

Historically, Birgi's economy revolved around the production of various types of fruit, in addition to cotton thread. These activities were supplanted by olive cultivation in the modern era, which is now the town's chief source of income.

Monuments from the *beylik* period are no longer extant in Birge, except for the Ulu Cami, the mosque which was constructed by Aydınoğlu Mehmed Bey in 712/1312–3, and Mehmed Bey's tomb, located in the mosque's inner courtyard. Among the most important surviving structures from the Ottoman period are the Derviş Ağa Camii, erected in 1074/1663, and the early thirteenth-/nineteenth-century Çakırağa Konağı (mansion), which has been recently restored and presents an excellent example of a monumental, sumptuously decorated Anatolian Turkish house. Birgi suffered damage during the Greco-Turkish war of 1920–2, and a large section of the town was burned.

Today, Birgi is a municipality (*belediye*) in the Ödemiş district (*ilçe*) of the province (*il*) of Izmir. The population of the town and its surrounding villages was 6,257 in 2011.

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ZEKİ ARIKAN

Bohras

The **Bohras** are a Shīʿī Muslim community of the Ṭayyibī Mustaʿlī branch of the Ismāʿīlīs, who trace their religious and literary heritage to the Fāṭimid caliph-*imāms* of North Africa and Egypt. Mostly indigenous Indians, their ancestors converted to Islam at the hands of Fāṭimid missionaries in the latter half of the fifth/eleventh century. For the purposes of this article, “Bohras” refers to the majority Dāʿūdī branch of the Ṭayyibī Bohras, which has its headquarters in India and numbers approximately a million members worldwide. The ʿAlawī and Sulaymānī Bohra branches, numbering about eight thousand each, are discussed at the end of the article. (An additional 200,000 Sulaymānī followers live in the

Arabian Peninsula, but they call themselves Makārimas, not Bohras).

1. NOMENCLATURE

The name “Bohra” (and its variant “Vohra”) is derived from the Gujarati word *vehwār*, meaning “honest dealings,” and is extended to mean “merchant.” Presumably many of the early Indian converts were of the merchant caste, and they continued to be called by their work-related name “Bohra.” Within the community, the Bohras refer to themselves as “Mu’minīn” (Believers), and to their religious institution as “al-Da’wa al-Hādiya” (The Rightly Guiding Mission) or “al-Da’wa al-Ṭayyibiyya/al-Fāṭimiyya” (The Ṭayyibī/Fāṭimid Mission)—often shortened (with Persianate pronunciation) to “Da’wat.”

2. HISTORY

The first Bohras were indigenous Indians living in the western parts of India, who converted from Hinduism at the hands of three missionaries sent by the Fāṭimid caliph-*imām* al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh (r. 427–87/1036–94) and his chief missionary, al-Mu’ayyad al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078), through the agency of the Fāṭimid mission in Yemen. Mawlā’ī ‘Abdallāh and Mawlā’ī Aḥmad came to Khambhāt, in the north-west of the present-day state of Gujarat, and Mawlā’ī Nūr al-Dīn to Dōngām, in the Deccan region, close to modern-day Aurangabad, in Maharashtra. The three savants won over significant numbers of the local populace to Fāṭimid Shī’ī Islam. Bohra sources name the Rājput ruler of Gujarat, Siddharāja Jayasimha (r. 1094–1143 C.E.), among the first converts, as well as his *wazīrs* Raja Tārmal and Raja Bhārmal, whose descendents would play a prominent and recurrent role in the leadership of the community.

When al-Mustanṣir died, in 487/1094, the Indian Bohras, together with the Egyptian and Yemeni Ismā’īlīs, supported his son al-Musta’lī (r. 487–95/1094–1101) as the next Fāṭimid caliph-*imām* (the Persian and Syrian Ismā’īlīs, called Nizārīs or Khojas, supported the incumbency of his brother Nizār). Upon the death of al-Musta’lī’s successor al-Āmir, in 524/1130, the Indian Bohras, along with the Yemeni Musta’lī Ismā’īlīs, rejected the succeeding Ḥāfizī regime in Egypt and professed allegiance to al-Āmir’s infant son, al-Ṭayyib (b. 524/1130), hence their designation as Ṭayyibī. Imām al-Ṭayyib, they believe, went into physical “concealment” (*satr*) and in his line the imāmate continues, father to son, with each succeeding Imām of the Age (*imām al-zamān*) continuing to be called by the name of his forefather al-Ṭayyib. During his concealment, the *imām* is represented by a vicegerent wielding his own authority, called the *dā’ī* (meaning one who conducts the *imām*’s mission; the full title is *al-dā’ī al-muṭlaq* (*dā’ī* with absolute authority), *dā’ī al-satr* (*dā’ī* in the concealment of the Imām), or *dā’ī al-zamān* (*dā’ī* of the age, or present *dā’ī*); and he is known in India by the honorific titles Sayyidnā Ṣāḥib (our Noble Master) and Mullā-jī Ṣāḥib (Noble High Priest); his followers call him Sayyidnā, Āqā Mawlā, or Bāwā Ṣāḥib, the latter meaning Revered Father).

The earliest Ṭayyibī *dā’īs* were Yemeni and the number of Bohras in India grew during their time. The Indian mission was concentrated then in Gujarat (particularly in the town of Pāṭan) and in the Deccan region, and the Yemeni *dā’īs* (like the Fāṭimid caliph-*imāms* earlier) appointed a local representative (*wālī*) to nurture the Indian flock. In the early ninth/fifteenth century, the eminent *wālī* Mawlā’ī Ādam b. Sulaymān (d. before 826/1423) led a

large contingent of Bohras from Pāṭan to set up home in the newly built city of Ahmadabad, capital of the Muẓaffarid sultans of Gujārat (r. 806–991/1403–1583).

During the stewardship of Mawlāʾī Ādam's son Mawlāʾī Ḥasan (d. 883/1478), the Bohras suffered executions and torture at the hands of the zealous sultans, who first acted at the instigation of a disenfranchised Bohra scholar named Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad Khwāja (d. c. 832/1429), then about thirty years later at the prompting of another Jaʿfar surnamed Shīrāzī (fl. ninth-tenth/fifteenth-sixteenth century). An ardent Sunnī cleric and a protégé of the sultan, this second Jaʿfar used the state apparatus to coerce the Bohra seceders into severing all social links with their one-time brethren, and this group came to be known as the Jaʿfarī (Sunnī) Vohra. Satish Misra calculates the number of Bohras who became Sunnī at this time to be more than a million (Misra, 24–5). Only nine of the twenty-two Bohra locales in Ahmadabad—roughly between 20% and 40% of the community, thus around a quarter million—remained Ṭayyibī Shīʿīs.

In the mid-tenth/sixteenth century, the headquarters of the Ṭayyibī mission moved from Yemen to India. In 946/1539, the twenty-third (Yemeni) *dāʿī*, Muḥammad ʿIzz al-Dīn, died, having appointed a resident of the western Indian town of Sidhpur as his successor. This scholar, the twenty-fourth *dāʿī*, Yūsuf Najm al-Dīn, as well as three other Indian Bohras who would successively lead the mission after him, had travelled to Yemen and studied with the *dāʿī* for many years. Sayyidnā Najm al-Dīn returned to Yemen to ensure a smooth transition: he wound up his predecessor's affairs in Yemen, appointed a local representative there, and transferred the full Ṭayyibī library

from Yemen to India, before dying in Yemen in 974/1567. His successor, the twenty-fifth *dāʿī*, Jalāl Shams al-Dīn (d. 975/1567), was a resident of Ahmadabad, and with his accession India became the new seat of the Ṭayyibī mission.

Over the next centuries, Ṭayyibī Bohra headquarters moved within India with the changing location of the *dāʿī* of the time: Ahmadabad (eight *dāʿīs*, 88 years, from 974/1567 to 1065/1655); Jamnagar in the Kathiawar region of Gujarat (five *dāʿīs*, including one in nearby Mandvī, 82 years from 1065/1655 to 1150/1737); Ujjain in the Malwa district of the present-day central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh (two *dāʿīs*, 42 years, from 1150/1737 to 1193/1779); Burhānpūr, a strategically important Mughal city also in Madhya Pradesh (one *dāʿī*, six years, from 1193/1779 to 1200/1785); Surat, a bustling port city in Gujarat (eight *dāʿīs*, 148 years, from 1200/1785 to c. 1351/1933); and Mumbai, the modern business capital of India, in the state of Maharashtra (two *dāʿīs*, including the current *dāʿī*, the fifty-second, as of 2013, 80 years). Generally, the town in which the *dāʿī* lived developed a large concentration of Bohra residents, and even when the seat of the mission moved away, these towns continued to host significant numbers of members of the community.

In the early twenty-first century, the largest Bohra communities are in Mumbai, Surat, Ahmadabad, Ujjain, Jamnagar, Indore, Dohad, Nagpur, Udaipur, Rajkot, Pune, Kolkata, and Chennai, in India, as well as Karachi, in Pakistan—totalling 800,000 or thereabouts in South Asia. An indigenous Arab community of approximately 13,000 members resides in Yemen (and they identify with the term Bohra), and about 200,000 Bohra dwell

in diaspora communities in various parts of the world.

Under the guidance of their *dāʿīs*, large segments of the Bohras had migrated from time to time in search of a livelihood. In 1813, when famine hit the province of Saurashtra, the forty-third *dāʿī*, ‘Abd-i ‘Alī Sayf al-Dīn (*dāʿī* 1798–1817) fed and sheltered some 12,000 displaced Bohra individuals in Surat for a year, later advising them to migrate to foreign lands rather than return home. At this time (and later), many travelled to the neighbouring island countries of the Maldives and Sri Lanka (at that time called Ceylon), the East African countries of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, and the Far East, including Hong Kong and Singapore; they became successful members of these societies, particularly in trade. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Bohra are migrating in rapidly growing numbers to the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and other Gulf countries, where they are mostly merchants, and to Europe, North America, and (to a lesser extent) Australia, for employment and higher education. In the cities where they have attained substantial numbers, the Bohras have built mosques, *madrasas*, and community centres.

Although Bohra leaders cultivated affable relations over the years with the ruling establishment, they suffered as a minority Shīʿī denomination under some of the Sunnī rulers of India. Like the Gujarat sultans’ persecution of them in the ninth/fifteenth century, harassment from the Mughal governor (at the prompting of the nascent Sulaymānī leadership) early in the eleventh/seventeenth century forced the twenty-seventh *dāʿī*, Dāʿūd b. Quṭub Shāh, to go into hiding, and he lived in an underground water channel in Ahmadabad for four years. But the

severest trial came in 1056/1646, again in Ahmadabad, when Aurangzīb, the Mughal prince who later became emperor (r. 1068–1118/1658–1707), executed the thirty-second *dāʿī*, Quṭub Khān Quṭb al-Dīn, on charges of heresy. At this time, Aurangzīb’s governor forcibly converted large numbers of Bohras to Sunnism, and killed many who refused to give up their faith. Due to the hundreds of martyrs buried in her soil, Ahmadabad is known in Bohra parlance as “Little Karbalā” (*chhotī Karbalā*). Later, in Jāmnagar, the Jām (ruler) repeatedly made steep monetary demands on Bohra elders and imprisoned the *dāʿīs* themselves. In contrast, British rule proved favourable to the security of the Bohra community. The East India Company (1757–1857) as well as the British Raj (1858–1947) honoured their leaders and provided (often armed) protection to their lives and livelihoods. During and after the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, the Bohras were targeted along with other Muslims in sporadic communal riots (in which they themselves, being doctrinally committed to pacifism, did not participate). But overall in secular India, and to a large extent elsewhere, they live and thrive and practise their religion freely.

3. DOCTRINES AND PRACTICE

Bohra theology is centred on the explanation of God’s transcendent unity, the meaning of creation, and the central guiding role of the *imām*, and in his concealment, the *dāʿī*, for human salvation. Along with allegiance to Muḥammad, ‘Alī, and the *imāms* in their progeny—through the line of Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar al-Šādiq (103–36/721–54), then later al-Mustaʿlī b. al-Mustaṣir (r. 487–95/1094–1101), and afterwards al-Ṭayyib b. al-Āmir (b. 524/1130)—acceptance of the spiritual

and temporal leadership of the *dāʿī* constitutes a cornerstone of Bohra belief. All Bohras who reach the age of maturity are required to declare allegiance to the concealed Imām of the Age and his *dāʿī* by pledging an oath called *mūthāq* (also *bayʿa* and *ʿahd*). The *mūthāq* text is a blueprint for the key doctrines and practices of the Bohra, and is rooted in the mediaeval Fāṭimid oath of allegiance (cf. al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭat*, Cairo 1853, 1:396–7; Halm, 91–115). Also named in the *mūthāq* are the *maʿdhūn* and the *mukāshir*, two rank holders whom the *dāʿī* appoints subordinate to himself in the spiritual hierarchy. The concepts of *naṣṣ* (specific designation of his successor) by each *imām* and *dāʿī*, and *tasalsul* (continuity) of the imamate and *dāʿī*-ship are fundamental. The “chain” of divinely guided *imāms*, and, during the concealment, of *dāʿī*s, is expected to continue link by link without a break until the Last Day (for doctrines of the imamate and *dāʿī*-ship, see Sayyidnā ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd d. 612/1226, *Dīwān*, MS, and Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn, *Risāla Ramaḍāniyya* of 1335/1917, *passim*).

The Bohras follow the Fāṭimid school of law represented most fully in the writings of the eminent Fāṭimid jurist al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān (d. 363/974). Their primary legal text is his *Daʿāʾim al-Islām* (The Pillars of Islam), supplemented by several other works by Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī scholars. Basing their doctrine on the *Daʿāʾim*, they uphold seven (two more than the Sunnī five) “pillars” of Islam: (1) belief in one God and Muḥammad as His Messenger, and allegiance to ʿAlī, the *imāms*, and the *dāʿī*s (*walāya*), (2) ritual purity (*ṭahāra*), (3) ritual prayer five times a day (*ṣalāh*), (4) annual alms-tax (*zakāh*), (5) fasting during Ramaḍān (*ṣawm*), (6) pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥajj*), and (7) struggle against evil (*jihād*).

The Bohras adhere to the twin concepts of *ẓāhir* (the outer, or literal, legal and historical meaning) and *bāʿin* or *taʾwīl* (the inner theological, rational, universal meaning) of the Qurʾān and Sharʿa. Alongside their practice of Sharʿa worship rites and adherence to Sharʿa law, they deem acceptance of its “inner” meaning to be an intrinsic part of faith. Furthermore, the harmonisation of revelation and reason (through the *imām*’s explication of *taʾwīl*)—best elucidated in the eight-volume *Majālis Muʾayyadīyya* of the distinguished Fāṭimid scholar al-Muʾayyad al-Shīrāzī (386–470/996–1078)—forms an important principle of their doctrinal system.

In addition to gathering in the mosque for communal ritual prayer (*ṣalāh*), the Bohra congregate in religious assemblies called *majālis* (pl. of Ar. *majlis*), where they recite religious poems and listen to sermons called *bayān* (explication). *Majālis* devoted to longer sermons, usually lasting two to four hours, are specified as *majālis al-waʿz* (assemblies of counsel) or simply *waʿz*, and originate in the Fāṭimid “sessions of wisdom.” They are held at times of commemoration or celebration during the year, particularly during ʿĀshurāʾ services, lasting from the second to the tenth of Muḥarram. Topics range from theology, ethics, and philosophy, to literature, history, and moral counsel, climaxing with the recounting of the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn. Most Bohra religious assemblies are followed by communal meals, the mosque forming a religious as well as a social nexus for the community.

The Bohras are generally considered one of the most progressive and prosperous Muslim communities of India. Decidedly conservative in terms of Islamic orthodoxy, they also eagerly adopt modern sciences and skills (Blank, 1 and *passim*;



Illustration 1. Ramaḍān prayers, Saif-e Masjid, Mumbai, India, 2011; men are dressed in traditional white robes, women are praying behind curtains on the upper balconies. Photograph courtesy of Tahera Qutbuddin.

Serjeant, 59). With near universal literacy, they boast large numbers of highly educated professionals, particularly business entrepreneurs, medical doctors, and information technology engineers—"internet pioneers uniting members of their far-flung denomination into a worldwide cybercongregation" (Blank, 1–2). Moreover, they exhibit greater gender equality than most communities of the subcontinent. For example, the Bohra are the only Muslim community in India whose women pray in the mosque; roughly half the prayer space in Bohra mosques, usually in wide, multi-level balconies overlooking the men's ground floor, is allocated to women.

4. LANGUAGE

The language used by the administration and spoken by the *dā'ī* and the majority of the Bohras worldwide is called *lisān al-da'wat* or *da'wat nī zabān* (literally, the language of the *da'wat*). Based on Gujarati, a Neo-Indo-Aryan language, *lisān al-da'wat* incorporates a large number of Persian words and a hefty and progressively increasing Arabic lexicon. The Bohra dialect of Gujarati is written both in the Devanagari script, and (more often and increasingly) in the Arabic *naskh* script. The earliest Bohras were Indian, and they spoke Gujarati. With the continuous effort of the Ṭayyibī leadership to promote Qur'anic and Islamic learning within the community, the language of these texts has, over time, percolated *lisān al-da'wat*, with Arabic words replacing part of the Gujarati lexicon.

5. LITERATURE AND LEARNING

The Bohras have a strong tradition of religious learning facilitated by various institutional, communal, and individual structures, with roots in an earlier semi-

formal academy in Yemen, and further back, in the Fāṭimid teaching assemblies. Ṭayyibīs from Yemen and India would travel to the *dā'ī* in Yemen, and stay with him for extended periods of time, studying with scholars who lived with him, and also studying with the *dā'ī* personally. Their major contemporary institution of religious education is the Jāmi'a Sayfiyya, a seminary located in Surat, with branches in Karachi and Nairobi. Founded in the seventeenth century in Jamnagar by Sayyidnā Ismā'īl Badr al-Dīn (*dā'ī* 1065–85/1657–74), and consolidated in the early nineteenth century in Surat by Sayyidnā 'Abd-i 'Alī Sayf al-Dīn, it was expanded and systematised in the twentieth century by Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn (*dā'ī* 1915–1965). The present *dā'ī*, Sayyidnā Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn (*dā'ī* since 1965), added the Karachi and Nairobi branches, as well as an institution named Ma'had al-Zahrā' in Surat, dedicated to the memorisation and recitation of the Qur'ān. Additionally, children are taught in increasingly standardised after-school classes called *madrasas*, and in classes within their regular school curriculum for those who attend one of the many Bohra secular schools. Religious learning is disseminated to the full community—adults and children—through regular classes called *sabaq* and periodic lectures. Women form roughly half the student body in the Jāmi'a Sayfiyya, as well as in Bohra secular schools.

In tandem with their emphasis on religious learning, the Bohra have a prolific tradition of religious scholarship. The *dā'īs* themselves have produced major works. Foremost fields of composition include history, jurisprudence, Qur'anic *ta'wīl*, higher esoterics (*ḥaqīqat*), denominational refutations (*radd*), pious counsel, poetry to



Illustration 2. Muharram wa'z sermon, al-Masjid al-Mu'azzam, Surat, India, 2009; women are observing from the upper balconies; children, male and female, are sitting on the ground-level with the men. Photograph courtesy of Tahera Qubuddin.

praise the *imāms* and *dā'īs* (*qaṣā'id*) and to commune with God (*munājāt*), and treatises (*rasā'il*) combining many of these genres. Although some texts are in *lisān al-da'wat*, the majority are in Arabic, and mastery of the Arabic language is thus a prerequisite to *da'wat* scholarship. The Ṭayyibī Da'wat libraries in Mumbai and Surat preserve a unique collection of rare manuscripts; almost all Fāṭimid and Ṭayyibī manuscripts in libraries around the world originate from this source.

6. THE CENTRAL ROLE OF THE DĀ'Ī AND DA'WAT

The *da'wat* mission of the Bohras is closely administered from the centre, which, since 1933, has been in Mumbai. Chief among its institutional departments is the governing body, al-Wazāra al-Sayfiyya, which appoints and directs governors (*'āmil*) in all cities worldwide with a significant Bohra population. Other departments handle various religious, social, and economic aspects of community life: the Education Department (Dā'irat al-Tarbiya wa-l-Ta'līm) supervises the numerous Bohra secular schools and colleges as well as their religious *madrasas*. The Law Department (Ṣiḡhat al-Qaḍā') arbitrates legal disputes, particularly those pertaining to family law and property. The Interest-free Loan Department (Burhānī Qarḍan Ḥasanā Trust) provides loans. The Shrine Visitation Department (Ṣiḡhat al-Mazārāt) oversees the various Bohra shrines and their adjoining hospices. The Faiz-e Husaini (Fayḍ-i Ḥusaynī) coordinates pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina, as well as Najaf and Karbala. The Construction and Restoration Department (Ta'mīrāt) oversees the construction and restoration of mosques, shrines, and other communal structures. The Yemen Department

(Ṣiḡhat al-Yaman) supervises community life in Yemen. Charitable organisations such as His Holiness Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin Memorial Foundation, Zahra Hasanaat, and Amatulla Aaisaheba Memorial Trust provide financial relief to Bohra and non-Bohra Indians.

As the spiritual pivot and administrative head of the Ṭayyibī religious mission, the *dā'īs* have historically played a key role in shaping the faith and practice of the Bohra, and their vision has been a powerful cohering force for the close-knit community. Often travelling to the hometowns of the Bohra in India and outside, the *dā'īs* have consistently provided counsel to their followers on both spiritual and socio-economic issues. The fifty-first *dā'ī*, Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn, granted unprecedented access to both men and women. The fifty-second and current *dā'ī*, Sayyidnā Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn (b. 1333/1915), personally interacts with Bohra men, women, and children on an ongoing basis. He offers regular audiences (*bayt'hak*), in which followers seek his blessings and guidance, travels widely to connect with Indian and international Bohra communities, leads prayers in their mosques, and preaches sermons. Bohra community members hold their *dā'ī* in reverence, flocking to listen to his sermons, to kiss his hand (*salām*), or even just to catch a glimpse of him (*dūdār*). Annually during the nine days of the 'Āshūrā' commemorations, he delivers *wa'z* in different cities, where 50,000 to 150,000 Bohra gather to hear him speak. Several of his *wa'z* are relayed in audio and video format via the Internet or satellite to the full international Bohra congregation. He hosts meals (including twice a year for the entire community worldwide), and in turn accepts invitations to dine at Bohra homes. He

personally supervises the various departments of the Ṭayyibī religious institution. Under his leadership, the Bohras have restored a number of Fāṭimid-era mosques in Cairo. Among the leading philanthropists of India, he funds (through personal as well as institutional moneys) numerous free or subsidised schools and hospitals (such as Saifee Hospital in Mumbai and Burhani Hospital in Karachi), as well as charities providing housing and food. Due to his efforts to bring together people and communities, he has been hailed as an “ambassador of peace.”

7. SCHISMS

Over the centuries, several schisms have appeared within the Bohra community. The first and numerically largest was the Dāʿūdī-Sulaymānī schism in 999/1591, with two groups supporting different incumbents to the *dāʿī*-ship. The followers of Dāʿūd b. Quṭub Shāh (d. 1021/1612) form the majority branch discussed at length earlier; they came to be known as the Dāʿūdī Bohras. The followers of Sulaymān b. Ḥasan (d. 1005/1597) currently number about 200,000 in the Najrān province of Saudi Arabia and in Yemen, where they are called Makārīma, after their *dāʿīs*’ Makramī clan. They number about 8,000 in the Indian sub-continent, where they are known by the appellation Sulaymānī Bohras. Their current *dāʿī* is the fifty-first incumbent, Shaykh ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Makramī (acc. 2005), who has governors (*manṣūb*) in India and Pakistan. Another group named the ʿAlawī Bohras (popularly called Alyā Vohras, or just Alyās) separated from the Dāʿūdīs in c. 1030/1621. With their centre in Vadodara, in Gujarat, they currently number about 8,000. Their present *dāʿī* is the forty-fourth incumbent, Ṭayyib

Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn (b. 1932). Other extant Bohra groups are smaller, among them the “Reformist” or “Progressive” Bohras, also known as “Engineerī Bohras,” after one of their leaders, Asgharali Engineer (b. 1939). A reformulated group of an earlier faction called the Inqīṭāʿiyya, they believe the spiritual authority of the *dāʿī* ended with the death of Sayyidnā Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn, the forty-sixth Dāʿūdī incumbent, in 1840. They acquired a distinct anti-establishment identity in the mid-twentieth century and currently number about a thousand members.

The various branches of the Bohra differ with the majority branch and with each other largely over the identity of the true spiritual leader and/or the nature of his leadership, while overlapping significantly (less so the Sulaymānīs) in doctrine and practice.

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TAHERA QUTBUDDIN

Book

The Arabic term for “**book**,” *kitāb* (a noun related to *kataba*, “to write”) encompasses every kind of graphic activity from the simplest to the most elaborate. The latter covers the whole gamut from inscription to letter, contract to administrative archive, reminder note to book. As this article aims to elucidate the relationship between the book and Arabo-Islamic culture, the first question to ask is whether the Qurʾān, as a founding text, is the first book in Islam.

1. HOW THE QURʾĀN BECAME A BOOK

By adopting the form of a codex, the Qurʾān clearly presents itself as the first book ever made by Muslim hands. This