

Religion and Society in Soviet-Era Central Asia in Western Vision

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Abstract: After the Russian Revolution, the western part of Central Asia was integrated into the Soviet Union, while the eastern part was renamed East Turkestan or Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous region, and integrated into the People's Republic of China. Mongolia remained independent as a Soviet satellite state. Under the domination of the Soviet Union (1918-1991), significant changes can be witnessed in five Central Asian countries in terms of religion and social progress, compared with the period of nomadic domination. However, most scholars both in China and abroad have so far focused on studies of Central Asia in either medieval or modern times. Little research has been done on the Soviet-era Central Asia. The essay, mainly based on three books or collections by foreign scholars, explores religion and society in Soviet-era Central Asia in western vision.

1. Introduction

Historically, Central Asia is tightly connected with nomads and the Silk Road, once a crossroads of people, commerce and thoughts from Europe, West Asia, East Asia, and South Asia. As a midpoint of the Silk Road, Central Asia linked Muslim lands with Europe, India and China. Its position exacerbated the collision between tribalism, traditionalism and modernization. In the early Islamic era, the major residents in Central Asia were Iranian; with the expansion of Turk, it has become a homeland of Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tatars, Turkmen, Kyrgyz, and Uyghur, while Turkic languages largely took the place of Iranian. From the mid-19th century to the end of the 20th century, most of Central Asia was part of the Russian Empire. Later, during the period when Slavic peoples were in the majority in the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan remained the main residence for Russians and Ukrainians. In the Soviet-dominated regions of Central Asia, industrialization has been increased over the years and infrastructure gradually improved. However, oppressive rule of the Soviet authorities also restrained the development of local culture, leading to tens of millions of deaths in failed collectivization programs, ethnic tensions and environmental issues that have been hazed over this region for a long time. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the five countries of Central Asia gained national and ethnic independence. In their early years, none of these new republics were acknowledged as democratic countries. But in recent years, significant progress was seen in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia while making societies more open, unlike Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan where the Soviet-style, centralized and oppressive policies were retained.

Most of the studies on Central Asia by scholars at home and abroad have focused on the intense

ethnic conflicts and struggles in Central Asia during the Middle Ages, tribal issues under the rule of Turkic Seljuk in particular, or on the contemporary position and role of Central Asia in Eurasian relations and international security. Little attention has been paid to the Central Asia during the Soviet era which interlinked two focuses mentioned above. As far as I am concerned, an important reason is that the archives related to the Soviet period have not been fully declassified, making scholars have less access to first-hand materials and the research about Central Asia in the period of Soviet Union more creative. As Soviet archives have been made available to the public in recent years, several scholars have produced papers in this field, expanding related historical research. Mainly based on *ISLAM AND COLONIALISM Western perspectives on Soviet Asia* by Will Myer, *The History of the Central Asian Republics* by Peter L. Roudik and *Social and cultural change in Central Asia: the Soviet legacy* edited by Sevket Akyildiz and Richard Carlson, I clarify and summarize the religion and society in Soviet-era Central Asia in Western vision.

2. The Essence and Development of the “Muslim Threat Theory” in Soviet Central Asia as Written by Will Myer

During the Cold War, the endogenous strength, politics and society were the topics which attracted considerable attention from western policy makers and scholars. Even though most research in this field focused on Russia itself, non-Russian or non-Slavic regions were not completely ignored, especially the vast Soviet territory in Asia beyond Siberia, a region that includes today’s five countries in Central Asia that have played a role in geopolitics as a result of their geographical location. These groups of people are also the mere original population in the Soviet Union. This region was conquered by armed forces in a relatively short period of time, and was the only region other than Europe which owned sophisticated civilization before it was integrated with the Russian territory. This fact makes it different from the rest of the Soviet region, as both its inner social and political dynamics and conflicts between Central Asia and Russia make it possible that the national security of the Soviet Union can be threatened. Such conditions significantly influenced western strategists and policy makers, thus driving a number of analysts and scholars during the Cold War to concentrate on social and political issues that may affect Central Asia. For instance, Edward Allworth, an American scholar, in *Central Asia: a Century of Russian Rule*, showed his opinion that the role of Central Asia in geopolitics drove western scholars to do research in the society of this region.

2.1 Central-Asia Islamic Strength That is Overestimated

Until the end of 1980s, it was commonly recognized in the west that the Islamic rebellion in Central Asia would be the greatest threat to the Soviet Union. In *ISLAM AND COLONIALISM: Western perspectives on Soviet Asia*, Will Myer tried to interpret how these perspectives could be developed and sustained. It is believed by some people that the perspectives of colonialism and colonial dynamics inappropriately affected the understanding in the west about Central Asian politics. Myer has conducted deep research in the concept of colonialism and assessed the contribution in a decade made by significant scholars in this region, focusing on their understanding of Central Asia as a colony and the role Islam has played during the whole process. At the end of his book, he proposed a spectrum of thoughts, demonstrating how and why the consensus could be reached by exploring the political background and knowledge behind the development of these thoughts. He put forward that the book was written with the aim of researching whether the assumption made by the west that Islam was a radical force which threatened the security and stability of the Central Asia under the rule of the Soviet Union is reasonable.

According to Myer, starting from the assumption which has deep roots in the experience of

Britain and France and the fact that colony kept changing, the basic consensus about conflicts of interest between Central Asian and Soviet countries was developed on the basis of Russia as a country. With the development of the Cold War, such conflicts were increasingly recognized as a civilization evolution between two incompatible systems, Islam and Communism. Therefore, it made Islam widely regarded as the biggest threat towards Marxism-Leninism within the Soviet Union. In 1970s and 1980s, increasing number of people believed that Islamic fundamentalism was the main threat to the hegemony of the west. It was during this period, from the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967 to the success of khomeinism success in Iran, that a complete separation between European and Islamic civilizations could be fully interpreted as a concept and developed into an opinion that Russian people would finally rise up against colonism. However, after Mukden Incident, it is obvious that the Islam in Central Asia as a strength against colonism and Russian domination was overestimated. Soviet republics in Central Asia established the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is contrary to sovereign state, because of a proposal in Central Asia that the law of a republic should enjoy supremacy over that of the Union and a presupposition that the Soviet Union would remain. Kazakhstan was one of the republics which proposed to renegotiate on the Union's political structure from the first beginning, but did not proclaimed independent sovereignty until December 16, 1991. On March 17, 1991, few people voted for independence in the referendum in Uzbekistan. In comparison, Latvia declared independence from the Soviet Union on March 11.

2.2 The Essence of Central-Asia Islamic Threat

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the west had assumed “explosion of Islam” which, however, never happened. But during the post Soviet era, western policy makers have fretted about khomeini-like Islamic revolution in this strategically significant region. This can be proved by their reaction to Civil War in Tajikistan from 1992 to 1994. During that period, newspapers and analysts in the west, in the first instance, recognized it as the collision between “radical” Muslim and secularism. In fact, leaders of other Central Asian countries, notably Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov, were soon seeking credit from international financial institutions.

According to Myer, the concept of “Islamic threat” in Central Asia was totally designed by the west and for their interests, which distorted the true meaning of Islam in Central Asia. These institutions usually add extra content related to human rights and believe that the use of domestic repression is necessary to prevent the emergence of an Islamic revolution. From the perspective of Myer, a cycle can be seen in papers written by western scholars from 1890s to 1990s. They kept worrying about that Central Asia would not be subordinate to western powers in the international relationship, even making the conflicts between Russia and Britain much less necessary than the collision between “Islam” and “the west”. Under this condition, Central Asia and its ethnic groups were put aside while Central Asia was forced to become a battlefield of two ideologies. Traditionally, according to the description given by the west, the role played by Islam in Central Asia can merely be either assimilation or Islamic revolution. As to why Muslims are demanding support for an Islamic state and why such a state must be anti-Western, these have never been discussed. But, to some extent, it's definitely a biased in terms of academic writing. As Dzhabbarov, a Uzbek scholar once said that “The interaction of religious and ethnic factors involves the content and the role of basic social structures including economic, political, moral factors, the essence of which is determined by the state and development of each particular factor at a given time.”

2.3 Western Policy of Religion in Central Asia

In order to promote their own interests, western countries implemented two policies in Central

Asia. One is to incorporate the region into western economic order, the other is to support a political mechanism which can be used to suppress any anti-western Islamic strength in the whole society. Therefore, the majority of economy in this region was controlled by foreign enterprises, and state-owned capital has been privatized for seeking interests from national capital, making political elites who took charge of economic sectors benefited from it. In this way, the wealth gap was expanded and the rest of population in the society were marginalized and caught in the poverty trap. Meanwhile, the fear of Islam made the west support suppressive regimes in order to safeguard stability, even which may make things worse. Thus, from the perspective of the west, Gorbachev initiated the democratization of the Soviet Union and overcame the threat of “totalitarianism,” yet from the perspective of Central Asia, Gorbachev appears to have been a weak leader who eroded the structure of the state.

As Myer concluded, the west itself might be a victim of Islamic or counter-colonialism revolution, which was truly an expected destiny of the Soviet Union.

3. Social Circumstances and Development Outlook of Republics in Central Asia as Written by Roudik

The exact meaning of “Central Asia” remain one of debatable topics in academia, as it seems that any definition is controvertible. In *The History of the Central Asian Republics*, “Central Asia” as written by Roudik is the five previous Soviet nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan which have developed culture, economy and politics throughout the millennia, with many shared history blending along the way. Central Asia has been the birthplace of world civilizations since ancient times, serving as a bridge between Muslim and non-Muslim parts of Asia, a land inhabited by Buddhists, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Shamanists, Jews, and Christians, and a unique region where the histories of different ethnic groups are intertwined. For thousands of years, they have maintained their traditions in isolated steppes, deserts and mountains, struggling for their people and resisting foreign political and religious influences. In the 20th century, Soviet experimented social engineering in Central Asia, which made the region a model for rapid modernization.

Combining his own research on the legal and political development of Central Asia and his observations about how local people adapted their traditions to the changing political environment over the course of a century, Roudik describes in the book the process of establishing independent states in this region, analyzes the state formation and the relations with their neighbors. He also reviews the major viewpoints and theories of influential local scholars and public figures about legislation, politics and culture, presenting the point that only when a government suppresses the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and encourages secular development, will it be able to ensure the sustained stability of an independent state. The author tries to analyze in the book the history of ethnic groups in Central Asia and the path from their ancient times to the 21st century, in order to reveal the development trend of these five republics in Asia and the Middle East amid the post-Soviet era.

3.1 Soviet Political Policy in Central Asia

After the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917, the five countries survived a short semi-independent period, maintaining much of their traditional political patterns and most of early civilizations until they were incorporated into the USSR. The Republic is bounded with arbitrary borders rather than ethnic and linguistic status of the region. In 1930s, the traditional lifestyles in this region survived the collectivization of agriculture, the campaign of industrialization, frequent famine and attacks against religions and traditional ideology. Even though the leaders of Uzbekistan

and Kazakhstan became one of the USSR highest political bodies, they still failed to protect their republics from communist influence. The elites in Central Asia were subject to Soviet rule as much as those of other countries. The author contrasts the social development of Central Asia under Soviet rule and after the emergence of independent states as the USSR collapsed.

Roudik reiterates that Central Asia was strictly controlled by the USSR in several fields when it was part of that. All the important decisions of staff changes was made in Moscow on the principle of dual leadership. In accordance with that, the highest leader was native, however, supervised by a trustworthy Russian assistant who reported to Moscow. And in Moscow, most of the key posts were held by Russians or other Slavs. In 1962, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev established a short-lived Bureau of Central Asia, which served as a political and economic “coordinator” for the four Central Asian republics and a province in northern Kazakhstan. It limited the authority of republican institutions and acted as an intermediary between Moscow and the republics. Soon after Khrushchev stepped down from office, the bureau was closed in order to ensure a direct connection between the centre of the USSR and each republic. Moscow authorities did not interfere deeply in the internal affairs of the republics, only asking the local leaders to meet the programmed requirements of taxation and production supply and to act in accordance with the rules enabled by the Party. Local communist elites knew the manner of dealing with Moscow, assuring that all the republics had been comprehensively controlled. This situation did not end until the late 1980s. For Roudik, although the control of the Soviet authorities over the Central Asian republics varied slightly, “With some insignificant variations (depending on the political priorities of Moscow’s leaders during the Soviet period), all five republics were subjected to the relatively same industrial, agricultural, and social policies.”

3.2 Soviet Policy of Culture in Central Asia

All aspects of social and political life in Central Asia were subject to the Communist Party, cultural development was also influenced by its ideology, while their historical origins and national characteristics were declared backward. Russification became a major factor in the Soviet authorities' policies toward Central Asia, especially the policies of culture, which advanced the further Russification of the region mainly through the penetration of Russian language. The cornerstones of this policy were “the opening of new schools; mandatory elementary education for all pupils; the elimination of illiteracy; the expansion of publications in native languages; and the establishment of national theaters, universities, and research institutions”, all of which should be consistent with Moscow ideology and censored by the Soviet authorities. The government did not entirely ban Islam, nor did it explicitly forbid the practice of the religion, but in 1927 an all-out crackdown on the religion began. In this campaign, a large number of clerics were removed and believers were imposed strict penalties on, while most mosques were closed by the authorities.

With regard to this campaign, Shoshana Keller, an American scholar, believed that “The Soviet government attacked religion because its Marxist-Leninist ideology dictated an atheist. It also attacked because it could not tolerate any rival for power”.

3.3 Social Changes after the Independence of Five Countries in Central Asia

The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. The five Central Asian countries apparently unprepared for this event. Besides, with no tradition of national political institutions, they decided to retain and gradually reform the outdated Soviet political structure, and the Communist Party leaders renamed themselves as presidents. Currently, all governments have a strong executive branch with a president as head of state, and the Constitutions of all these countries give the president the power to rule by decree with constitutional effect. Although all countries had elections, none were

recognized as free and fair by international standards, especially with the fact that all five presidents, except for former Kyrgyzstan President Askar Akayev who stepped down due to the Tulip Revolution, were Soviet senior officials and basically implied the tendency of lifelong presidency. So none of these countries had a vibrant opposition party ready to take power in the next election. Meanwhile, none of them has a government which contained a truly independent judiciary and a legislature with the deliberation power to control the executive branch. In all these five countries, the rule of law has been interpreted as the rule of the president and law enforcement authorities. The gap between expectation and reality of the reform has increasingly widened, which aroused people's protests and local riots.

Communities in Central Asia have undergone dramatic changes in the post-communist era. They still have good prospects for participation in international trade, although it is severely limited and dependent on specific conditions. For instance, Turkmenistan is rich in oil and gas, which could contribute to its long-term stability; Uzbekistan has large population and considerable resources which could provide it a basis for steady development and security; and emerging civil society activities in Kyrgyzstan could promote entrepreneurship. The Muslim populations of all these republics claim to be the most moderate and tolerant people. Although there is inadequate regional cooperation, which theoretically could be strengthened by current ties among elites. Many U.S. officials have learned one common language (Russian) and have been trained in an ideology similar to that of the Soviet era with its emphasis on authoritarianism. And many are members of the Communist Party, so the tendency that all five republics would unite into one power is not unfounded.

According to Roudik, in this era, how deeply Central Asia participates in international markets and how fast society changes will depend more than ever on whether these countries can grasp more opportunities of international cooperation and those offered by foreign countries. Undoubtedly, he expects that their traditional culture will not get lost while Central Asia participates in international affairs and develops its foreign economy. Thus, it is clear that Roudik is still confident of the future of Central Asia.

4. Soviet Influence over Central-Asia Society in the Vision of Scholars

Social and cultural change in Central Asia: the Soviet Legacy is a collection by young scholars and researchers, focusing on how "the Soviet legacy" sustainably promotes social, cultural and political changes in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in modern times. These scholars come from different countries with various academic background. The purpose of this book is to review the impact brought by former USSR and Soviet institutions, formal and informal cultural, social, and political practices, values, and codes of conduct on the development of the Central Asian republics and how they keep influencing the region's social, cultural, and political systems. The research and analysis in the book provided a new perceptions and varied viewpoints about Soviet legacy inherited by those republics in Central Asia. As a study in terms of culture and society, the symposium involves significant subjects related to Russification and Socialization, as well as continuity of the thoughts and concepts cultivated in the Soviet era.

As far as I am concerned, compared with other works in the same field, the most distinctive feature of the book is that it offers varied approaches to research and covers a wide range of countries. Most other books have focused on the politics of USSR-dominated Central Asia and the economic transformations of the five countries after independence. But this book draws on the complexity of the Soviet legacy in the minds of local societies and indigenous peoples, focusing on subjects that have been somewhat marginalized in contemporary Soviet Central Asia studies, including national education, sociology, anthropology, music, literature and poem, film and the

construction of national identification, and problematic social transformation. By a multidisciplinary approach, this book assesses different organizations, and illustrates how and why the Soviet legacy affected the Central Asia with political, cultural, social and anthropological themes. Even though differential development can be seen in the five countries, they shared a 70-year history of the USSR era which even, to some extent, continue shaping their social and political life.

4.1 The Formation of Central-Asia Society in Soviet Period

The October Revolution in 1917 should be a great opportunity for the Bolsheviks to transform society and its people. As the editor states, “Seventy-year Soviet rule did not disappear, just as traditional culture and customs remained under Soviet rule.” The purpose of Soviet socialization and cultural assimilation was to establish a common civic culture in all the institutions and the minds of people. However, a multiculturalism has been enshrined in the Constitution, facilitating the process of development of local folk culture, dress, music and sports, even though Soviet leaders required people to construct a centralized country. Since 1991, we have seen the social and cultural changes in Central Asia being achieved in a gradual and scrappy process, as each country made these happen in its own way. It is the result of two factors: The first is the governments of western countries and international organizations who expected that Central Asian countries would copy the western model and realize globalization. In fact, although these countries in Central Asia have participated in the political and economic systems of globalization in some degree, they did never desert their own history. The second is that these republics have not drawn new national or social blueprint, even when they achieved independence. Therefore, when they propose any blueprint, the republics often look back to seek what they have known before, which is the Soviet model.

According to the editors, the legacy of social changes under the Communist rule can be seen as shaping Central Asian societies in such beneficial ways as mass literacy and education, industrialization, urbanization, secularization and gender equality. But the legacy is also proved controversial because of, for example, Marxism-Leninism, Russification and political centralization. Although Marxism-Leninism exists in reality in these republics no more, many other controversial legacies remain at least in public discussion, such as the Aral Sea disaster, contamination of nuclear test sites and the environment, and water management issues. Since the USSR collapsed in December 25, 1991 after president Mikhail Gorbachev resigned, the five republics have developed along different tracks in political, economic and cultural terms. As they were conquered either as a whole or separately by great powers, however, each of the republics is a compound of both indigenous and heterogeneous culture and features.

4.2 Soviet Factors in Post-Soviet Society of Central Asia

The book could be divided into two main parts: first, from 1924 to 1991, the USSR controlled Central Asian countries in several fields including education, architecture, economy and women’s rights; second, since 1991, the Soviet legacy has brought influence to independent republics in culture, society and public opinions, etc.

To a large extent, this book demonstrates the influence of Soviet control on the five Central Asian countries after joining the USSR by describing Soviet factors in their social development during the post-Soviet era. Christopher Schwartz, at the end of the essay, takes people of Turkmenistan as an example and points out that the most striking issue is the difference between the older and younger generations. Unlike in the West, younger generations are not distinguished from older people by the way they behave, dress or spend their free time, etc. The notable difference

between them is the way they perceive the world. For younger people, Turkmenistan means everything; but for older ones, Turkmenistan should be part of the USSR where they were born and grew up. The latter know something about Ukraine, have been in Moscow, used to spend their holidays in Crimea or serve in Poland or East Germany. While chatting with younger ones in Turkmenistan, it is noticed that they have no idea about the world beyond Turkmenistan, which indicates that with the influence of the USSR Communist culture they have little independent thinking. What's worse is that they are wholeheartedly and blindly believing in social policies, and this belief does not come from fear or enforcement. Surprisingly, it is easier to communicate with those who can more freely criticize the government, and those elder people are more willing to talk to foreigners. This makes Turkmenistan an exception in this region amid the post-Soviet era, because, generally speaking, young people are more open, inclusive and more eager to communicate with foreigners. So Christopher proposes a novel viewpoint that "duality seems to be the crucial paradox in the relationship between Central Asian people and the year of 1991, which can especially demonstrated by their feelings toward the elderly... as was the case in 1991: as the reality of one generation will lay the foundation for another one, the elder ones could become a younger generation."

Although education in Central Asia stagnated in the 1980s, as Seveit Akhildez writes, in 1980s, the serious challenge to political education in schools came from the widespread questions on the state ideology by the people who faced the real life. The Soviet ideology had become stagnant and no response to people's needs and interests has been made. A further increase of unemployment exacerbated this problem. In the USSR period, the aim of its curriculum has been questioned by the masses.

But it is undeniable that the Soviet Union has made contribution to the educational development of the five Central Asian countries. Promoted by Marxism-Leninism and its ideology, the system of education for all is a remarkable success achieved by the Communist Party in its 70-year domination in Central Asia. The Soviet authorities' policy of literacy campaigns and basic education for all in this region was so fruitful that illiteracy was virtually eliminated, according to the census in 1979. And even though the republics are part of the USSR, Russian became the common language of inter-ethnic communication and one of the two official languages of each republic in order to increase its usage. Starting from the first grade, children were taught Russian; professional education was also taught in Russian; all official documents issued by the republican authorities were published in two languages, Russian and the native language of the respective republic. By the time when the USSR's domination came to an end, almost half of Kazakhs and Uzbeks were fluent in Russian; in industrially underdeveloped countries like Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, one-third of the population spoke Russian in everyday life. So the unitary educational system offered a significant channel for the USSR to cultivate Soviet features and citizens. The Soviet authorities pursued an educational policy aimed at preparing young people for their adult obligations, cultivating qualified and vocationally trained workers, supervisors, managers and Party cadres, and helping to sustain industrialization and social transformation. It was in the classrooms, lecture halls, and factories of Central Asia that the authorities fostered the values and norms of socialist citizenship among the people in Central Asia.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the study of religion and society in Soviet Central Asia is of dual significance. It demonstrates both the change of Central Asian society during the USSR era and the Soviet factors existing in the development of Central Asia amid the post-Soviet times, which provides a new direction for the study of Central Asia and a new perspective to expect its development. It has been

evidenced that, even about 30 years have passed since the collapse of the USSR, the countries in Central Asia have still been unavoidably affected by the Soviet Union in varying degrees. It deserves our attention. Moreover, During my research, it is found that scholars in China have paid little attention to religious and social development in Soviet Central Asia, so there's little achievements made in this field; scholars abroad, even though they have made deeper study in this term compared with the last century, mostly focus on the changes in Central Asia amid the post-Soviet era. They have attempted to review “the Soviet Legacy” in Central Asia to analyze Bolshevik rule in this region during that period. However, little research was done directly in its social and religious conditions. On the contrary, the focus was the educational and economic policies of the USSR in this area.

As far as the three representatives of books in this field are concerned, *Social and cultural change in Central Asia: the Soviet legacy* is of higher comprehensiveness, covering more aspects and broader. But as it is jointly written by several scholars, each chapter is incomplete and lacking in depth, a feature of which is that in the study of the development of various fields in Central Asia during the Soviet period, each essay focuses on only one or two fields in one country with less connectivity among the five. It could of course be a feature and drawback of the collection of papers. Therefore, relatively speaking, *ISLAM AND COLONIALISM Western perspectives on Soviet Asia* by Will Maier, as it concentrates on the development of Islam in the Soviet Union and contemporary Central Asia, is the most profoundly researched and enlightening among the three books.

Domestic scholars have made fewer thematic studies about Central Asia during the USSR period, usually regarding the development of this period as part of general history of Central Asia, such as *History of Countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia* edited by Mr. Jin Hui. Probably due to the involvement of too many countries and editors, the book offers just a shallow introduction about the five countries in Central Asia. Each country is briefed on basic conditions, politics, economy, education, military, cultural education and science and technology, while its reliability and accuracy are ensured by the use of considerable research data.

Generally speaking, the research in this field is of much shallower depth than the study of Central Asia in Turkic Seljuk-era and modern times. In other words, the study on religion and society in Soviet Central Asia can be much more innovative, which is certainly a good thing for the future generation of scholars in studies about Central Asia.

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