Excerpts: His Highness the Aga Khan on the tithes (dasond) given to him by Ismailis

Roy Bonisteel: That your leadership wasn’t just spiritual it was also financial support there too -- tell me, does the community still tithe to you?

Aga Khan: There is, like in I think all faiths, a form of religious due which is voluntary, which is institutional income. It is given within the context of the link between the Imam of the Time and the individual, or the family, and I think that it is been a source of strength both to the community and to the institution so long as those resources are used in a manner which is appropriate to the role of the Imam as an institution and is understood as such.

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1986 CBC interview with Roy Bonisteel (Canada)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/3268/

Michael Charlton: How is your institution organised, the Imamat of the Ismaili sect? For example, is your own property inseparable from the property of the Imamat itself?

Aga Khan: The Imamat revenue is given by the community to the Imam. He has a responsibility to manage the Imamat revenue. Now, in Shia Islam, and this is true of the Twelvers and of the Seveners, the Imams or the Ayatollahs, as it would be in Twelver Shi’ism, are allowed or authorised to retain certain percentage of the Imamat revenue.
**Michael Charlton:** Can you tell me how much that is?

**Aga Khan:** In Ismaili tradition, because there is nothing which I have seen in writing, it is 10% at the present time, but the interesting thing is that, in effect, I would say easily 98% of those funds, and in fact at times much more than 98%, in fact probably of the order of 150%, goes back to the community. The reason for this is that...

**Michael Charlton:** And just tell me...

**Aga Khan:** I just want to finish this ... is that, it is extremely difficult for the Imamat to programme development the way it should be programmed. I will give you an example: the situation like the war between India and Pakistan, and the creation of Bangladesh, Uganda. Situations like that are extremely difficult to handle.

**Michael Charlton:** What do, what do these people as individuals contribute? How much of their income? Is it, is it...

**Aga Khan:** I would not really be in a position to discuss that because what they contribute is entirely at their discretion, in effect you know....

**Michael Charlton:** But is the general willingness to contribute to the Imamat in the form of religious dues, however you describe them, falling off being affected by the turmoil in various parts of the world or not?

**Aga Khan:** Well, I think that is bound to happen according to what is happening in the world. You know if people are fleeing for their lives, you can't really expect them to participate in any form of activity other than to save, save their lives.

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His Highness the Aga Khan's 1979 BBC Radio 4 Interview with Michael Charlton (London, United Kingdom)
Interviewer: Tell us how this money is collected? I mean is it a system of taxation or is it really entirely voluntary?

Aga Khan: No -- it is entirely voluntary and the Imam uses the money either to grant scholarships to students, to grant capital to a school or a hospital. We have got a hospital in Nairobi at the moment which will have cost about 400,000 pounds and my grandfather gave a very large sum to that hospital.

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1958 interview by four members of the UK Press (London, United Kingdom)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1095/

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See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on Imamat finances

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