

## REVIEW

Of Dr. Hab. Pd. Nora Lafi of the dissertation council for the dissertation of **Daniil Andreevich Alferov** on the topic: "**Sudanese city in the socio-political history of the country: Modern times**", submitted for the degree of Doctorat in a scientific speciality HISTORY

. **Nora Lafi's Report on the thesis of Daniil Andreevich Alferov in the field of history:**

**"Sudanese city in the socio-political history of the country: Modern times"**

For the Council of Saint Petersburg State University

The dissertation student **Daniil Andreevich Alferov** has submitted is composed of 136 pages, of which 97 pages are dedicated to the main text (somehow short for European standards) (+13p. of bibliography and sources and 26 pages of annexes with interesting illustrative materials and tables, specifically a map of urban land use in Khartoum in 1950 and a nice scheme of Khartoum in 1840 (with Omdurman site), 1880-90, 1904 and 1952, Scheme of Wad-Madani at the beginning of the XXth. century and a collection of old pictures and postcards illustrating some passages of the text in a relevant way and an interesting Table of population in largest cities in Soudan from 1955 to 1986).

The work is presented in the field of urban history at the Saint Petersburg State University, and it corresponds as for its form and academic construction to the expectations, with an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion well balanced between a chronological and thematical construction. The outline is clear and well done. The dissertation is a translation from Russian into English. It is very well written. The organisation of the work is quite coherent and clear. A chapter corresponding to a review of the existing scholarly literature in diverse languages (including Arabic, French and English) is proposed. The student used Arabic in the sources, showing that he can read and use Arabic literature very well. The corpus for analysing the soudanese city in Modern times is rich and relevant even without direct recourse to archives. It consists of a series of published books in arabic on the history of the region *Ta'rikh* (Abd al-abīb, Yāsir Ahmad, Abū Salīm, Muhammad Ibrahim, Al-Qiddāl, Muhammad Sa'īd, Al-Muqaddam, Muhammad Ahmad Ismā'īl, Al-Hāğ, Tāğ al-Sir 'uṭmān, Hasan, Yūsuf Faḍl, Shibaykah, Makkī) and *Mudhakkaraât* (Osman Diqna), of and one French book by Dehérain, H. *Le Soudan égyptien sous Mehemet Ali* published in 1898. Most of the rest of the sources come from electronic resources. The candidate demonstrates an excellent knowledge of the Sudanese historiography. He follows the classic chronological division of the region's history. The part would have deserved to be more extensive even if the existing work on the topic of the study is very well articulated between diverse historiographies from the rich Russian and the British and French on the Arab world.

In his introduction the candidate clearly (but too shortly) introduces the problematic and the questionings as well as the method. **Daniil Andreevich Alferov** explains the goals of this research respectively the exploration of the patterns of development of Sudanese cities founded during the Sennar Sultatanate (1404-1821); "Consider the distinctive features of the social and political development of the largest Sudanese cities of the "Turkiya" period (1821-1885)"; to study the principles of urban construction and the formation of neighborhoods during the period of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium (1898-1956) using the example of the "second" Khartoum;

and analyse and compare the distinctive characteristics of a Sudanese city in the first half of the 20th century on the example of Port Sudan, Suakin and Wad-Medani. The topic and the relevance of this type of research in urban history is fundamental and important. The study of the largest cities of Sudan from 1821 to 1956 is not well known and in this way **Daniil Andreevich Alferov** contributes to fill the gap in historical knowledge and to bring new elements to understand the rapid transformation of cities of this region. The study refers to the work of Bogdan Bogdanovich and his approaches in 'Symbols in the city and the city as symbol' (1975). One might have expected a more important passage on historians who have worked on the region and tried to reflect on the urban history of the region such as Jean-Louis Triaud. The passages on colonial effects are not enough explained even if the angle of study is pertinent: focusing on the spread of Modern technology at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth changing radically cities is excellent.

Some passages would however have deserved to be more precise and more nuanced, for example by using the very common way to design the ottoman period by the 'Egyptian-Turkish' invasion in 1821'. Ottoman Empire was not as it is described a 'Turkish' empire. 'The Soudan' and its relationship with 'Egypt' furthermore should be better contextualized with the two last decades on studies mainly after the opening of the central archive in Istanbul (BOA). See for example the studies of Mohamed Elfath Ahmed dedicated on ottoman cities in the region of Soudan and specifically Suakin.

**Chapter 1** is a very short survey on cities of eastern Sudan at the end of the Funj sultanate. It presents quickly the long history of the region studied. The focus is deliberately on the 'african' history and on its experiences under the new settlements during the Sennar Sultanate from the 18<sup>th</sup>. Century.

**Chapter 2** focuses on the formation of the largest cities of the Soudan in the nineteenth century from 1821 to 1898 mainly Khartoum (1821), Omduman (1885) and Suakin (between 1821 and 1898). The scholarly literature in diverse languages on the issue is very well examined by using seminal work of historians in a convincing way. It helps to understand how the population mostly nomad settled in cities like Sweini and Cobbe. The urban history of Khartoum or Omduman through a set of excellent well-known literature and journal of missionary like Paolo Rossignoli for 1886. The student articulates very well such literature with the problematisation of the thesis. He explains how cities were connected through people. He follows some religious scholars with their Marabout sites, Khalwa (cell) connected with students from Nubians in the Arbab al-Aqaid for exemple. This is a stimulating analysis. However, the presentation on 'Islamization' of the territory of modern Sudan would have deserved a renewed vision with new archives but as the student stresses, there is no data for the moment on these issues except the very well-known genre of the *Tabaqat*. The birth of the city of Khartoum and its development is well done for the 18<sup>th</sup> century with a various set of documentation, travels accounts, journals. For the years of the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup>. Century the student could have used the ottoman archives, notably on figures like Khurshid Pasha, the governor general of Sudan or French military archives for slave trade. For Suakin during the 1821 and 1898 events the student made important reflections on the local architecture using perfectly various tarikh. A pity that the recent historiography connected to urban infrastructure in ottoman cities and to Suakin is not discussed. Nevertheless, the urban history approach here is very stimulating and convincing for the presentation of the new cities.

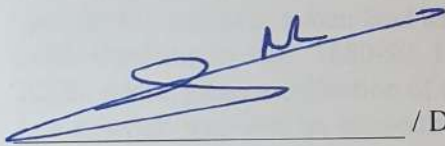
**Chapter 3** analyzes the formation and development of the 'second' Khartoum during the Anglo Egyptian condominium period 1898-1956. The colonial history of the region is too shortly but well presented. The cities of Nubia and Sudan presented in a 'chaotic urban development' is typical for the clichés on the period. The student manages to give a picture of how the cities of the region were conceived by British engineers creating diagonal streets, large 'western' cities like Chicago after the fire. This party is well written but there is a lack of dialogue between the expert on soudanese cities and historians in general who wrote on these issues. A dialogue with these studies could have helped to analyze with a more critical way the development of the city

infrastructure building in the long 19<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter is very stimulating in the study of plans based on original plans specifically at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The student manages to show how urban planning was connected to the banking system. Stimulating analyses on the Egyptian bank (which later gave a way to the Barclays Bank and the national Bank of Egypt for example. The student stressed as well that the tourism industry was an agent of urban development in the region. This period is based on the reading of reports and on the study of I.V. Gerasimov and D. Yu Bodganov and for the 20<sup>th</sup> century he used very interesting Arabic literature like the *mudhakarât* of M. Husay Haykal after his travel in the city. These passages are excellent and very precise and it adds new and original knowledge on the building and city development of the city.

### **Conclusion**

The study would have deserved however to be articulated much more with the historical chronology based on original archive of the region, a posture which would have allowed the student to develop his arguments and his problematic in an easier way. However, the student managed to reflect on the urban history of the soundanes cities with a precise examination of the whole bibliography in urban history in diverse languages on this issue and explaining the ongoing controversies in this field of academic knowledge. Even if the study remains based only on second-hand readings, it explores very well Arabic documentations (without quoting them properly in the text).

For these reasons, I rate this work as "very good" but after the defense and the answer of the candidate I rate this work 'Excellent'.



/ Dr. Hab. Pd. Nora Lafi

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