

# ARAB SCHOLARS IN RUSSIAN UNIVERSITIES (the Nineteenth - Early Twentieth Century)

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## المخلص

يحاول الكاتب في هذه المقالة مناقشة تطور الدراسات العربية بصفة خاصة وعن الدراسات الإستشراقية بصفة عامة في أواسط العلماء الروسيين حتي نهاية القرن العشرين . وأكثر من هذا فإن هذه المقالة تبحث عن دور الأكاديميين الروسيين في التعريف عن الدول الشرقية حتي أصبحت معروفة لدي الروسيين. ومن العلماء الروسيين الذين لهم باع طويل في ايجاد العلاقة بين الجامعات الروسية والدول العربية هو الشيخ محمد عياض الطنطاوي أحد علماء الأزهر الشريف الذي هاجر من بلاده الي الروس وأقام فيه في عام ١٨٤٠. وتبحث هذه المقالة عن مكانته كأستاذ في دراسة الإستشراق وحياته ودوره في التعريف عن العرب و الإسلام في وسط الروسيين عن طريق الأنشطة المتنوعة وكتاباتة. وهناك عالم روسي آخر لا يقل أهمية عن دور الطنطاوي في ذلك وهو جورجي مرقص وهو عربي مسيحي من دمشق الذي كان طالبا في جامعة Petersberg وأصبح بعد ذلك أستاذا بالجامعة نفسها ومن أحد زعماء العرب المسيحيين الأرثوذكسيين في روسيا.

## Abstrak

*Dalam artikel ini, penulis mendiskusikan perkembangan studi tentang dunia Arab secara khusus dan studi ketimuran secara umum di kalangan intelektual Rusia hingga awal abad ke-20. Lebih jauh, dibahas juga peran akademik orang-orang Arab-Rusia yang telah membuat dunia Timur semakin dikenal di kalangan orang-orang Rusia. Salah satu tokoh utama yang ikut merintis hubungan bagi universitas-universitas di Rusia dengan dunia Arab adalah Shaykh Muḥammad Ayyād al-Ṭaṭṭany,*

*seorang ulama al-Azhar yang kemudian pindah dan menetap di Rusia pada tahun 1840. Karir Ṭaṭāwī sebagai profesor studi ketimuran dan kehidupan serta peranannya dalam memperkenalkan Arab-Islam kepada kalangan Rusia lewat berbagai kerja dan tulisannya banyak dibahas dalam artikel ini. Selain Ṭaṭāwī, tokoh yang tak kalah pentingnya adalah Georgi Murkos, seorang Arab-Kristen dari Damaskus, yang melanjutkan pendidikannya di Universitas Petersburg, kemudian menjadi professor di universitas yang sama dan menjadi salah satu tokoh Arab-Kristen Ortodoks di Rusia.*

**Keywords:** Oriental Study, Arabic World, Shaykh Ṭaṭāwī, Georgi Murkos.

For centuries Russian people were aware of the Arab world and the Arab-Muslim culture. Despite that, first notable steps in studying language, history and religion of the Arab East were made only at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Autocratic reformer Peter the Great imposed in Russia the New Order, which became the basic framework for the country's future drive for modernity. His reformatory undertakings in diplomatic, cultural and educational fields were complemented by an initiative to send several promising young men to Iran to study Oriental languages, mainly Turkish, Arabic and Persian.<sup>1</sup>

The new stage of exploration of the Middle East by young Russian Oriental science began in the nineteenth century that came out to be "the age of discovery of the Arab world by Europe". Russia actively participated in the development of the cross-cultural "East-West" dialogue, which was determined not only by internal yearnings and external necessities but also by growing and extensive needs of the increasing academic milieu engaged in Oriental studies. One of the founders of Russian Oriental studies, academician Vasili Bartold emphasized the progress of Russia in this field. He stated: "In the nineteenth century the study of the East in Russia presumably made

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<sup>1</sup> V.V. Bartold, "Obzor dejatel'nosti faculteta vostochnih jazikov (Review of the Activities of the Faculty of Oriental Languages)," in V.V. Bartold, *Collected Works*, vol. 9, (Moscow, 1977), p. 29.

even more significant steps than in the Western Europe.”<sup>2</sup> The important role in the rise of scientific and cultural contacts between Russia and the Middle East was played by Arab scholars who worked in Russian universities and contributed to a considerable extent to the field of education and science. Despite the fact that the number of highly educated Arabs who settled in Russia was quite small, the essence of the intellectual exchange is not represented only by quantitative characteristics.

This paper seeks to examine the importance of the role of so-called “Russian Arabs” in the Russian academic circles and endeavors to evaluate their attempts to bring the Orient much closer to Russia than it was ever attempted before.

According to the first general Statute of Russian universities issued in 1804 teaching of Turkish, Persian and Arabic was officially incorporated into curriculums of universities in Moscow, Kharkov and Kazan. St. Petersburg University was re-founded in 1819 on the basis of the Central Pedagogical Institute and soon became the acknowledged Russian center of Oriental studies. In the early period of Arabic studies’ development the teaching of Arabic language, literature and history was carried out mostly by foreigners. As many other fields of Russian culture and science the Oriental studies were widely opened to scholars from France, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Italy, Poland, etc. In the mid-nineteenth century academicians from the Middle East joined this group of intellectuals.

The original impulse to the establishment and further progress of Arab-Russian ties in the academic and educational fields was given by an outstanding Arab scholar and writer, contemporary of the Egyptian ruler Muhammad Ali, shaykh Muhammad Ayyad al-Ṭaṭṭāwī (1810–1861).<sup>3</sup> In 1847 he was appointed as a professor of the St. Petersburg University. Among his predecessors at the Chair of Arabic Language was a Frenchman Jean François Demange (1819–1822), who, according to his colleagues, “hated not only his job, but also all sorts

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<sup>2</sup>V.V. Bartold, “Istoria izutschenia Vostoka v Evrope i v Rossii (The History of Study of the East in Europe and Russia)”, in *ibid.*, p. 418.

<sup>3</sup>Muḥammad ibn Sa’d ibn Sulaymān Ayyad al-Marḥūmi al-Ṭaṭṭāwī al-Shāfi’ī.

of academic activities in general”.<sup>4</sup> After Demange “there was not a trace remained of him besides falsely attributed to him honour of teaching Persian to /famous Russian poet/ Griboedov”.<sup>5</sup> Following Demange, the post was occupied by a gifted Polish scholar and talented writer Osip (Julian) Senkowski (literary pseudonym “Baron Brambeus”) (1822–1847).

Shaykh Ṭaṭṭāwī arrived to Russia in 1840. A popular periodical of that time *St. Petersburg Gazette*<sup>6</sup> immediately depicted an exotically looking foreigner walking down the Nevski prospect. “You could ask me,” wrote a journalist, “who is that handsome man wearing an Oriental dress and white turban with jet-black beard, lively eyes and witty expression on his face? ... It is shaykh Muhammad Ayyad al-Ṭaṭṭāwī who came here from banks of the Nile to occupy a vacant post in the Chair of Arabic Language at the Institute of Oriental Languages in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Now you have an opportunity to learn Arabic intensively without leaving St. Petersburg”.<sup>7</sup>

The idea of inviting Ṭaṭṭāwī to St. Petersburg belonged to a prominent Arabist, member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and leader of the Russian Orientalists of the first half of nineteenth century Christian Martin (Hristian Danilovitsh) Frähn (1782–1851). He recommended the minister of Foreign Affairs count Karl Nesselrode to issue an order according to which a new teacher of Arabic should be found among “the educated Arabs”. Ṭaṭṭāwī was fully supported by Russian consul-general in Egypt A.I. Medem as an appropriate candidate. However, the choice was not spontaneous at all; Russians surely knew whom they were inviting. Ṭaṭṭāwī was “an exemplary intellectual product” of Muhammad Ali’s époque. Despite the fact

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<sup>4</sup> N.I. Veselovski, *Svedenia ob ofitsialnom prepodavanii vostochnih jazikov v Rossii* (Information about the Official Education of Oriental Languages in Russia), (St. Petersburg, 1879), p. 131.

<sup>5</sup> I.U. Kratchkowski, “Otcherki po istorii russkoy arabistiki (Sketches of the History of Russian Arabic Studies),” in I.U. Kratchkowski, *Selected Works*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Leningrad, 1957), p. 175.

<sup>6</sup> *St.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*.

<sup>7</sup> I.U. Kratchkowski. “Nad arabskimi rukopisami (Working on Arabic Manuscripts),” I.U. Kratchkowski, in *Ibid.*, vol. 1.

that by that time Muhammad Ayyad al-Ṭaṭṭāwī had not reached the age of 30, he already gained wide popularity as a skilful teacher of Arabic and literature not only among students and scholars of al-Azhar, but also in the European community of Cairo. Ṭaṭṭāwī's high scholarly reputation among foreigners could be partially explained by the fact that he belonged to a handful of Islamic intellectuals, who supported the Egyptian governor Muhammad Ali in his revolutionary undertakings.

Among European apprentices and friends of Ṭaṭṭāwī we should mention German prominent Arabist, acknowledged specialist on the history of the Arab Caliphate Gustave Weil (1808–1889) and French traveller and diplomat F. Fresnel (1795–1855) known by his *Letters on the Pre-Islamic History of Arabs*.<sup>8</sup> Before his appointment as a consul to Jeddah, under the guidance of Ṭaṭṭāwī Fresnel significantly improved his knowledge of Arabic. Later Fresnel characterised his mentor as “un des hommes les plus savants de l'Égypte” and portrayed him with a certain degree of exaggeration as “a sole representative of Egyptian ulama who studied native language and ancient Arabic literature with sincere love and admiration”.

Ṭaṭṭāwī's deep knowledge of the medieval Arabic literature was highly appreciated by Edward William Lane whose influential work *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* was a virtual Bible to travellers throughout the nineteenth century. Ṭaṭṭāwī assisted Lane in translation of the most difficult verses from *The Thousand and One Nights*. In the introduction to this publication British scholar mentioned his colleague as “the first philologist of the first Arab college of the present day”<sup>9</sup> – al-Azhar.

This opinion was also shared by a number of Russian diplomats who joined a circle of students and admirers of Ṭaṭṭāwī. The shaykh named two of them in his short autobiography: the first – N. Mukhin who served as a dragoman in the Russian consulate in Cairo in 1835 – 1837 and the second – the successor of Mukhin in the post of dragoman – Rudolf Frähn, son of the mentioned above famous Russian Arabist

<sup>8</sup> *Letters sur l'histoire des Arabes avant l'islamisme*, 1836.

<sup>9</sup> E.W. Lane, *The Thousand and One Nights*, a new translation from the Arabic by E.W. Lane, 3 vols. (London, 1839–1841), vol.1. p. XVI.

Christian Frähn. Both of them benefited considerably from their lessons with Ṭaṇṭawy and did their best to encourage him to move to Russia. As a final point of long-lasting official correspondence regarding the invitation of shaykh Ṭaṇṭawy to the Russian capital the “vice-king” of Egypt gave a ceremonial reception. Muhammad Ali agreed to send the shaykh to Russia and ordered him to learn Russian thoroughly wishing that his knowledge would be used by his homeland in future.

It is worth mentioning that at that time Russia played a significant role in the international relations of the Middle and Near East. Muhammad Ali’s first Syrian campaign had forced the Ottoman Sultan to seek Russia’s assistance. Russian troops landed on the coast of Bosphorus and in July 1833 Mahmud II was forced to sign the Hunkar Iskelesi treaty, which included a stipulation that both sides would consult before taking steps in foreign affairs. As a result of this impressive diplomatic victory Russian international prestige and influence grew considerably. Moreover, the British prime minister lord Palmerston constantly received reports from Istanbul with warnings of possible alliance between Russia and Muhammad Ali. In addition, Russia was actively involved in adjustment of the “Egyptian question” during the crucial years from 1839 to 1841, when the most dramatic chapter in Muhammad Ali’s remarkable career came to an end.

The shaykh began fulfilling the wish of the Egyptian ruler on board of the ship that left Istanbul in April 1840. He started learning Russian under the guidance of his student N. Mukhin who by the order of Russian ambassador accompanied Ṭaṇṭawy during his trip to Russia. In a few months shaykh Ṭaṇṭawy was able to translate into Arabic some verses of Russian poets and since then he signed all official papers in Russian. In summer 1840 Ṭaṇṭawy began his pedagogical activities in St. Petersburg as a teacher of Arabic at the Educational Department of Oriental Languages at the Asiatic Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That specialized institution, which contemporaries occasionally called the Institute of Oriental Languages, was founded in the first decades of the nineteenth century in accordance with European standards using the French *École des langues orientales* as a model. The main goal of the institution was to train staff for Russian diplomatic missions in the Middle East. During the seven years of teaching at the

institution shaykh Ṭaṇṭawy succeeded in proper organization of the educational process and prepared the textbook for teaching of spoken Arabic *Traité de la langue arabe vulgaire*, which was published in Leipzig in 1848 and was welcomed by the majority of his European colleagues.

Ṭaṇṭawy's recognized merits, scholarly and teaching achievements gave the Academic Council of St. Petersburg University an opportunity to offer him professorship in the Chair of Arabic Language and Literature in 1847. Since then and almost until the end of his life shaykh Ṭaṇṭawy's career was linked with St. Petersburg University. It is worth mentioning that it was the only case in the nineteenth century history of all Russian Universities when a person of Arabic origin became a professor and headed a University department. Later Ṭaṇṭawy was also granted the rank of a civil general (state adviser), decorated with Orders of St. Anna and St. Stanislav and the tsar Nicholas I expressed Ṭaṇṭawy his "highest gratitude" for "diligence in teaching students... at St. Petersburg University". In addition Ṭaṇṭawy received a ring with diamonds from the throne-heir, later tsar Alexander II for "special efforts in organization of a Turkish chamber in the Tsarskoye Selo palace," where some of Ṭaṇṭawy's books and manuscripts were preserved. Ṭaṇṭawy participated in the decoration of this chamber as a calligrapher by making Arabic inscriptions on the chamber's wall. Ṭaṇṭawy's autograph represented several odes on important occasions of the life of the court.

Ṭaṇṭawy's productive pedagogical activities at the University included lessons of spoken Arabic and calligraphy for senior students, as well as lectures on Arabic literature with his own commentaries of medieval texts, such as of *Makamat al-Ḥariry* (1054–1122).<sup>10</sup> Since 1855 he delivered a course of lectures on Arabic history with a special stress on the history of the Caliphate before the Mongolian invasion. This course was based on several Arabic medieval chronicles and also on superb works of Ibn Khaldūn and al-Suyūṭy.

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<sup>10</sup>The complete translation of the *Makamat* into Russian has been recently done by Russian Arabists. See: Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥariri, *Makamat: Arabskīye srednevekovīye plutorskīye novelli*, translation from Arabic by V.M. Borisova, A.A. Dolinina, V.N. Kirpichenko, (Moscow, 1987).

The Oriental Faculty of the St. Petersburg University was established in 1855. At the same time Ṭaṇṭawy felt seriously ill (he was half-paralysed) and two years later his severe disease forced him to stop teaching at the Educational Department of Oriental Languages in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, he remained a professor of the Chair of Arabic Language and Literature in the St. Petersburg University until retirement in 1861. In a few months Ṭaṇṭawy died and was buried at Volkowskoye (Tartar) cemetery in St. Petersburg. As a patriarch of Russian Arabists Ignati Kratchkowski sadly stated, “for Russia Ṭaṇṭawy remained an exotic flower, which faded fast because of painful illness”.<sup>11</sup>

Shaykh’s wife, who was an Egyptian, had passed before Ṭaṇṭawy. According to a romantic legend in her young years she was a slave. Before moving to Russia the shaykh bought his future wife, organized her education in Paris and afterwards married her. Ṭaṇṭawy’s only son Ahmad (1850 – the 1880s) preferred to settle in Russia and became a subject of the Russian Empire. Shaykh’s granddaughter Helena converted to Christianity and was registered in the noble estate.

By the beginning of the 1920s Ṭaṇṭawy’s name was mostly forgotten and just by a chance his figure attracted attention of a distinguished Russian Arabist Ignati Kratchkowski (1883–1951). According to the recently published correspondence between Kratchkowski and another renowned Russian expert on Oriental cultures Agafangel Krimski (1871–1942), an idea to write a biographical sketch on Ṭaṇṭawy came to Kratchkowski when he read the publication on Arabic manuscripts of Istanbul libraries with a reference to Ṭaṇṭawy’s manuscript under the title *Tuhfat al-Adhkiyā’ bi Akhbār Bilād Rusia* (A Gift to the Clever with the Report on Russia).<sup>12</sup> Soon after arrival to St. Petersburg Ṭaṇṭawy began collecting and summarizing his reminiscences about the trip and finished the final version of the book

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<sup>11</sup> I.U. Kratchkowski, “Otcherki po istorii russkoy arabistiki (Sketches of the History of Russian Arabic Studies).” p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> “Perepiska akademikov A.E. Krimskogo i I.U. Kratchkovskogo 1920–1930-h godov (Correspondence of Academicians A.E. Krimski and I.U. Kratchkowski in 1920s–1930s),” *Neizvístnie straniži otechestvennogo vostokovedenia (Unknown Pages of the Russian Oriental Science)*, (Moscow, 1997), p. 195.



around 1850. The manuscript was dedicated to the Ottoman sovereign Abdulmejid (1839–1861) whose rein was marked by a series of military and administrative reforms aimed to modernize the Ottoman society. The manuscript, discovered in one of Istanbul mosques, was the original presented to the sultan. Kratchkowski succeeded in getting its copy in 1927 and soon published two short articles on Ṭaṭṭāwī's *Description of Russia* (in 1927 and 1928). Later, in 1930 he published a more detailed description of shaykh Ṭaṭṭāwī's life and pedagogical activities at St. Petersburg University.<sup>13</sup> In 1928 another copy of *Description of Russia* was discovered in one of the rare books' shops in St. Petersburg. At this time it was a draft of the manuscript with numerous corrections and notes of the author.

According to an eminent Russian Arabist Agafangel Krimski the treatise of Ṭaṭṭāwī, if published, could exercise the same considerable influence on the literature and cultural life of the Arab East as the famous Rifa'ā Rafi'ī al-Taḥṭāwī's *Description of Paris* (*Ṭaḥlīṣ al-Ibrīz fi Ṭalḥīs Bārīs*).<sup>14</sup>

Ṭaṭṭāwī's travelogue is divided into three parts. The first one, a competent account of his journey from Cairo to St. Petersburg, is the most attractive from the literary and historical point of view. There Ṭaṭṭāwī expressed his straightforward perception of the Russian reality, which was marked by sometimes naïve and often deep understanding of the events he had witnessed. In the meantime, two other parts, the second one on the history of Russia and the final one on the manners and customs of Russians, could be appealing for his Arab contemporaries mainly due to the Ṭaṭṭāwī's vivid depiction of Peter

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<sup>13</sup> Kratchkowski dedicated to the shaykh Ṭaṭṭāwī several special research papers: I.U. Kratchkowski. "Sheykh Ṭantawī, professor S.-Peterburgskogo universiteta (1810–1861) (Shaykh Ṭaṭṭāwī, Professor of the St. Petersburg University)," in I.U. Kratchkowski, *Selected Works*, vol. 5, (Moscow: Leningrad, 1958). p. 229-299; "Neizvestnoe sochineniye sheykha at-Tantawī (An Unknown Treatise of Shaykh al-Ṭaṭṭāwī)," in *Selected Works*, vol. 1. p. 165-170; "Novaya rukopis opisaniya Rossii sheykha at-Tantawī (A New Manuscript of the Description of Russia by Shaykh al-Ṭaṭṭāwī)," *Selected Works*, vol. 1. p. 171-174.

<sup>14</sup> A.E. Krimski, *Istoriya novoy arabskoy literaturi (XIX – nachalo XX veka)* (*The History of the Modern Arabic Literature [the Nineteenth – Beginning of the Twentieth Cent.]*), (Moscow, 1971), p. 176.

the Great's reforms, especially those in cultural field.

In historical part of Ṭaṭṭāwī's *Description of Russia* we came across an important note about shaykh's translation into Arabic of a short essay on the Russian history written by St. Petersburg historian N. Ustryalov (1805–1870). This script did not survive and we cannot say anything about the quality of this translation. Moreover, we do not know the exact source of this translation (Ustryalov produced two short publications on this subject). Anyhow, this fact proves Ṭaṭṭāwī's intention to introduce to Arab readers the history of his second homeland.

Ṭaṭṭāwī also wrote an accurate and informative description of popular Egyptian festivals (*Ḥāl al-ʿĀyāt wa'l-Mawāsim fi Miṣr*), which could be used as a valuable supplement to particular parts of Lane's *Manners and Customs*. It was translated into Russian by the Soviet researcher D.V. Semenov, however, to our regret, had not yet been published.

Scholarly and literary heritage of the Egyptian shaykh embraced not less than 30 manuscripts, half of them written during the Russian period of his life, which were complemented by several printed works composed mainly in French.

As a scholar Ṭaṭṭāwī was a devoted follower of the scholastic tradition of his alma mater – college-mosque al-Azhar, which possessed the highest reputation of “the bearer of Islamic values and knowledge” and “the stronghold of Sunni Islam”. Ṭaṭṭāwī's “al-Azhar roots” predetermined his life-lasting “obsession” by manuscripts and strictly classical style of his creative works. Anyhow, it is unreasonable to consider Ṭaṭṭāwī a pure representative of the traditional Islamic school. He came in touch with European Orientalists when he was relatively young and he was deeply impressed by Western methods of the scientific critique and research. Ṭaṭṭāwī's scholarly attitude and sincere devotion to his native language and literature was very significant. His first European student – a French diplomat and scholar Fresnel made an important remark about his mentor in this respect: “It seems that he [Ṭaṭṭāwī] was the only one in the East who dedicated himself to

the restoration to life of ancient monuments of the Arabic literature”.<sup>15</sup> Due to his fruitful contacts with European scholars the shaykh gradually mastered methods of European philology and demonstrated a rare for an Arab scholar of his time stove for critical analysis of literary Arabic language and Egyptian dialect. Moreover, as a Muslim, shaykh Ṭaṭṭāwī was devoid of religious fanaticism and professed an idea of religious tolerance. One of his St. Petersburg pupils, scholar and traveller from Finland George August Wallin described his *murshīd* as “a man who overcame his Muhammedan intolerance, didn’t try to hide his talents and answered all questions including those which could be considered delicate and even ticklish by a rigorous Muslim”.<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting to note that Ṭaṭṭāwī was also a prolific writer of panegyrics and epitaph odes on happy and sad occasions of the Russian royal family life. His *Traité de la langue arabe vulgaire* opens by a glorifying ode addressed to the family of the future emperor Alexander II on occasion of the birth of his son “al-Amīr al-Kabīr Shah-zade Hikula Alexandrowitch” (1843). Often Ṭaṭṭāwī was accepted at the court where he recited his emotional verses, composed in traditional Arabic classical poetry style.

During his life Ṭaṭṭāwī amassed a large collection of Arabic manuscripts and books, which was presented to the St. Petersburg University library in 1871, ten years after the Arab scholar’s death. The study of more than 300 manuscripts from Ṭaṭṭāwī’s collection, preserved in the Oriental section of this library, is still in progress. This extraordinary collection shows a wide range of Ṭaṭṭāwī’s scholarly, literary and pedagogical interests. It includes hand written copies of different textbooks, treatises on Arabic grammar and metrics, Ṭaṭṭāwī’s personal works and his profound commentaries on works of other authors. The collection contains a number of rarities, such as “unicum of universal value” – *Glossary of the Egyptian Dialect* of Yūsuf al-Maghribī (beginning of the seventeenth century). Ṭaṭṭāwī gradually and methodically gathered Sufi treatises. The real gems of that part of his collection are works of eminent *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* Ibn ‘Araby,

<sup>15</sup>I.U. Kratchkowski, “Sheykh Tantawi, professor S.-Peterburgskogo Universiteta (1810–1861) (Shaykh Ṭaṭṭāwī, Professor of the St. Petersburg University)”, p. 262, 280.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 271.

prominent Egyptian mystic of the sixteenth century Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rāny and a devoted follower of Islamic mystical tradition Badr al-Dīn al-Shurunbābī (first half of the eighteenth century), whose intellectual heritage is mostly unknown to Orientalists.<sup>17</sup>

Successful career of shaykh Ṭaṭāwī opened the way to Russian Universities for other Arabs, who came mostly from Syria and Lebanon. A member of the famous Arab-Christian family from Tripoli, Syrian Arab Salim (Irinei) Noufal (1828–1902) filled Ṭaṭāwī’s post after his retirement at the Educational Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He taught Arabic language and Islamic law. According to Kratchkowski, Noufal “was an aggressive opponent of Muslim religion and his nasty remarks on Muhammad and Islam that he often included in his publications led to protests of the Turkish ambassador and his demands to confiscate these booklets”.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, Salim Noufal made a successful career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and became ‘russified’ so much that his children never visited the Arab East and forgot Arabic completely.

At the St. Petersburg University Ṭaṭāwī was succeeded by other teachers of Arabic origin, who were invited there for improvement of students’ knowledge of colloquial Arabic. Former teacher of Arabic in Kazan Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn al-Makky from Arabia taught language in the Oriental Faculty for a short period of time (1856–1857). A teaching career of his colleague Abdallah (Feodor) Kelzi (1819–1912), an Arab from Aleppo and Armenian Catholic by religion, lasted quarter of the century. The successor of Kelzi was Faḍlallāh Sarrūf (1826–1903), a Christian Arab from Damascus. From 1848 he served in the first Russian ecclesiastical mission in Palestine under the guidance of one of the foremost nineteenth century’s Russian religious scholars archimandrite Porfiri Uspenski. In 1857 Fadlallah Sarruf settled in St. Petersburg, accepted Russian citizenship and in 1882 began teaching

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<sup>17</sup> Arabskie rukopisi vostochnogo otdela nauchnoy biblioteki Sankt-Peterburgskogo Gosudarsvennogo universiteta (Arabic Manuscripts of Oriental Section of St. Petersburg University Scientific Library), *A Brief Catalogue*, compiled by O.B. Frolova and T.p. Deryagina, (St. Petersburg, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> I.U. Kratchkowski, “Nad arabskimi rukopisami (Working on Arabic Manuscripts),” p. 118.

Arabic at the University. After his death the position was given to another Syrian Arab from Tripoli – Antun Hashab (Hashshāb) (b. in 1874) who graduated from the Oriental Faculty of St. Petersburg University. He was the last lector of Arabic origin at the University till 1919. His main contribution to the teaching process was literary Arabic grammar and a collection of widely used Arabic documentation and correspondence samples.

As it was mentioned above, the Greater Syria was the main “Arab source” of the human resources for Russian educational centres. The majority of immigrants from Syria and Palestine were Christians and the Eastern Christian community had traditional close links with the Russian Orthodox Church.

In the second half of the nineteenth century a recognized and influential leader guided the “Arab Orthodox lobby” in Russia. It was an acknowledged religious authority and well-known ingenious scholar Georgi (Juri) Murkos (1846–1911). He was born in 1846 in Damascus and his father Avraam, a close confidant and adviser of the patriarch of Antioch, was considered to be one of the key figures in the Christian Orthodox community of the city. Murkos the Junior got his secondary education in Turkey in Greek seminary, after that he moved to Russia and graduated from the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Seminary and the Faculty of Oriental Languages of St. Petersburg University. In 1872 he became the second (after Ṭaṇṭawy) professor of Arabic origin in Russia and the head of the Chair of Arabic Philology in the first Oriental educational institution in Moscow – Lazarevski Institute of Oriental Languages.<sup>19</sup> His knowledge of Russian was extraordinary. University professor Mikhail Navrotski once told his talented student: “You are from Damascus and your Russian is as fluent as Russian of an Egyptian – shaykh Ṭaṇṭawy; yet the shaykh had a peculiar ascent and your pronunciation is excellent”.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lazarevski Institute was founded in 1815. It was named after a rich Armenian, state official Lazarev who made a substantial donation (200.000 roubles) to this institution. From 1848 Armenian, Georgian, Turkish, Tatar, Persian and Arabic languages started to be taught at this Institute.

<sup>20</sup> A.E. Krimski, *Istoriya novoy arabskoy literaturi (The History of the Modern Arabic Literature)*, p. 177.

Among his scholarly publications we should point out the superb short research on modern Arabic literature,<sup>21</sup> which Russian specialists still quote quite often. The significant part of Murkos's academic production was devoted to translations from Arabic. He published a commentated translation of famous *muallaga* of Imr al-Qais (Moscow, 1882; St. Petersburg, 1885) and *Fragments from Kuran and other Authoritative Islamic Books about Attitudes towards Adherents of Different Faith* (Moscow, 1877). Deeply interested in the history of his fellow believers Murkos translated and published twice *The History of Patriarchs of Antioch*,<sup>22</sup> one of the most valuable sources on the history of Christian Arabs of the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The lifetime work of Murkos was a translation and commentaries on travel account of an outstanding value – the journey of patriarch of Antioch Makarius to the Moscow state (1652–1659) during the reign of the Russian tsar Aleksei Mikhailowitsh.<sup>23</sup> Murkos devoted thirty years to this five volumes, one thousand pages' opus magnum. He began working on the translation in 1871 and published it part by part from 1896 to 1900. Even today this work of Murkos remains the most considerable and complete translation of this unique source, which covers history of the Ottoman Empire, Danube principalities, Ukraine and Russia in the mid-seventeenth century. Academician Kratchkowski emphasized that publication of this traveler literature masterpiece “would keep the name of Murkos in the annals of the Russian Arabic

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<sup>21</sup> G.A. Murkos, “Noveishaya literatura arabov (Modern Literature of the Arabs),” in *Vseobshaya istoria literaturi (The General History of Literature)*, ed. by V.F. Korsh and A. Kirpichnikov, vol. 2, (St. Petersburg, 1885), pp. 374–380.

<sup>22</sup> “Peretchen Antiohiyskih patriarhov (The List of Patriarchs of Antioch),” *Soobshenia Imperatorskogo Palestinskogo Pravoslavnogo obshestva*, 1896; supplement to vol. 5 of *Puteshestvie Antiohiyskogo patriarha Makaria v Rossij v polovine XVII veka, opisannoe ego sinom arhidiakonom Pavlom Aleppskim* (Journey of Patriarch of Antioch Makarius to Russia in the Mid-Seventeenth Century, described by his Son, Archdeacon Pavel of Aleppo), (Moscow, 1900).

<sup>23</sup> *Puteshestvie Antiohiyskogo patriarha Makaria v Rossij v polovine XVII veka, opisannoe ego sinom arhidiakonom Pavlom Aleppskim* (Journey of Patriarch of Antioch Makarius to Russia in the Mid-Seventeenth Century, described by his Son, Archdeacon Pavel of Aleppo), 5 vols., (Moscow, 1896–1900).

studies and in history of the Russian culture in general”.<sup>24</sup>

It is worth outlining that Murkos represented the majority of the Arab Christian community in Russia. He was an uncompromising opponent of Greek hegemony in the administration of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Murkos was also known as an ideologist of the national movement among Christian Arabs against Greek clerical hierarchy, which emerged in Syria and Palestine in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> He published numerous articles on this issue in Russian periodicals of that time,<sup>26</sup> describing Greek clergy as “greedy, treacherous and rigid xenocrats” who treated deprived Arab Christians without any compassion and indulgence. Murkos tried to convince the public that Russia should support Arabs with direct and immediate actions.

The Arab-Greek conflict on its own, together with the apparent position of Murkos on the subject provoked contradictory reactions in the Russian society – from enthusiasm to suspicion and indignation. Murkos became a target of intense criticism in the Russian pro-Greek circles and on the pages of the book *New Advocates of Orthodox Christianity*, which was printed in Moscow in 1892.

Although Murkos was indeed deeply and truly concerned with needs and sorrows of Eastern Christians, his best intentions and frank intellect were bounded and coloured by various prejudices. His anti-Islamic attitudes and beliefs were quite obvious. In one of his articles he made a remarkable comment: “A Christian, guided by his sacred faith, is able to stand passionately an oppression of the Muslim conqueror and the life of Muslims might be happy and peaceful under the Christian dominance, however, neither Christian nor Muslim could

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<sup>24</sup> I.U. Kratchkowski, “Otcherki po istorii russkoy arabistiki (Sketches of the History of Russian Arabic Studies)”, p. 114-115.

<sup>25</sup> *Encyclopedicheski slovar, izdateli F.A. Brokhaus i I.A. Efron (The Encyclopedia, published by F.A. Brokhaus and I.A. Efron)*, (St. Petersburg, 1897), vol. 39.

<sup>26</sup> See: G.A. Murkos, *Interesi Rossii v Palestine (Interests of Russia in Palestine)*, (Moscow, 1882).

be equal subjects of one and the same state”.<sup>27</sup> According to Krimski, Murkos was planning to translate a scandalous treatise of Rizqallah Hassun *Lifting the Veil from Islam* (*Ḥaṣr al-lithām ‘an al-Islām*) into Russian (1859).<sup>28</sup> Written copies of this pamphlet were secretly spread among Christian Arabs after its author was condemned to death by the Ottoman authorities and finally immigrated to Russia. Unfortunately Murkos had to abandon the idea of its translation because of his work on *Journey of Makarius*.

In addition, Murkos was widely known as a patron and generous sponsor of Christian Arabs who came to continue their education in Russia. Among his protégés we can name Alexander, the metropolitan of Tripoli, and Rafail,<sup>29</sup> the prior of the mission of the Patriarchy of Antioch in Moscow and later the head of the first eparchy of the Greek Orthodox Church in the United States of America – the bishop of Brooklyn.

In 1906 Murkos returned to his homeland, where he died in 1911 in the monastery of Saydanayya near Damascus. According to the Murkos’s will testament, one-third of his enormous possessions, namely eighty thousand roubles, were left to the Arab charity organizations and Russian academic institutions. Of course, professor’s salary was not the main source of his sizable income. Murkos fortunately and at the right time invested in a profitable business enterprise, which exported lemons and oranges from Syria to Russia, and that gave him a chance to amass a fabulous fortune.

The assistant and successor of Murkos, an Arab from Damascus Mikhail Attaya (1852–1924) kept close links with the Moscow Lazarevski Institute for more than 50 years. In 1920 he was elected the director of the Institute of Living Oriental Languages and later

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<sup>27</sup> G.A. Murkos, “Mnenie pravoslavniĥ arabov o greko-bolgarskoy raspri (The Arab-Christians’ Opinion about the Greek-Bulgarian Conflict),” in *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*, vol. 3, 1880, p. 165.

<sup>28</sup> A.E. Krimski, *Istoriya novoy arabskoy literaturi* (*The History of the Modern Arabic Literature*), p. 227.

<sup>29</sup> About archimandrite Rafail see: R.M. Valeev, *Kazanskoe vostokovedenie: istoki i razvitiie* (XIX v. – 20 gg. XX v.) (*Oriental Studies in Kazan: Roots and Development [the Nineteenth Century – 1920s]*), (Kazan, 1998), p. 224.



taught at the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies and other educational institutions. He produced several textbooks, among them *A Textbook for Learning a Spoken Arabic (Syrian Dialect)*, which was published several times (Kazan, 1884; Moscow, 1900, 1910), *Arabic-Russian Dictionary* (1913) and *A Handbook of Arabic Colloquial Language* (1923). Attaya was highly respected by numerous students as a competent teacher of Arabic, Muslim law and history of Arabic literature and became a popular figure in Moscow academic milieu. In the Soviet period he participated in the translation of the first Russian Soviet Federate Socialist Republic Constitution and explanatory political dictionary into Arabic.

The main centre of the so-called “missionary school” of Oriental studies in Russia during the described period was the Ecclesiastic Academy of Kazan and its Chair of Arabic Language and “Denunciation of the Muhammedan Religion.” One of its graduates, a Palestinian from Jerusalem Panteylemon K. Jooze (Bendeli al-Jawzi) (1870–1942) was another notable “Russian Arab” who connected his entire live with Russia. His dissertation on doctrinal foundations of Mutazilites, which appeared in 1899, was highly esteemed by Russian academics. Jooze started his teaching career at the Kazan Ecclesiastic Academy and in 1916 he moved to the Kazan University where he taught basically Islamic law. Jooze became an author of the manual of Russian language for Arabs (1898–1899) – the first textbook of this kind in the history of Russian teaching literature and also he compiled a big Russian-Arabic dictionary, which was published in Kazan in 1903. Jooze considerably contributed to the improvement of the Oriental studies in Kazan, as well as in Baku, where he became the professor of the local university after the October revolution of 1917 and produced a number of valuable publications about Arabic sources on the history of the Caucasus.

We know that the majority of “Russian Arabs” maintained constant contacts with their homeland, often visited the native places and wrote for the Arab press. The vivid example is a Palestinian Arab Taufiq Kezma (1882–1958), who lived in Kiev, where he graduated from the Ecclesiastic Seminary and Academy. From 1918 he taught in different educational institutions of Kiev and was a staff member of

the Arabic and Iranian Philology Cabinet in the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. Along with his teaching activities Taufiq Kezma willingly informed Arab readers of his Russian colleagues-Arabists' academic achievements and even published their portraits in Arab scientific and popular periodicals. Professor of the Kazan Ecclesiastic Seminary Panteleymon Jooze translated into Arabic and published in the Arab press several important scholarly works on the pre-Islamic and early Islamic history including study of European scholar, corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Science F. Wilken (1777–1832) on the matriarchate among Arabs during Jahiliyya period and essay on the false prophet Musaylama by world-wide known Russian academician Vasili Bartold (1869–1093).

In our attempt to understand the development of Russian Oriental studies we should keep in mind a strong impact, which was made on it by the representatives of the “Arab intellectual establishment”. “Russian Arabs” had different mentality, different research techniques and even different schools of creative thought. Their academic and literary interests were remarkably diverse and they were truly dedicated to their craft, deeply convinced of its importance. These scholars effectively contributed to the teaching process in major Russian educational institutions, enlarged Russian collections of Arabic manuscripts and rare books and created cultural inheritance of substantial value for modern Oriental studies.

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