ON PREPARATION OF ARABISTS AND ISLAMIC SCHOLARS IN RUSSIAN STATE UNIVERSITIES*

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Arabic studies as a science has existed in Russian since the XVIII century. At the roots of the Russian Arabic studies was associate of Peter I Dmitriy Cantemir. In his outstanding work "Book Sistima or Condition of Muhammad religion", published in Petersburg in 1722, Cantemir acted not only as an Islamic scholar, but also as an Arabist, Iranian and Turkic scholar. However, this remarkable scientist didn't leave behind any students, not to mention the scientific school. The emergence of scientific school and various areas of studies of the East in Russian science became possible only in the XIX century.

The most famous Arabists of the XIX century became Christians Fran and Alex Boldyrev. Fran, who had been an academician of the Imperial St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences since 1817, began his scientific career in 1807 in Kazan and successfully continued it in St. Petersburg. Since moving of Fran from Kazan to St. Petersburg in 1817, according to academician Ignatiy Krachkovsky, "scientific Arabic studies finally found its feet". Works of Fran on the use of arabic sources for the study of ancient Rus history became whole epoch in science.

Boldyrev, who was the rector of Moscow State University in 1832-1837, initiated the study of Arabic and other oriental languages in Moscow. Academician Vasily Bartold considered Boldyrev as "the first Arabist in Russia" because he made first "Brief Arabic grammar" (1827) in Russian. His "Arab reader" (1824) and "New Arab reader" (1832) served as textbooks by the end of the XIX century.

It's worthy to remember a teacher of oriental and classical languages of Kazan Theological Academy in 1849-1862 Gordiy Sablukov, whose translation of the Quran, published for the first time in 1878, is one of the best to the present day.

In Russia, Islam is practiced by about 14 million people, that is more than 10% of the population. According to the Russian census, conducted in 2002, more than 10 thousand Arabs lived on the territory of the RF, most of whom are also Muslims.

Any oriental training begins with learning the language, only through the language it's possible to understand the mentality of its native speakers and the depth of other civilizations. Now there are more than 30 universities teaching Arabic literary language in Russia (including universities passed state accreditation). The most important of them are the Institute of Asian African Studies of Moscow State University, Saint Petersburg State University and the Military University of the Ministry of Defense of the

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Russian Federation, as well as the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Institute of Practical Oriental Studies, Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Moscow State Linguistic University and Russian University of peoples' Friendship.

In Kazan and St. Petersburg Universities are followed old, pre-revolutionary traditions of teaching of oriental languages and cultures with own schools of Oriental Studies.

Many universities and faculties that have been founded in the Soviet time still have good reputation and as a consequence high prestige of their diploma. Among them are the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the Military University, Institute of Asia and Africa of MSU, Moscow State Linguistic University and others. It's worth noting that IAAS MSU and Moscow State Linguistic University, as well as departmental MGIMO and Diplomatic Academy, are permanent "suppliers" of personnel for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the post-Soviet era were formed special oriental universities, which in teaching based mainly on academic staff or on invited colleagues from such "strong" educational establishments as IAAS MSU.

There are two aspects of modern Islamic studies - the scientific and the spiritual. Each Arabist in varying degrees is an Islamic scholar, because the study of the Arabic literary language and Arab culture assume familiarization with Quran and basics of Islamic law. Some Arabists, fluent in Arabic, become professional Islamic scholars.

Unfortunately, in some universities teaching of Arabic language is not accompanied by special course on the study of Islam: in the frame of language classes students are spontaneously told fragmentary information on the basics and history of religion, the Holy Scriptures which is recognized as such only in Arabic. It's obvious, that knowledge of the basics of Islam only on the conceptual level are not enough for those whose work will involve the Arabic language. Future diplomats, journalists, area studies specialists and other professionals focused on the Arab East, should not only deal with religious studies. For productive professional activities they should be taught as experts in the field of interfaith relations in the Middle East and North Africa.

Unfortunately, many graduates of oriental universities, anticipating great results of their studies, can not immediately apply knowledge in practice. They feel disappointment and as a result refuse to work in the speciality in general: young specialists with unique knowledge look for completely different areas of activity, forever parting with their dreams of a bright interesting life full of exotic and experiences, resigned to the fact that the spent years as well as efforts and huge sums of parents' money did not bring the expected effect neither materially nor morally. Anyone who dared to get oriental education must be prepared to this. The basis for this decision should only be the desire to devote himself to diligent study of the East, dedication to this job. Only then the choice will be a "win-win situation" and the learning outcomes will be much higher.

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