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The Territories of Philosophy in Modern Historiography

Edited by

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edizioni di pagina

This book has been published thanks to the support of the European Commission (FP7 Seventh Framework Programme), in the framework of the ERC-2013-CoG 615045: MEMOPHI (Medieval Philosophy in Modern History of Philosophy). It is available on line at <https://www.brepolonline.net/doi/book/10.1484/M.ADARG-EB.5.117384>

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ISBN (print): 978-2-503-58468-3
ISBN (ebook): 978-2-503-58469-0
DOI: 10.1484/M.ADARG-EB.5.117384

D/2019/0095/96

Finito di stampare nel marzo 2019
da Services4Media s.r.l. - Bari

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Iva Manova*

The Creation of Philosophical Nations under the Soviet Regime: “Restoring the Historical Truth” about the Peoples of Asia in Philosophy

I. Introduction

This essay focuses on the interplay between criticism of Eurocentrism in philosophical historiography and patriotic discourse in history of philosophy, both of which emerged in the Soviet context in the late 1940s. The examples and the specific analysis are related to the interpretation of Arabic, or Islamic, philosophy, which we find of particular interest for at least two reasons. First, because of the direct points of contact of Arabic philosophy and Islamic culture in general with ‘Western’ philosophy and culture. Since these two traditions are historically interlinked, this makes the task of determining the place of Arabic philosophy with regard to the dividing line between ‘East’ and ‘West’ a serious challenge. Another reason is that Islam was the traditional religion of the peoples of the Central Asian Soviet republics and that the interpretation of Arabic, or Muslim, philosophy had long been conditioned by the political agenda of the Soviet government in those areas.

Soviet criticism of Eurocentrism in philosophical historiography was closely connected with the development of the national histories of philosophy of the individual Soviet nations. For each nation, the elaboration of its history was entrusted to the members of research centres created expressly for that purpose. As regards the study of medieval Arabic philosophy, whose Eastern branch from the 1950s onwards began to be called ‘philosophy of the peoples of Central Asia in the epoch of feudalism’, it was assigned to researchers working at the national Academies of Sciences in Tashkent¹ and Dushanbe², as well as in Baku, Alma-Ata

* This article is the result of research work carried out at the Centre for Advanced Study (CAS) Sofia in the framework of the Advanced Academia Programme (2017-2018). An earlier version appeared in CAS Working Paper Series, Issue 11/2019.

1. In 1940, the Uzbek branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences was established, and in 1943 the foundations of the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR were laid. The Institute of Philosophy and Law was founded in 1958.

2. In 1932, in accordance with a decision of the Soviet government, the Tajik bureau of the USSR

and other centres. It was conducted alongside the analysis of the current state of things in philosophy of the North African, Near, Middle and Far Eastern countries, which was a prerogative of the Division of Philosophy and Sociology of the Countries of the East at the Institute of Philosophy of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow. This Division was founded in 1960 on the initiative of Sergei Grigorian, who became its first Head³.

As far as the research traditions are concerned, Soviet studies of medieval Arabic philosophy were connected to Russian pre-revolutionary Orientology (*vostokovedenie*). However, the relation between Russian Orientology and the later Soviet historiography of Eastern philosophies, or Philosophical Orientology (*filosofskoe vostokovedenie*) was not direct. On the one hand, the very tradition of Orientology was strongly affected by Stalin's terror in 1936-1938⁴. And on the other hand, Russian Orientologists were specialists in Eastern languages, literatures, religions, history and archaeology but did not normally engage in history of philosophy. Yet there was also an affinity between the two schools. The first post-war generation of Soviet specialists in Eastern philosophies learned almost everything they needed to know about the cultures they explored, about the context in which the authors they studied had lived, from the works of Orientologists, above all Vasiliĭ Bartol'd (1869-1930). His publications on the history of Turkestan and on the history of Islam were the starting point for virtually every new venture in the field, at least until the 1960s. In addition, when the Division of Philosophy and Sociology of the Countries of the East at the Institute of Philosophy in Moscow was founded, philosophers and Orientologists (i.e., philologists and historians) started working together there in order to establish and develop the new Soviet discipline of Philosophical Orientology⁵.

Academy of Sciences was created in Stalinabad (today Dushanbe). In 1940, it became a branch of the USSR Academy, and in 1951, the Academy of Sciences of the Tajik SSR was founded.

3. Sergei Nikolaevich Grigorian (1920-1974) was a specialist in Persian philosophy and culture. His doctoral thesis (1951) was devoted to the history of the Bahá'í faith in Iran. His thesis for obtaining the *Doktor Nauk* degree (a higher doctoral degree equivalent to the German *Habilitation*), discussed in 1965, was entitled *Medieval Philosophy in Central Asia, Iran and the Arab East* and published under the title *Medieval Philosophy of the Peoples of the Near and Middle East* (GRIGORIAN 1966). Grigorian was for many years the permanent Head of the Division of Philosophy and Sociology of the Countries of the East at the Institute of Philosophy. The 'mission' of that Centre was comprehensive and systematic study of the philosophical and socio-political thought of the countries of Asia and Africa. Under Grigorian's leadership, the members of the Division explored the history and the status of philosophical thought in the Arab countries, Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan, China, Japan, Indonesia and Africa.

4. Cf. TOLZ 2011, pp. 165-166.

5. Cf. AA.VV. 2005, p. 4.

II. The ‘philosophical thought of the peoples of Central Asia in the epoch of feudalism’ defined as a field of study

The first Soviet publications on medieval Arabic philosophy date back to the 1940s⁶. By the end of the following decade, their number grew considerably and the official Soviet reading of the medieval ‘philosophy of the peoples of Central Asia’ was established. It was elaborated as part of a centralised campaign the aim of which was to transform philosophical historiography into a vehicle of patriotic propaganda. As a result of that campaign, the view about the particularly important place of Russian philosophy in the history of human thought was worked out, and then this high historical evaluation was extended to the national philosophies of all the other Soviet peoples. The new role of philosophical historiography exclusively as a means of political propaganda found full expression in the two-volume *Studies on the History of the Philosophical and Social-Political Thought of the Peoples of the USSR* (1955-1956), edited by six scholars, among whom the prominent Communist Party leader Mikhail Iovchuk (1908-1990)⁷. Published shortly after Joseph Stalin’s death in 1953, this work documents the state of Soviet historical-philosophical research at the time, as a hostage to Stalinist ideology. The introduction to the work contains a quotation from a speech Joseph Stalin delivered in 1948 before a delegation representing the Finnish government:

“The Soviet people believe that every nation, be it large or small, has its typical features, its own specifics, which belong only to it and which other nations do not possess. These features are the contribution that each nation makes to the common treasury of world culture and by which each nation adds to and enriches the latter. In this sense, all nations – both small and large – are in the same position, and each nation is equivalent to any other nation”⁸.

Referring to the so-called international principle of Soviet ideology, the editors of the *Studies* argued that their mission was actually to “restore the histor-

6. As early as in 1943, Orientologist Timofei Rainov dedicated his *Great Scientists of Uzbekistan (9th-11th century)*, to al-Ḥwārazmī, al-Fārābī, al-Bīrūnī and Avicenna (RAINOV 1943). In 1945, Aleksandr Semenov published his biographical sketch of Avicenna, which today is a bibliographical rarity (it is easier to find the second edition: see SEMENOV 1953). A 1948 article of Bogoutdinov describes and analyses the *Book of Knowledge*, Avicenna’s most important Persian work (see BOGOUTDINOV 1948). There were almost no publications on al-Fārābī, al-Bīrūnī or Avicenna prior to that date. Two articles in commemoration of Avicenna appeared in the bulletin of the Academy of Sciences in 1938, on the occasion of the nine hundredth anniversary of his death (cf. BERTEL’S 1938 and BORISOV 1938). At that time, however, scholars were not expected to adhere strictly to any normative interpretation and neither author made use of the historiographical pattern and the terminology that were later imposed on researchers in the field.

7. Cf. VASETSKII / IOVCHUK ET AL. 1955-1956.

8. VASETSKII / IOVCHUK ET AL. 1955-1956, I, pp. 14-15 (*The Speech of Comrade J.V. Stalin at the Dinner in Honour of the Finnish Government Delegation on April 7, 1948*).

ical truth” about the role of the peoples of Eastern Europe and Asia, especially the Soviet peoples, for the advancement of the “philosophy of all the peoples of the world”⁹. As stated by Iovchuk and his colleagues, that role had been neglected and adulterated by “bourgeois” historians of philosophy for centuries. Now the time had come for each of the Soviet peoples to receive due attention as an active participant in the advancement of human thought. The *Studies* were the first large-scale attempt to ‘internationalise’ Soviet philosophical historiography and, in particular, to deal with the philosophy of the republics of Central Asia. The interpretation of the philosophical thought of the peoples of Central Asia in this work was generic and too simplistic, but it proved to be important in view of subsequent developments in Soviet research in the field. This importance was due to two reasons. First, because the use of the term ‘philosophical thought of the peoples of Central Asia in the age of feudalism’ to indicate what in the ‘bourgeois’ tradition is known as the Eastern ‘branch’ of medieval Arabic philosophy, was introduced for the first time in Soviet historiography precisely in the *Studies*. And secondly, because with the publication of this work, the stylisation of al-Hwārazmī (c. 780-c. 850), al-Fārābī (c. 872-950/1), al-Bīrūnī (973-1050), Avicenna (c. 980-1037), and other medieval scholars as national philosophers of the peoples of the Central Asian republics was ratified and became part of the Soviet historiographical canon¹⁰.

In this way, *Studies on the History of the Philosophical and Social-Political Thought of the Peoples of the USSR* marked the first stage of a comprehensive and long-term project to develop the national philosophical historiographies of the Central Asian Soviet peoples. It is no coincidence that the writing of the sections on Central Asia involved Aloutdin Bogoutdinov (1911-1970) and Ibrakhim Muminov (1908-1974), both of whom were prominent Communist Party leaders in their countries (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan respectively) and academics who enjoyed great institutional authority. Muminov worked as Dean of the Faculty of History and Head of the Department (*kafedra*) of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy of the Uzbek State University. Later he participated in the creation and was appointed the first Director of the Institute of Philosophy and Law of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences¹¹. Bogoutdinov was one of the founding fathers and then Head of the Philosophy Division of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, as well as of the Philosophy Department (*kafedra*) of the Tajik State University¹². The establishment of the national philosophical historiographies of their countries was also mainly due to the activity of those two academics. Needless to say, they still

9. VASETSKII / IOVCHUK ET AL. 1955-1956, I, p. 15.

10. Cf. VASETSKII / IOVCHUK ET AL. 1955-1956, I, pp. 82-96.

11. Cf. KHAIRULLAEV 1978, p. 31. On Muminov’s life and work, see SADYKOV 1976, 1978.

12. On Bogoutdinov’s life and work, see ASHUROV / DINORSHOEV 1980 and MULLOBOEVA 2016, pp. 16-25.

penned chapters and sections in the six-volume general *History of Philosophy* edited by Mikhail Dynnik (1896-1971)¹³.

Muminov and Bogoutdinov were no exception in this respect among those who worked on the *Studies*: most of the authors of chapters in the *Studies* wrote for the general six-volume *History of Philosophy* as well. In a sense, the *Studies* prepared the grounds for the general *History*. Its first volume came out in 1957, but the plan, the structure and the methodological tenets of the entire project had been outlined long before that date. They were devised in the late 1940s as a result of the infamous ‘philosophical discussions’ of those years which led, among other consequences, to the ban on the third volume of the earlier Soviet general *History of Philosophy* (1940-1943) and the interruption of that editorial undertaking¹⁴. Accordingly, the methodological requirements applied in the post-war work and expounded in the introduction to it were the fruit of the intellectually very restrictive circumstances of the period of late Stalinism¹⁵. In the subsequent decades, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, these requirements were gradually ‘relativised’, the historiographic practice increasingly deviated from them, but in the six-volume *History of Philosophy* they were followed strictly. In particular, along with Engels’ view of the two lines – materialistic and idealistic – in the history of thought and Lenin’s concept of partisanship (*partiinnost*) in philosophy, Stalin’s principles of patriotism and internationalism were also implemented. In the years after the war, not only philosophical historiography, but the humanities and culture in general were governed by these principles, which emerged in response to the ‘enemy ideologies’ of Eurocentrism (seen as the ideology of the Western bourgeoisie and of colonialism) and cosmopolitanism (seen as the tribune of American imperialism).

The most noticeable result of the application of the methodological tenets set out in the introduction to the *History of Philosophy* edited by Dynnik consists in the significant differences in the structure of this work compared to the first volume of the unfortunate general *History of Philosophy* published in the 1940s¹⁶. One of the novelties is that extensive sections on ancient Chinese and Indian philos-

13. See DYNNIK / IOVCHUK ET AL. 1957-1965. Still one of them, Bogoutdinov, together with Sheidabek Mamedov, co-authored the chapter on Central Asian philosophy in the epoch of feudalism in the first volume of the *History of Philosophy in the USSR* (cf. BOGOUTDINOV / MAMEDOV 1968).

14. Between 1940 and 1943, the first three of the seven volumes planned were published (ALEKSANDROV / BYKHOVSKII ET AL. 1940-1943). Regarding the fate of this edition and the banning of the third volume, see, among numerous studies, BATYGIN / DEVIATKO 1993 as well as the memoirs of Vasilii Sokolov (SOKOLOV 2016, pp. 24-33). From 1943 to 1953 work on the project continued under the leadership of Georgii Aleksandrov (1908-1961). Mikhail Dynnik was in charge as the Editor-in-Chief of the general *History of Philosophy* (DYNNIK / IOVCHUK ET AL. 1957-1965) from 1953 to the moment when the last volume came out.

15. KEDROV / IOVCHUK / DYNNIK 1957.

16. Cf. ALEKSANDROV / BYKHOVSKII ET AL. 1940-1943, I, pp. 490-491.

ophies are included here¹⁷. Another really remarkable ‘novelty’ is how the task of developing the national historiographies of the Soviet peoples is reflected in the reading of medieval Arabic philosophy. In the first volume of the pre-war *History of Philosophy*, the examination of medieval thought (“Philosophy of Feudal Society”) is distributed in chronological order in the chapters “Historical Preconditions of Medieval Philosophy”, “Early Scholastics”, “Arabic Medieval Philosophy”, “Jewish Medieval Philosophy”¹⁸ and “Late Scholastics”¹⁹. In the new, post-war project, the material is organised by geographic regions and nations so that what is labelled as “Philosophy of the Peoples of Central Asia” (whose emblem is Avicenna) is discussed separately from “Philosophy in the Arab Countries and Jewish Philosophy” (with Averroes as its main representative). These two chapters are part of distinct sections entitled “Philosophical and Sociological Thought of the Peoples of the USSR” and “Philosophical and Sociological Thought of the Orient”, respectively²⁰. A curious outcome of this choice is that in the post-war work the ideas of Averroes are expounded before Avicenna’s, although the Andalusian thinker lived a century later than the Persian polymath.

The tendency to deal with medieval ‘Central Asian philosophy’ separately from its Western counterpart persisted also in subsequent decades. The continuity between the philosophy of Avicenna and of Averroes was never questioned. However, the two greatest philosophers of the Muslim world were approached by two parallel branches of Soviet scholarship. Averroes was an object of study principally in the historiography of Western medieval philosophy. Research on Avicenna, on the contrary, became the prerogative of the historians of Central Asian philosophy. This division was not exclusive, yet it was clearly marked, especially in the period considered here²¹. In general, in the space of the four decades between the 1950s and the 1980s, hundreds of both popular and scholarly works on the life and thought of Avicenna, al-Fārābī and other Central Asian authors were published in the Soviet Union, mainly in the Russian, Uzbek, and Tajik languages²². Of utmost importance among these publications were the translations. They covered practically the entire corpus of Avicenna’s works in the different fields of

17. Cf. DYNNIK / IOVCHUK ET AL. 1957-1965, I, p. 716.

18. The word commonly used in Russian editions to denote Jewish philosophy is *evreiskaia*, i.e., ‘Hebrew’.

19. Cf. ALEKSANDROV / BYKHOVSKII ET AL. 1940-1943, I, p. 491.

20. Cf. DYNNIK / IOVCHUK ET AL. 1957-1965, I, p. 716.

21. To give but one example, Sergei Grigorian dedicated his booklet *Great Thinkers of Central Asia* to al-Fārābī, al-Bīrūnī and Avicenna (cf. GRIGORIAN 1958). This was followed by *Great Thinkers of the Arab East*, dedicated to Avempace, Ibn Ṭufayl and Averroes (cf. GRIGORIAN 1960).

22. For an overview of that literature, see KNYSH 1996 and the introductory chapter in STEPANIANTS 1994 (pp. 1-6), as well as VAN DER ZWEERDE 1997, p. 138, and the relative references. As far as the period examined in this article is concerned (1950s-1960s), very useful are the analysis of the state of the question about the Soviet studies on al-Fārābī in KHAIRULLAEV 1967, pp. 76-87 and the relative bibliography (KHAIRULLAEV 1967, pp. 340-353). Around the end of the Soviet epoch, West-

knowledge, including his monumental *Canon of Medicine*, which was published in the Russian and Uzbek languages from 1954 to 1960²³.

III. Criticism of Eurocentrism in the historiography of Arabic philosophy

In the 1940s-1950s, the most important statements were formulated, which together constituted the specific Soviet reading of the role and place of medieval Arabic philosophy in the culture of the Islamic world, on the one hand, and in the development of philosophy through time, on the other. The role of philosophy in medieval Islamic culture is eloquently characterised by Parviz Shad in his 1958 article *Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī, Iranian Materialist and Early Medieval Atheist* as follows:

“Philosophy [in the era of Rāzī] became the banner of the opposition. It set itself against the Talmudism of the Hadith and Shariah followers, against the sophistry of Asharite theology, and against the irrationalism of the Sufis. Philosophy was a fervent champion of science and scientific research, free-thinking and religious tolerance. Performing such noble tasks, philosophy at that time certainly was a most militant participant in the ideological struggle and it was not without reason that its adherents were subjected to fierce persecution. Significant in this regard are the lives of Rāzī, Ibn Sīnā, ‘Umar Ḥayyām and other thinkers who experienced many misfortunes in the name of their convictions. [...] Philosophy served as a convenient haven for materialism and atheism, it was the ideology of the most enlightened, advanced part of the feudal intelligentsia, consisting of people coming from the folk. In those conditions, it played a revolutionary role, opposing orthodox Islam, which served as the worldview of the Caliphate”²⁴.

As Gul’shat Shaimukhambetova maintains in a 1998 overview of the studies of Arabic philosophy, in the 1950s-1960s, Soviet specialists emphasised the rationalistic and anti-religious aspects of medieval Arabic thought and strived to show that, in general, it was much less dependent on mysticism and theological ideas than claimed by many Western authorities in the field²⁵. From the late 1940s to the

ern bibliographies took account of titles in Russian for the first time: see BUTTERWORTH 1988 and JANSSENS 1991.

23. See AVICENNA 1954-1960.

24. SHAD 1958, p. 77. The author, who was from Iran, studied at the Academy of Social Sciences of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow and in 1957 defended a PhD thesis on *The Philosophy of Ibn Sīnā*.

25. Shaimukhambetova points out Max Horten, Richard Walzer, Georges Anawati and Franz Rosenthal as the scholars who, along with their students, identified the problem of the relationship between faith and disbelief as the central theme of Arabic philosophy. While acknowledging the importance of this problem, the representatives of the Soviet school tried to suggest another emphasis. For them, medieval Arabic philosophers’ main concern lay with the “differentiation between the fields

late 1960s, philosophical historiography in the Soviet Union depended entirely on politics and ideology. And yet, according to Shaimukhambetova, despite the ideological restraints and the concessions to political opportunism, what was produced during that period, was not worthless. In particular, the Soviet approach made it possible for the elements of atheism, freedom of thought and scientific interest in nature, “actually present” in medieval Arabic philosophy, to come to the fore²⁶.

With regard to the evaluation of the ‘historical mission’ of Arabic, or Islamic, philosophy, Soviet scholars typically accused Western scholarship of being Eurocentric. In their eyes, Western Orientologists and historians of philosophy underestimated the originality of the Arabic tradition in philosophy and reduced its role in history solely to that of a depository and transmitter of the heritage of other cultures, denying its specific contribution to the progress of human thought and science. This proved to be a persistent line of attack on ‘bourgeois’ historiography throughout the entire post-war period. The political, not to say opportunistic, functionality of this critique, however, led to the fact that it was most often formal and only apparent. The authors confined themselves to bare statements regarding ‘bourgeois’ historiography, often without mentioning names, and used all the same formulas to qualify it. This applied both to collective publications performing strictly ideological tasks²⁷, as well as to dissertations, monographs and articles by different authors²⁸. As a matter of fact, the accusations of ‘falsification of the history of Eastern socio-philosophical thought’ referred to the Western as well as to the Eastern ‘bourgeois’ scholarly production. The Western tradition was blamed for having underestimated the importance of Oriental thought whereas the Eastern one, suffering from ‘Asio-’, or ‘Eastcentrism’, was blamed for having exaggerated it. Both these faults were interpreted generically as part of the ideological struggle and manifestations of anticommunism. However, some – few – Soviet authors criticised Eurocentricism in philosophical historiography in more detail, trying to find out exactly how their standpoints lay in relation to earlier historiography.

The most thoroughly elaborated critique of the Eurocentric attitude to Arabic philosophy allegedly inherent in Western research that I have met in Soviet literature of the 1950s-1960s is a 1967 text by Muzaffar Khairullaev. Khairullaev was a student of Ibrakhim Muminov and himself an influential scholar and academic

of physics and metaphysics” and the “elaboration of a scientific methodology” (cf. SHAIMUKHAMBETOVA 1998, pp. 28-30, 34-35).

26. Cf. SHAIMUKHAMBETOVA 1998, p. 30.

27. Cf. the discussion about “the denigration of the significance of the philosophical thought of the peoples of Asia [...], the Arab countries, and the peoples of Eastern Europe” by “reactionary historians of philosophy, in particular the ideologists of imperialism” in the methodological introduction to the first volume of the *History of Philosophy* (KEDROV / IOVCHUK / DYNNIK 1957, p. 17).

28. Bogoutdinov, for instance, explicitly cites only Hegel and Karl Vorländer as champions of Eurocentrism in philosophical historiography (cf. BOGOUTDINOV 1961, pp. 21-22).

figure in the Soviet Uzbek Republic. He expounded his critique of Eurocentrism in the introduction to his book on *Fārābī's Worldview and Its Significance in the History of Philosophy*, as well as in the first chapter entitled “Shedding Light on [the Interpretation of] Fārābī's Thought in Historical-Philosophical Literature”. Khairullaev's analysis focuses on the way in which the idea that there is an essential and profound difference between Eastern and Western culture was imposed by nineteenth century historiography. In his view, in the second half of the nineteenth and in the first half of the twentieth centuries the European powers were interested in nourishing this idea in order to justify their imperialist appetites. Although not new to European scholarship, it had grown in importance particularly in the 19th century due to the “transformation of the bourgeois class from a relatively progressive to a reactionary class”²⁹. During that period, Khairullaev writes, all sorts of biological, geographic, psychological and other “theories” flourished in full bloom. These theories favoured statements about the perennial social and cultural stagnation of the peoples of the East, whose “fate” was to be subjected to the “dynamic” and “civilised” West³⁰.

With reference specifically to Eurocentrism in philosophical historiography, the Uzbek scholar emphasises the influence of certain ideas of Hegel and Renan on this field³¹. We are reminded that Hegel considered philosophy to be a prerogative of the European nations and regarded even the greatest representatives of the world of Arabic thought as merely commentators of Aristotle³². Renan for his part put into circulation the racist theory of the struggle between the Semitic and the Aryan spirit, which proved to be surprisingly tenacious. It was adopted and widely used in the work of the subsequent generations of “reactionary bourgeois Orientalists”³³. Indeed, the only merit Khairullaev admits in Renan's work is its vast documental basis.

“The methodological principles and racist attitude of Renan notwithstanding, the great factual material collected by him and the individual conclusions that inevitably follow from it show the originality and great importance of the philosophy of Fārābī, Ibn Sinā and Ibn Rušd in the development of European free thinking and natural-science ideas”³⁴.

According to Khairullaev, the early twentieth century generation of historians of philosophy, e.g., Windelband, Kirchner, Vorländer, Wundt³⁵ followed both

29. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, p. 8.

30. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, p. 9.

31. Renan's *Averroès et l'averroïsme* was published in Russian in 1902 (see RENAN 1902) and was widely read by Soviet scholars.

32. Cf. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, pp. 9-10.

33. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, pp. 10-11.

34. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, p. 11.

35. Khairullaev cites the names of authors, whose works were known to Russian readers in pre-Re-

Renan in affirming the Europeans' moral and intellectual superiority over Eastern races, and Hegel in either completely excluding Eastern philosophy from their accounts on the history of thought, or devoting very little attention to it and labelling it as veiled in mysticism³⁶. Connected to the latter is another important defect that Khairullaev spots in Western historiography. It is that most attention is paid in it not to examples of free thought or to the scientific achievements of famous medieval polymaths, but mainly to doctrines aimed at justifying religious dogmas. And it is certainly not by accident, Khairullaev points out, that precisely "Ghazālī, the ardent enemy of science and philosophy, the mystic who fiercely fought against contemporary progressive thinkers" was declared by "bourgeois" historians as, to put it in the words of Renan, "the most original mind in the Arabic school"³⁷.

Further in his book, Khairullaev moves on to discuss the recent, i.e., post-war trends in the historiography of medieval Arabic philosophy. Here is what he writes:

"In the course of the Second World War, due to the fact that a number of countries abandoned capitalism and the socialist system emerged, the general crisis of capitalism deepened. At present, the anti-imperialist movement [...] is sweeping away the last remnants of colonialism and undermining the foundations of imperialism. [...] The Eurocentric ideas of the modern apologists of bourgeois culture obey the common ideological tasks of modern imperialism and are used as ideological and theoretical weapons in the fight against the Marxist-Leninist outlook [...]"³⁸.

The author argues that, because of their fidelity to their ideological mission, contemporary scholars, such as Richard Walzer, did not feel the need to challenge the received paradigm in the historiography of medieval Arabic philosophy. They continued to ignore the "objective laws" of social and cultural development, to treat history subjectively and – indeed, quite unprofessionally – to psychologise the *geographic* notions of 'east' and 'west'³⁹.

volutionary translations: Wilhelm Windelband's *Geschichte der alten Philosophie* (1888) and *Die Geschichte der neueren Philosophie in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der allgemeinen Cultur und den besonderen Wissenschaften* (1878-1880) were published in Russian in 1893 and in 1902-1905 (2 vols.), respectively. The Russian edition of Friedrich Kirchner's *Katechismus der Geschichte der Philosophie von Thales bis zur Gegenwart* (1877) was of 1895. Two different translations of Wilhelm Wundt's *Einführung in die Philosophie* (1901) came out in 1902 and a third one was published in 1903. The first volume of Karl Vorländer's *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1903) came out in Russian in 1911 and his *Völkertümliche Geschichte der Philosophie* (1921), in 1922.

36. Cf. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, p. 14.

37. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, p. 16. He mentions the Hungarian Orientologist Ignaz Goldziher as someone who differs somewhat from these authors by "his endeavour to find what was new and valuable in medieval Arabic thought" (cf. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, p. 15). Khairullaev refers to the chapter on "Philosophy of Islam" penned by Goldziher for the *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie* by Wundt, Oldenberg *et al.* (1909), which, too, had been published in Russian (cf. WUNDT / OLDENBERG ET AL. 1910-1912).

38. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, p. 18.

39. Cf. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, pp. 22-23.

Khairullaev's examination of the history of research on Arabic philosophy includes also a section on the Russian pre-Revolutionary Orientological school. Without getting into the details of their works, this analysis, however, suggests that Khairullaev holds Rozen, Bartol'd, Ol'denburg and the other Russian imperial Orientologists in high esteem⁴⁰. In particular, he acknowledges to Bartol'd the merit of being the first scholar to define, as early as in 1918, al-Fārābī, al-Bīrūnī and Avicenna as Central Asian philosophers⁴¹.

Finally, there is a last point in Khairullaev's criticism of Eurocentrism in historiography we have not yet touched upon. It concerns the fact that in Soviet literature none of the 'traditional' terms used to denote the subject of the history of Arabic philosophy was accepted. Both 'Arabic philosophy' and 'Muslim philosophy' were rejected. The first of these two terms was criticised for placing too much emphasis on the linguistic element and for alluding to the Arabs' dominance over subjected peoples. In the second formula, the emphasis on the religious element was found improper. Moreover, Khairullaev writes further, both these terms ignore the fact that every culture is mainly *nationally* shaped. He claims that the so-called Arabic culture was in reality the culture of the peoples of medieval Central Asia, Iran, Northern India, North Africa and other regions that had been formed under the influence of the Arabic language on the basis of the economic and cultural relations during the existence of the Arab caliphate. Therefore, the culture of the peoples of the Middle East and Central Asia of this period should be defined as *Arabic-language* culture and, accordingly, one should speak of Arabic-language science, philosophy, etc.⁴².

IV. Post-Soviet developments

Two were the distinctive features of 1950s-1960s Soviet historiography of Arabic philosophy. The first consisted in the conventional norm of portraying al-Fārābī, al-Bīrūnī, Avicenna and other authors originating from Central Asia as national philosophers of some of the Soviet peoples. The second was the stylisation of Arabic philosophy as opposed to religion and theology and persisting in free thinking and scientific research. The latter of those two features had eroded already during the late Soviet era due to the process of "expansion of the philosophical front"⁴³,

40. Cf. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, p. 65. During the 1960s, some of the Russian pre-Revolutionary Orientologists were rehabilitated and Bartol'd's collected works came out in nine volumes (cf. TOLZ 2011, p. 160).

41. Khairullaev refers to Bartol'd popular work *Muslim Culture (Kul'tura musul'manstva)*. Cf. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, p. 76.

42. KHAIRULLAEV 1967, pp. 35-37. Aloutdin Bogoutdinov follows a similar line of reasoning in his *Studies on the History of Tajik Philosophy* (cf. BOGOUTDINOV 1961, pp. 23-27).

43. An expression used by Gul'shat Shaimukhambetova in SHAIMUKHAMBETOVA 1985, p. 12.

i.e., of devoting ever more attention to doctrines and currents of thought, such as Sufism, that did not fit into the definition of Arabic philosophy as opposed to religion⁴⁴. And by the end of the Soviet era, it had been definitively replaced by the reading which identifies the issue of the relationship between faith and disbelief as the central theme of Arabic philosophy and interprets Arabic philosophy as intertwined with religion⁴⁵.

This was the paradoxical result of the involvement of several generations of Soviet scholars with medieval Arabic thought. The outcome of their joint efforts was exactly the opposite to what some fifty years earlier had been set as the aim of this pursuit: to prove that, contrary to the Eurocentric notion about the non-European peoples as incapable of rational thinking, the distinctive feature of Arabic philosophy is precisely its independence from religious belief and its interest in the scientific inquiry of nature. This outcome must, of course, be seen in the broad context of the deep social changes in the Soviet Union related to the transition from the period of stagnation in the 1970s to the period of *perestroika* in the 1980s. Changes that affected the humanities as all the other spheres of social life and that, in philosophy, led to a “*perestroika* of philosophy”⁴⁶. At the same time, it appears that there is enough reason to suggest a more daring explanation for the paradoxical result of the Soviet involvement with the study of Arabic and non-European philosophy in general. It seems that to some extent it was connected with the personal efforts of an influential individual: Mariëtta Stepaniants, Orientologist and specialist in the philosophy and culture of India and Pakistan. In 1980, she became Head of the Division of Philosophy and Sociology of the Countries of the East at the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences. In an interview in 2005 on the occasion of her seventieth an-

44. Cf. STEPANIANTS 1987. For references to other works published in Russian in the 1980s and the early 1990s, see KNYSH 1996 and STEPANIANTS 1994, p. 112.

45. As Evgeniia Frolova explained on the occasion of the first participation of a Soviet delegation at the *Kölner Mediaevistentagung*: “In der Erforschung der mittelalterlichen arabischen Literatur lassen sich in den letzten Jahren folgende Tendenzen feststellen: Während in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten aus ideologischen Gründen Vertretern der ‘Falsafa’ wie al-Farabi und Ibn Sina der Vorzug gegeben wurde, deren Werke sich als dem Materialismus nahestehend interpretieren ließen, besteht jetzt ein großes Interesse an der religiösen Philosophie. [...] Kalam und Sufismus, die früher als reaktionäre, der Wissenschaft und Philosophie feindlich gegenüberstehende Strömungen angesehen wurden, werden heute von den meisten Gelehrten ganz anders bewertet und unter dem Aspekt der jeweiligen konkreten historischen Bedingungen und Situationen betrachtet. Besonderer Aufmerksamkeit erfreut sich der Sufismus als eine Konzeption, die sich am Individuum, an der Persönlichkeit und Freiheit des Menschen im Glauben orientiert, als Konzeption, die als einzige die rationale Erkenntnis Gottes ablehnt und Gott zum Gegenstand eines mystischen, nicht verifizierbaren reinen Glaubens macht” (FROLOVA 1992, p. 175). Evgeniia Frolova is specialist in Arabic philosophy. She has been working at the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences since 1961. In 1983, she published an important monograph on *The Problem of Faith and Knowledge in Arabic Philosophy* (cf. FROLOVA 1983).

46. There is also an opinion that the movement was two-way: *perestroika* affected Soviet philosophy and philosophy, in turn, played a role in *perestroika*. Cf. VAN DER ZWEEDE 2010, pp. 76-77.

niversary, she shared the following in relation to the tasks she had set herself as Head of the Division:

“First of all, it seemed to me necessary to change the thematic orientation of our research activity, to get rid of excessive attachment to ideology and political conjuncture. Not only me, but a number of colleagues (first of all E.A. Frolova) knew that materialism, atheism, rationalism, revolutionary democratism, the theories of non-capitalist way of development, etc., do not at all give an adequate idea of Eastern philosophies; that, instead of exclusive attention to modern ‘progressive’ currents of thought, one needs to concentrate on historical and philosophical studies free of subjectivity”⁴⁷.

The change of the focus of research in the field of ‘philosophical Orientalology’ along with the relativisation of the ideological canons, was, however, only a step towards the elaboration of a new and comprehensive interpretation of Eastern philosophies in general. This interpretation found full expression in Stepaniants’ post-Soviet publications. In particular, it is reflected in her 1997 book *Eastern Philosophy*⁴⁸, as well as in the second edition (2002) of the textbook *Introduction to Philosophy* edited by Ivan Frolov⁴⁹, with which the standard post-Soviet reading of the history of philosophy was sanctioned⁵⁰. The textbook has an historical-philosophical and a theoretical part. The historical one is divided into sections as follows: “Western Philosophy and Its Cultural-Historical Types”, “Eastern Philosophy’ and Its Cultural-Historical Types”, “Philosophical Thought in Russia from the Eleventh to the Nineteenth Century”, “Contemporary Philosophy: A Synthesis of Cultural Traditions”. It can be observed that the undoubtedly problematic and yet inventive attempt of Soviet scholarship to present the history of philosophy by combining the chronological with the national principle of organisation of the material has been abandoned here in the name of a return to the ‘classical’ division of philosophy into Eastern and Western. Although here the term ‘Eastern philosophy’ is put in inverted commas (unlike ‘Western philosophy’ which, strangely enough, is not) and although the authors emphasise their respect for “the cultures of other peoples”⁵¹, apparently they share the view, so fiercely criticised by the ideologised Soviet ‘school’, that an Eastern philosophy exists, which is

47. AA.Vv. 2005, p. 11.

48. Cf. STEPANIANTS 1997.

49. Cf. STEPANIANTS 2002a.

50. For decades, one of the main courses in the curriculum of university students studying philosophy in the Soviet Union was Foundations of Marxism-Leninism. In the late 1980s, at the height of *perestroika* and as a result of the latter, it was replaced by the course Introduction to Philosophy. A team of scholars led by the ‘ideologist’ of this new discipline, Ivan Frolov (1929-1999), wrote a textbook of the same name whose first edition was published in 1989 and the most recent one in 2012 (cf. FROLOV / ARAB-OGLY ET AL. 1989 and FROLOV / ARAB-OGLY ET AL. 2012).

51. STEPANIANTS 2002a, p. 130: “We would like to clearly express our respect for the cultures of other peoples, recognising the equivalence of non-Western types of philosophising [to the Western one]”.

somehow essentially different from the Western. Presenting the “cultural-historical types” of Eastern philosophies together, as Eastern, clearly implies that they all differ from the Western ones and/or have some unifying similarities. Referring to the emergence of Indian and Chinese philosophies in the first millennium BC, Stepaniants stresses that, unlike them, “Arabic-Muslim philosophy was a medieval phenomenon, which is why its emergence and development significantly differed from the analogous processes in the ancient civilisations of India and China”⁵². The question remains as to what unites these three philosophical traditions which Stepaniants examines together both in the second (and in all subsequent) editions of Frolov’s textbook *Introduction to Philosophy* and in her book *Eastern Philosophy*. Here is how she responds to this question:

“It is well known that the conventional concept of ‘Eastern’ philosophy was introduced into scholarly circulation by those thinkers predisposed to be only ‘at home with the Greeks.’ This explains the inclination to cover all philosophical ideas propounded by representatives of apparently dissimilar cultural traditions with one word: ‘Eastern.’ This common category has come to embrace thinkers whose world-views are bound to be distinct by virtue of their emergence under different natural, geographical, historical, and cultural conditions. Yet for the sake of convenience I too use this term from time to time in expounding these traditions, which in certain respects have turned out to be similar enough and thereby distinguishable from ‘Western’ philosophy. In particular I would highlight that, throughout their centuries-old history, each of these traditions failed to distinguish itself fully from religious thought and practice, and to thereby ‘structure thought from within itself’”⁵³.

From this quotation we can conclude that the late Soviet and post-Soviet general assessment of ‘Arabic-Muslim philosophy’ turned out to be a mirror image of the pattern of interpreting the ‘philosophy of Central Asia, Iran and the Arab East’ of the earlier period⁵⁴. The new reading indeed gave priority to doctrines that Evgeniia Frolova, in a historically important 1992 text, described as “religious philosophy”⁵⁵. To be sure, that paradigmatic turn in the interpretation was not yet an adequate attempt to start a dialogue with Western scholarship. For one thing, it did not contemplate the presence of somewhat contradictory narratives of Arabic philosophy inherent in the Western tradition⁵⁶. So at this point it seems rel-

52. STEPANIANTS 2002a, p. 131.

53. STEPANIANTS 2002b, pp. XII-XIII.

54. In post-Soviet research, we are witnessing the replacement of previously coined formulas such as ‘Arabic-language philosophy’, ‘philosophy of the peoples of the Muslim East’, ‘philosophy of Central Asia, Iran and the Arab East’ etc. with the new ‘Arabic-Muslim philosophy’ (*arabo-musul'manskaia filosofii*).

55. Cf. FROLOVA 1992, p. 175.

56. In connection with the reception of al-Fārābī and Avicenna in Western historiography, it is instructive to see GERMANN 2018 and LIZZINI 2018.

evant to ask what part of that change was due to reasons intrinsic to scholarship and what part was psychologically motivated as an act of ‘revenge’ against the long oppression of an ideology that had already lost its credibility.

The other of the two moments we have identified as distinctive features of 1950s-1960s Soviet history of Arabic philosophy – the stylisation of al-Fārābī, al-Bīrūnī, Avicenna, al-Ḥwārazmī and others as national philosophers of some of the Soviet peoples – has turned out to be more lasting. At present, philosophical historiography is being used once again as an instrument for national consolidation in the young post-Soviet states in Central Asia⁵⁷. The recent historical-philosophical narrative in these countries is more often than not in continuity with the inherited schemes dating back to the late Stalin era. Maybe the most eloquent example in this respect is provided by Tajikistan, where the account of medieval Tajik philosophy that had been put together already in the 1950s is being reproduced nowadays without any extensive modification. Aloutdin Bogoutdinov’s *Studies on the History of Tajik Philosophy* came out in a second edition in 2011⁵⁸, exactly fifty years after they had been first published in 1961⁵⁹. A PhD thesis praising his role for the establishment of philosophical historiography as a discipline in Tajikistan was defended at the Academy of Sciences in Dushanbe in 2016⁶⁰. And it appears that, in general, philosophical historiography in this country is conceived as a continuation of the achievements of earlier research rather than as a radical shift in the perspective as one might expect⁶¹. This testifies to the fact that in the long term, in the interplay between the various elements composing Soviet history of philosophy – such as the Marxist-Leninist approach to history, criticism and deprecation of religion and of religious thought, criticism of ‘bourgeois’ historiography, anti-Eurocentric and universalistic discourses, development of national historiographies, etc. – precisely the latter has prevailed. Perhaps what Kåre Johan Mjør and other specialists have clearly shown with regard to post-Soviet historiography of Russian philosophy is the case with the philosophies of the peoples of Central Asia as well: under up-to-date wrappings, the main structure of the national historical-philosophical narratives has been preserved⁶².

57. Cf. MULLOBOEVA 2016, p. 3. On the controversies about Vasilii Bartol’d’s legacy in post-communist Central Asia, see TOLZ 2011, p. 163.

58. BOGOUTDINOV 2011.

59. BOGOUTDINOV 1961.

60. Cf. MULLOBOEVA 2016.

61. Without trying to be exhaustive, let me mention KOMILOV 1993, DINORSHOEVA 2006, SAIDOV 2009, MULLOBOEVA 2016.

62. MJØR 2018, pp. 291-292; MJØR 2013, p. 329.

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Abstract: This essay focuses on the interplay between criticism of Eurocentrism in philosophical historiography and patriotic discourse in the history of philosophy, both of which emerged in the Soviet context in the late 1940s. The examples and the specific analysis are related to the interpretation of Arabic, or Islamic, philosophy and its connection with the development of the national histories of philosophy of the individual Soviet nations. The distinctive features of Soviet historiography of Arabic philosophy of the 1950s-1960s are outlined in the essay. In addition, the post-Soviet developments in the study of Arabic philosophy are traced in two directions: the 'opening' of the former Soviet historiographical school towards alternative approaches to philosophy's past and the current involvement of philosophical historiography as an instrument for national consolidation in the young post-Soviet states in Central Asia.

Keywords: Soviet philosophy, Arabic philosophy, Philosophical historiography, Non-European philosophy, National philosophies, Central Asia

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