

# Current Biography International Yearbook

## 2004

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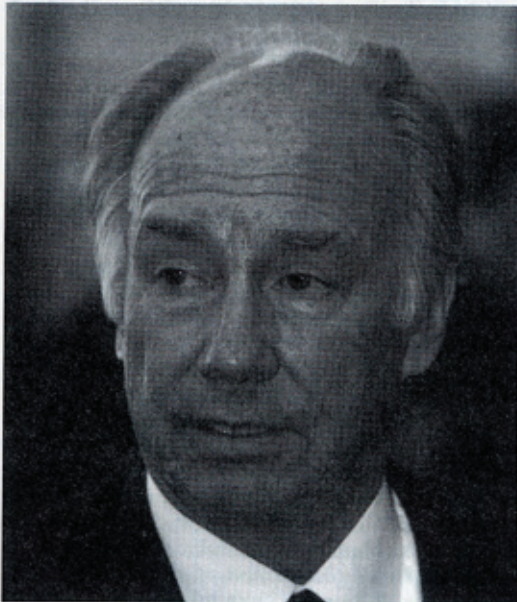


## AGA KHAN IV

coming World Cup. As Dunne reported, "Adriano left the Mestalla stadium to a standing ovation from the home fans, much as Ronaldo had done after his three goals . . . helped Real Madrid dump Manchester United out of the Champions League in April 2003." Indeed, comparisons to Ronaldo have continued. Ronaldo himself has offered praise. "He's stronger than anyone else around and has an extraordinary shot with his left foot," he told Dunne in regard to Adriano. "He has the ability to take on opponents—and age is on his side."

—L.S.

Suggested Reading: Associated Press July 22, 2004, Sep. 16, 2004; FIFA Web site; goal.com; (London) *Independent* (on-line) Oct. 23, 2004; Inter Milan Web site; *International Herald Tribune* p21 July 24, 2004



JOHN MACDOUGALL/AFP/Getty Images

### Aga Khan IV

*Dec. 13, 1936– Islamic leader*

*Address: The Aga Khan Development Network, P.O. Box 2049, 1-3 Ave. de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland*

The current Aga Khan assumed that hereditary title upon his grandfather's death, in 1957, and thus became the 49th imam, or spiritual leader, of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims, a diffuse Islamic community of 15 million faithful living primarily in West and Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. His Highness Aga Khan IV, as he is known, is revered by Ismaili Muslims as a descendant of the

Prophet Muhammad, and his photograph is said to adorn the walls of virtually every Ismaili home in the world. The Aga Khan supervises the religious affairs of his followers around the globe and dedicates himself to fostering their economic and social progress. Aga Khan IV explained to a reporter for the *New York Herald Tribune* (August 16, 1959) that the Imamate, his mandate, is "the link which holds together our people [Ismailis], who live in many different kinds of cultures and speak so many different languages." Pranay Gupte, writing for *Forbes* (November 17, 1986), called Aga Khan IV, who was reared and educated in Europe, a "bridge between East and West, between tradition and modernity." He has also been described as a cross between a pope and a prince; indeed, the Aga Khans have traditionally played a number of prominent roles, serving simultaneously as religious leaders, statesmen, diplomats, businessmen, and philanthropists.

The Ismaili faith is a subdivision of the Shia branch of Islam, a sect whose votaries are far outnumbered in the world by the followers of Sunni Islam, which is considered the orthodox branch of the faith. (Shia is sometimes written as Shiite.) The origins of the Ismaili faith and name are rooted in the dispute that arose following the death of Jafar as-Sadiq, an eighth-century theologian recognized as the sixth Shia Imam, as to which of his sons would succeed him. One Muslim faction recognized Ismail, Sadiq's eldest son, as his father's successor; that faction came to be known as the Ismailis. Ismailis also differ from the Shia mainstream in their belief in the absolute authority of a single, living leader, namely the Aga Khan, who is a descendent of Ismail.

The eldest son of Prince Aly Khan and the former Joan Barbara Yarde-Buller Guinness, eldest daughter of England's Baron Churston, Aga Khan IV was born Prince Karim Khan in Geneva, Switzerland, on December 13, 1936. (Some sources list 1937 as the year of his birth.) Prince Karim's great-great-grandfather had been given the title of Aga Khan by the Shah of Persia; later, in the early 1840s, the Aga Khan left Persia for India. For his loyalty and service to the British crown in India, a British colony from the late 18th century until 1947, Prince Karim's great-great-grandfather was rewarded by the British with a sizable pension and the title of "His Highness the Aga Khan." Aga Khan II also maintained strong ties to the English government during his reign, which lasted from 1881 to 1885.

Aga Khan III, born Mahomed Shah and known officially as His Highness the Right Honorable Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan, inherited his family's weighty mantle at eight years of age. Continuing a tradition established by his forebears, Aga Khan III had access to the highest offices in India and was an influential statesman. In 1906 he helped to found the All-India Muslim League, the political organization created to speak on behalf of India's large, yet minority Muslim population. The



league eventually splintered into factions and played a role in the creation of Pakistan, which was carved out of the Indian subcontinent as a homeland for Muslims upon India's independence from Britain in 1947. Rather than being an agitator for Indian independence from Britain, Aga Khan III was seen as a pillar of support for the raj, the colonial British government. He led the Indian delegation to the League of Nations Assembly in 1932 and from 1934 to 1937. (He was elected president of the organization's assembly in 1937.) His efforts toward establishing peace in India in the turbulent first half of the 20th century resulted in his being nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1924.

Not only a religious leader and statesman, Aga Khan III was also a bon vivant whose riches and lifestyle were legendary. Indeed, despite his considerable political work and his ambitious program to elevate the living standards of his followers, through media portrayals Aga Khan III was perhaps better known to the public as a socialite and sportsman. Toward the end of his life, Aga Khan III lived in a lakeside villa in Switzerland, where he was often likened to a king without a country.

Prince Aly Khan, the son of Aga Khan III (and the current Aga Khan's father), was certainly best known to the public as a sportsman and playboy who rode as a jockey and tended his father's renowned thoroughbred stables, competed in European auto races, and later married the Hollywood screen legend Rita Hayworth. However, Aly Khan also distinguished himself during World War II in various capacities in the British, French, and American armed forces and later served as Pakistan's ambassador to the United Nations (U.N.). His brother, Prince Sadruddin, was also associated with the U.N., contributing to the organization's humanitarian and human rights work over several decades, including a period of service as the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

After 13 years of marriage, in 1949 Prince Aly and his wife divorced. Aly Khan was given custody of both Prince Karim and his younger brother, Prince Ameen. The young boys, however, subsequently spent a good deal of time at their mother's home in London's Eaton Square. Prince Karim is said to be, through his father, a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. It was to be expected, then, that despite possessing European ancestry through his mother and being a British subject, Prince Karim would be trained in his rich Muslim heritage. After spending his early childhood in Nairobi, Kenya, he attended Le Rosey preparatory school, near Geneva, Switzerland, for nearly a decade. With his brother, Prince Karim then toured Ismaili communities in East Africa before enrolling at Harvard University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was not until he came to the United States that Prince Karim learned Arabic. As an undergraduate in residence at Harvard's Leverett House, Prince Karim joined the school's Islamic Association, played on the freshman soccer team, and competed in intramural hockey games. He was

elected to the Signet, Delphic, and Hasty Pudding clubs. His standard of living was modest. One of his roommates was John Fell Stevenson, the youngest son of the U.S. diplomat Adlai Stevenson. The younger Stevenson recalled in *This Week* magazine (November 10, 1957): "'K,' as we soon came to call Karim, was dressed casually in a plain brown leather jacket, open white shirt, creaseless baggy trousers, and shoes which I believe had never been shined. . . . [But] Karim impressed me when we first met as freshmen because he had a purpose—he wanted to help people."

Realizing that he had to devote his future to the Ismailis, Prince Karim began to study civil engineering. When he could not keep up with the chemistry courses that were required of him, he changed his major to Oriental history. In the latter field he distinguished himself, earning a place on the dean's list. Prince Karim considered making Oriental studies his life's pursuit. He planned to attend the Sorbonne, in Paris, after he completed his courses at Harvard.

In 1957, however, Prince Karim was forced to withdraw from Harvard to be with his grandfather during Aga Khan III's last illness. Unbeknownst to his people, the dying Imam had passed over his two sons to choose his 20-year-old grandson, Prince Karim, as his successor. It is often speculated that Aga Khan III passed over Prince Aly for the Imamate because the latter, who ultimately died in an automobile accident near Paris in 1960, had lived too profligate and wild a life. "It is in the best interests of the Shia Muslim Ismaili community," Aga Khan III wrote in his will, as quoted by Gupte, "that I should be succeeded by a young man who has been brought up in the midst of the new age and who brings a new outlook on life to his office of imam." Aga Khan III died on July 11, 1957, and two days later Prince Karim proclaimed the start of his reign as Aga Khan IV. At around that same time Britain's Queen Elizabeth II conferred upon the new Aga Khan the title "His Highness," and also awarded him the Brilliant Star of Zanzibar.

In the ensuing years Aga Khan IV distinguished himself from his forebears. Pranay Gupte wrote, "Unlike his flamboyant grandfather and his playboy father, the Aga Khan is seldom mentioned in the gossip columns and rarely appears in the media." Gupte continued, "Where his grandfather twice in his lifetime—amid much publicity—received his weight in gold and diamonds, and his father pursued women and was passed over for the Imamate, the present Aga Khan is an entirely serious man. Serious but not dull." In the course of an extensive tour of Ismaili communities in Africa and Asia, Aga Khan IV was officially invested in a ceremony at Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika, on October 19, 1957. The formal ceremony was repeated in Kenya, Uganda, India, Pakistan, and other countries as the Aga Khan visited various Ismaili communities. (According to the Aga Khan Development Network Web site, Ismaili Muslims live today in 25 different countries.)



## AGA KHAN IV

Aga Khan IV's grandfather's widow, the Begum Aga Khan, emerged as his most influential advisor. In 1958 Aga Khan IV returned to Harvard to complete his studies. He carried an unusually heavy load of courses in order to graduate in June, and in addition devoted much time to his religious duties. With him in Cambridge were a secretary, Gaetane Beguel, a Frenchwoman who had formerly served his grandfather in the same capacity, and a personal aide, Michael Curtis, formerly an editor of the *London News Chronicle*. In spite of his workload, Aga Khan IV found time to play left wing on the varsity soccer team. On June 11, 1959 he received his bachelor's degree (with honors) in Islamic history. Two days earlier, he had given \$50,000 to Harvard to establish a scholarship fund for Muslim students from the Middle East.

Part of the Aga Khan's customary responsibilities is to hold regular council meetings with Ismaili representatives around the world and to visit his followers wherever they may be. To that end, after his graduation, Aga Khan IV resumed his travels through the Muslim world to visit, advise, and create business plans with Muslim communities so that they might develop culturally, spiritually, and economically. Aga Khan IV's work within the Ismaili community is exemplified by a flurry of activity he spearheaded on a trip to Syria in the late 1950s, shortly after assuming the mantle passed down to him. He announced that a central bank for Ismailis was being established in Damascus, Syria's capital, and that he was bringing two engineers to Salamiyeh, Syria, to search for underground water. Aga Khan IV also appointed an 11-member Ismaili council to handle community affairs, organized a group of 40 youthful Ismailis to recommend projects to the new central bank, and created a small educational committee. By means of these and similar projects he hoped to alleviate the abysmal poverty of his disciples in that country.

In addition to his religious and economic duties, during the 1960s and 1970s the Aga Khan was inevitably concerned with the Cold War—the decades-long standoff between the rival superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union—and its effects on the Muslim world. During a visit to Washington, D.C., in November 1959 Aga Khan IV declared that each Ismaili must approach communism according to his own conscience (though he also expressed some concern regarding communism's potential threat to a monotheistic faith such as Islam).

It was not unusual for Aga Khan IV to exhort his followers to think for themselves. The Aga Khan Development Network Web site states that the Aga Khan views Islam as a "thinking, spiritual faith, one that teaches compassion and tolerance and that upholds the dignity of man, Allah's noblest creation." It further explains that the Aga Khan IV's duty as imam of his people is to "safeguard the individual's right to personal intellectual search and to give practical expression to the ethical vision of society that the Islamic message inspires." Using

the example of the Prophet Muhammad, Aga Khan IV has also stressed the need for Muslims to seek new solutions to problems and to adapt to rapidly changing times, in order to create a "truly modern and dynamic society, without affecting the fundamental concepts of Islam." (The idea of modernizing Muslim societies faces considerable resistance, however, from forces within the Muslim world that would rather preserve the traditions and practices of Islam's earlier ages.) As quoted on the Web site *Ismaili.net*, in his book *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (1985), William Montgomery Watt wrote that under Aga Khan IV's leadership, the "Ismailites have given other Muslims an example of how Islamic faith may be adapted to the modern world and may lead to effective action in it."

Like the Aga Khans before him, Aga Khan IV lives a privileged and opulent life. He owns hundreds of thoroughbred racehorses, skis at St. Moritz in Switzerland, and plies his luxury yachts off the sun-drenched islands of the Mediterranean Sea. Pranay Gupte described the Aga Khan's many homes around the world as "virtual museums" that contain priceless Islamic art and antiquities, about which the Aga Khan can hold forth with "scholarly commentaries." However, a number of sources, including Gupte, suggest that the Aga Khan's lifestyle, rather than being a selfish indulgence, is to a large degree expected of him by his followers. Furthermore, despite the lavish means at his disposal, Aga Khan IV came to be known early on as a "conscientious and sober-sided businessman" with a "low-key image," as Adam Zagorin described him for *Time* (June 7, 1993). Most of the Aga Khan's time was spent amassing financial holdings that included resorts, newspapers, and airlines and, from the Imamate's headquarters outside Paris, France, managing his foundation and its more than 15,000 employees worldwide.

Speaking at international conferences and other events, Aga Khan IV has often stressed the importance of education, has encouraged the establishment of pluralistic societies in which advancement is based on merit and competence, and has addressed the pressing need for the industrialized world to give sustained and wide support to developing nations. Through the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and his Secretariat, which oversees the network's many agencies, Aga Khan IV has continued the philanthropy that has been a major part of his family's legacy. The AKDN agencies are not religious bodies, but rather private, international, nondenominational organizations working in the fields of health, education, culture, and economic development. These agencies are dedicated to improving the lives of the poor regardless of their faith, origin, or gender. Under the AKDN's umbrella are the Aga Khan Foundation, based in Geneva and founded by Aga Khan IV in 1967; the Aga Khan Education and Health Services; the Aga Khan Trust for Culture; and Aga Khan University, which was founded in the early 1980s in Karachi, Pakistan, and was that country's



first private university. The school provides post-graduate training of health-service professionals and teachers and managers of schools, and fosters the development of research scholars. Among the school's facilities and departments are a medical college, a school of nursing, and a hospital. The Aga Khan himself serves as the school's chancellor.

The Aga Khan receives regular reports on development projects or the need for such from Muslim communities around the world, along with the donations that make those aforementioned projects possible. Most of the AKDN's work is concentrated in South Asia, Central Asia, and East Africa, where many of the world's poorest people live. Aga Khan IV explained to Gupte that his grandfather, Aga Khan III, believed that the "Third world, and more particularly the Islamic world, would make far more rapid progress if they were able to learn the lessons of the industrialized nations." Therefore, Aga Khan IV continued, "many of the development strategies, such as cooperative banking and housing, which he introduced to the Ismaili community, were based on Western models."

Recent projects undertaken by Aga Khan IV and the AKDN include the reconstruction of sites in the historic city of Mostar, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where terrible ethnic and religious violence raged between Muslims and Christians during the early- to mid-1990s, and the restoration of the Hotel Kabul, in the heart of war-torn Afghanistan. The AKDN has also fostered tourism in Pakistan and East Africa, in particular in Kenya and Tanzania, through the development of the Serena Hotels chain and other facilities. Since the mid-1990s Aga Khan IV and his network have built the lushly landscaped Al-Azhar Park, in Cairo, Egypt; installed more than 100 micro-hydroelectricity plants in the north of Pakistan; organized the first major European tour by Tengir-Too, a band of Central Asian musicians; and helped women in the rural Indian province of Gujarat devise new ways of collecting and storing drinking water, among scores of other projects.

As a result of the Aga Khan's generous endowments, a number of prizes awarded around the world bear the Aga Khan name, including the Aga Khan Award for Design; the *Paris Review's* Aga Khan Award for Fiction; and the Aga Khan Award for Islamic Architecture, which Daniel S. Levy described for *Time* (November 2, 1998) as one of architecture's "most important honors." Aga Khan IV has established the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at both Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Among the many honors that have been bestowed on him for his efforts to preserve man's cultural heritage, including the conservation of historic buildings, Aga Khan IV has won the Hadrian Award from the World Monuments Foundation. He has received honorary degrees from universities in the United States, England, Pakistan, and Canada, and civilian decorations from the govern-

ments of France, Portugal, the Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Iran, Pakistan, Senegal, Morocco, Spain, and Tajikistan.

The Aga Khan is said to speak at least four languages, including Arabic and Urdu, the latter a native tongue of Pakistan. On October 28, 1969 Aga Khan IV married Princess Salima, a British-born former model whose English name was Sally Croker-Poole; after 25 years of marriage, the couple divorced. They have three children: a daughter, Princess Zahra (born September 18, 1970), who works with her father directing the Aga Khan Imamate's social-development agencies; and two sons—Prince Rahim (born October 12, 1971), who helps direct the Imamate's economic-development agencies, and Prince Hussain (born April 10, 1974), who is involved in the AKDN's cultural activities.

In 1998 Aga Khan IV married Princess Inaara, a German-born U.N. consultant originally named Gabriele Thyssen, whose first husband had been Prince Karl-Emich zu Leiningen. (Aga Khan III had publicly proclaimed that Muslim men, the Aga Khan included, can marry non-Muslim women as long as those women believe in God. Inaara had converted to Islam before the marriage, however.) Upon that marriage, Aga Khan IV became the stepfather to Inaara's daughter, Theresa. On March 7, 2000, Inaara gave birth to a son, Prince Aly Muhammad Khan.

—C.F.T.

Suggested Reading: Aga Khan Development Network Web site; Aga Khan Foundation Web site; *Forbes* p134 Nov. 17, 1986, with photos; Ismaili.net

## Ahmed, Leila

May 29, 1940– Islamic scholar; writer

Address: c/o Penguin Books, Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014

The Egyptian-born scholar Leila Ahmed is the author of *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992), a watershed text in the study of gender roles in the Islamic world. "Questioning the legitimacy of the customary way in which Arab women are discussed by Middle Eastern Islamists and secularists as well as by Western academicians and media professionals, Leila Ahmed provides a sensitive, phenomenological rethinking of this timely subject," Kevin F. Dwyer wrote in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (July 1993), in a review of Ahmed's book. As an educator and advocate for women's equality, Ahmed has been fighting the battle against stereotypes on two fronts—contending with sexist attitudes within the Islamic world and with Western stereotypes of Islam and its followers.