

Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies on Ismailism

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Abstract : This paper is a thorough contribution to the analysis of Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet scholarship on the study of Ismailism in Central Asia. It focuses on the lengthy development of Russian studies on Ismailism from the Russian colonial domination to the entire period of Soviet rule, down to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the last two decades of post-Soviet history. These studies, conducted along the lines of various disciplines in the span of more than one hundred years, have resulted in a large amount of scholarly contributions. This paper aims at probing the virtues and shortcoming of such scholarship. Particularly, our investigation of the specialised fields in the Russian-Soviet Studies has required laborious researches in Russian and Central Asian libraries, which have enabled us to provide a guide through this literature, assessing its ideological leanings and qualities, institutions and level of scholarship. Despite some shortcomings, due to Marxism and the authoritarian rule of the Communist Party over the socio-religious life of the people and religious communities, Soviet studies have produced many positive insights on Ismailis studies. These captured almost every aspects of the life of the Ismaili community from anthropology to archaeology, ethnography, history, philosophy, ritual practice and, most importantly, collection and preservation of Ismaili manuscripts, which will be examined and assessed in this study.

Keywords : Central Asian Studies, Ismailism, Russian Studies, Soviet Studies

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