



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

“Anjoman-e Esma‘ili (Isma‘ili Society)”

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Research Institution

A research institution founded on 16 February 1946 in Bombay, India under the patronage of the third Aga Khan, Sultan Muhammad Shah (1294-1376/1877-1957), the 48th *imam* of the Nizari Ismailis. Its primary objective, according to the charter, has been ‘the promotion of independent and critical study of all matters connected with Ismailism’ with the stated policy of refraining from all religio-political missionary activities.

Role of Wladimir Ivanow

The Anjoman-e Esma‘ili grew out of the Islamic Research Association, founded in Bombay in 1933, also under the patronage of Aga Khan III. The person most responsible for the creation and promotion of both institutions was Wladimir Ivanow (1886-1970), a distinguished Russian scholar in Ismaili studies, who had left Russia soon after the October Revolution to spend the next forty years in India. Ivanow worked with his colleagues in the executive committee of the Association, notably its president Ali M. Mecklai and its secretary Asaf A. A. Fyzee, to give an Ismaili focus to the research and publications of the Association and eventually transformed it into the new Ismaili Society, with Mecklai continuing as its president.

Publication Series

With Ivanow as honorary editor and principal author, the Society established a publications series including texts, translations and monographs in Persian, Arabic, English and Gujarati. Ivanow’s close relations with non-Nizari Ismailis gave him access to carefully guarded private collections of Ismaili manuscripts, a large number of which he procured for the Society’s library. Indeed, Ivanow was the moving force of the Society, and it encountered difficulties after his departure for Tehran in 1959. By 1964 the publication series was discontinued and the Society itself was in effect absorbed by the Ismaili Association of Pakistan in Karachi.

Major Publications

Between 1946 and 1963 the Society published twenty-eight major items, twenty-two of which were contributed by Ivanow himself. The most important Ismaili texts, edited and translated for the first time by Ivanow include: Nasir Khusraw’s *Shish Fasl* (Bombay, 1949); Nasir al-Din Tusi’s *Rawdat al-taslim* (Bombay, 1950); *Pandiyat-i jawanmardi*,

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containing the sayings of the late 9th/15th century *imam* Mustansir bi'llah (Bombay, 1953); *Haft bab* of Abu Ishaq Quhistani, a Nizari author of the early 10th/16th century (Tehran, 1336 S/1957); *Fasl dar bayan-i shenakht-i imam*; the *Tasnifat*, attributed to Khayrkah Herati, a Nizari missionary of the mid-10th/16th century (Tehran, 1961); and some works by Shihab al-Din Shah (d. 1302/1884), the eldest son of Aga Khan II. The Society's latest publication, and Ivanow's final work, is *Ismaili Literature* (Tehran, 1963), a bibliographical survey of the extant Ismaili manuscript literature providing detailed information on some 900 titles.

Further Reading

'The Islamic Research Association,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1938, pp. 480-81.

A. A. A. Fyzee, *Islamic Research in Bombay*, Bombay, 1948, pp. 1 ff.

F. Daftary, 'W. Ivanow,' *Middle Eastern Studies* 8, 1972, pp. 241-44.