There are no reliable sources on their numbers, and estimates range from 2.5 to over 12 million; the former is a conservative figure but probably closer to reality (Farhad Daftary, pers. comm.). The Khoja Isma'ilis form a prominent diasporic sector of the community that has been highly mobile in the past two centuries. Originating in India, the now wealthy Khojas migrated throughout the Indian Ocean rim to parts of Arabia and East Africa, sometimes as merchants, and from there to Europe and North America. Other Isma'ili communities are comprised of indigenous societies who converted to

Isma'ilism, particularly in the Himalayas. There is now extensive interaction between these two constituent parts of the global community, particularly through the structure of the Aga Khan Development Network. Different countries have national councils with elected leaders who are responsible for ratifying and implementing the Isma'ili constitution.

Isma'ilism is syncretic and eclectic, fusing elements from numerous religious traditions but maintaining the primacy of the Qur'an and the centrality of Islamic thought. It has incorporated, in various areas, elements of Gnostic Neoplatonism, Manicheanism, Zoroastrianism, and, in India, Hinduism. A view of time and history as cyclical is a key tenet of Isma'ili philosophy (see Corbin 1983). Also central is an emphasis on a distinction between the outward message of revelation (*zahir*) and its inner, esoteric meaning (*batin*). This distinction is connected with an emphasis on *ta'wil*, or interpretation, to reveal that meaning and with a view of certain doctrines, such as *qiyama* (resurrection), as allegorical or metaphorical, that other Islamic sects interpret literally. It is only the *ta'wil* of the imam that can reveal the true, inner meaning, the *batin*, of religion.² Isma'ili men and women may pray in the same space, known as a *jama'at khana*, where worship takes a quite different form from that in other Islamic communities and may involve singing and chanting. Non-Isma'ilis are not permitted to enter the *jama'at khana* during worship. Until recently, Tajikistan had no such houses of worship, and the primarily Pamiri Isma'ilis there, from the country's southern mountains, pursued their own practices in homes, shrines, and outdoors.

The Isma'ili imam, who is now known as the Aga Khan, is simultaneously a social, political, and spiritual leader to Isma'ilis, embodying in many ways the historical ideal of the Muslim imam or caliph. He is an intermediary between the divine and human realms, and only he is sanctioned to prescribe doctrine and practice. Only he can elucidate and explain the truth behind the outward messages of Islam.³ The Aga Khan is not considered, nor does he claim to be, a divinity or deity, as a common misconception would have it, but he is nonetheless said to possess the *Nurullah*, or the light of God.⁴ In other words, he and the institution of the imamate are seen as imbued with divinity and a divine mandate; furthermore, he is only one bodily manifestation of the eternal and unchanging reality of the imam.⁵ While the historical record itself is a bit inconclusive on this matter (see Daftary 1990), the official Isma'ili view states that the Aga Khan, as "a direct lineal descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, through his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali bin Abu Talib, the Prophet's cousin, is the 49th hereditary Imam" (Uni-

versity of Central Asia 2004: 17). The current Aga Khan lives in Aiglemont, near Paris, where his secretariat is located. He was educated at Harvard, during which period his grandfather named him through *nass* (the designation utterance) the next imam.

As mentioned above, the institution of the imamate has allowed Isma'ilis to adapt their practices to new social realities. The Aga Khan issues regular *farmans*, or decrees, prescribing appropriate conduct and belief for Isma'ilis everywhere. Isma'ilis in Canada and in Pakistan may hear the same *farman*. In the last century Isma'ili religious discourse has been deeply concerned with modernity and with responding to its perceived social exigencies.⁶ Isma'ili women are not required to wear a veil, and Isma'ilis are encouraged to participate in promoting the social welfare of their coreligionists, as well as others who are in need, particularly through the global structure of the AKDN, a secular, global organization involved in providing everything from schools, clinics, and roads to musical recordings and architectural design awards. AKDN is most active in areas where at least some Isma'ilis live, though they also work with non-Isma'ilis in all of their focus countries. The highest representatives of AKDN in poorer countries enjoy diplomatic status;⁷ their vehicles bear diplomatic plates, and the national "resident representative" has legal ambassadorial status.

One of the most visible and important activities of AKDN is that of rural development, executed through AKF. The foundation has implemented an unusual approach within the metadiscourse of "development," creating new forms of civil society and political participation. In essence, AKF offers villagers resources and technical assistance in exchange for their forming local councils through which all subsequent aid is channeled. These "Village Organizations" and "Women's Organizations," whose dynamics in relation to localities will be discussed below, thus become the primary agents of their own "development" and the primary decision-making bodies in villages where they have been implemented.

AKDN is critical in inculcating in Isma'ilis an awareness of their connection to a global community and its institutional network. Through interaction with its complex structure, whose activity reaches even into the local and domestic spheres, Isma'ilis come into contact with other Isma'ilis from both their own and other regions and become conscious of their membership in a larger global society and polity. Individuals from disparate localities come to see themselves and each other as parts of a unitary and cohesive whole through the dynamic and ceaseless flow of communications between various nodes of the transnational network. Learning through mul-

multiple media of communication of the existence of other Isma'ilis elsewhere whom they have neither seen nor met creates a strong sense of connection to a deterritorialized community and suggests the development of a new type of global "imagined community" (Anderson 1991): one in which subjects' knowledge of distant localities (through novel forms of mobility and media) participating in similar processes across the planet facilitates integration into a single transnational ecumene that is nonetheless not a state. Thus it is through the common experience in different localities of globally connected institutions, in the flow of Isma'ilis to areas where culturally different Isma'ilis live, and in shared rituals of inculcation that a cohesive Isma'ili community begins to emerge.

This, then, is the assemblage in which transnational Isma'ili participation becomes possible. These building blocks, however, do not explain its emergence. Making sense of Isma'ili globality requires finer analytic tools and an appreciation of historical processes at once messier and more complex. It would be easy to take for granted, for example, that the Isma'ili transnational structure is a single, seamless system. But such a presupposition might overlook the possibility that the Isma'ili assemblage is *not* so unitary as it appears to be, even if it appears otherwise. It is possible that there are multiple modes, spaces, and channels of globality here that only appear or are *made* to appear unified. It is possible that Isma'ilis participate in multiple, overlapping Isma'ili spaces, some global, some regional, and some local; that the system is fragmentary and complex, or even constituted of multiple systems; that it is not a single thing, neither entirely global nor entirely local. It is probable that global Isma'ilism means and constitutes something different for different people and different classes. And it is certain that they are fighting over what "it" *should* constitute.

Historicizing Isma'ili Globality

Isma'ilism came in a different form centuries ago to the Himalayan regions of present-day Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and Tajikistan. But Isma'ili institutions working to consolidate scattered and pelagic populations into a single "community" came only very recently. Primarily over the course of the last century, Himalayan Isma'ilis have been incorporated into an intensive project of modernization, institutionalization, and centralization. How this happened and why are key questions I attempt to answer in this book. As we will see, the story of Isma'ili globalization cannot be separated

from histories of empire and the spread of capital. It was the geographies of power instituted by colonial states and the expansion of markets that opened the channels of movement and interaction required for Isma'ili globalization to unfold as it has.

Whether or not global Isma'ilism is indeed a unitary assemblage, it is not without a history (or multiple, convergent histories). To avoid giving a decontextualized representation of Isma'ili globality, one of the central goals of this book will be to historicize the phenomenon, to problematize the scattered polity in the context of its own pasts, on the one hand, and in the context of the history of human political organization, on the other. Too much of the scholarship on globalization presents a utopian, futurist triumphalism (see Tsing 2000), a static, synchronic account of the excitement of syncretism and the adventure of cosmopolitanism whose analytic explanation, grounded in the observation of surface features, ignores the historical conditions that produced those features. Globalization's epiphenomena should not be mistaken for the thing itself.

I thus seek in this book to construct a loose periodization of Isma'ili globalization (though not of Isma'ili *history* more broadly defined), a genealogy of the community's emergent transnationality. If we are to come to conclusions about what kind of thing Isma'ili globalization really is, a story of some temporal depth must be told. To avoid essentialist assumptions, wherein Isma'ili globalization might be explained by virtue of some internal feature of Isma'ilism, I delve into the agents, engines, and antecedents of the profuse institutional structures we see now. I follow in part the multisited, hybrid approach of Engseng Ho's (2006) sweeping analysis of Hadhramawti Sayyid diasporas in interrogating the historical antecedents of emergent Isma'ili configurations and structures, in striving to "treat the present as a historical moment" (Appadurai 1996: 64). In my examination of the meaning of transnationality in the *longue durée* and globalization in historical context, I look carefully at the role of capital and empire in the transformation of human communities into diasporas and other forms. The discussion is further informed, at some level, by the writings of Braudel (1979), Frank (1998), and Chaudhuri (1991).

This book examines specifics of the long engagement between Isma'ilism and multiple modernities, rooted in colonial states, national states, and markets, among other forms. These include the intimate relationship between Isma'ili diasporas in the Indian Ocean and the British circulation of laborers, managers, and merchants; the special role of wealth accumulated

in and tithe paid from those diasporic contexts; a decision by the Bombay High Court to legally designate Aga Khan I, the forty-sixth Isma'ili imam, supreme leader of all Isma'ilis; and the later infusion of modern ideologies of liberal humanism and rational individualism into the agendas of contemporary Isma'ili institutions of social service.

Among the broader historical concerns to be addressed is whether contemporary Isma'ili modes of global organization represent something truly new or not. In light of almost a thousand years of intricate, translocal Isma'ili polities, a question may be raised about the degree to which the structure under current observation embodies something substantively different and worthy of analytic attention. My position on this is that the continuity between those earlier forms and the currently active one is unclear. "Isma'ilism" does not necessarily represent a temporally stable and unitary "community" or "polity" throughout the entire millennium, despite official depictions of its uninterrupted evolution. Even if it did, however, I believe that current Isma'ili modalities of political organization and long-distance communication emerge out of historical conditions firmly rooted in modernity. I also seek to isolate the analytically relevant variables here. A second theoretical question informed by historical concerns is thus the question of whether or not, taking into account only the present moment, the dynamics of the Isma'ili community constitute something unique and distinct, or whether they are a token of a type. For that reason, I seek to understand how much of what we see now is due to widely shared historical conditions rooted in globalization, and how much of it is due to the special features of the Isma'ili community and its religious foundations. If the former, extrinsic factors were to be the more important, we could expect to see the contemporaneous emergence of other structures analogous to transnational Isma'ilism. And yet I am not sure that there is anything else like it. If not, then the interest of this case lies in the dynamics it reveals about the way profound and massive social change transforms extant human communities.

In this book I attempt to explore the degree to which Isma'ili globalization is imbricated with a project of modernization, with the politics of empire, and with the mobility of capital, to excavate the story of how Isma'ilism went institutional and global. At what point, I ask, did the enterprise become one of centrally directed transnational community-building? What were the intentions and historical conditions behind it? How far back do we have to look to locate the beginnings of the system that to Sher Ali and Sultan Ali is the very order of things? Perhaps not very far.

Elites and Peripheries: Borderlands into the Fold

A consideration of the process by which an increasingly centralized, self-consciously transnational Isma'ili assemblage has been built from a more fragmentary configuration forms perhaps the most basic concern of this book. I seek to examine both how the Isma'ili imamate itself constructed a global community and how exogenous historical processes constructed a global community *for* the Isma'ili imamate. My focus here is on an intensive process of consolidation by which populations once only loosely connected to each other and to the imamate have been progressively bound into a highly centralized, nonterritorial transnational structure (whose operation bears much resemblance to the government of a polity). It is clear that the Isma'ili leadership has worked very hard to enact enthusiastic global participation and to encourage the incorporation of far-flung communities into the sphere of global Isma'ilism. What is less clear, however, as we begin a close read of the events of the past few centuries, is how intentional this process has been.

Of particular interest here is the intensive and continual process of incorporating disparate and scattered communities into the Isma'ili complex, of bringing them into the fold of the imamate. In my interpretation, this involves, first, an effort to teach the far-flung communities *that they are Isma'ili* and to present them with a standardized version of what that means (in part through the narrative vehicle of an official history). Second, it is tied up with an attempt to teach them the details of *how* to be Isma'ili. And third, it functions (and, I believe, it is intended to function) to socialize them to *modern* ideals and ideologies through the *medium* of Isma'ilism. Through an inspection of this process of consolidation and centralization, I will endeavor to illuminate the processes that crystallize, reinforce, and maintain the operation of the Isma'ili complex as a unitary system (which its participants crucially *see* as unitary).

An examination of the role of modernity and capitalism in the Isma'ili assemblage requires careful scrutiny of the intimate and sometimes fraught relationship between diasporic (and usually affluent) Khoja Isma'ili elites and the scattered and isolated communities with whom they interact, largely through the medium of global Isma'ili institutions.⁸ Those institutions, religious and secular alike, are largely led by Khojas, and there is thus an imbalance of power, prestige, and wealth between the two sectors. There are, moreover, other forms of "ethnic" tension: Khojas, as they introduce their view and version of Isma'ilism to the Himalayan borderlands, engen-

der a degree of resentment among communities who have long practiced their own, "non-standard" forms of religious practice. Particularly in Tajikistan, local Isma'ilis express resentment at the infringement on their lifeways and autonomy—and sometimes they resist or reject it.

In some sense, then, it could be said that there are two globalizations here, their encounter mediated by an array of institutional channels and spaces that privilege a metropolitan diasporic elite. For this reason, Isma'ili globality cannot be characterized solely as emerging from diaspora; rather it is an *interaction* between a diaspora and less-mobile autochthonous communities whose ties to the places they inhabit are very old indeed. The formation of the diasporic Khoja Isma'ili community cannot be separated from the historic movement of capital around the Indian Ocean rim. The community's later expansion to "global cities" is bound to more recent processes of urbanization and postcolonial migration. For these reasons, among others, the emphasis on inculcating "borderland Isma'ilis" with norms associated with modernity and the market is of great interest, as is the dissemination into those communities of the language of liberal humanism couched in the lexicon of Isma'ilism.

I would like to stress, here, the agentivity of Isma'ilis in all contexts: Isma'ili subjects and communities are not just pawns following the directives of the Aga Khan's institutions. They actively interpret and mold Isma'ilism and Isma'ili institutions to their own goals and articulate their own set of meanings. They make Isma'ilism their own in a process of active interpretation, contestation, and semiotic production. And the institutional globalization of Isma'ilism, led by the Aga Khan and the Khoja elite at the top of his structures, is also intentional, although less transparently so. The individuals that occupy and navigate the institutional structure *also* exercise agency over the same system that circumscribes their activity. Thus the individual and the local figure prominently in transnational Isma'ili process.

Isma'ili globalization can, in sum, be seen as a process in which scattered marginal populations are socialized to the values of modernity, capitalism, rational individualism, and modern discourses of rights and membership. This book tracks the story of the gradual incorporation of those remote communities into the global polity, their consolidation into a single global structure, and their inculcation with enthusiasm for prescribed Isma'ili ideals.

But to say that there is a single history to be told here would be misleading; the history is contested and contextually contingent. A discrepancy emerges in the spaces between, on the one hand, the official, institu-

tional versions of the story of Isma'ili history, which emphasize (or even construct) connections between the present moment and the distant past, and on the other hand, unofficial, unwritten versions. Boivin (2003) illuminates the conscious mobilization under Aga Khan III, an intensive modernizer, of the Fatimid past as an effective political symbol and a core paradigm for the Isma'ili community.⁹ The modern is represented as causally linked to earlier Isma'ili structures. Under this paradigm communities that have always been "Isma'ili" are simply brought into the fold. In nondominant, "subaltern" versions of Isma'ili history, a different type of story is suggested; here it emerges that communities with indeterminate historical connections to structures loosely related to current Isma'ilism are taught that they are Isma'ili and recruited into its global structures—a process perhaps not unlike the inculcation among scattered populations of Jews (e.g., Yemeni, Kurdish, Bukharan, Cochin, Ethiopian) with a belief in an autochthonous, primordial, empirical, and historically objective connection to Israel, and an invitation to "return." Perhaps the story of modern Isma'ili community-building might be seen as a different sort of invitation to return.

Nation-States and Transnational Formations

I have already pointed to critical parallels between the Isma'ili "polity" and the processes characterizing nation-states. Another theme for discussion here is that of the complex relationship between the Isma'ili transnational structure and the nation-state. I refer to "relationship" here in both its formal and material senses: the Isma'ili global assemblage has real-time, historical relationships with individual states, but as a sociopolitical structure (idealized and abstracted) it also demonstrates a morphological relationship to (though certainly not an identity with) the generalized form of the nation-state. I also aim to explore the larger implications of formations like that of global Isma'ilism for the future of the system of national states. Sassen (2006) observes that the global is deeply imbricated with the national and rejects their representation as mutually exclusive sites of identification and organization. I hope to avoid the implication that I believe Isma'ili transnationality is a "wave of the future" that signals any kind of end of the era of "nation-states." It certainly suggests a transformation in the role of the nation-state, but not its replacement. The territorial state is clearly here for the long haul. Nonetheless, with increasing frequency it will have to reckon with the expansion of alternative, nonnational, nonterritorial sites of social organization and personal identification with which it will co-exist.

The notion of the emergence of a new type of transnational structure can stir in enthusiastic observers a sense of anticipatory excitement, hopes for grand (and revolutionary) things to come, a world in flux. It seems to occasion comments of new utopias and democratic worlds defined by syncretic cosmopolitanism, radical equality, and polyvocality. Perhaps some of this is indeed true. Perhaps parallel and empowering spaces in the seams between culture and the state *are* emerging, and perhaps they will allow some relief from domination and subordination. But global Ismaʿilism also produces its own governmentalities (and other, similar formations will likely produce similar dynamics). Even as it presents a site for resistance, it also produces new spaces for the exercise of power, new forms of subjectification and subjugation, and new configurations of normativity. Ismaʿili institutions govern, sanction, and provide disciplinary order. Polycentric systems of global organization, despite their scattered modes of organization and possibilities for cosmopolitan egalitarianism, may thus also be sites of governmentality and subjectification.

All that said, something compelling—and compellingly new—is happening here. Surely a “sea change” is occurring, and Ismaʿili globalization may well reveal something about it. But just what it reveals is not yet clear and will require careful scrutiny. In diverse contexts across the planet, individuals *are* certainly increasingly able to affiliate themselves not only with the nation-states in which they live, but also with transnational, nonterritorial sociopolitical formations. Sassen (2006) observes:

If important features of the territorial and institutional organization of the political power and authority of the state have changed, then we must consider that key features of the institution of citizenship—its formal rights, its practices, its subjective dimension—have also been transformed even when it remains centered on the national state. This territorial and institutional transformation of state power and authority has allowed operational, conceptual, and rhetorical openings for nation-based subjects other than the national state to emerge as legitimate actors in international global arenas that used to be confined to the state. (306)

The Ismaʿili Muslim community provides us with an opportunity to examine the possibility for emergent global modes of human organization rooted in local contexts. It is an ideal subject for the examination of whether transnational, nonterritorial formations can act, at this moment in history, as primary sites of identification, allegiance, and membership. The Ismaʿilis

are widely scattered across the planet, but their community forms a highly organized, centralized, integrated network with constant contact between all of its component parts. And, as mentioned, the institutions of the Isma'ili structure, beyond their religious role, provide for their subjects many secular services and symbols conventionally provided by nation-states, and yet they have no territorial base.

I attempt cautiously to explore in this book how it is possible that individuals and localities become more closely affiliated with a transnational, nonterritorial organization than with the territorial nation-state of which they are citizens or administrative units. The question of how subjects come to feel themselves part of a nation-state has been asked and explored exhaustively (Anderson 1991; Kertzer 1988; Gellner 1983). But the question of how citizenship and membership has shifted as the status of the nation-state has changed has been investigated less thoroughly. I believe that it is true that notions of citizenship have been unhitched, at least to a degree, from the need to be cast in terms of either nation-state or place. Does this really mean that a parallel system of transnational formations is now emerging alongside the system of nation-states? The study of the globalization of identity and deterritorialization of political allegiance, because of its prevalence, is increasingly becoming an imperative for anthropological inquiry.

In this analysis I will explore what has made possible transnational affiliation and organization on such a scale, whether it is unique to this case, and, if not, what it means for the people and places that experience it. Most important, the Isma'ili case, I believe, raises questions about the spatiality of power and membership and about the changing nature of cultural selfhood under emergent historical conditions. I aim to explore the sociohistorical preconditions underlying the possibility for the globalization of human communities, the mechanisms through which such globalization occurs, and the phenomenology of their experience. In the face of processes of globalization, the fixity of the system of nation-states does emerge clearly transformed. The trend toward identification with nonterritorial, translocal, global polities portends diminished borders and decentralized authority. In Pakistan, Tajikistan, and elsewhere, new alignments of identity indicate the simultaneous existence of parallel political systems, despite the recognition of only one form being vested with legitimate power. Such unruly and scattered formations as global Isma'ilism are not locatable on a map, not classifiable on a grid; they escape the fixity of the nation-state's enumerative and totalizing epistemologies and must be taken as signs of major transformations in global cultural configurations. The pervasive emergence, entrench-

ment, and legitimization of transnational discourses of identity in local contexts can only indicate that the social and political realities of the world may indeed be very different from those indicated by the atlas and the identity card.

All this raises again the question of citizenship. If Isma'ilis favor the imamate's transnational religious structure as their primary site of allegiance, does that make them citizens of something besides (or in addition to) a state? Does it make them postnational citizens (see Hedetoft and Hjort 2002; Cheah and Robbins 1998)? A claim that they are citizens of an Isma'ili assemblage could be said to ignore the possibility that the adoption of Isma'ili transnational identity might have primarily *local* relevance, as an element of regional identity politics. Whether or not participation in Isma'ili institutional structures in Hunza, for instance, or Badakhshan, constitutes transnational or postnational citizenship is unclear. Certainly, Isma'ili subjects in such remote regions participate more in Isma'ili structures than in those of the states they inhabit. From the Isma'ili complex they derive rights, but within it they also are bound by obligations and rules that regulate their behavior and have sanctioning power. But the exclusive force of global Isma'ili institutions over the political identity of members is highly variable, and thus it is difficult to make universal claims and authoritative conclusions about the implications of Isma'ilism for understanding transnational citizenship on the basis of the specific cases under consideration. In my examination of Isma'ili lives in local context, I seek to pay special attention to the ways Isma'ili transnational structures have altered and reconfigured subjective framings of the self.

Muslim Modernities: Global Isma'ilism as Global Islam

In this book I attempt to shed light on some aspects of the contemporary life of a little-studied form of global Islam. It bears virtually no resemblance to the varieties of "global Islam" so frequently depicted in the media. It defies the widely circulating popular imaginaries of that object of public obsession. And yet, it is of interest in part precisely for this reason. Not all transnational Muslim networks are militant. Not all are radical, revivalist, and literalist. This one, in fact, defines itself, in some ways, as the very antithesis of militant radicalism and Qur'anic orthodoxy. Its constituents and leaders imagine it as modern, progressive, cutting-edge, and liberal, an Islam able to adapt to changing times. And their imaginings are, more or less, true. As described above, the Qur'an and Islamic ritual practice are, to Isma'ilis, fluid

and flexible, their inner truth to be revealed (and altered) from lifetime to lifetime by the succession of imams.

That the “global Islam” of the Ismaʿilis defies *expectations* about Islam is, however, only a starting point. We are dealing here with a Muslim transnational structure, but it is one that self-consciously rejects the tenets and the tone of most Sunni global networks. It appears that the politics of the post-9/11 era have played a role in engendering a new sense of Ismaʿili identity, one in which its embrace of liberal modernism is thrown into sharp relief by the galvanization of radical Sunni Islam. The conditions of the moment have made it possible for Ismaʿilism to cast itself and emphasize its role as the counterfundamentalist form of Islam, to present itself as an alternative to the dominant impressions set by some Sunni factions. These political conditions have also changed the *actual* interaction between transnational Muslim communities and politicized the differences between them. The nature of Ismaʿili–Sunni interaction is profoundly altered in the process. The “War on Terror” not only made Islamic formations the target of the United States and its allies; it made the definition and practice of Islam itself a charged site of local and regional contestation.

Another objective of this book, then, is to explore the suggestions of this case for understanding global Islam and to interrogate the role of the specifically Islamic aspects of global Ismaʿilism. The Ismaʿili self-representation as the “Modern Muslims,” has the potential to disturb and destabilize popular (mis)representations of just what Islam is and to complicate and problematize uncritical constructions of a homogenous, univocal “Islamic World.” In fact, Ismaʿilis and other global Muslim organizations and communities occupy a polyvalent space, with communities constructing their identities in relation to each other and to non-Muslims, in a sort of multivariate dialectic. Moreover, in media, in popular writing, and even in scholarship Islamic societies are often imagined and represented ahistorically, with little attempt to anchor claims in contexts. In this book I work hard to avoid that by means of a careful examination of the ways that capitalism and empire interact with an Islamic community.

Isolation, Globalization, and Allegiance

A central concern of this book is the relationship between isolation and globalization. As I have suggested, in the Ismaʿili Himalaya, the transnational structure of Ismaʿilism becomes a part of local social relationships. Most important, here and perhaps in other, similar contexts, it seems that

the transnational formation under discussion is perceived as an opportunity for advancement by traditionally disadvantaged groups and individuals. Thus transnationality plays heavily into marginality on the local level. A central assumption of my hypothesis is thus that transnationality resonates in local contexts among people who have been marginalized in the nation-states where they live. It is this marginality that encourages them to look for some other, nonnational locus of identification and organization, to be receptive to some *alternative* to the state that has alienated them. The arrival of the Isma'ili transnational complex gives the Isma'ilis of the Himalayan areas under discussion the opportunity to be one-up on their neighbors for the first time in history. Sassen (2006) observes that "as the unitary character of the nation-state disaggregates, even if only partially, sovereign authority is itself subject to partial disaggregations. . . . As this centripetal dynamic of the nation-state becomes less significant, we also see exit options for the disadvantaged" (423). But all of this happens within the framework of the state. The transnational structure neither supplants nor obviates the state. It is not in any way *post*-national, nor are it and the state mutually exclusive bodies. Transnational communities thus may develop out of a set of processes firmly rooted in the cultural politics of nation-states.

The Isma'ilis of Pakistan and of Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan have both suffered violence and persecution. In both Tajikistan, with its civil war, and northern Pakistan, with its sectarian violence, Isma'ilis have had few advantages in local and regional social relationships. Thus it makes sense that the transnational structure would appeal to them, for it offers them strategic, symbolic, and material benefits in relation to other groups. It gives them, perhaps for the first time in history, the opportunity to gain a comparative advantage in local interactions. While local groups have had some hand in persecuting Isma'ilis, it is more often the agents of the nation-state (and their collaborators) who have been responsible for their marginalization. The local success of transnational formations in various areas thus seems to depend on the actions of the nation-state, and without it this necessary sense of marginality would not exist. Without the nation-state there is no such marginality, and it is a necessary condition of the transnational structure. Thus the transnational structure is *not* truly an alternative to the nation-state—it is a different kind of functional organization and alliance of people who are made residual in the nation-state. And this residuality, and the consciousness thereof, becomes one of the criteria for the development of their sense of commonality across territory.

The ethnographic focus area of this book is a highly isolated one, situated

in some of the highest areas in the Himalayan ranges. The location is interesting in part because it gives us the opportunity to examine the process of globalization in one of the remotest parts of the world. It is even more interesting because the region has been significantly bisected by the boundaries of nation-states, and this process of political division has been powerful enough to have caused the local cultures of the region to diverge from each other. For the past century, the Isma'ilis of western China, southern Tajikistan, eastern Afghanistan, and northern Pakistan have had very little contact with each other. Previously, as we will see, they had a great deal of contact. Thus the cultural divergence in the region is a good testing ground for the real significance and success of the arrival of a possible unifying force, that of transnational Isma'ilism. In other words, the power and resonance of the Isma'ili assemblage can be assessed, in part, by the degree to which it is able to serve as a unifying factor across international boundaries that have created fundamental differences in the region.

Methodological Concerns

I first came into contact with the Isma'ili community on a trip to Hunza in 1993, at the age of eighteen. I was welcomed into the home of Sher Ali and Sultan Ali in a hamlet adjoining Altit village, where I would stay repeatedly over the course of numerous trips to Pakistan from 1993 to 2001. From that point on I maintained close contacts in Hunza and Gilgit, regions in Pakistan's far north. I stayed with other Isma'ili families throughout Pakistan's northern mountains during these visits, when I sometimes worked as a researcher for the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) based in Gilgit. AKRSP was an ideal site from which to observe global processes at work. The office itself was a forum where Isma'ilis from all over the world came together and discovered their common identity. And AKRSP's activity in the villages provided fascinating examples of the operation of a global set of institutions in remote rural localities and of the participation of villagers in a transnational sphere mediated by those institutions. It was during these periods that I made my initial observations about Isma'ili organization and interaction on the local and global levels.

Later, in 2003, I went to conduct further research in the nearby region of Gorno-Badakhshan, in Tajikistan, which is predominantly Isma'ili, and also in the Tajik capital of Dushanbe, where the majority of Isma'ili global institutions in Tajikistan are based. In both Tajikistan and northern Pakistan I explored and documented the points of contact between rural Isma'ili

localities and the Isma'ili global network, trying to compose an inventory of all of the transnational connections experienced by Isma'ili subjects in these areas. I also looked at broader elements of the social context that may play some role in making the globalization of social organization possible. In 2003 I also visited the Institute for Isma'ili Studies in London, a forum for transnational contact and the development of global programs. Finally, in 2004, I completed my research with a further visit to London and to the Isma'ili institutions in Paris and Geneva, where the headquarters of the Aga Khan Development Network is based and where I was able to look from the other side at the interaction of Isma'ili metropolitan institutions with the remote and scattered localities they administer. In all of this I followed a formal ethnographic method, living among Isma'ili students and functionaries as they participated in the life of official Isma'ili institutions in Europe. I stayed in their residences, carried out interviews with them, recorded their seminars and meetings, and went to their workplaces daily. I also met with the leaders and elites of these institutions, including Tom Kessinger, general manager of the Aga Khan Development Network, and Azim Nanji, director of the Institute for Isma'ili Studies. This component of my research could be characterized as institutional ethnography—I immersed myself in the contexts created by the institutions and documented patterns in individual interaction with those institutions.

In the course of my research in the Isma'ili region of the Pakistan Himalaya, I carried out research in the following settlements, among others: Gilgit; Gahkuch, Gupis, Phander, Shamran, and Teru in Ghizar; Yasin, Hundur, and Darkot in the Yasin valley, along with Harf in the tributary Thui valley; Karimabad-Baltit, Altit, Mominabad, Aliabad, Murtazabad, Sost, Chapursan (particularly Shutmerg), Misgar, Kermin, Zoodkhun, Mor-khun, Khunjerab, Dainyore and Sultanabad in the Hunza-Gojal area; Chitral town; Zhitor, Izh, Munoor, Kiyar, Hart, Begusht, and many other villages of the Lutkho-Garm Chashma tributary system in Chitral; and the cities of Rawalpindi-Islamabad, Peshawar, and Lahore. I stayed in village households in Gahkuch, Yasin, Shamran, Altit, Sikanderabad, and Sultana-bad. In Tajikistan, besides the capital, Dushanbe, I lived in the town of Kho-roq, the capital of Gorno-Badakhshan; I visited the Pamiri villages of Porsh-nev, Saroi Bahor, Khuf, Rushan, Yemz, Baghow, Ishkashim, Upper Ryn and Lower Ryn, Garm Chashma, Murch, and Jelandy, among others. Over the course of this period, I had contact with the following Isma'ili institutions: the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (Pakistan), the Mountain Societies Development and Support Programme (Tajikistan), the Aga Khan De-

velopment Network, the Aga Khan Foundation, the Aga Khan Health Services, the Aga Khan Education Services, the University of Central Asia, the Aga Khan Health Education Initiative (Tajikistan), the Aga Khan Humanities Project, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and Award for Architecture, Focus Humanitarian Assistance, the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development, the Serena Hotel Chain, the Isma'ili Secretariat (Paris), the Institute for Isma'ili Studies and the Isma'ili Center (London), and the Isma'ili Tariqah Religious Education Board (worldwide) and Committee (Tajikistan), among others. For most of these organizations I visited multiple sites. I have also had contact with members of the Isma'ili National Councils in various countries.

Most of my research in Pakistan was carried out in Urdu, a well-established *lingua franca* of the region that I speak fluently. In Tajikistan, I spoke to subjects in Tajik, a regional dialect of Persian, and in Russian, and sometimes, in remote villages, I had help with translation and logistics from Safdar Alibekovitch, a highly educated resident of Porshnev village fluent in English and a number of Pamiri languages.¹⁰ In all settings I used a combination of traditional immersion and participant observation, semiformal interviews, and documentation of spontaneous discourse.

The global fervor surrounding Islam was present even during the development phase of this project. The research was carried out in situations where Islam was a central factor in social life and sometimes a sensitive topic of discussion. This was salient both in northern Pakistan, where the religious community has been the focus of a good deal of violent conflict and open discussion of sects is sensitive, and in Tajikistan, where religion was a key element in the civil war and was intensely regulated until very recently. The dynamics of Islam pose unique challenges and opportunities for ethnographic researchers, particularly in the present context. Events surrounding September 11, 2001, and its aftermath had a direct effect on my research. Precarious conditions in Pakistan motivated me to work in Tajikistan in 2003 rather than return to Gilgit and Hunza. Moreover, the realities of the "War on Terror" and post-9/11 events have changed the very social environments that are at the center of this analysis.

This project also raises important questions about the change in ethnographic method produced by globalization. Changing historical conditions necessitate new research methods and questions and new ways of thinking about social units and field contexts. An important consideration in this undertaking was the degree to which Isma'ilis could be considered a single group, which raises the question of whether ethnography needs to focus

on a single space. Ethnographic technique focused on the complexities of globalization as a historical condition has yet to be standardized and fully formulated, but it is being negotiated and interrogated in the literature of the moment.

George Marcus (1995) has provided an influential commentary on the concept of multisited ethnography in a "world system," an ethnography that "moves from its conventional single-site location, contextualized by macro-constructions of a larger social order, such as the capitalist world system, to multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut dichotomies like 'the local' and the 'global,' the 'lifeworld,' and the 'system'" (95). The ethnographer of multiple sites follows "connections, associations, and putative relationships" (97). Appadurai (1996) also provides insight into the implications of globalization for ethnography, pointing out that "ethnographers can no longer simply be content with the thickness they bring to the local and the particular" (54).

Multisited ethnographies of global formations also provide their share of challenges, including confusion about when one is in and when one is outside of one's "sites." Moreover, multisited ethnography can make methodological rigor difficult to maintain and can make it easy to lose track of the central question or process one is studying. But a "deterritorialized" community (see Appadurai 1996); necessitates a deterritorialized ethnographic practice. The Isma'ilis are an ideal multisited subject for a global ethnography. Few communities are simultaneously as widely dispersed and, at the same time, as intensively centralized. The many *types* of Isma'ili subjects, from wealthy members of the Indo-African Nizari Khoja diaspora living in Canada, to Himalayan villagers living in mud houses in Afghanistan, also necessitate a multisited approach. Any other method would be fatally partial.

More recent work shows well the direction ethnography has taken in its approach to questions of globalization and transterritorial connectedness. Of note for its innovative exploration of connections and linkages across territory is Adriana Petryna's *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl* (2002). Anna Tsing's (2004) ethnography of Kalimantan forests, which she describes as "an ethnography of global connection," is also an important contribution and demonstrates well the new ethnographic connections in the face of conditions of globalization. "Global connections are everywhere," she writes. "So how does one study the global?" (1). Tsing, whose earlier work focused on marginalized and remote Malaysian locali-

ties, explains her new method: "Following global connections out of Kalimantan, I found myself exploring other sites, including powerful centers of finance, science, and policy. But these, too, produce only fragments" (271). Aihwa Ong, in her important book *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (1999), explores diverse forms of transpacific connection between North America and East Asia. In ethnographies like these, the influence of the global on the patterns of social life and its consequent influence on the field of anthropology are clear. A new direction emerges wherein the unit of analysis is not necessarily tied to a locality but is defined by social connection. In my research on Isma'ilism, I have worked to trace and locate the linkages that form Isma'ili community across territory and at the same time discern the ways in which they remain stably situated in localities and lives despite their flexibility and fluidity.

Plan of the Book

In this book, I seek most fundamentally to explore through the lens of Isma'ilism how emergent historical conditions engender new modes of subjectivity and new framings of self. I approach this in part through an exploration of the interstitial points of interaction between Isma'ili individuals and localities, on the one hand, and Isma'ili institutions, on the other. Much of the material I present deals with how (and whether) Isma'ilis come to feel themselves part of a collectivity, and how social solidarity is developed transnationally (see Durkheim 1933; Cheah and Robbins 1998; Anderson 1991). How do people come to feel that they are part of the transnational community of Isma'ilism? How do they gain a sense of belonging to it, and even of belonging to it more than to anything else?

Such a process requires a ritual apparatus. Kertzer (1988) writes of the rituals that polities effect to inculcate loyalty and allegiance in their subjects. What I strive to locate are the corresponding semiotic mechanisms for transnational polity-building. The institutions, rituals, and interactions I describe are on some level the global network's mechanisms for incorporating subjects, the ritual apparatus for imbuing subjects with loyalty and encouraging participation. My concern is ultimately with transnationality as *local* experience. How do people experience the apparatus? And what are the mechanisms through which that experience is made possible? Consider the following statement by an Isma'ili from Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan region:

- J: Do you feel that you're part of a global Isma'ili community and what things make you feel that way if you do? What things make you aware of that?
- S: First of all, the entire population close to Khorog feel that they are part of this community. ITREC and other organizations have showed us that there is someone who is devoted to the Isma'ilis of Badakhshan, who are accepted as a part of this global community of Isma'ilis. These kinds of things make us sense that we are part of it. Also . . . Khoja Isma'ilis, from other places, are also working at that institute [ITREC] and they [Pamiri Isma'ilis] are accepted. . . . They are interested in Badakhshan. All these things show that we are also a part of it.

My examination of the ethnographic material here is geared toward asking *how* the institutions and structures of the Isma'ili assemblage make subjects aware of their connection to the larger system. How do subjects experience that connection?

Part of that awareness is a reflexive one. I will reference throughout the text the critical awareness Isma'ilis express of their position in a global formation. I see institutional and individual subjects' explicit discourse of participation in a transnational sphere as a crucial element of cultural globalization in general and Isma'ili globalization in particular. As is evidenced by many Isma'ili practices and activities, Isma'ilis not only participate and move through globalized institutional spaces but also know it and talk about it. I believe that to be an important part in the construction and synthesis of a global community, helping motivate a desire to keep it unified and cohesive. A transnational group's *idea* that they are connected in a globalized community, the consciousness of it, can become key in the formulation of their self-image. This consciousness may inculcate a sense of simultaneity and transregional commonality in members (Anderson 1991); it comprises the formation of a "metaculture of globalization" (Urban 2001).

In Chapter 1, I detail the historical development of a uniquely Isma'ili modernity. I cover the medieval period, whose connection to contemporary Isma'ilism is loose at best, only inasmuch as it forms the necessary background and demonstrates the precursors to the contemporary Isma'ili moment.¹¹ My substantive engagement with Isma'ili history begins with the relocation of the first Aga Khan to India, the formation of an Isma'ili diaspora, and the first attempts to construct a broader Isma'ili sphere. Key to

this moment is the story of a Bombay High Court case, already mentioned, which decreed the Aga Khan the supreme leader of the Isma'ilis and dictated that his followers be called Isma'ilis. I move from here to a succinct discussion of the modernization policies of Aga Khan II and especially Aga Khan III, whose work began the proliferation of global institutions that was continued by his grandson, Aga Khan IV. My objective here is to outline specifically the institutional history of modern Isma'ilism to underscore the variables contributing to its emergence.

In Chapters 2 and 3 I map the vast and nebulous Isma'ili institutional structure, exploring its many nodes and circuitous tributaries, its multiple centers and its shifting spaces. I include in this discussion (in Chapter 2) AKF's "development" institutions, including, significantly, those working at the local level to construct "Village Organizations," which I interpret, in part, as local conduits for political participation in a global Isma'ili sphere. These sprawling development institutions, under the umbrella of AKDN, are generally referred to as *imamati* organizations, issuing directly from the imamate. I also provide here an exploration of the informal social configurations generated by the institutions' formal structures, their ethnographic by-products.

In Chapter 3 I deal with the so-called *jama'ati* institutions, those considered under the control of the "community." These include the important Institute for Isma'ili Studies (IIS) in London and the Isma'ili Tariqah Religious Education Boards in various countries. The London institute is responsible for the creation of a field of "Isma'ili Studies," and therefore in part for writing the Isma'ilis' history. The review boards are charged in part with standardizing and regulating Isma'ili practice and theology. Villagers visit to ask questions on such matters as proper funeral or marriage ritual, and the boards dispense advice. Both sets of institutions, it should be noted, are generally under the leadership, directly or indirectly, of Khoja elites. In my view, these *jama'ati* institutions are essential for the inculcation of local populations with enthusiasm for participation in a centralized Isma'ilism, because the spaces they provide are critical in the formation of a transnational sense of solidarity and shared experience. The historical development and lived experience of these institutions, secular and nonsectarian, are unusual in the Islamic world and warrant special attention. Chapter 3 ends with a consideration of some noninstitutional structures and processes essential in engendering a transcultural sense of shared experience.

The conceptual map of the Isma'ili structure is essential. But a top-down,

institutional perspective only goes so far; it is insufficient to represent the real complexity and diversity of Ismaʿili people. In Chapters 4 and 5, then, I focus on more in-depth ethnographic descriptions of the local iterations of these institutions in the Himalaya. In Chapter 4, I account for the ethnographic settings and contexts of Ismaʿili institutional activity in the region. I provide a deeper background here on the primary area of research, the Pamir ranges of southern Tajikistan, and the adjacent Karakoram Himalaya of Pakistan. I look carefully at what the entry of Ismaʿili institutions has meant for the region's isolated localities, how they figure into its conflicts and the ethnic politics of identity with its variable meanings for individuals in different situations. I also consider in this chapter the exogenous transformations wrought on these lives and localities by national borders, new roads, and global markets. All this sets the sociohistorical stage for the next chapter.

In Chapter 5, I consider the ethnographic realities behind the structures described. I look at the ethnographic moments (like conferences), structures (like AKF's Village Organizations), and spaces (like the IIS-sponsored Khorog English Program). These disconnected ethnographic elements reveal the role of the global institutions in local context. Chapters 4 and 5 shift the axis of my study away from an institution-internal perspective and onto Ismaʿili people and places, at once messier and more illuminating. From there I move to propose, in a final chapter, some tentative conclusions.

The process by which emergent forms of Ismaʿili identity are born, and the transformations of personal experience that this entails, form the big questions here. The core problematic rests in the realm of the subject. But it is not an ahistorical subject. I try here in particular to excavate the role of capital in the formation of a religiously defined global assemblage with social attributes. The focus on capital, empire, and modernity, however, should not be so heavily privileged as to obscure the important antecedents, even modernity. Capital, empire, and modernity are not the whole picture. But in those moments of contact where distant communities are intensively incorporated into the Ismaʿili assemblage, they figure prominently.

Much has been written on Ismaʿili history, particularly on its medieval Fatimid and Nizari phases. The syncretic doctrines of Ismaʿilism, particularly those centered on cyclic views of time and history, have received a great deal of attention. Gossip-laden, sensationalist, and unscholarly tracts on the lives and times of the Aga Khans are commonplace. But the number of works on modern Ismaʿilism is scant indeed. Even more scarce are books

focusing on Ismaʿili people and their cultural contexts. Given the compellingly interesting dynamics of the community, this paucity is unwarranted. I offer here something, however limited, to fill that lacuna in the scholarship. I hope that my findings will be illuminated and substantiated by Ismaʿili voices and yet-unwritten histories.