



**Akademik Sosyal Arařtırmalar Dergisi**  
**The Journal of Academic Social Science**  
**Yıl: 1, Sayı: 1, Aralık 2013, s. 62-68**

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**THE PLACE AND THE ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY OF ISLAMIC  
REGION in the EVOLUTION of WESTERN  
(EUROPEAN) PHILOSOPHY**

**ABSTRACT**

The article presents the influence of the Medieval Philosophy of the Islamic cultural region on the formation and development of the West-European philosophy. Referring to the researches of the scholars from England, Turkey, Russia and Iran it identifies the place and role of Ibn Rushd's (Averroes') and Ibn Sina's (Avicenna's) legacy in the formation and development of the philosophy and independent thought in Medieval Europe.

The article points out the special role of Averroes' and Avicenna's ideas in the history of the world cultural legacy which they played in the establishment of the first faculties of philosophy at the Universities in France and Italy.

**Key words:** Avicenna, Averroism, Universities of France and Italy.

**ORTAÇAĞ BATI FELSEFESİNİN OLUŞUMUNDA İSLAM BÖLGESİ  
FELSEFESİNİN YERİ VE ROLÜ**

**ÖZET**

Makalede Ortaçağ İslam bölgesi felsefesinin Batı-Avrupa felsefesinin oluşumu ve gelişimindeki etkisi üzerinde durulmuş ve İngiltere, Türkiye, Rusya ve İran alimlerinin görüşlerine dayanılarak İbn Rüşd (Averroes) ve İbn Sina (Avicenna) mirasının Ortaçağ Avrupasında özgür düşünce ve felsefenin şekillenmesi ve gelişimindeki rolü ve yeri gösterilmiştir.

Averroes ve Avicenna ideyalarının Fransa ve İtalya Üniversitelerinde ilk felsefe fakültelerinin yaranmasındaki rolü, böylece Dünya medeniyet tarihinde oynadığı özel rolü belirtilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İbn Sina, Averroizm, Fransa ve İtalya Üniversiteleri

The weighty contribution of philosophers of the Islamic cultural region in the processes of formation of Western philosophy and interpretation of ancient philosophy is known from the representatives of European intellectuals and by the church personalities of XII - XIII centuries, investigating philosophical ideas and concepts of tens of ancient philosophers (Socrates, Plato,

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Aristotle, Plotinus and etc.) through extensive interpretation of works of the past, compiled by the philosophers of the above mentioned regions. That fact was relatively widely studied and remarked by Russian (G.V.Shevkina, E.A.Frolova, L.F.Ilichev, P.N.Fedoseev, S.M.Kovalev, V.G.Panov and etc.), Western (R.L.Benson, K.Battervors, U.U.Montgomeri and etc.), Turkish (Karlyga B., Nesefti O., Hizmetli S., Kushpinar B. and etc.), and by many other foreign scientific researchers. Summarizing the results of their investigations can be maintained that on the base of many philosophical ideas and theories formed in Europe before and after the Renaissance, there is very significant place of the ideas and theories of philosophers of the Islamic cultural region, supplying their own translations with critical comments and interpretations promoting the formation of a new philosophical atmosphere of the West.

From the history it is known that since the VIII century, in the cultural region of Islam widely extended the experience of translation of monuments of ancient philosophy into the Oriental languages (14, 15). Activating of translations of samples of ancient philosophy, first into Syriac<sup>2</sup> and then into Arabic soon helped to big revival in the field of science and enlightenment in the East and initiation of new permeated Islamic ideas and educational atmosphere.

According to the thought of British researcher K. Butterworth, the same situation repeated much more later in the West too. "Just as the ancient philosophy also stepped on the East, Arabic-speaking philosophers, treaters, mathematicians, geographers of the East, extending and increasing of ancient philosophical traditions, stepped on the West, bringing a new idea and a new word here" (3, 80). According to Butterworth and Watt Montgomery, although the Western world has not given up a backward system of its own philosophical thinking that not presented essential value, and at first perceived "in arms" of idea of Eastern thinkers and then later, they went for its benefit. Ancient philosophical works, reinterpreted for new and annotated with Eastern thinkers are translated into French and English languages now. Translators took into account not only the ancient authors, but also to the works of eastern authors, offering an excellent work in the field of philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, history, geography, sociology and other scientific fields. For example, B.Karlyga noted that a man named Johann al-Isbani translated work of Ibn Sina "Mantik" (Logic), with his help Gundissalinus also translated the Avicenna's work "Ash-Shifa" (Book of Healing) and the work of Al-Ghazali "Maqasid al-falasifah" (The intentions of philosophers), Gerard de Cremona translated several works of Al-Kindi. These examples we could continue on. From the above it is clear that the widespread translation of Arabic writers have played a significant role in the run-up period of the Renaissance (10, 24). In briefly, we could express it like that all the Europeans read the original works of Aristotle and Plato, but were unable to comprehend what they perceived from the works of Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd and to be based on that set out their philosophical views. Here we must note an important point, which included the fact that Muslim philosophers were not limited with the translation of ancient philosophers and analyzed their

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<sup>2</sup> Syriac - since the end of the IX the dead literary language, which was based on the Aramaic dialect, Aramaic-speaking Christians in Aramaic. With the formation of the Arab caliphate Syriac played the role of the transmitter between the ancient Greek science and Arabic as well as the works of Greek authors in the first period (during the reign of Abbasidov since 750 B.C) were translated into Arabic by Syrian Christians are not from the original, and on the Syrian.

work, also complemented and accompanied them with their extensive comments, theories and ideas than revived, was nearly extinct, the legacy of ancient civilizations. We see that a large number of European philosophers who lived in the XIII - XIV centuries had widely influenced to works of Muslim thinkers. Abdurrahman Badawi said that Albert Magnus (1207-1280) known as Albert the Great, in his writings he extensively referred to Ibn Sina, borrowed from him such ideas and views as the idea of the Soul, the ideas of peace of mind, the world of mind, the relationship of Creator and Man and others, also tried to explore them. Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great created a series of works under the influence of al-Farabi (10, 12).

Philosophical direction Averroism directly associated with the name of the philosopher and social activist Ibn Rushd became independent philosophical course in Europe and rallied many followers around him. We can cite the names of many European philosophers representing the idea of this trend. We know from history that the influence of Ibn Rushd on the philosophical systems of Western Europe went on for quite a long time, until the XVII century (14, 15). Particularly, in Europe, Ibn Rushd is known as an outstanding commentator and interpreter of ancient Greek philosophy. In this case, considering the period of the formation of Western thought and its trends, we can see a greater impact of Ibn Rushd (*averroism*), rather than the ideas of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. For two or three centuries the *averroism* had remained as one of the most influential philosophical currents. For the many research works on this topic can be come to this conclusion that the *averroism* begins with the translation of Ibn Rushd's comments to the works of Aristotle, made by Michel Scott in 1228-1235s. Michelle Scott served as an astrologer at the court of Frederick II at Palermo. One of the brightest *averroism* was Siger Brabantskiy (1235-1284s.). Extensively researching this issue G.V.Shevkina, in his work "*Siger Brabantskiy and Paris averroists*" noted that among the intellectuals of Paris University the philosophy of Ibn Rushd respected for the actual truth and defended this view. These people were supporters of the ideas of Ibn Rushd of "double truth" and together with the philosophical truth, did not deny the existence and religious. Among the European philosophers, for example, Jean de Zhandun (monk) in his letters of critical content to Thomas Aquinas, was forceful in arguing philosophy of loyalty to the ideas of Ibn Rushd, calling the latter "the patron or guardian of philosophy".

Fuad Ahmad al-Ikhwani, categorically rejecting the critical arguments against Ibn Rushd and speaking out about the value of his contributions and comments, noted that the separation of church and state in Europe, subsequently arose precisely because the principle of Ibn Rushd on the separate existence of philosophical thought and religious faith (16 , 299).

Substantiate these views in his works, Marsilius of Padua stressed the need to use these ideas in political science. Marsilius of Padua noted that *avverroizm* implies a beginning of the two, being with each other in contradiction of concepts, religious and philosophical. Al-Ikhwani, explaining Ibn Rushd interpretations of Aristotle and revealing the complexity of solving the problem, standing in front of Averroes and made him famous in Europe, says: "Once Ibn Rushd was secretly invited Ibn Tufayl and told him about the difficulties encountered by the "Emir of the Faithful" (means cordovan Khalifate) with an understanding of Aristotle and its various translations. He wrote: "If anyone has collected these pieces and thoroughly comprehended, explained their whole essence, it would be invaluable service to these people,

helping to understand these works” (17, 338). Ibn Tufayl, referring to his advanced age and his employment at the administration, asked Ibn Rushd take this task on himself. “Thus, Ibn Rushd began to write comments to the works of Aristotle. This was his fame as a commentator and facet his talent to become the most well known in medieval Europa. These thoughts was expressed like this by Buje the researcher of France «C'est an qualité de 'commentateur' d'Aristote que le philosophe arabe andalous Averroes (1126-1198) est devenu célèbre» (trans.: At the same year, in the capacity of commentator Aristotle became known Arabian Andalusian philosopher Averroes (1126-1198)).

To all of sayings in above you can also add that despite the abundance of work on the impact of the Muslim East to the Western culture and way of thinking and life, the role of Islam, particularly the impact of being under the influence of it philosophical thinking of the Islamic cultural region, the emergence of European Universities, has not learnt till the end. Carefully analyzing this important problem, we also noticed that the Western medieval sources, beginning from the XIII century, confirms the existence of significant influence of scientific directions of the Islamic East, in particular, its philosophical thought on a sequential opening of universities in the central European cities (Paris, Oxford, Madrid, Budapest, etc.). The most significant universities among them were the universities of Paris and Bologna (in 1200). Islamic thought has had a big impact on those universities that are under the influence of the philosophical ideas of Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd played an important role in the process of “Latinization”. The university of Paris – “*Universitas magistrorum et studentium Paris*” – in Latin it means “Scientific Meeting of teachers and students of Paris”, according to affirmation of the modern Western authors arose in the activities form of the circle, close ranks of teachers and students, inspired by the idea of “universality of knowledge (6, 67). Only in 1200, when King Philip Augustus, supported by Pope Innocent III, set a goal to coordinate the work of some of cathedral schools in a single center, the University of Paris has found its university status and structure (9, 24).

Van Steenbergen noted that their university status, in a short time, which turned into the centers of European Christian culture, received from the Papal regime, which was the highest ecclesiastical authority, controlling their activities (6,30).

In the universities of Western Europe the priority in the educational process was given to theology. All the science in the ultimate goal had been codified in the direction of theology. It means, the author noted that at the Universities of Paris and Bologna studies were carried out in the framework of the church. In the universities were defined schedule and directions were divided by levels. In the first stage of university education at the Faculty of Arts were taught the so-called “liberal arts”. After completing this course, to the students were given the right to study in the law, medical and theological faculties of the University (1; 13). Faculty of Arts inherited from the free art school in Paris of XIII century and we can say that on the base of these schools laid the system of Abelard. Benson wrote: “In the logical science” Abelard recognized “the basic logic of Aristotle” and included in the learning process philology, dialectic and rhetoric, defining the concept of “trivium”. In the educational process at the universities had used from two basic methods. The first was called *Lectio* – it means, the lesson. Here taught the works of Aristotle, theology (the doctrine of Peter Lombard) and the Bible. The

second - called *disputatio* - that means, discussion. These discussions had kind of a scientific seminar, took place under the supervision of a teacher or withstood the test of maturity of student” (2, 87).

It is known that the translations of Ibn Sina into the Latin language, the works of al-Farabi and al-Kindi, since 1180 have been used in schools as a free art books. At the beginning of the XIII century to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris had begun to publish the book with interpretations of Aristotle, made by Arab philosophers. It created great interest to philosophers of the Islamic region and has caused to considerable discussion among the University of Paris. The works of al-Farabi, al-Kindi, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd and other philosophers of the Islamic cultural region were translated into Latin and became very popular among the European scientists (2; 8). These works in the curriculum of the University of Paris have included teachers and pupils of the Faculty of Arts. Especially these centers were required to include these works into the library of the University. As a result of these requirements in the University of Paris formed a movement of “Parisian Averroists”. Till the opening of the University of Paris the Muslim thought had a lot of serious supporters in the West. Such seriousness and importance issue had even noted by G.V.Shevkina. Therefore, the lack of teaching of Eastern philosophy in the University of Paris during the reign of papal authority, has caused of concern among teachers and students at the school and became known as the “university crisis” in the history (11, 40, 12).

During the opening of the University of Paris, some teachers and students as textbooks used the works of Ibn Sina. At the head of these teachers was a man from England, John Bland. Through the Arabic language, he was able to read both the works of Aristotle and the works of Muslim authors.

The need of university teachers and students in the works of Muslim authors, especially, translations of Aristotle from Arabic into Latin and their inclusion in the University course has led to a major crisis in 1210. During this period, the Paris council made a decision along with the philosophical books of Aristotle, to prohibit the teaching of works of al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali and other authors at the University (16, 71). However, since the ban was ignored they had to put it back in 1215. Thus, the people met the need for the works of Muslim scholars in different roundabout ways. However, such teachers and students excluded from the management process in education. Among these teachers were Amalric Bensky, David Dinantsky and Spanish Maurice (Mauritius), became famous thanks to his zealous interest in Islamic theology (2, 142).

A. Badawi noted the presence of a large number of supporters of Islamic thought among the Parisian teachers. According to *Pere de Vauksa* at the head of these teachers was William of Auvergne (in 1249). This person was considered the head of supporters of teaching of Avicenna in Paris. Gilom Overnsky one day in class declared Ibn Sina the greatest philosopher of Muslim thought and said his name 40 times during the lesson. From the sources, it is clear that, despite the ban imposed on the teachers of the University, the students in all the way, underground methods extracted and studied the books of the philosophers of the Islamic cultural region. After the ban in 1215, formed a secret group of students with an interest in Islamic thought and

philosophy. In 1230, at the University appeared the movement of “supporters of learning of Ibn Sina”.

Although A.Badavi is the emergence of Averroism universities in Europe by 1230, the data of the event dates back to an earlier time, as early as 1229, at the University of Paris, there was a problem of discussion of the philosophical ideas of Ibn Rushd, gave rise to considerable controversy. Another challenge was attracting the attention of translation by Michael Scott in 1227, Ibn Rushd's comments to the work of “On the Heavens” by Aristotle, which became known in the University. All of these show the great interest in the works of Averroes, among Parisian teachers and students have been existed no later than 1225. This has contributed to the emergence of “Averroism”. As a result of interest in Ibn Rushd, in its turn, appeared the camp of his opponents. This aspect of the problem, particularly learned by Sayyid Mujtaba Larry (18). After all, the ideas of Ibn Rushd were rated as “monopsychism” and proponents of these ideas - as “monopsychoses” and had been strongly condemned. According to the theory monopsychism, Ibn Rushd was separated from the concept of intelligence, active mind from the possible existence of the mind and raising the ability of the degree of perception of possible existence of the mind, it refers to all people. This idea of Ibn Rushd stemmed from his desire to unite all people, regardless of their race, religion or national origin in the world, through the existence of possible common things of the mind. This idea is pursued to exert a strong influence on Christian thought, urging the universal human equality at the level of the mind. As a result, we see that Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd defended the opposite that exist in the modern world theories on the level of mental inequality, the idea of universal reason. They did not share the ability of the human mind to think on the poles, did not oppose the East to the West, praising one level higher than the other. According to philosophers, to promote ideas and beliefs of the Islamic cultural region, on certain stages of the history of any nation could be at the forefront of cutting-edge science. However, the main goal should not be the cultivation of a sense of superiority and the desire to develop and achieve global progress together with other nations.

Also, it should be noted that discriminating among the European universities the University of Paris from the first years of its opening develops under the influence of Arabic-language philosophy. The first century of the existence of the University (1200-1300) has marked by discussions related to Averroism and works of Islamic philosophers of the Renaissance period had a profound influence on the minds of the Parisian intellectuals. Intellectual circles of Paris, in response to the limited ideas of religious scholasticism, promoted by the church, most of all applied it to the philosophers of the East, most of all, to the writings and commentaries of Ibn Rushd, as well as to the works of other members of the philosophical thought of the Islamic cultural region.

Introduced in 1225, in the European universities, in the Sorbonne, Paris, Bologna Averroism in secret have been taught to them for a long time. Even in 1265, Siger of Brabant, who was a supporter of the “extreme” Averroism taught oral lessons of philosophy of Ibn Rushd in the University of Paris. It caused to a sharp resentment of the papal regime in 1267-68s. and had led to some restrictions. Influence of Averroism opened the way to discussions that have stepped over the threshold of the University of Paris (8, 12). Renan wrote that to the holy Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, some theologians wrote works against the ideas of Ibn

Rushd, where he was identified as “erroneous interpreter of ideas peripatetizma” (11, 12). Thus, the decision of the University in 1270 was 13 prohibits the teaching of philosophical theses. These were such abstracts that related to the concepts of “monopsychism”, “strong-willed determinism”, “eternity of the world”, “denial of the divine will” (11, 12, 13). After imposing these restrictions in the period between 1270-1277 years. The University is going through years of hard struggle. These crises have led in 1277 to increase the number of prohibited abstracts of up to 210, become a cause for the charges of some teachers and students and brought them to justice inquisition (18, 34-39).

We hope that the above links to sources and research literature conclusively showed the influence of the philosophical classics of the region of Islamic culture on the development of Western European medieval philosophy, as well as its scientific, spiritual and moral-political relevance at the present stage.

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