

THE NEW APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ORIENTAL HISTORY
BASED ON THE SCHOLARLY
HERITAGE OF NICOLAI IVANOV

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The International Congress of Asian and North African Studies is the permanently acting forum which gives the opportunity to summarize the achievements of Orientalism, to sum up some results and define the outlooks for further research. That is why we consider it quite relevant to make a report concerning the scholarly heritage of the prominent Russian Orientalist professor Nicolai Alekseyevitch Ivanov who died in 1994.

N. A. Ivanov was not only the best contemporary Russian historian of the Arab countries, but also one of most prominent researchers of the Arab Maghreb and Arab-Ottoman society in the World. His work with the sources was irreproachable. His Russian language from the point of beauty and fascination belongs more to the historical prose.

Owing to N. A. Ivanov "Studies on Tunisia" arose in Russia as a special branch of the Arab studies. Among the numerous research on Tunisia, the most significant is his monograph "The Crisis of the French protectorate in Tunisia" (1971). This is the most solid work about Tunisia in the world literature. In this book the author showed the precise understanding of the peculiarities of Tunisia and Maghreb in general, wrote the "encyclopedia" of Tunisian life in the 1920's and 1930's, and marked in it everything bright and typical that was most interesting. Even now when a quarter of a century has passed the monograph is a model of historical research. Nevertheless, Nicolai Alekseyevitch was interested in the study and interpretation of all the periods of Tunisian history in equal degrees, beginning from the ancient times.

The important place in the scholarly heritage of N. A. Ivanov belongs to the research on the social aspects of the traditional Islamic society. Since the end of the 1970's he develops the concept of Arab-Ottoman feudalism based on his personal investigations in Tunisia, France and Germany. He was exploring in detail the influence of the political system and social institutions of the Ottoman empire on the Arabian society, the impact of Islam not as a religion but as a system of ideology, world outlook which determines the way of life. Comparing Christianity and Islam, he discovered that they had incompatible preconditions of religious consciousness. He considered Islam not reformed religion in principle. Recognizing the great importance of religion, N. A. Ivanov sharply opposed the clerical intolerance and obscurantism of all fanatics, let they be Catholics, Islamic *faqīhs*, Šī'ites of the Fātimids, moralists of the Almohads, or scholastic marabouts.

The research of the Arabian society under the domination of the Ottoman dynasty led N. A. Ivanov to a new understanding of the peculiarities of the Arab-Ottoman community in the 16th-17th centuries. He came to the conclusion that the legislation code (Ottoman *šarī'a*) worked out in these centuries strengthened a rather rigid system of social and economic relations which could be defined as the "Eastern feudalism". All this astonishing rigidity and stability of these relations he explained by the absence of "the mechanism of self-development".

Nikolai Alekseyevitch was an expert in not only the new and contemporary history of Maghreb's countries, but also of the Arabian Middle Ages. In particular, his article about Ibn *Haldūn* (1956) and also his work "Free and taxable tribes of Northern Africa in the 14th century" (1963) confirm this fact. In the second work the author for the first time set the problem about the different social functions of the tribes, first of all, depending on their status in the structure of state power, and second, according to their ethnic origins, wealth etc. N. A. Ivanov proved that it is more correct and accurate to characterize it by the Arabian landowning system with the help of Islamic law terminology, and not by using "Marxist" determinations like "landowner", "peasant", "fraternal", and so on.

The "Arab-Ottoman period" in the creative work of N. A. Ivanov was completed by the magnificent work named "The Ottoman conquest of the Arab countries 1516-1574" (1984). The monumental research work is devoted to one of the most interesting periods in Turkish history, when the mighty Ottoman Empire was being created. Such questions as the political history of the Arab countries during the Renaissance period, the internal and external reasons for the creation of the Ottoman empire, the spread of the Turkish influence in the Arabic world and the role of the Ottoman empire as the leader of the Arabic peoples in their fight against foreign enslavement are investigated in the monograph. On the basis of the wide data material, he tells about the fall of the Mameluk empire and post-Almohad states of North Africa and their "step-by-step" joining the Ottoman Empire. The process of the formation of the empire is considered in detail the book and it is especially stressed that it was not a conquest in its traditional meaning. It was rather a change of power related to the Arab peoples' strive for a social renewal, as they considered the Ottoman empire to be a guarantee for their liberation.

The main ideas and conclusions made by N. A. Ivanov in his book "The Ottoman conquest of the Arab countries" (1984) were subsequently developed by the author in his further works. Thus, for the monograph "The Arab World. Three decades of Independent Development" (1990), he wrote a chapter on the modernization of the Arab countries and the changes in their classic structure. He considered that: "The more the level of modernization is the quicker the process of decomposition of the traditional sector stuck in the spiritual immobility goes" and thus the material and cultural level of the Arab society is raised. Still the striking exception to this rule are the oil-rich countries of the Arab region, where the standard of living of the

population is much higher than the real level of their modernisation. The process of modernization itself strongly depends on the chosen model of development in one or another country. N. A. Ivanov examined the problem of opposition between the city as a centre of modernization and the village as a reserve of the traditional sector in the Arab East. But the scientist warned that traditionalism should not be interpreted too simply, because it wears modern clothes and has assimilated new forms of expression.

We can talk much about N. A. Ivanov's scientific contribution to the investigation of the theory of agricultural relations and the European colonization of the East of the political and historical role of Islam. Especially, we would also like to underline his research on the genesis of capitalism in the Arab World, where he put forward the idea about the incompatibility (multisided relations) of Islam and capitalism. During his last years of life the problem of the analysis of Eastern despotism particularly attracted his attention. Some of his ideas which seemed too bold and debatable before, now in many aspects have found confirmation. Apparently the same fate awaits his investigations concerning the civilizational concept and the problem of East and West in World History.

N. A. Ivanov tried to widen the topics of former research, he was interested in the problems of the world and Russian history, and did his best to find answers to many questions which have not been solved until now yet. He strived for the democratic renewal of the concept of our historical science.

In conclusion, it is necessary to underline the merits of Prof. Robert Landau who has published some articles about the creative path of N. A. Ivanov. One of these articles, and also the full list of Prof. Dr. Ivanov's publications which can be found in the book "Oriental Studies in Moscow" devoted to the memory of N. A. Ivanov. This book is introduced by the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and by the Institute of Asian and African Countries. There are 25 articles of great scientists in this book. They are written on different topics and show the many-sided creative potential of contemporary Orientalism.

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