George G. Arnakis: The near east in modern times. Volume I: The ottoman empire and the balkan states to 1900

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Ο θεσμός της οικογένειας εις τήν Ελλάδα (έπισκόπησις βιβλιογραφίας) 
ύπό Κλειούς Πρεσβέλου 

As curious as it may sound, the civilization of one third of Eurasia still awaits definition. Traditionally cut between the classical distinction of West and East, the «cradle» of world civilization which lies in a circle around Eastern Mediterranean and more precisely around a fabulous city, Istanbul (otherwise called Byzantium, Constantinople, Polis, Tsargrad) has never been presented by historians in its unity. This «intermediary region» between West and East encompasses the Orthodox Christian Slavs (including the Russians) the Rumanians, Albanians, Greeks, Turks, Jews, Arabs, Persians, that is from Belgrad in the West to the Indus River in the East and from Arkhangelsk in the North to Ethiopia in the South.

No textbook has ever been written on the history of this Intermediate Region. The first important effort in this direction was made however by L.S. Stavrianos when, in 1958, Rinehart of New York published his remarkable The Balkans since 1453. This book encompasses only one part of the Intermediate Region, the western quarter of it, describing five centuries of its history. At the same time a parallel effort was made in French by a Lebanese historian Jawad Boulos, published in five volumes by Mouton of The Hague, under the title Les peuples et les civilisations du Proche Orient. But the ambition of this work was so great that it made a failure of the last volumes. With the exception of Russia it tries to encompass the history of the whole Intermediate Region from prehistoric times to the present day. The book by Arnakis, the third volume of which is still to be published, also studies the whole area with the exception again of Russia, but only covers the 19th and 20th centuries.

The absence of Russia is a great mistake in a book like this which has the ambition to help understand the unity of the Intermediate Region, because of the great importance this people played in the last millennium of the «intermediate» history of this area of civilization. To present, as the author does, the Russian State as an external factor to the Eastern Question, on the same level as England for instance, is a very common mistake among historians which prevents us once again from understanding the significance of the internal struggle of the area, which has always been the will of each one of the peoples of the Intermediate Region to hold the sceptre of its Oecumenical Empire in Istanbul. Thus we fail to understand the process by which an external power, England, intervenes in the «civil war» going on in the area for the succession of the Istanbul throne and helps the Turks maintain the throne by repelling both the internal contender from the South (the Arabs of Mohammed Ali) and the internal contender from the North (the Russians of Nicholas Ist.). It equally fails to understand why so many prominent Greeks continued their close
collaboration in Istanbul with the Oto-
toman Emperor, even after the making
of a small independent kingdom of Greece
in 1832. In fact it very much resembled
the present Canadian situation. As there
are French separatists in Quebec and
Federalists in Ottawa, in the same way
there were Greek separatists in
Athens and Greek «federalists» in
Istanbul, for ideological and not just
opportunistic reasons.

However the main value of this work,
which far exceeds its weaknesses, is that
which only came into vogue at the out-
break of the Second World War. It
is highly desirable that in the near fu-
ture a synthetic history of the Inter-
mediary Region in modern times,
including Russia, be written from the «in-
side» and not from the Western angle.

The bibliography of both volumes is
not satisfactory. The once more repeat-
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III. 'Ο συγγραφέας δέχεται ότι δέν έγέ-
νετο έναν θρόνο δεκτος ο θεσμός της ιδιο-
κτησίας από την Έκκλησία. Τονίζεται π.χ. υπό τού συγγραφέως
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Α. ΤΖΑΝΙΜΗΣ

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