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The Ismaili of Central Asia

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Summary and Keywords

The Ismailis are one of the largest Muslim minority populations of Central Asia, and they make up the second largest Shi'i Muslim community globally. First emerging in the second half of the 8th century, the Ismaili missionary movement spread into many areas of the Islamic world in the 10th century, under the leadership of the Ismaili Fatimids caliphs in Egypt. The movement achieved astounding success in Central Asia in the 10th century, when many of the political and cultural elites of the region were converted. However, a series of repressions over the following century led to its almost complete disappearance from the metropolitan centers of Central Asia. The movement later re-emerged in the mountainous Badakhshan region of Central Asia (which encompasses the territories of present-day eastern Tajikistan and northeastern Afghanistan), where it was introduced by the renowned 11th-century Persian poet, philosopher, and Ismaili missionary Nasir-i Khusraw. Over the following centuries the Ismaili movement expanded among the populations of Badakhshan, reaching a population of over 200,000 in the 21st century. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Ismailis suffered a series of severe repressions, first under local Sunni Muslim rulers and later under the antireligious policies of the Soviet Union. However, in the decades since the end of the Soviet period, the Ismailis of the region have become increasingly connected with the global Ismaili community and its leadership. While many aspects of the history of Ismailism in the Badakhshan region remain obscure and unexplored, the discoveries of significant corpuses of manuscripts in private collections since the 1990s in the Badakhshan region have opened up wide possibilities for future research.

Keywords: Nasir-i Khusraw, Badakhshan, Pamirs, Ismailism, Shi'ism, Central Asia, Tajikistan, Afghanistan

Historical Survey of Ismailism in Central Asia

The Origins of the Ismaili Movement in Central Asia

The Ismaili movement traces its origin to a schism in the nascent Shī'ī Muslim community over the question of succession to the Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765). One faction championed the imāmate of his second son Ismail, while the line of imāms constituting the Ithnā'asharī or "Twelver" Shī'ī branch, today the majority Shī'ī community in Iran, Iraq, and elsewhere, extended from his younger son Mūsā al-Kāzīm.¹ Supporters of the Ismaili movement appeared in northern Africa in the late 9th century, where they founded the Fāṭimid dynasty under the Imām Abū Muḥammad 'Abdullāh al-Mahdī in 909. Later establishing its capital in the city of Cairo, the Fāṭimid Empire persisted for over two centuries as one of the leading cultural, political, and religious centers of the Islamic world, presenting a formidable challenge to the Sunni 'Abbāsīd caliphate. From an early period, the Fāṭimid imāms placed a strong priority on the expansion of the Ismaili missionary movement, known as the *da'wa* (summons), throughout the Islamic world. In the 10th century, the Ismaili *da'wa* achieved success in many far-flung corners of the Muslim world, including, for a time, Central Asia. Although the Central Asia region had long been host to a number of Shī'ī movements, the earliest records of the Ismaili *da'wa* in Central Asia appear only in the late 9th century, and little is known about these early missionary figures aside from their names. Many of the earliest *dā'īs* (missionaries) in the region were representatives of the dissident Qarmaṭī faction, which did not recognize the Fāṭimid imāms; however, the loyalty of the *da'wa* in this period remains difficult to determine precisely, because the term "Qarmaṭī" was generally employed in local sources as a derogatory term for all Ismailis, regardless of their affiliation. By the early 10th century, however, the Central Asian *da'wa* appears to have largely come under the control of agents loyal to the Fāṭimid cause.

The Fāṭimid *da'wa* was established in Central Asia in the early 10th century by a *dā'ī* named Abū 'Abdullāh al-Khādim, who established the seat of the *da'wa* in the city of Nishapur.² In the 10th century, the regions of eastern Iran and Central Asia were home to a significant number of prominent Ismaili scholars and missionaries, including such renowned figures as Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī and Muḥammad b. Ahmad al-Nasafī, who are credited with forming a "Khurāsān school" of Ismaili Neoplatonist philosophy.³ The commencement of the Fāṭimid *da'wa* in eastern Iran and Central Asia accompanied the rise to power in this region of the Sāmānid dynasty, which, though it recognized the 'Abbāsīd caliphs as the symbolic rulers of the Muslim world, was in practice entirely autonomous within the sphere of the caliphate's political authority. The rise of the Sāmānids thus presented the Fāṭimids with a ripe opportunity to build a political and spiritual alliance against their opponents in the Near East. Consequently, the Ismaili *da'wa* in Central Asia in this period appears to have been focused primarily on the conversion of the political and military elites of the Sāmānid court rather than the common population. The Ismailis achieved particular success during the reign of the

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Sāmānid Amīr Naṣr II (r. 914–943), eventually leading, according to some sources, to the conversion of the Amīr himself.⁴

This florescence of the Ismaili *da'wa* in Central Asia proved to be short-lived. A violent repression of the Ismailis was led by Naṣr's son Nūḥ, who forced his father to abdicate and reprimanded him for permitting the sect to flourish in his realm. A brief reappearance of the *da'wa* under Nūḥ's son Maṣṣūr I (r. 961–976) was met with another violent repression led by his governor of Khurasan, Abu'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad Simjūrī. From the late 10th century onward the sources reveal little evidence of Ismaili activity in Central Asia until the career of Nāṣir-i Khusraw nearly a century later. This hostility toward Ismailism was perpetuated under Maṣṣūr's son, Nūḥ II. Generally speaking, the early efforts to propagate the Ismaili *da'wa* among political elites in Central Asia in the 10th century appear to have had little long-term impact, aside perhaps from a hardening of anti-Ismaili views among the Sunni scholars of the region.

Following the collapse of the Sāmānid state at the end of the 10th century, Fāṭimid missionary efforts shifted westward to the Buyid territories of Iraq and western Iran, where the *da'wa* was spearheaded by such prominent figures as Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 1078) and Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī (d. after 1020). A brief attempt to revive the *da'wa* in Central Asia is reported for the year 1045, when a number of Ismaili missionaries, acting on behalf of the Fāṭimid Imām Mustanṣir bi'llāh, appeared in Bukhara and were massacred by the Qarakhānid ruler Bughrā Khān.⁵ This incident would appear to mark one of the final efforts in the Fāṭimid era to project the Ismaili *da'wa* in the major urban centers of Central Asia. The modern Ismaili presence in Central Asia, centered in the mountainous Badakhshan region of eastern Central Asia (which today comprises the territories of eastern Tajikistan and northeastern Afghanistan), owes its origins to a later period, and bears little connection with the earlier *da'wa* efforts of the 10th and 11th centuries.

Nāṣir-i Khusraw and Ismailism in Badakhshan

The next major phase in the history of Ismailism in Central Asia is associated with the career of Nāṣir-i Khusraw.⁶ Born in the Balkh region of eastern Iran circa 1004, Nāṣir went to the Fāṭimid capital of Cairo in 1045, after a long period of travel throughout Iran and the Near East, during which he was converted to Ismailism. Seven years later, in 1052, he left Egypt to return to Balkh, this time as a proponent of the Ismaili *da'wa*. The details of this stage of his career are obscure, but it would appear that at some point over the next two decades, he encountered fierce opposition to his *da'wa* activities in Iran and was forced into exile farther east, in the region of Badakhshan, where he was given refuge by a local ruler in the remote province of Yumgān. Nāṣir-i Khusraw composed a number of critical works on Ismaili philosophy and doctrine during his exile, and was among the earliest generation of scholars to compose works of Islamic philosophy in the Persian language. Nāṣir also composed a collection of poetry and an account of his

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travels (the *Safar-nāma*), both of which remain widely popular in the Persian-speaking world. Nāṣir died sometime after 1072 in Yumgān, where his shrine stands today.

Nāṣir-i Khusraw is widely credited in both scholarship and the communal tradition as the founder of the present-day Ismaili community of Badakhshan, which in the 21st century numbers over 200,000. Yet there remain a number of unresolved questions concerning his precise role in the historical development of Ismailism in the region.⁷ Nāṣir-i Khusraw's writings offer little concrete indication of his activities during his exile in Badakhshan. In fact, he mentions only one individual from the region by name: his patron, the ruler of Yumgān, Abu'l-Ma'ālī 'Alī b. al-Asad al-Ḥārith, to whom Nāṣir dedicated his *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*.⁸ It is likely that Nāṣir-i Khusraw's missionary efforts, like those of the earlier Central Asian *da'īs*, were directed at the political and military elite of the region, and there is little evidence to suggest that he administered mass conversions in the area. The earliest references to Nāṣir-i Khusraw in Ismaili sources do not in fact appear until the 15th century, and it is not until the 18th century that we see evidence of a fully formed narrative tradition among Ismailis that credits him with the conversion and establishment of the Ismaili community in Badakhshan. Accordingly, the spread of Ismailism among the peoples of the Badakhshan region was most likely an ongoing process that unfolded over several centuries and that historically may be attributed to a range of missionaries and agents whose communal identity gradually came to coalesce around Nāṣir-i Khusraw as a founding figure.

There is also the question of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's reception among the non-Ismaili populations of Central Asia. While early non-Ismaili accounts of Nāṣir invariably deride him as a heretic, beginning in the 14th century (in the wake of the Mongol conquests), we begin to see a drastic shift in the accounts of him circulating among Sunnis communities in Central Asia, which describe him as a great saint and obscure his historical connection with Ismailism.⁹ Likewise, there is evidence of patronage of Nāṣir's shrine in Yumgān by Sunni rulers as early as the 14th century.¹⁰ Subsequent endowment deeds show a continuous record of shrine patronage by Sunni rulers up to the 20th century, including some rulers who are otherwise known for being hostile to Ismailism.¹¹ From the texts of these endowment deeds and other sources, it is clear that the rulers and Sunni scholars of the region largely perceived, or at least sought to portray, the Nāṣir-i Khusraw as an 'orthodox' Sunni Muslim, most likely for the purpose of gaining recognition for his shrine. The sources throughout the early modern period display an ongoing literary struggle between Ismaili and non-Ismaili sources over the confessional affiliation of Nāṣir-i Khusraw.

From the Mongol Conquests to the 15th Century

The history of Ismailism in Badakhshan post-Nāṣir-i Khusraw, from the 11th century to the Tīmūrid conquest in the mid-15th century, remains almost entirely obscure. The broader Ismaili community faced another schism after the death of the Imām Mustanṣir bi'llāh in 1094, as the majority of the Ismailis in Iran, Syria, and elsewhere followed the

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lineage of imāms descending from his son Nizār. Although missionaries who advocated for the cause of Nizār and his successors were highly active in Iran, India, and the Near East in the 12th and 13th centuries, there is no record of their activity in Central Asia or in the Badakhshan region until later centuries. From the mid-12th century to the time of the Mongol conquests, the Badakhshan region was ruled by the Ghūrid dynasty, who were renowned opponents of the Ismailis. It is likely that any Ismaili community that Nāṣir-i Khusraw had established in this region would have suffered persecution or been driven underground, which may explain the absence of any references to Ismailis in the sources of the period.

The Mongol conquests in Iran in the mid-13th century dealt a devastating blow to Ismaili communities and institutions throughout the region, concluding with the murder of Imām Rukn al-Dīn Khūrshāh and the destruction of the Ismaili headquarters at the mountain fortress of Alamūt, in 1256. Thereafter, the Ismaili imāms and many of their followers entered into a prolonged period of concealment that persisted, to varying degrees, to the 18th century.¹² While it is sometimes claimed that Badakhshan was spared from the Mongol conquests because of its mountainous territory, the sources from the period in fact make it clear that the region was incorporated within the scope of the conquests and became part of the patrimony of Chinggis Khān's son Chaghatay. At some point after the death of Chaghatay, in 1244, we see emergence of an autonomous dynasty of obscure origin that claimed descent from Alexander the Great, whose members continued to rule the region for two hundred years under Mongol and later Tīmūrid vassalage. Amīr Tīmūr invaded Badakhshan in the late 14th century and imposed a tributary arrangement on its rulers, who otherwise continued to govern Badakhshan as autonomous rulers. Although relatively little is known of this dynasty, it is clear that its members were Sunnis who patronized various Sufi shaykhs and other Sunni religious institutions, although their policy toward the Ismailis of the region remains unknown.

The sources throughout the Mongol era are entirely silent on the question of Ismaili activity in the Badakhshan region. Even such authors as Juvaynī, Rashid al-Dīn, and the Venetian traveler Marco Polo, who are otherwise keenly interested in Ismaili affairs in their accounts, are uniformly silent in regard to any Ismaili activity in Central Asia. There is some indirect evidence to suggest that some Nizārīs from Iran and other areas may have migrated to Badakhshan in the wake of the Mongol conquests and found a degree of protection from local rulers. The main evidence for this migration is that a significant number of early Nizārī texts produced in Iran survive in the manuscript record of Badakhshan. However, nearly all of these texts are only preserved in very late copies (dating to the mid-19th century or later), and further research is necessary to determine when they may in fact have been transmitted to Badakhshan.

Ismaili sources, which at any rate are quite sparse for the 13th and 14th centuries, also do not make any reference to an Ismaili presence in the region prior to the 15th century. The earliest direct textual evidence for Ismaili activity in Badakhshan in the post-Mongol era is found in an early-15th-century text, the *Haft nuktaḥ*, or "Seven Aphorisms," which contains a series of discourses from one of the imāms of this period (most likely Imām

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Islām Shāh), in which reference is made to Ismailis residing in Badakhshan.¹³ This would appear to be the earliest known reference from either an Ismaili or a non-Ismaili source from the post-Mongol era to Ismailis in Badakhshan. The 15th century is more broadly associated with a vigorous expansion of the *da'wa* into new areas and regions, particularly in South Asia, culminating with the shift of the seat of the imāmate to the town of Anjudān in Central Iran during the imāmate of Mustanṣir bi'llāh II (d. 1480). This led to a brief period in Ismaili history, deemed in modern scholarship the "Anjudān revival," marked by expanded literary production and a relatively more open position for the Ismaili imāmate in the decentralized political environment of 15th-century Iran, before the Safavid takeover in the 16th century once again forced the imāmate into a more guarded position.

Another major development that characterized the evolution of Ismailism in the post-Mongol era was the increasing autonomy and authority relegated to the agents of the *da'wa*, known as the *pīrs*. In this period, the *pīrs* in areas such as Central Asia and India came to hold positions of great authority as virtual stand-ins for the imāms, who remained physically inaccessible to the most of their followers. The treatises and doctrinal writings of the *pīrs* represent the bulk of the extant Ismaili literature from the 14th to the 18th centuries. Among the earliest of such Central Asian texts is the *Ṣaḥīfat al-nāzirīn* (known also under the title *Sī ū shish ṣaḥīfah*, composed c. 1453), which exists in two redactions. The first is attributed to Ghiyāth al-Dīn Iṣfahānī, a scholar who was later in the service of several of the Tīmūrid governors of Badakhshan; another version is attributed (probably anachronistically) to a legendary *pīr* by the name of Sayyid Suhrāb Walī.¹⁴ Another important Nizārī *pīr* in the region in the 16th century was Khayrkhwāh Harātī, who, according to his own account, was in his day the head of the *da'wa* in Khurasan and Badakhshan, and whose treatises survive in multiple manuscripts in Badakhshan today.¹⁵

Other *pīrs* are known primarily from legendary and hagiographical traditions preserved by the Ismailis of Badakhshan. Among these is the aforementioned Sayyid Suhrāb, who is also an important figure in many of the genealogical traditions of the region, whose name appears at the head of the genealogical records of several of the main lines of *pīrs* who led the *da'wa* up to the early 20th century. In addition to Sayyid Suhrāb, later traditions also record the name of another legendary *dā'ī* 'Umar Yumgī, who is said to have been a contemporary of Sayyid Suhrāb and whose name also stands at the head of a number of lineages of *pīrs*. Aside from Sayyid Suhrāb and 'Umar Yumgī, there also exist a number of other legendary traditions concerning figures associated with the spread of Nizārī Ismailism in the Badakhshan region. Among them is a very popular legend from the Shughnān region concerning the arrival there of four holy men, or dervishes, said to have traveled from Iran at some indeterminate point in the past, who are credited with the propagation of the Nizārī *da'wa* in Badakhshan. The chief of these four travelers was Shāh Khāmūsh, about whom a wide range of legendary narratives have been recorded.¹⁶ However, very little is known historically of these figures.

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Ismaili missionaries operating in the post-Mongol era appear to have pursued a very different strategy from that of their Fatimid-era predecessors, whose efforts were aimed largely at members of the political, military, and scholarly elite. By contrast, Ismaili *dā'īs* operating in later periods pursued more grassroots efforts, aimed particularly at populations within the 'periphery' of the Muslim world, including non-Muslim communities. Whereas many of the earlier Ismaili footholds established in major urban centers such as Bukhara, Nishapur, and even in the former Fatimid capital of Cairo later passed from the scene, it was within these more peripheral territories, such as India and Badakhshan, where more deeply-rooted and long-lasting Ismaili communities were established. In particular, Ismaili missionary efforts seem to have had the most enduring success among non-Muslim communities, whose conversion to Ismailism was synonymous with conversion to Islam itself and was linked with concomitant processes of communal and ethnic identity formation. This relationship between religious and communal/ethnic identity in the post-Mongol era may explain why, over time, Ismailism in Central Asia became almost singularly (although not exclusively) associated with the Pamiri ethnic groups of Badakhshan, whose languages represent a series of Eastern Iranian dialects that are distinct from the Tajiki/Dari Persian that is spoken by the majority of their Sunni neighbors, to the extent that there is nearly a complete overlap between the prevalence of Pamiri language speakers and Ismailism in Central Asia today.

Another element that played an important role in the history of Ismailism in Badakhshan in the post-Mongol era was the schism that appears to have occurred within the Nizārī community in the early 14th century following the death of Imām Shams al-Din Muḥammad (c. 1310) between the supporters of his sons Qāsim Shāh and Muḥammad Shāh.¹⁷ Although the Qāsim-Shāhī line is now synonymous with Nizārī Ismailism, the Muḥammad-Shāhī line for several centuries held a very strong position in several regions, particularly in Syria, where the very few remaining adherents of this line still reside, as well as in the Deccan and Badakhshan. Among the sources of evidence for this is an early-16th-century text from Badakhshan titled *Irshād al-ṭālibīn fī dhikr a'immat al-Ismailiyya*, which advocates for the rights of the Muḥammad-Shāhī lineage and provides the most complete known account available of the schism. The Muḥammad-Shāhī line relocated from Iran to India in the 16th century and appears to have died out there sometime in the 18th century. By the end of the 18th century, it is clear that the bulk of the Ismailis of Badakhshan pledged allegiance to the Qāsim-Shāhī lineage, as remains the case in the 21st century.

Ismailism in Central Asia under Tīmūrid and Uzbek Rule

In 1467, the last member of the dynasty of autonomous rulers of Badakhshan, Shāh Sulṭān Muḥammad, was overthrown by the Tīmūrid ruler Abū Saʿīd, and the Badakhshan region was directly incorporated into the Tīmūrid Empire; Sulṭān Muḥammad was executed by Abū Saʿīd in 1467, following a failed plot to retake the region. The Tīmūrids are known for having taken very harsh measures against the Ismailis in their domains in Central Asia and Iran. Among other incidents, the Tīmūrid governor Sulṭān Ways Mīrṣā is recorded as having in 1509 violently suppressed an Ismaili uprising in Badakhshan led by the Muḥammad-Shāhī Imām Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī.¹⁸ Tīmūrid rule in Badakhshan continued to the end of the 16th century, the Tīmūrid governors serving first under the Tīmūrid dynasts of Samarqand and later under the Mughal emperors in India, following the Shībanid Uzbek conquest and displacement of the Tīmūrids from the urban centers of Central Asia in the early 16th century. Finally, in 1584 the Badakhshan region was wrested from the Tīmūrids by the Uzbek ruler ʿAbdullāh Khān, who following his conquest likewise faced a revolt among the Shīʿī communities of the region.¹⁹ Upon the death of ʿAbdullāh Khān in 1598, there was a brief attempt at a Tīmūrid restoration in the region, but control of Badakhshan passed to another Uzbek dynasty, known as the Astarkhānids, who, at the turn of the 17th century, displaced the Shībanids throughout Central Asia.

Like the Tīmūrids and Shībanids before them, the Astarkhānids faced revolts from the Ismailis of the region. A particularly virulent uprising against the ruler Nadr Muḥammad Khān is recorded in 1635, which was put down with significant violence (interestingly, this ruler is also recorded as having patronized a major endowment of the shrine of Nāṣir-i Khusraw in Yumgān in 1620).²⁰ In 1657, a new dynasty came to power in Badakhshan under Yārī Bek Khān, a shaykh of the Naqshbandi Sufi order who enjoyed a wide following among Sunnis in the region.²¹ The Yārid dynasty remained at least nominally in power until the late 19th century. Like their predecessors, the Yārids remained strongly opposed to Ismailism. Among other actions attributed to them, in 1751 the Yārids launched a massive campaign against the Ismailis in neighboring Chitrāl from which claimed to have taken 10,000 captives. Despite this, the Yārid dynasty is also recorded as having provided a number of endowments for the shrine of Nāṣir-i Khusraw during the same period, and indication of the continued strength of his legacy among the region's Sunnis.

The 18th and 19th Centuries: Expansion and Crisis

Although the Ismailis remained a marginalized and persecuted minority in Badakhshan until the mid-18th century, political developments in the late 18th and early 19th centuries presented the Ismaili *daʿwa* with an opportunity for a significant expansion of their strength and influence.²² In Central Asian history, the 18th century is generally known as a period of economic decline and political decentralization. This situation led to

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crises for many of the period's ruling dynasties, but the resulting political fragmentation and decentralization provided a critical reprieve for Ismaili communities who historically had been persecuted by these states. In particular, the fall of the Safavid Empire in Iran and the subsequent emergence of a new imperial power under Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī in Kabul would have significant consequences both for the Yārīds and the Ismailis of Badakhshan. In 1768, Aḥmad Shāh launched a devastating campaign into Badakhshan that significantly weakened the Yārīd dynasty and made the Yārīds tributary subjects of the Afghans. The weakening of the Yārīds' central authority allowed for new political formations in Badakhshan. In particular, the sources of this period show the emergence of a newly autonomous state in the Badakhshan's Shughnān region. The ruling dynasty of Shughnān does not appear to have been Ismaili in origin, but local sources show that throughout the 18th century this lineage was developing a close relationship with leaders of the Ismaili *da'wa*. The relationship was cemented in the late 18th century under the ruler Shāh Vanjī, who became the disciple of a prominent Ismaili pīr named Khoja Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ (who traced his descent to Sayyid Suhrāb). According to a historical account left by Khoja Ṣāliḥ's grandson (in a text titled *Silk-i guhar-rīz*), Shāh Vanjī sponsored the efforts of a number of missionaries to spread the *da'wa* throughout the Shughnān region under Khoja Ṣāliḥ's guidance. The alliance between the *da'wa* and the rulers of Shughnān established Ismailism as the dominant faith in the area, ensuring its prevalence in the region that continues in the 21st century.

Consequently, political developments in 18th- and early-19th-century Central Asia provided the conditions for a considerable expansion of Ismaili influence in the region. The sources from the 19th century clearly demonstrate an increase both in the number and distribution of Ismaili communities in Central Asia in comparison with past centuries. However, this florescence would take a drastic turn for the worse in the second quarter of the 19th century. The shift began with the invasion of Badakhshan by Murād Beg, the Uzbek ruler of Qunduz, in 1829. Murād Beg appears to have targeted Ismailis for slave raids. The invasion led to the migration of many Ismailis to more inaccessible highland areas in Shughnān and elsewhere. Murād Beg's control over Badakhshan, however, was relatively brief. A more enduring catastrophe originated in the 1840s, as the Afghans began to exert much more direct control over Badakhshan and the neighboring areas, with perilous consequences for the Ismailis and other Shī'ī communities in the region. These developments were to a large degree facilitated by British colonial policies. Following the conclusion of the first Anglo-Afghan war and the ensuing British conquest of Sindh, the Afghans, finding their opportunities for outward expansion blocked by the British, began to pursue a policy of inward colonization and consolidation, which came at great cost to the Ismailis and other hitherto autonomous minority communities residing in their realm. Parallel policies the Russian Empire pursued later in the 19th century with respect to their protectorate in Bukhara led to similar consequences, as the rulers of Bukhara sought to make up for their loss of autonomy in external affairs by pursuing further colonization of their hitherto lightly governed territories in present-day eastern Tajikistan, with similarly disastrous consequences for the Ismailis of the region.

The Ismailis and the Colonial Powers in the 19th Century

The history of Ismailism in Central Asia entered a dramatic new phase in the second half of the 19th century.²³ This period was marked by a military-diplomatic contest between the Russian and British Empires in Central Asia known as the Great Game, which would have profound consequences for the Ismailis of the Badakhshan region. An agreement between Britain and Russia in 1895 established the Oxus River (known as the Panj River in its upper reaches) as the border between their respective spheres of influence. This effectively divided the historical Badakhshan region in half, along with the Ismaili communities residing in it. But if this agreement served to artificially divide the Ismailis, the extension of colonial suzerainty over the region also presented the Ismailis with an opportunity to seek support from the colonial powers in their efforts to redress long-standing grievances against local Sunni rulers. The Ismaili pīrs of the region began to actively cultivate relationships with both Russian and British colonial officials.²⁴ In part because of petitions from the pīrs, in 1905 the Russian government decided to directly annex the northern portion of Badakhshan, removing it from the administrative control of Bukhara, against whose rule the Ismailis had expressed numerous grievances.

The entry of the Badakhshan region into the orbit of the colonial empires also resulted, for the first time, in the region and its peoples becoming a subject of Western scholarship. As a result of this documentation, scholars in the 21st century know far more about the structure and traditions of the Ismaili community in the colonial era than in earlier periods. In particular, scholars, including Aleksandr Semenov, Ivan Zarubin, and Aleksei Bobrinskiĭ, conducted extensive research expeditions in the first two decades of the 20th century, and their accounts serve as critical sources for understanding the religious practices and institutions of the Ismailis in this period. According to Bobrinskiĭ, approximately fifteen pīrs were active in the greater Badakhshan region at the beginning of the 20th century.²⁵ The followers of a particular pīr were often not relegated to a particular area, but instead cut across the various regions of Badakhshan and its neighboring areas, reflecting the movement of followers throughout the region and their continued adherence to the pīrs with whom they were historically associated. For instance, the pīr Yūsuf ‘Alī Shāh, in the early 20th century, commanded followers as far afield as the city of Yarkand (in the present-day Xinjiang province of China) and the town of Osh in present-day Kyrgyzstan.

While the pīrs occupied the most prominent position in the life of the community, serving as the link between the Imām and his followers, a great number of other prominent scholars, poets, and other intellectual figures also flourished during this period. One noteworthy local scholar was Mubārak Wakhānī (1843–1903) from the village of Yamg in the Wakhān region.²⁶ Wakhānī’s works, which range from poetry to astrology to philosophical treatises, show him to be the sort of polymath who typifies many of the Ismaili authors of this period. The works of many scholars like Wakhānī can be found in the manuscript tradition of Badakhshan. Despite the numerous persecutions and dislocations suffered by Ismailis in this period, the late 19th and early 20th centuries

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nonetheless witnessed a significant outpouring of literary production. A manuscript-collection expedition led by a team of Soviet scholars from the Academy of Sciences undertook a series of visits to the Badakhshan region between 1959 and 1963 and collected 117 manuscripts in total.²⁷ All but a tiny handful of these texts remain unstudied since then. The collection includes a small number of older manuscripts; however, the vast majority appear to have been copied in the late 19th century or early 20th century. A large number of texts bear dates as late as the 1940s, indicating that the manuscript tradition of the Badakhshani Ismailis continued even well after the imposition of Soviet rule.

The Ismailis in the Soviet Era

The revolutionary events that convulsed the Russian Empire in 1917 had an almost immediate impact on the Badakhshan region, despite its great distance from Moscow.²⁸ The Russian military garrison in Khorogh, which was loyal to the interim Russian government, was dispersed upon receiving news of the Bolshevik takeover. In its absence, members of the anti-Bolshevik forces known as the Basmachi, who sought to restore the deposed Amirate of Bukhara, launched raids into Badakhshan and took control of the former Russian post at Khorogh, implementing harsh measures against the local Ismailis. Finally, in November 1920, the first Soviet forces arrived and, with the support of the Ismailis, established control in the region. As noted, much of the Ismaili leadership had previously established strong relations with the Russian colonial administration, and the arrival of Bolshevik troops was initially welcome as a continuation of the previous Russian presence there. From 1921 to 1924, Tajik Badakhshan was part of the Turkestan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), and in 1924 it became part of the newly established Tajik Autonomous SSR in the Uzbek SSR. In 1927, the Tajik ASSR came under the leadership of Shirinsho Shohtemur (d. 1937), an Ismaili from Badakhshan, who in 1929 obtained permission from Moscow to establish the Tajik SSR as a separate republic within the Soviet Union. The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast was subsequently established as an autonomous region within the Tajik SSR.

The upheavals of the period from 1917 to 1921 also spurred sharp debates among the Ismailis of Badakhshan concerning religious practices and the leadership structure of the community. Chief among the parties to this debate was a reformist movement known as the Panjabhai, which was formed shortly after Soviet power had been established in Badakhshan.²⁹ The Panjabhai movement circulated a charter that sought to reduce the power of the pīrs and to establish in their place a series of representative bodies (known as *anjumans*), which would be responsible for administering communal affairs and collecting the tithes for the Imām. In particular, the Panjabhai supporters were critical of the established institution of the pīrs and their hereditary position and accused them of expropriating a portion of the tithes intended for the Imām. The charter therefore called for reforms in the collection, accounting, and delivery of the funds in order to reduce corruption. It also called for the establishment of formal prayer houses (*jamat-khāna*) and

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communal prayer rituals that would bring the Badakhshani Ismailis more closely in line with the practices of their coreligionists in India.

In 1921, the Panjabhais sent an embassy led by Sayyid Ḥaydar Shāh to Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh in Bombay to deliver the charter. The Imām's response was initially favorable, and the following year he sent his representative Sayyid Munīr to further investigate and explore the feasibility of the proposed reforms. Then, in 1923, the Imām sent a major delegation led by Sabzālī Ramazānālī (known popularly as Pīr Sabzālī), who proved to be the last high-level delegate sent by the Imām to Badakhshan in the Soviet era. Pīr Sabzālī arrived with instructions to set up the proposed *anjumans* and to establish *jamat-khānas* and implement other institutional and doctrinal reforms. Efforts to implement these reforms in the Tajik SSR were, however, largely abortive, having been cut short by the intensification of the antireligious policies of the Soviet state in the late 1920s and 1930s. Meanwhile, the Imām later reversed a number of the proposed reforms, ordering the closure of the *anjumans* in 1927 and the restoration of some of the previous privileges held by the pīrs, many of whom subsequently fell victim to Soviet antireligious policies.

Although the Soviet government was dedicated to a policy of promoting atheism from the very start, Soviet policy toward religion in Central Asia, and in Badakhshan in particular, was initially quite relaxed. The Ismailis had proven themselves to be overwhelmingly loyal to the Soviet state during the Basmachi insurgency, and they saw in the Soviet government a continuation of the good will and official protection established under its Tsarist predecessors. The Soviets initially cooperated with the local pīrs, and even allowed them to send the tithes to the Imām in India. However, the Imām of this era (Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh), whose headquarters were in Bombay, was widely disparaged in Soviet propaganda as an agent of British imperialism, and before long, this hostility began to reflect upon his representatives in Badakhshan as well. In the late 1920s, Stalin ordered that much harsher measures toward religion be implemented throughout Central Asia, and unleashed a vicious policy of repression and persecution that persisted throughout the 1930s. Soviet Propaganda began to accuse the pīrs and other religious officials in the region of being “class enemies” and of disloyalty to the Soviet system. In 1936, the border along the Panj River was completely closed, which put an end to contact with the Ismailis living across the border and prevented delegations from carrying the annual tithe to the Imām. Nearly all the prominent pīrs of Tajik Badakhshan had been arrested, executed, or forced into exile by 1940.

A momentous shift occurred in Soviet policy toward religion during the Second World War. Needing to improve morale and build support for the war effort, Stalin made the fateful decision in 1942 to significantly relax state repression of religion and to permit the establishment of closely regulated religious institutions. Across the Soviet Union many mosques, churches, synagogues, and other buildings of worship that had been closed were permitted to reopen, and religious leaders, many of whom had been imprisoned by the Soviet regime, were permitted to re-establish their congregations under close supervision. With the institution of pīrship having been abolished and with the pīrs having

been murdered or sent into exile, their former deputies, the *khalīfas*, took on the position of religious authority in this period. Although they did not possess the same status and position as the *pīrs*, they increasingly became the sole religious authorities within the community. However, the *khalīfas* were forced to operate without contact with the *Imām* and without the historical authority that was invested in the *pīrs*. This narrowed the *khalīfa*'s job to merely carrying out the basic religious ceremonies, such as funerals, marriages, and other rites of passage for which the presence of the *khalīfa* was deemed indispensable, and their appointment was subject to approval by the Soviet government. Although there was some further relaxation of policies in the late 1980s under Mikhail Gorbachev, it was not until after the independence of Tajikistan in 1991 that relations between the *imāmate* and the Ismailis of Badakhshan were fully restored and the full range of religious institutions of the global Ismaili community were formally established in Tajikistan.

Discussion of the Literature

The beginning of the academic study of the broader Ismaili tradition can be traced to the early 19th century; the Central Asian Ismailis, however, did not come to the attention of Western scholars until the very end of the 19th century, as British and Russian colonial interests in the region advanced.³⁰ Beginning in the 1890s and continuing to the early 1920s, a number of Russian scholars, including Alekseĭ Bobrinskiĭ, Ivan Zarubin, Wladimir Ivanow, and Aleksandr Semenov carried out critical research and manuscript-collection efforts among the Ismailis of the Badakhshan region, until the political imperatives of the new Soviet regime effectively brought the study of Ismailism in the Soviet Union to a halt, for a time.³¹ Ivanow was forced to leave the Soviet Union in the wake of the revolution; he eventually made his way to India, where he made the acquaintance of the Ismaili *Imām* Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh, who appointed him head of the Ismaili Society, the forerunner of today's Institute of Ismaili Studies. From the early 1930s until his death in 1970, Ivanow published a wide array of studies and editions and translations of Ismaili texts, including many of Central Asian provenance.³²

Although a handful of largely polemical articles on Ismailism were published in the corpus of Soviet antireligious literature in the 1930s and 1940s, it was not until the late 1950s, with the publication of Andrey Bertel's groundbreaking study of on the life and thought of Nasir-i Khusraw, that serious scholarship on the Central Asian Ismaili tradition began once again in the Soviet Union.³³ In 1959, Bertel's and his Tajik colleague Mamadvafo Bakoev launched the first of five summer expeditions to Badakhshān under the auspices of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Tajik SSR for the purpose of collecting manuscripts, collecting copies of 253 texts in total.³⁴ The photostat reproductions of these texts are held today at the Rudaki Institute of Oriental Studies and Written Heritage of the Republic of Tajikistan. Bertel's later published

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editions and commentaries on a selection of five texts from this collection, dealing primarily with philosophical themes.³⁵

Scholars including Liudmila Stroeva, Khayolbek Dodikhudoev, and Kudratbek Elchibekov conducted studies on the medieval period of Ismâ‘îlî history, and the works of Nâsir-i Khusraw especially, in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁶ In these works we begin to see a subtle shift toward a more favorable presentation of Ismâ‘îlism within the Soviet academy, in which the Ismâ‘îlî movement (at least in its medieval period) begins to be depicted more and more as reflecting a revolutionary and anticlerical character, before allegedly undergoing an intellectual decline in the wake of the Mongol conquests. Accordingly, the later medieval and early modern periods of Ismâ‘îlî history remained almost entirely unexplored in Soviet scholarship. Along with this, a number of important studies on the history of the Badakhshan region in the 19th and early 20th century were published as well, chiefly by Bokhodur Iskandarov, emphasizing the role of the Ismâ‘îlîs in the region’s “voluntary annexation” to Russia.³⁷ Several ethnographic studies of Ismâ‘îlî communities in Badakhshan were carried during the Soviet era as well, although these studies largely steered clear of religious practices and, when such topics were broached, generally treated then within the Soviet interpretive framework of *perezhitki*, or supposed survivals of pre-Islamic religious practices.³⁸

The decades since the end of the Soviet era have witnessed a virtual explosion of new studies on Central Asian Ismailism. Recent years have seen the appearance of groundbreaking historical and ethnographic studies by scholars including Jo-Ann Gross, Abdulmamad Iloiev, Tokhir Kalandarov, Hakim Elnazarov and Sultonbek Aksakolov, Sharaf Oshurbekov, and others.³⁹ A number of groundbreaking studies have also appeared recently in the study of Nasir-i Khusraw.⁴⁰ New aspects of the community’s history in the colonial and early Soviet era have been explored as well, drawing on previously unavailable manuscript materials from private archives.⁴¹ The London-based Institute of Ismaili Studies has established an ongoing research project in Badakhshan to identify and digitize Ismaili manuscripts maintained in private collections throughout the region.

Despite these great advances, there are still a number of critical gaps and deficiencies in the field of Central Asian Ismaili studies. First and foremost, despite the recent efforts to collect new manuscript materials in the region, thus far very little work has been done toward the study and publication of this new material, and the textual basis of the field still remains largely dependent on the now very outdated publications by Bertel’s and Ivanow.⁴² Second, a large chronological gap remains evident: while studies of the medieval and modern periods of Ismaili history continue to proliferate, the history of Ismailism in Central Asia from the 13th to the 18th century still remains largely unexplored.⁴³ Third, many studies on the religious dimensions of Ismailism in Central Asia continue to reflect Soviet-era interpretive frameworks which characterize the religious traditions of the region as essentially continuations or only partially Islamized variants of pre-Islamic practices, and have not engaged with current developments in the Islamic studies or religious studies literature.⁴⁴

Primary Sources

The primary sources for the study of Central Asian Ismailism consists principally of manuscript materials that have been produced and retained in private collections within Badakhshan and neighboring regions. While there is no official manuscript archive in the region, copies of these manuscripts are housed at several academic institutions in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. The photostat reproductions of the manuscripts photographed by Bertel's and Mamadvafo Bakoev during their expeditions to Badakhshan from 1959–1963 are currently housed at the Rudaki Institute of Oriental Studies and Written Heritage of the Tajik Academy of Sciences in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.⁴⁵ A number of other Ismaili manuscripts are housed at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg and in the Al-Beruni Institute for Oriental Studies of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.⁴⁶

By far, however, the most significant collection of Ismaili manuscript materials, from Central Asia and elsewhere, is housed at the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) in London. Central Asian materials may be found in two collections housed by the IIS. The first is a collection of manuscripts previously assembled by Wladimir Ivanow and his colleagues at the Ismaili Society, which is housed at the IIS in London with the main body of the Persian manuscripts collection. The second and vastly more voluminous collection is currently being assembled by an IIS research team in Badakhshan, consisting of digital images of manuscripts in private collections from Badakhshan. The physical manuscripts have been retained in the possession of their owners; however, the digital images of the texts will be made available in the future for consultation by scholars through the IIS library in London.

Several bibliographies of Ismaili sources have been published, including by Wladimir Ivanow (now highly dated and lacking references to manuscripts), Ismail Poonawala (which includes references to manuscripts in published catalogs as of 1977), and a more recent publication by Farhad Daftary, which includes only published sources and no references to manuscripts.⁴⁷ In addition to these, a survey of the manuscripts of the verse works of Nāṣir-i Khusraw found in published catalogs has been prepared by François de Blois.⁴⁸ None of these surveys includes reference to the uncatalogued collections maintained by the IIS.

As has been noted, a number of Ismaili texts of Badakhshani origin have been published by Wladimir Ivanow, although virtually all of these now require reconsideration and re-editing in light of more recent manuscript discoveries. In addition, a selection of five texts on philosophical themes was published from among the collection assembled by Andreï Bertel's.⁴⁹ Just recently, a larger and more diverse collection of materials from private collections in Badakhshan, including correspondence and genealogical records, was published by Umed Mamadsherozshoev and Kawahara Yayoi.⁵⁰ Finally, a research project currently underway involving the present author, along with Jo-Ann Gross and

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Umed Mamadsherozodshoev, will assemble a collection of genealogical materials from private collections in Badakhshan for digitization and analysis. This collection will be made available for open access through the Princeton University library by 2020.

Further Reading

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(2.) On the early history of Ismailism in Central Asia, see Yahia Baiza, "The Shi'a Isma'ili Da'wat in Khurasan: From Its Early Beginning to the Ghaznawid Era," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 8.1 (2015): 37-59; and Samuel M. Stern, "The Early Ismaili Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurāsān and Transoxania," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 23, no. 1 (1960): 56-90.

(3.) On Ismaili philosophy and the "Khurāsān school" in this period, see Paul E. Walker, *Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī: Intellectual Missionary* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 1-25.

(4.) On Ismailism at the Sāmānid court, see Patricia Crone and Luke Treadwell, "A New Text on Ismailism at the Samanid Court," in *Texts, Documents, and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honor of D. S. Richards*, ed. Chase Robinson (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 37-67; and W. L. Treadwell, "The Political History of the Sāmānid State" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1991), 186-210.

(5.) 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi'l-tawārīkh*, ed. C. J. Tornberg, 12 vols. (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1851-1876), ix, 9:358.

(6.) On the life and works of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, see Andreï Bertel's, *Nasiri Khosrov i Ismailizm* (Moscow: Vostochnoĭ Literaturny, 1959); and Alice Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw, the Ruby of Badakhshan: A Portrait of the Persian Poet, Traveler and Philosopher* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000).

(7.) On this topic, see the further discussion in Daniel Beben, "Islamisation on the Iranian Periphery: Nasir-i Khusraw and Ismailism in Badakhshan," in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 317-335.

(8.) See, in English, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Between Reason and Revelation: Twin Wisdoms Reconciled*, trans. Eric Ormsby (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

(9.) On these legendary traditions, see further Daniel Beben, "The Legendary Biographies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw: Memory and Textualization in Early Modern Persian Ismailism" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2015).

(10.) On Nāṣir-i Khusraw's shrine in Yumgān, see Beben, 173-231; and Marcus Schadl, "The Shrine of Nasir Khusraw: Imprisoned Deep in the Valley of Yumgan," *Muqarnas* 26 (2009): 63-93.

- (11.) Some of these endowment documents were published by the Afghan scholar Khalīlullah Khalīlī, “Yumgān va vathā’iq-i tārīkhī darbārah-i Nāṣir-i Khusraw,” *Yaghmā* 20 (1346 A.Hsh./1967), 438–442, 472–476. They were reprinted in his *Yumgān: Mazār-i Nāṣir-i Khusraw dar Badakhshān*, ed. ‘Ināyatullāh Shahrānī (Delhi, India: Delhi University, 1379 A.Hsh./2000).
- (12.) On this period, see Nadia Eboo Jamal, *Surviving the Mongols: Nizārī Quhistānī and the Continuity of Ismaili Tradition in Persia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002); and Shafique N. Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- (13.) Institute of Ismaili Studies MS 32 (ff. 22a–25a) and MS 37 (ff. 4b–10a). See further discussion of this text and the significance of its reference to Badakhshan in Beben, “Legendary Biographies,” 238–241.
- (14.) The second redaction of this work (attributed to Sayyid Suhrāb Walī) has been published as *Sī va shish ṣaḥīfah*, ed. Hūshang Ujāqī and Wladimir Ivanow (Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1961).
- (15.) The collection of his works has been published. See Khayrkhwāh Harātī, *Taṣnīfāt-i Khayrkhwāh Harātī*, ed. Wladimir Ivanow (Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1961).
- (16.) On Shāh Khāmūsh and the legends associated with him, see Jo-Ann Gross, “Foundational Legends, Shrines, and Ismailī Identity in Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan,” in *Muslims and Others in Sacred Space*, ed. Margaret Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 164–192.
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- (18.) For the account of this uprising, see Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dūghlāt, *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, ed. ‘Abbāsquī Ghaffārī Fard (Tehran: Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1283 A.Hsh./2004), 346–347.
- (19.) On the Uzbek conquest of Badakhshan, see Buri A. Akhmedov, “Poslednie Timuridy i bor’ba za Badakhshan,” in *Issledovaniia po istorii, istorii nauki i kul’tury narodov Srednei Azii* (Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Fan, 1993), 82–93. For an account of the uprising against ‘Abdullāh Khān, see Ḥāfiz-i Tanīsh, *Sharaf-nāmah-i shāhī*, British Museum MS Or. 3497, f. 239a.
- (20.) Maḥmūd b. Amīr Valī Balkhī, *Baḥr al-asrār fī manāqib al-akhyār*, India Office MS no. 1496, f. 276b.

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(21.) On Yārid rule in Badakhshan, see Sang Muḥammad Badakhshī and Faḍl ‘Alī Bek Surkh-Afsar, *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*, ed. and trans. A. N. Boldyrev (Moscow: Vostochnoĭ Literaturnyĭ Tsentr, 1997).

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(23.) On this period, see Bokhodur I. Iskandarov, *Vostochnaia Bukhara i Pamir vo vtoroi polovine XIX v.*, 2 vols. (Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Akademiia Nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR, 1962–1963); and Alexei Postnikov, *Skhvatka na “Kryshe Mira”: Politiki, razvedchiki i geografy v bor’be za Pamir v XIX veke* (Moscow: Pamiatniki Istoricheskoi Mysli, 2001).

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(25.) Alekseĭ A. Bobrinskiĭ, *Sekta Ismail’ia v bukharskikh predelakh Srednei Azii* (Moscow: 1902).

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(32.) A bibliography of Ivanow's works can be found in his recently published memoirs, *Fifty Years in the East: The Memoirs of Wladimir Ivanow*, ed. Farhad Daftary (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015).

(33.) See, for instance, Bobodzhan G. Gafurov, "Aga Khan," *Bezbozhnik* 11–12 (1940): 8–9; and L. Klimovich, "Ismailizm i ego reaktionnaia rol.'" *Antireligioznik* 8 (1937): 34–40; and Bertel's, *Nasiri Khosrov i Ismailizm*.

(34.) For the catalog of the collection, see Bertel's and Bakoev, *Alfavitnyiĭ katalog*.

(35.) Andreĭ Bertel's, ed. *Piat' filosofskikh traktatov na temu Āfāq va Anfus* (Moscow: Vostochnoĭ Literatury, 1970).

(36.) Khaiolbek Dodikhudoev, *Ocherki filosofii Ismailizma: Obshchaia kharakteristika filosofskoĭ doktriny X–XIV vv.* (Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Donish, 1976); Kudratbek Ėl'chibekov, "Ierarkhiia dukhovenstva v ismailizme i ee politcheskaia rol' (na osnove materialov, sobrannykh ékspeditsieĭ v Gorno-Badakhshanskuiu avtonomnuiu oblast' Tadzhikiskoĭ SSR v 1959–1970 g.)" (PhD diss., Akademiia Nauk Tadzhikskoĭ SSR, Institut Vostokovedeniia, 1977); and Liudmila V. Stroeva, *Gosudarstvo Ismailitov v Irane v XI–XIII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978).

(37.) Iskandarov, *Vostochnaia Bukhara i Pamir*.

(38.) Mikhail S. Andreev, *Tadzhiki doliny Khuf*, 2 vols. (Stalinabad: Akademii Nauk Tadzhikskoĭ SSR, 1953); Lydia F. Monogarova, *Preobrazovaniia v bytu i kul'ture pripamirskikh narodnosteiĭ* (Moscow: Nauka, 1972); Monogarova, "Sovremennye étnicheskie protsessy na Zapadnom Pamire," *Sovetskaia Étnografiia*. 6 (1965): 23–33; and Monogarova, "Étnicheskiĭ sostav i étnicheskie protsessy v Gorno-Badakhshanskoĭ avtonomnoĭ oblasti Tadzhikskoĭ SSR," in *Strany i Narody Vostoka*, vol. 16: *Pamir*, ed. A. N. Zelinskiĭ (Moscow: Nauka, 1975): 174–191.

(39.) Gross, "Foundational Legends," 164–192; Ilioliev, *Ismailī-Sufī Sage of Pamir*; Tokhir S. Kalandarov, "Religiia i traditsii: Religioznaia situatsiia na pamire (k probleme religioznogo sinkretizma)," *Vostok. Afro-Aziatskie Obshchestva: Istoriia i Sovremennost* 6 (2000): 36–49; and Kalandarov, "Ismailizm na Pamire: Poiskh novykh puteĭ i resheniĭ," *Rasy i narody* 32 (2006): 180–196; Elnazarov and Aksakolov, "Nizari Ismailis of Central Asia," in *Modern History*, ed. Daftary, 45–76; and Sharaf Oshurbekov, "Places, Memories and Religious Identity: Muslim Places of Worship in Badakhshan Region of Tajikistan" (PhD diss., York University, 2014).

(40.) For recent surveys of scholarship in this field, see Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw*; Alice C. Hunsberger, ed. *Pearls of Persia: The Philosophical Poetry of Nāṣir-i Khusraw* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012); and Sarfarozi Niyozov and Ramazon Nazariyev, eds., *Nosiri Khusrav: Dirūz, Imrūz, Fardo* (Khujand, Tajikistan: Noshir, 2005).

(41.) Ilioliev, "Pirship in Badakhshan," 155–176; and Khodzhibekov, *Ismailitskie dukhovnye nastavniki (piry)*; Abusaid Shokhumorov, *Razdelenie Badakhshana i sud'by Ismailizma* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk, Institut Vostokovedeniia, 2008).

(42.) One critical exception is the recent publication of documents by Umed Mamadsherozodshoev and Kawahara Yayoi, eds., *Documents from Private Archives in Right-Bank Badakhshan* (Tokyo: Department of Islamic Area Studies, University of Tokyo, 2015).

(43.) This period has now been the subject of several recent and unpublished doctoral dissertations. See Beben, "Legendary Biographies"; and Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev, "The Ismailīs of Badakhshan: History, Politics and Religion from 1500 to 1750" (PhD diss., University of London, 2014).

(44.) For examples of this approach, see N. Davlatbekov, *Doislamskie verovaniia naseleniia zapadnogo pamira* (Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Oriĕno, 1995); Lydia F. Monogarova, "Arkhaichnyiĭ element pokhoronnogo obriada Pamirskikh Tadzhikov," *Polevye issledovaniia Instituta Ėtnografii* (1979), 155–164; and Ikromiddin Mukhiddinov, *Relikty doislamskikh obychaev i obriadov u zemledel'tsev zadadnogo pamira (XIX—nachalo XX v.)* (Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Donish, 1989). This approach is in particular evidence in studies of the *Chirāgh-rawshan*, a funerary ritual widely observed among the Ismailis of Central Asia that has often been interpreted in scholarship as a lightly Islamized Zoroastrian survival. For instance, see T. S. Kalandarov and A. A. Shoinbekov, "Pokhoronno-pominal'naia obriadnost' u pamirskikh narodov: Zabota o zhivlykh ili osveshchenie puti umershego," in *Vostokovedcheskie issledovaniia na postsovetskom prostranstve: Sbornik nauchnykh stateĭ pamiati professor Sergeia Petrovicha Poliakova* (Moscow: Moskovskii Gosudarstvennyiĭ Universitet im. M. V. Lomonosova, 2014), 163–177; and A. Z. Lashkariev, "Pominal'nye obriady ochishcheniia doma i vozhiganiia sviashchennoiĭ lampady u ismailitov Zapadnogo Pamira," *Ėtnograficheskoe Obozrenie* 1 (2008): 97–109; cf. Umed

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Mamadsherzodshoev, *Manobe'i sunnati "Charoghnavshan"* (Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Merosi Ajam, 2009).

(45.) For the catalog of this collection, see Bertel's and Bakoev, *Alfavitnyi katalog*.

(46.) Kh. N. Niazov, *Opisanie persidskikh i tadzhikskikh rukopisei Instituta Vostokovedeniia*, vol. 8: *Persoiazychnaia khudozhestvennaia literatura (XI-nachalo XIII v.)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979); and N. D. Miklukho-Maklaï, *Persidskie i Tadzhikskie rukopisi Instituta Narodov Azii: kratkiï alfavitnyi katalog*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Institut Narodov Azii, AN SSSR, 1964). Aleksandr A. Semenov, *Sobranie Vostochnykh Rukopisei Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoi SSR*, 11 vols. (Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Izvestiia Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoi SSR, 1952-87).

(47.) Wladimir Ivanow, *Ismaili Literature: A Biographical Survey* (Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1963); Ismail K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismaili Literature* (Malibu, CA: Undena, 1977); and Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

(48.) François de Blois, *Persian Literature: A Bibliographic Survey*, vol. 5: *Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 174-184.

(49.) Bertel's, *Piat' filosofskikh traktatov*.

(50.) Mamadsherzodshoev and Yayoi, *Documents from Private Archives*.

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