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## The Role of Syrian Christians (Shuwām) in the Nahda Movement of the 19th Century

Suriyeli Hristiyanların (Şuvâm) XIX. Yüzyıl Nahda Hareketi'ndeki Rolü

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## The Role of Syrian Christians (Shuwām) in the *Nahda* Movement of the 19th Century

### Abstract

After his invasion of Egypt in 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte departed the country in 1802. In 1805, Kavalian Mehmet Ali Pasha, who later became the Khedive of Egypt, took significant measures to modernize Egypt through the *Nahda* Movement. To keep up with advancements in the West, Kavalian Mehmet Ali Pasha initially focused on translating Western languages, particularly French and Italian - the language of diplomacy at the time - into Arabic and later into Turkish. These Syrians had migrated to Egypt after the first quarter of the 1700s and were present in Egypt after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. Finding individuals in Egypt who possessed fluency in both Arabic and foreign languages for these translations was challenging and these characteristics gave Syrian Christians extraordinary advantages that they could not have obtained in Beirut and Syria. In fact, the economic crisis in Bilād al-Shām and the struggles between the Druze and the Maronites and agricultural disasters, famine and many other factors have disturbed the peace of the people and they have started to search for a better place where they can build a better life. In this regard, they saw Egypt as their primary destination. Some immigrants even migrated to the American continent via Cairo and formed a school of what they would call "Mahjar literature" in countries such as the USA, Brazil and Argentina. Cities like Cairo and Alexandria have become centres that have attracted thousands of Christian Syrians and have become an important attraction in the Middle East. Therefore, they were first employed within the framework of the translation movement. In addition, although a school was opened in Egypt to teach French, it was understood that this language was not learnt very well, so Kavalian Mehmet Ali Pasha thought that students should be sent to European countries and learn these languages in their natural environment. As a result, the translations made by immigrant Syrians, the newspapers and journals they founded formed the foundations of the modernisation steps of the Mehmet Ali Pasha period, and science and literature developed, especially among Christian Arabs, and Egypt was able to gain an important position in the Arab world. The contributions of the Syrians extended beyond translations, as they also played a key role in Egypt's media sector, establishing newspapers and magazines. The translations produced by Syrian immigrants and the newspapers and journals they founded became the building blocks for the modernization efforts during the period of Kavalian Mehmed Ali Pasha. This led to advancements in science and literature, particularly among Christian Arabs, and elevated Egypt to a significant position within the Arab world. In light of this, this article aims to explore the contributions of Syrian Christians who migrated from Bilād al-Shām to Egypt, and their impact on the *Nahda* Movement through their translations and establishment of newspapers and journals. In this context, this article will try to discuss the contributions of Syrian Christians who migrated to Egypt from the geography of Bilād al-Shām to the Nahda Movement through the translations they made and the newspapers and magazines they established.

**Keywords:** Arabic Literature, Syrian Christians, Shuwām, Egypt, Kavalian Mehmet Ali Pasha.

### Suriyeli Hristiyanların (Şuvâm) XIX. Yüzyıl *Nahda* Hareketi'ndeki Rolü

#### Öz

Napolyon Bonapart, 1798 yılında Mısır'ı işgal etmesinin ardından 1802 yılına gelindiğinde buradan ayrılmıştır. 1805'te ise Mısır'da Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa, Mısır'ın modernleşmesi adına *Nahda* Hareketi adını taşıyan ciddi adımlara imza atmıştır. Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa, ilk olarak Batı'da meydana gelen ilerlemeleri ve gelişmeleri takip edebilmek adına Fransızca ve İtalyanca gibi Batı dillerinden ilk olarak Arapçaya ve daha sonraları ise Türkçeye çeviri yaptırmak gayretinde olmuştur. Bu dönem içerisinde Mısır'da bu çevirileri yapabilecek düzeyde hem yabancı dili hem de Arapçası olan kişileri bulmak pek kolay bir durum değildi ve öyle ki bu özellikler Suriyeli Hristiyanlara Beyrut ve Suriye'de elde edemeyecekleri sıra dışı avantajlar sağlamıştı. Bu nedenle Bilâduşşâm coğrafyasında yaşayan Suriyeli diyebileceğimiz özellikle Fransızca ve İtalyanca gibi Batı dillerine vakıf olan insanlara ihtiyaç duyulmuştu. Söz konusu Suriyeliler 1700'lü yılların ilk çeyreğinden sonra göç etmelerinin ardından Napolyon'un Mısır'ı işgali sonrasında da Mısır'da yer almışlardı. Ardından, Bilâduşşâm coğrafyasındaki ekonomik kriz ve Dürziler ile Maruniler arasındaki mücadeleler ile çatışmalar, zirai afetler, kıtlık ve daha birçok etken bölgedeki insanların huzurunu iyice kaçırmış ve insanlar daha iyi bir yaşam kurabilecekleri bir yer arayışına girmişlerdir. Bu durum için de öncelikli istikamet olarak Mısır'ı görmüşlerdir. Hatta bazı göçmenler Kahire üzerinden Amerika kıtasına da göç etmiş başta ABD, Brezilya ve Arjantin gibi ülkelerde "Mehcer edebiyatı" olarak adlandıracakları ekolü oluşturmuşlardır. Kahire ve İskenderiye gibi şehirler ise binlerce Hristiyan Suriyeliyi cezbeden ve Orta Doğu için de önemli bir çekim alanı olan merkezler hâline gelmiştir. Mısır'da yeni bir başlangıç yapan bu göçmenler aslında tam da Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa'nın aradığı özelliklere haizdiler. Bu yüzden ilk iş olarak tercüme hareketi çerçevesinde istihdam edilmişlerdir. Ayrıca Mısır'da Fransızca öğretmek için okul açılabilirse bile bu dilin çok iyi öğrenilemediği anlaşıldığından Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa, öğrencilerin Avrupa ülkelerine gönderilmeleri ve burada da bu dilleri doğal ortamında öğrenmeleri düşüncesinde olmuştur. Böylelikle de Avrupa'ya gönderilen öğrenciler öğrenim gördükleri dallarla ilgili olarak kitap çevirileri de gerçekleştirmişlerdir. Ancak çeviri işinin profesyonel bir alan olduğu göz önünde bulundurulmuş ve bu işin çeviri okulundan mezun olan kişilerce yapılması uygun görülmüştür. Bu minvalde Suriyeli Hristiyanların Mısır'a gelişi, ardından bir dil okulunun kurularak insanlara dil öğretilmesi gayesi ve bu amaçta başarısız oluş, bunun üzerinde de Mısırlı

öğrencilerin Avrupa ülkelerine gönderilmesi ve buralarda çeşitli dallarda eğitim görmesi ve bu tecrübelerini ülkelerindeki Mısırlılarla paylaşmaları ve aynı zamanda da sorumlu oldukları dala dair de bir kitap çevirisi yapmaları gerekliliği ve son olarak da profesyonel bir çevirinin yapılabilmesi gayesi ile dil okulunun açılarak uzman yetiştirilmesinin amaçlanması aslında bu dönemde meydana gelen önemli gelişmelerdir. Buna binaen de aslında dil öğrenimi konusunda Mısır'da ciddi bir yol kat edilebilmiştir. Sonuç olarak "Şuvâm" olarak adlandırılan göçmen Suriyelilerin yapmış oldukları çeviriler, kurmuş oldukları gazeteler ve dergiler Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa döneminin modernleşme adımlarının temellerini oluşturmuş ve başta Hristiyan Araplar üzerinden olmak üzere bilim ve edebiyat gelişmiş; Mısır, Arap dünyasında önemli bir konum elde edebilmiştir. Ayrıca Suriyelilerin katkıları çevirilerin ötesine geçerek Mısır'daki medya sektörü üzerinde de önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu bağlamda bu makalede Bilâduşşâm coğrafyasından Mısır'a göç etmiş olan Suriyeli Hristiyanların yapmış oldukları çeviriler ile tesis etmiş oldukları gazete ve dergiler üzerinden *Nahda* Hareketi'ne olan katkıları ele alınmaya çalışılacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Arap Edebiyatı, Suriyeli Hristiyanlar, Şuvâm, Mısır, Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa.

## Introduction

Syrian migrants started coming to Egypt during the latter part of the 18th century. However, it was not until the mid-19th century that this small influx turned into a continuous stream. The reign of Kavalian Mehmet Ali Pasha in Egypt opened up the country to Europe, particularly its economic system. As the Egyptian economy grew, there was a demand for skilled professionals who could manage it effectively. Unfortunately, the local Egyptians with limited education were not able to fulfill this requirement. On the other hand, Syria had been exposed to Western ideas and gradually began producing more graduates from European missionary schools who possessed foreign language proficiency.<sup>1</sup>

The educated class, who were unable to find employment in Syria, discovered abundant opportunities in Egypt. The cities of Cairo and Alexandria became havens for many Syrians, particularly Christians, seeking safety and stability. Kavalian Mehmet Ali Pasha and his successors recognized the potential of Syrians and their skills. The modernization efforts led by the Khedive family necessitated a group of administrators, technicians, and civil servants, which were readily filled by Syrians. Their fluency in Arabic and proficiency in one or more foreign languages gave them an edge in the local job market. Taking advantage of Khedive Ismail Pasha's ambitious endeavors to integrate Egypt with Europe, the educated individuals from Syria found numerous opportunities to flourish.

Paradoxically, Egypt's closeness to France was further strengthened by the departure of Napoleon's army in 1801. Mehmet Ali Pasha involved many Frenchmen in his ambitious plans to turn Egypt into a modern state. His successors followed suit and enlisted the help of French experts in their projects. Cairo and, more importantly, Alexandria became cities full of strong European influence. Alexandria developed as a typical Mediterranean cosmopolitan city, home to many Levantine communities. For the people of Alexandria, whether they were wealthy merchants, skilled craftsmen, or humble artisans, regardless of their Greek, Italian, French, Syrian, or Maltese origins, Egypt presented itself as a land full of opportunities and Alexandria as a new place to call home. The city housed a Levantine community that possessed a distinct culture, which in many ways resembled that of other Mediterranean cities like Izmir, Thessaloniki, and later Beirut. While the socio-political backgrounds and class divisions varied among these communities, they still shared many cultural spaces. This was a world where at least three languages were spoken, where trade connections were established, and where geographical mobility was common. It was not uncommon to find families with relatives scattered across the Mediterranean basin: one brother in Alexandria, another in Beirut, and a third in Izmir. Firstly,

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), 1; Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia, The Search for Identity in Lebanon* (New York, London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 57-58.

Alexandrians were better educated than the average Egyptians. Secondly, they were fluent in French and often spoke another foreign language such as English or Italian. These characteristics were also found among the European communities in Levantine cities. However, Syrians had an additional advantage as they were fluent in Arabic and part of a larger Arabic-speaking world. This gave them an edge over other foreign communities and expanded their horizons significantly. Many Syrians residing in Alexandria were drawn to the concept of a borderless world, and they expressed a strong desire to preserve it.<sup>2</sup>

Typically, students would come to Egypt for a limited period, usually just a few years. It was uncommon for someone to remain in Egypt after completing their studies. Similarly, merchants would only stay in Egypt semi-permanently, with their families often residing in Syria. The Syrian community in Egypt was relatively small and transient, consisting mostly of Muslims. They lacked the organization or influence to significantly impact Egyptian society. However, they were seen as a distinct non-Egyptian group with their own unique characteristics. Despite these traditional connections, they do not fully explain the sudden influx of Syrian migration to Egypt during the 18th and 19th centuries. These migrations differed greatly in scale and composition compared to previous Syrian migrations.

The initial migration, occurring from 1725 to 1780 and comprising approximately 4,000 immigrants, consisted predominantly of Greek Catholics. The subsequent wave during the nineteenth century was even more significant, with the Syrian population in Egypt reaching around 35,000 before World War I. The majority of these individuals were Greek Catholics, Greek Orthodox, or Maronites, while the remainder consisted of other Christians and Muslims. Both migration waves are essential for comprehending the structure and evolution of the Syrian community in Egypt. However, they possess distinct characteristics, motivations, and timeframes, necessitating separate treatment.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, the terms Syrian or Shuwām refer to Syrian and Lebanese Christians, and in a broader sense, to Christian Arabs from the geography of Bilād al-shām. The purpose of this article is to explore the role of Syrian Christians in the *Nahda* Movement. When we look at the Turkish writings related to this topic, the master's thesis titled "Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa Döneminde Mısır'da Edebi ve Kültürel Hayat (1805-1848)" written by Arzu Ertuğrul and the works titled "Mısır'da Türkler ve Kültürel Mirasları" written by Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu have provided a serious transfer of information at the point of following the steps taken during the reign of Mehmet Ali Pasha. In addition to these sources, Şükran Fazlıoğlu's work titled "Arap Romanında Türkler", Mustafa Ergün's article titled "Mehmet Ali Paşa Zamanında Mısır'da Eğitimin Batılılaşması", and various TDV Encyclopedia of Islam's articles on this subject are among the important sources used in this study. Since we have not come across a study that deals with the contribution of Syrian Christians to the beginning of Nahda, we have tried to reflect the scientific, literary and cultural developments in the period of Mehmet Ali Pasha, especially in the light of the concept of Shuwām.

<sup>2</sup> Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia, The Search for Identity in Lebanon*, 58-59.

<sup>3</sup> Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 1-2.

## 1. The Idea of Shuwām and the People from Syria

In the Arabic language, the plural form of "Shāmī" is "Shuwām," and this term is derived from an ammi word.<sup>4</sup> It specifically refers to individuals who originate from Bilād al-Shām. The Egyptians referred to Syrians as "Shuwām," which essentially means people from al-Shām, encompassing both Syrians in general and specifically those from Damascus. This particular designation had strong associations with Christian Syrians. Similarly, individuals were identified as Moorish or Hijazi based on their place of origin. However, the term "Shāmī" itself does not provide much information beyond indicating some specific commercial connections or a general acknowledgement of the geographical diversity among students at al-Azhar. The term "Shāmī" is used more broadly to refer to anyone hailing from Syria, and it is only through context that we can determine whether it pertains to Christian Syrians, Muslim Syrians, residents of Damascus in particular, or simply all Syrians collectively. Naturally, Egyptian attitudes toward Syrian individuals varied greatly depending on their religious affiliation—a predictable outcome given that society during that time primarily defined itself based on religious beliefs.<sup>5</sup>

A significant number of Syrian migrants have undertaken a large-scale movement, surpassing the local population in the areas where they have settled. This group includes individuals from various professions such as writers, intellectuals, poets, journalists, and others who sought political liberty. Economic motives also played a role in their decision to leave their homeland. One major factor that drew the attention of these migrants towards Egypt was their familial connections. In fact, those who migrated earlier managed to attract not only immediate family members but also extended relatives up to second and third degrees of kinship. Eventually, people from their village followed suit, as did individuals from the wider region surrounding it.

Egypt housed numerous foreign companies that were actively involved in the economy. These companies offered employment opportunities primarily to Shuwāms, who possessed fluency in Arabic and other foreign languages. In essence, the control of the Egyptian economy was in the hands of foreign banks and corporations. From cotton production to managing the Suweish canal, everything was entrusted to foreigners. As a result, job prospects for Shuwāms experienced substantial growth. For immigrants seeking employment, personal competence played a crucial role in securing a job opportunity. This requirement also aligned with the interests of these companies operating in Egypt during that period. The historical circumstances were indeed favorable for Shuwāms due to their unique qualities such as personal competence, language proficiency, adaptability, dedication to work, experience within service sectors influenced by historical events and their inclination towards Western culture. The majority of Shuwāms were Christians who held distinctive roles within society. This fact largely explains why religious sects did not dominate discussions surrounding this issue but rather self-interest prevailed instead. If this weren't true, it would have been expected that Copts—the largest Christian community—would have been granted priority benefits from Egypt's engagement with

<sup>4</sup> The term "Shāmī" denotes the region of Shām, encompassing a geographical expanse stretching from Palestine in the southern direction to the Turkish border in the northern vicinity. For details see, Muhammad Omar Hammāda, *A'lāmu Filistīn*, (Damascus: Dāru Kutaybe, 1985), 1/242; Ziyād Ahmad Salāma, *al-Sheikh Abd al-Hamid al-Sā'ih: Hayātuhi, Fikruhi wa Mevākifuhu* ('Ammān: Muessasetuhu 'Abd al-Hamid Shūmān, 1995), 8, footnote, 4; Ibn Manzūr, *Lisānu al-'Arab*, pub. Amīn Muhammad 'Abd al-Vahhāb, Muhammad al-Sādik al-'Ubeydi (Beyrut: Dāru l'hyā' al-Turās al-'Arabī, 1997), 6/7-9; Luvis b. Niqūlā al-Ma'louf - al-Yesui al-Ma'louf, *al-Muncid fī al-Lughā wa al-A'lām* (Beyrut: Dāru al-Mashriq, 2003), 370.

<sup>5</sup> Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 48-49; Hussam Eldin Raafat Ahmed, *From Nahda to Exile: A History of the Shawam in Egypt in the Early Twentieth Century* (Montreal: McGill University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Arts Institute of Islamic Studies, 2011), 4.

Western nations; however, this was not the case as they suffered setbacks due to both Shuwām migration and European immigrants settling in Egypt during that time period.<sup>6</sup>

If we examine the situation of Christian Syrians in Egypt within the context of current economic conditions and the gains they have achieved, we can observe that they have managed to establish a place for themselves. After providing information on this topic, if we turn our attention to their interest and engagement with the Arabic language and literature, we would see that according to al-Sāmī al-Qayyālī in his book *al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Mu'āsir fī Sūriya*, he explains that the Arabic language sought shelter in foreign and Christian educational institutions. He also notes that the study of Arabic literature was more prevalent among Christians than Muslims.<sup>7</sup> The Lebanese people have achieved significant success in this field for various reasons. They established connections with Egyptian society and were highly regarded by Egyptians. Many intellectuals and Egyptian politicians have consistently shown their interest and affection for the Lebanese activities and their essential role in relation to Nahda.<sup>8</sup>

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the movement of Shuwām people shifted unpredictably. They began migrating to the Americas after World War I and towards Africa shortly before World War II. According to data from the *Syrian Journal (al-Majallat al-Sūriyya)*, Lebanese Christians relocated primarily to the American continent. Following World War I, around 65,000 individuals emigrated from Lebanon and areas of Damascus. Indeed, the United States transformed into a massive Lebanon. Nevertheless, the movement of Lebanese individuals to Egypt did not cease at this point. This can be observed in the statistics from October 1925. Additionally, there was a rise in migration to the American continent. Around 458 individuals emigrated during that month—126 went to Egypt, 66 relocated to Palestine, France welcomed 54 migrants, North and South America received 119 newcomers, Turkey welcomed 13 people, Iraq gained an influx of 45 immigrants while Cyprus and India each received two new residents.

According to certain studies, the migration from Bilād al-Shām in the 1800s can be attributed to sectarian conflicts in Damascus and Jabal al-Lebanon. However, alternative statistics present a different perspective. It is argued that the influx of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants to Egypt during this time was not primarily driven by sectarian conflict but rather by a period of peace and stability. Edmond Bleybel also highlights that during the mutasarrifate era in Egypt, land was surveyed and industries such as tobacco and silk flourished, resulting in great prosperity.<sup>9</sup>

In the beginning, the Shuwāms resided in their own distinct areas, with a majority of them living in neighborhoods like Shubrā, al-Fajjāla, and al-Zāhir. However, as the population grew denser, they started dispersing to different parts of Cairo and settling in neighborhoods that were more suitable for their income levels. In the past, families would live together in one building and one neighborhood. The integration of the Shuwāms into Egyptian society took time. They initially had reservations about being part of the same community as their Egyptian counterparts because they saw themselves as separate from them. They even considered themselves more advanced than Egyptians. The Shuwām's viewpoint is justifiable because while they welcomed Egyptians into their homes and spaces with open arms, Egyptians were hesitant to reciprocate these familial relationships. To an ordinary Egyptian at that time, "Shāmī" referred to a Christian

<sup>6</sup> Massoud Daher, *Hijrat al-Shawām: al-Hijrah al-Lubnāniyah ilā Misr* (Cairo: Dār al-Shorouk, 2009), 13-14.

<sup>7</sup> Sāmī al-Qayyālī, *al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Mu'āsir fī Sūriya 1850-1950* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1968), 11.

<sup>8</sup> Daher, *Hijrat al-Shawām: al-Hijrah al-Lubnāniyah ilā Misr*, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Daher, *Hijrat al-Shawām: al-Hijrah al-Lubnāniyah ilā Misr*, 175-176.

from Bilād al-Shām (Greater Syria). This demonstrates how Egyptian society was reluctant to embrace people from different sects or backgrounds.<sup>10</sup>

For many years, the Shuwām chose to reside within a specific community, driven by various factors. They eventually expanded their presence to multiple cities in Egypt. While it would not be accurate to state that the Shuwām occupied exclusive neighborhoods in Egypt during the twentieth century, they were often referred to as such in order to differentiate them from Egyptians. In terms of their personal lives and traditions, they exhibited similarities with foreigners rather than typical Egyptian society members. It could be argued that their open-mindedness and inclusive nature appealed greatly to Egyptians.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Activities Related to Translation within the Syrian Community in Egypt

In Kavalian Mehmet Ali Pasha's endeavor to advance Egypt's economic and military foundation, there was a particular area where the expertise of a group of Syrians was highly sought after: translation. The overarching goal of modernization was to train a fresh set of administrators, technicians, and officers. Consequently, student delegations were dispatched to Europe while vocational schools were simultaneously established within Egypt. European teachers and textbooks were brought in for the students' education. However, since these teachers could not converse in Turkish or Arabic, language posed a significant challenge right from the start in terms of effective communication. In addition to lectures, there arose the need for translating textbooks as well. Translation became an essential component within the educational system. It was through this function that a distinct group of Syrians possessed the necessary skills and had the potential—at least temporarily—to play an influential role.<sup>12</sup>

The Shuwāms played a significant role in the advancement and progression of the translation movement in Egypt right from its inception. They can be recognized as the trailblazers of this movement. Their contribution became particularly evident during the French invasion in 1798 and onwards. The French required translators who were proficient in both Arabic and French languages, and it was the Shuwām translators who accompanied them during their invasion. Interestingly, prior to Napoleon's invasion, he had reached an agreement with Eastern translators residing in Italy. Ilyās Fathullāh and Yūsuf Masābīqī from Bilād al-Shām were among these translators, while assistance was sought from Egyptian-based Shuwāms who possessed fluency in both Arabic and French. Niqūlā al-Turk, Yūsuf Farhāt, and Mīhā'il Kuheil were some notable names among them. Continuing their legacy were individuals like Anthūn Rafā'il and Ilyās Fakhr who General Menu recruited as translators for the re-established diwan by 1800.<sup>13</sup>

During the latter half of the 19th century, there was a significant surge in Egypt's translation movement. This movement encompassed a wide range of documents, including political, financial, and economic reports, as well as texts related to medicine and law. Not only did educational materials like textbooks and curricula get translated, but scholarly and literary works also underwent this process. The need for such a translation movement was apparent due to various reasons. As a result of this momentum gained by the translation movement in Egypt, some scholars began referring to Mehmet Ali Pasha's era as the "century of translation and Arabicization." Within this context, Mehmet Ali Pasha included two distinct groups known as

<sup>10</sup> Daher, *Hijrat al-Shawām: al-Hijrah al-Lubnāniyah ilā Misr*, 233.

<sup>11</sup> Daher, *Hijrat al-Shawām: al-Hijrah al-Lubnāniyah ilā Misr*, 234.

<sup>12</sup> Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 67.

<sup>13</sup> Māhir Muhammad Sa'īd Darwish, *Hijrat al-Shawām ilā Misr: Hilāl al-Nisfi al-Sāni min al-Karn al-Tāsi'a 'Ashar wa Bidāyāti al-Karni al-'İshrin* (Nāblus: Daraja al-Mācistīr fī al-Tarīkh bi-Kulliyya al-Dirāsāti al-'Ulyā fī Cāmi'a al-Necāhi al-Vataniyye, 2003), 123.

Shuwāms in promoting the translation efforts. The first group consisted of individuals who returned to Egypt following the French occupation while the second group comprised those who directly migrated from Bilād al-Shām. Several prominent Shuwām translators emerged during this period for fulfilling these objectives. Some noteworthy names include Jūrj Fidāl, August Sakāqīnī, and Būḡūs Bey.

The translation movement aimed to bring the latest advancements in Western sciences, particularly in areas like navy regulations, education systems, military practices, healthcare institutions, and government administration. The objective was to translate modern scientific knowledge into Arabic and Turkish languages for easier access in schools. The translations played a crucial role in educational institutions such as the School of Medicine (established in 1827) and the School of Veterinary Medicine (established in 1828). Although most teachers were foreign professors, it was essential for translators to be well-versed in Arabic. Interestingly enough, the Shuwāms excelled at this task as well.<sup>14</sup>

The Shuwāms were actively involved in various fields, and their names can be found across different areas of expertise. Jack al-Tājir provides a list of individuals who made significant contributions in specific fields: Suleiman Suleiman, for instance, focused on the field of law; ʿĪsā Neddūr and Saʿīd al-Bustānī were notable figures in the field of statistics. Hanīn Niʿme al-Khūrī translated to Arabic as *al-Tuhfat al-Adabiyya fī Tārīh Tamaddun al-Mamālik al-ʿUrubbiye* which is written by the famous French historian François Guizon's book. Besides that Philip Jalād was the first translator the city of al-Qanat. He also authored a comprehensive six-volume dictionary that encompassed legal and administrative concepts. This extensive resource not only covered terminology but also provided insights into the Egyptian system of government.

Shuwām translators contributed not only to the translation of scientific books but also to the translation of various literary works. They translated the works of world-famous names such as Shakespeare, Corneil, Alexandre Dumas, Racine, Victor Hugo, and others in English and French.<sup>15</sup>

During the rule of Mehmet Ali Pasha, the government initially sought assistance from Italy and invited Italian teachers. They also selected Italian texts for students to translate and offered Italian language classes in certain Egyptian schools. A delegation was sent to cities like Livorno, Milan, Florence and Rome, while other students traveled to different parts of Italy. Among these students was Niqūlā Masābīqī, who was known as the only Christian of Syrian origin. Along with three other students, he was sent to Milan. In 1815, they underwent training in letterpress printing techniques as well as the methods for creating type molds and printing processes. After spending around 3-4 years there, they returned with the tools they had acquired and printed letters produced in Italy. Mehmet Ali Pasha established a printing press called *Dār al-Sinā ʿa al-Āmiriyya* at the Bulaq Shipyard. To set up this printing press, three presses were imported from Milan along with ink paper and various materials sourced from Leghorn and Trieste. Initially, Arabic scripts were obtained from Italy before eventually being procured from France as well. Between September 1821 and January 1822, Niqūlā Masābīqī successfully implemented the installation of printing presses. As part of Osman Nureddin's entourage in Bulaq, students from different countries joined the effort. Subsequently, Niqūlā Masābīqī assumed the role of director

<sup>14</sup> Darwish, *Hijrat al-Shawām ilā Misr: Hilāl al-Nisfi al-Sānī min*, 123-124.

<sup>15</sup> Darwish, *Hijrat al-Shawām ilā Misr: Hilāl al-Nisfi al-Sānī min*, 124-125.



at the government printing house in Bulaq and remained in that position until his passing in either early 1830 or 1831.<sup>16</sup>

During this particular period, one of the primary challenges was the absence of a proper translation system, which led to various difficulties. These issues persisted until the return of student delegations who had been sent abroad in 1831. The number of translators available was limited and their skills were questionable. Furthermore, their work proved to be inefficient. Regrettably, due to the scarcity of translators during this century, not all their names are known today. However, some notable individuals include Osman Nureddin Pasha as well as Father Rafā'īl and Yūsuf Fir'awn from Syria along with Yūsuf 'Anhūrī.

This particular collective, originating from Syria, primarily converted medical literature written in French into Arabic. They fulfilled their responsibilities until educational institutions were established and the first students graduated. Upon the return of student delegations sent overseas, a second group of translators emerged, comprised of these school graduates and delegation members. The initial Syrian group was relatively small in size and possessed limited knowledge that proved insufficient for their tasks. In contrast, the second group performed translation work as a supplementary occupation alongside their primary roles in fields such as education, administration, healthcare provision, or organizational oversight. The translation of professional texts from French to Arabic was primarily done by a specific group. To support this process, the establishment of the School of Languages became crucial. Graduates from this school formed a third group of translators who specialized in translating European languages, especially French and Italian, into Arabic and Turkish. Mehmet Ali Pasha, whose native language was Turkish, encountered a challenge as most members of the army and initial government officials were proficient only in Turkish and lacked knowledge in Arabic. Consequently, during Mehmet Ali Pasha's reign, a fourth group emerged within the translation lineage with the responsibility to translate predominantly Arabic books. Although few members possessed knowledge in a European language, their translations were from Arabic into Turkish. As demand for translations continued to rise beyond what current translators could handle effectively, Mehmet Ali Pasha decided to bring French-speaking translators from Istanbul to assist with the workload.<sup>17</sup>

During that period, it became mandatory for foreign schools to employ translators. If a foreign teacher delivered lectures in their native language, like Italian or French, an interpreter was required to translate into Arabic. The interpreter would accompany the teacher to class, explain the lesson, and read it aloud in Arabic for the students. Subsequently, a decision was made to offer languages such as Italian or French as foreign language courses in public schools. This initiative aimed at facilitating education led to the introduction of foreign language classes in preparatory schools. To enhance students' proficiency in medicine, Clot Bey<sup>18</sup> established a school where French was taught intensively. However, this approach did not yield satisfactory results prompting Mehmet Ali Pasha's decision to make it compulsory for some students to study

<sup>16</sup> Ahmad 'Izzat 'Abd al-Kerīm, *Tarīkh al-Ta'līm fī 'Asr Muhammad 'Alī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdat al-Misriyye, 1938), 434; Turgut Kut, "Bulak: Bulak Matbaası", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1992), 6/388; Arzu Ertuğrul, *Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa Döneminde Mısır'da Edebi ve Kültürel Hayat (1805-1848)* (İstanbul: İstanbul University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2018), 131, 151.

<sup>17</sup> İhsanoğlu, *Mısır'da Türkler ve Kültürel Mirasları*, 152; Shayyāl, *Tarīkh al-Tarjama ve al-Hareke al-Thaqāfiya fī 'Asr Muhammad Ali*, 71-72; Ertuğrul, *Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa Döneminde Mısır'da Edebi ve Kültürel Hayat*, 139, 143.

<sup>18</sup> Antoine-Barthélémy Clot, a French physician and surgeon, dedicated a significant portion of his life to Egypt. He assumed the role of overseeing the health administration for Mehmet Ali Pasha's Egyptian army; see Ertuğrul, *Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa Döneminde Mısır'da Edebi ve Kültürel Hayat*, 49, footnote, 149.

abroad in Europe. By doing so, they could have the opportunity of learning a foreign language within its natural environment.<sup>19</sup>

Anthūn Rafā'īl Zāhhūr emerged as the pioneering figure among Syrian translators. In 1803, he embarked on a journey to Marseille and subsequently Grenoble in France, eventually making his way to Paris. During the period spanning from 1803 to 1816, he was deeply engrossed in writing endeavors within the French borders. Among his notable works is a book entitled *'Anī'l-Badawī aw 'Arabī's-Sahrā'*, wherein he crafted a poetic rendition of Sindbād's adventures at sea. Additionally, Zāhhūr undertook translations of selected stories by *La Fontaine* into Arabic. Another noteworthy contribution by him is the compilation of *Merju al-Ezhār wa Bustān al-Hawādīs wa al-Ahbār* - an educational resource intended for instruction in Oriental languages schools. Furthermore, Zāhhūr penned a comprehensive volume chronicling both Egyptian history and the Durūz mountains titled *Majmū'u Esahhi al-'Ibārat wa Edakki al-Rumūz fī Ardi Mīsr wa Jabal Durūz* - an offering with intentions to honor Napoleon Bonaparte through dedication.

During that period, Italian served as the dominant language for diplomatic and written communication, making it the most widely spoken European language in Egypt. In 1823, Rafā'īl Zāhhūr took on the task of translating a French treatise by P.J. Macquer titled *l'art de la teinture en soie* into Arabic. The resulting Arabic book was called *Kitāb fī Sinā'ati Sibāghati'l-Harīr* and spanned 118 pages - a medium-sized publication. Although an introduction by the translator graced its first page, there is no explicit explanation regarding why this particular work was chosen for translation. Nonetheless, it is highly probable that Mehmet Ali Pasha commissioned its translation.<sup>20</sup>

Yūhannā 'Anhūrī hailed from one of Syria's oldest families, which has produced numerous religious, political, and academic figures in both Syria and Egypt. Among these notable individuals is Yūhannā 'Anhūrī himself, who was active during the rule of Mehmet Ali Pasha. Although little is known about his personal life, it is believed that he traveled to Italy and acquired fluency in Italian. He was proficient in both Arabic and Italian languages. Following the passing of 'Anhūn Rafā'īl Zāhhūr at the Medical School in Egypt, Yūhannā 'Anhūrī assumed the role as the first translator to fill the vacancy left behind. In fact, it can be inferred that Anthūn Rafā'īl played a significant role in facilitating Syrian translators' admission to this institution.

Yūhannā 'Anhūrī has translated a total of seven medical books. Among these works, one is authored by Clot Bey and another by Dr. Brown. The books are as follows: *al-Qawl al-Sarīh fī 'Ilmi al-Tashrīh*, originally written in French as *Anatomie du Corps Humain* by Bayle, with some additional input from Clot Bey. This two-volume publication was released in Bulaq in 1823. *Batūlūciyye Ey Risāla fī al-Tibbi al-Basharī*, copyrighted by Bayle and known as the French *Traité de Pathologie*, was published in Bulaq in 1834. Another work translated by Yūhannā 'Anhūrī is the book titled *Risāla fī 'Ilmi al-Jirāhati al-Bashariyye*, which is the French *Traité de Chirurgie* published also in Bulaq during the year 1834. The two-volume publication called *Muntehā al-Eğrād fī 'Ilmi Shifā'i al-Amrād* was translated into Arabic from the original work written by two renowned French scholars. It appeared on shelves under this title at Bulaq back then, precisely during 1834. *Mablagh al-Berāh fī 'Ilmi al-Jirāh's* author is that Clot Bey. It is released in Bulaq in

<sup>19</sup> Jack Tajir, *Hareke al-Tarjama bi-Mīsr hilāl al-Karn al-Tāsi'a 'Ashar* (Cairo: Dāru al-Ma'ārif, 1945), 22-24; Ertuğrul, *Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa Döneminde Mısır'da Edebi ve Kültürel Hayat*, 139-140.

<sup>20</sup> Shayyāl, *Tarīkh al-Tarjama wa al-Hareke al-Thaqāfiya fī 'Asr Muhammad Ali*, 74-83.

1835. *al-Azhāru al-Badī'ati fī 'Ilmi al-Tabī'ati*, the work was released in Bulaq as a two-volume publication. *'Ilmi al-Tabī'ati* was translated from French and released in Bulaq in 1841.<sup>21</sup>

Jūrj Fīdāl originates from Aleppo and is a member of the Maronite community. At the age of 32, he secured a position as an interpreter at the esteemed Egyptian Medical School during its establishment. Fīdāl's primary responsibility revolved around translating French texts into Arabic, specializing in Hodja Bernard's works. Noteworthy publications that he translated include *Kānūn al-Sihha* (French title: *Des Règles de l'hygiène et de la médecine appliquée du corps humain*), which was published in Bulaq in 1832, and *al-Minha fī Siyāse Hifz al-Sihha*, published in Bulaq in 1833. The introduction to the latter book, edited by Shaykh Muhammad 'Imrān al-Harāwī, acknowledged that it was compiled based on Hodja Bernard's exceptional writings and translated into Arabic by Jūrj Fīdāl from French.

Among the significant individuals mentioned, Jūrj Fīdāl belonged to the Maronite community, while the rest were Greek Catholics. Some of these individuals had previously served as translators or secretaries for the French in Egypt. Following the French withdrawal, all of them left Egypt either with or shortly after. The majority of them sustained themselves by utilizing their proficiency in French, Arabic, and Middle Eastern languages. Yūhannā 'Anhūrī, Yūsuf Fir'awn, and Anthūn Rafā'īl Zāhhūr worked as Arabic teachers. Mīhā'īl al-Sabbāgh (d. 1816)<sup>22</sup> collaborated with orientalist Sylvestre de Sacy. Others found employment as translators for the French in Tunisia and Algeria. In 1816, Anthūn Rafā'īl Zāhhūr became the first to return to Egypt voluntarily. He remained the sole Syrian translator at Bulaq Printing House until his death in 1831.<sup>23</sup>

August Sakāqīnī, a Syrian translator whose family hailed from Damascus, was known for his translation work. The Sakāqīnī family held a prominent position in Egypt. In Ilyān Serkīs's book *Mu'jemu al-Matbū'āt al-'Arabiyya wa al-Mu'arraba*, August's full name is listed as August b. Gabriel b. Mīhā'īl b. Ibrahim Sakāqīnī.<sup>24</sup> According to the sources, his father had traveled with Napoleon Bonaparte to Paris and remained there for some time. August resided in Marseille and from there travelled to Tunisia where he married a French lady called Th. Verduta. Subsequently, he made his way to Egypt and secured a position as a translator at the Medical School where he primarily focused on translating from French into Arabic. Clot Bey's book, *Kitāb al-'Ujālat al-Tibbiyya fīmā la Budda minhu li-Hukamā'i al-Jihādiyya*, was translated by himself and printed in 1832 at the madrasa of the School of Medicine in Abu Za'bel. Clot Bey, in his report, commended Sakāqīnī and Fīdāl for their efforts at the School of Medicine, stating that their early work deserved encouragement and expressing hope that they would contribute to future translations with better outcomes. This translation by al-Sakāqīnī is his only known work. Fīdāl, on the other hand, has translated two books; one published in 1832 and the other in 1833. The last book translated by Yūhannā 'Anhūrī was released in 1841. While there is no definitive evidence from

<sup>21</sup> Shayyāl, *Tarīkh al-Tarjama wa al-Hareke al-Thaqāfiyya fī 'Asr Muhammad Ali*, 83-87.

<sup>22</sup> Mīhā'īl al-Sabbāgh, was born in Akkā in 1775. He was raised in a family that belonged to the Greek-Catholic Church. For details see Philip Charles Sadgrove, "Mīhā'īl es-Sabbāgh", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2020), 30/23-24.

<sup>23</sup> Shayyāl, *Tarīkh al-Tarjama wa al-Hareke al-Thaqāfiyya fī 'Asr Muhammad Ali*, 87-88; Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 67.

<sup>24</sup> Yūsuf b. Ilyān Serkīs, *Mu'jemu al-Matbū'āt al-'Arabiyya wa al-Mu'arraba* (Cairo: Matba'at Serkīs, 1928), 1/1035; Shayyāl, *Tarīkh al-Tarjama wa al-Hareke al-Thaqāfiyya fī 'Asr Muhammad Ali*, 88-89.

sources, it is likely that both al-Sakāqīnī and al-Fīdāl ceased this endeavor around 1833 without further continuation.<sup>25</sup>

Ya'qūb, one of the translators from Syria, remains a mystery in modern sources due to the lack of information about his full name. However, we do know that he translated two works from French into Arabic. One of these works is *Dustūr al-A'māliyya al-Akrabazīniyya li-Hukamā'i al-Diyāri al-Misriyya*, which was published in 1836. The other work is *Kitāb al-Akrabazīn*, which was published in Bulaq in 1837. Khoja Ya'qūb carried out the translation of *Dustūr al-A'māliyya al-Akrabazīniyyeti li-Hukamā'i al-Diyāri al-Misriyya* at the Medical School in Abu Za'bel. This translation received praise from a committee of translators and underwent meticulous proofreading before being compiled for printing by Shaykh Muhammad al-Harāwī. Interestingly, there are no records indicating Ya'qūb's involvement with translation work during the early years of the School of Medicine. It is possible that he joined this institution after predecessors like al-Sakāqīnī and al-Fīdāl had already departed<sup>26</sup>. In summary, while not much information exists about Ya'qūb himself, his translations have left a lasting impact within their respective fields.

Yūsuf Fir'awn hailed from one of the ancient lineages in Syria and Egypt, particularly Damascus. He was one of the earliest translators of medical books from French into Arabic. He died in the middle of the 19th century. In 1833, he made his debut as a translator with his rendition of the book titled *Risāla fī 'Ilm al-Baytāriyya*. This translation was originally written in French but was meticulously translated into Arabic by Yūsuf Fir'awn and subsequently printed at the Bulaq Printing House. Another notable work by Yūsuf Fir'awn is called *al-Tawdīh li-alfāzi al-Tashrīh - Baytārī-*. The author of the original text, al-Musyo al-Jīrār, held a position as a professor at the Veterinary School. Like his previous endeavor, this book was also translated from French to Arabic and published at the Bulaq Printing House in 1833. The following year saw Fir'awn's translation of *Risāle fī 'Ilm al-Tibbi al-Baytārī* which again involved translating from French to Arabic and printing it at Bulaq Printing House. Interestingly enough, this particular work enjoyed another round of publishing in 1844. His translation project called *Kānūnnāme-i Baytārī* came into being through translating from French to Turkish language before being printed at Bulaq Printing House in 1835. Lastly but certainly not least important is *al-Tuhfet al-Fāhira fī Hey'eti al-A'dā' al-Zāhirah*—another masterpiece by Yūsuf Fir'awn that originated as a translation from French to Arabic language before making its way onto paper through printing process carried out by Bulaq Printing House back in 1835.<sup>27</sup>

The book *al-Mādde al-Tibbiyye al-Baytāriyye* was translated from French to Arabic by Yūsuf Fir'awn and published in 1839 at the Bulaq Printing House. Another publication is that by al-Musyū Lāfāric a professor at the Veterinary School, titled *Nuzhetu al-Enāmī fī al-Tashrīhi al-'Ammi*, was also published in 1839 at the same printing house. In addition to these works, there were other books published in 1839 at the Bulaq printing house. One of them is called *Tuhfet al-Riyād fī Kulliyāti al-Amrād*. Another notable publication from that year is *Ghāyetu al-Marām fī al-Edwiyeti ve al-Eskām*. Moving on to the following year, another work called *Ravdatu al-Azkiyā fī 'Ilmi al-Fisyūlūciyā* was published in 1840 at Bulaq Printing House. This particular book holds a copyright under al-Musyū Lāfāric's name. Continuing with publications from 1840, we have two

<sup>25</sup> Shayyāl, *Tarīkh al-Tarjama wa al-Hareke al-Thaqāfiya fī 'Asr Muhammad Ali*, 88-89.

<sup>26</sup> Shayyāl, *Tarīkh al-Tarjama wa al-Hareke al-Thaqāfiya fī 'Asr Muhammad Ali*, 89.

<sup>27</sup> Shayyāl, *Tarīkh al-Tarjama wa al-Hareke al-Thaqāfiya fī 'Asr Muhammad Ali*, 90; Serkis, *Mu'jemu al-Matbū'āt al-'Arabiyya wa al-Mu'arraba*, 2/1445-1446; Tajir, *Hareke al-Tarjama bi-Misr hilāl al-Karn al-Tāsi'a 'Ashar*, 56-57.

books: *al-Amrādu al-Zāhira fī al-Tibbi al-Baytārī*, *Muntehā al-Berāhi fī 'Ilmi al-Jirāh*. *Nuzhet al-Riyād fī 'Ilmi al-Amrād* was published in 1842, it's author of the original text of is al-Musyū Bernes. All three of these works were printed at Bulaq Printing House as well. There's also a work titled *Ajli al-Asbābi fī Ehalli al-Iktisāb* written by al-Musyū Tāyū al-Afrancistānī and edited by Shaykh Nasr Abu al-Wafā al-Hurīnī. However, this specific piece has not been printed yet; it remains only as a manuscript within the agricultural collection of Dār al-Kutubi al-Misriyya. This manuscript bears Shaykh Hurīnī's calligraphy and is given number 58 within its collection. The writing process for this work was completed on Friday, 10 Ramadan, 1843.<sup>28</sup>

Even though Syrians were instrumental in the assimilation of European ideas and the incorporation of innovative literary styles into Egypt during the latter half of the 19th century, their involvement in this initial phase was brief. As time progressed, a growing number of students who had studied abroad in France began to return to their home country from the mid-1830s onwards. Many of them took on the responsibility of translating books related to their field as one of their first duties. Eventually, graduates from Cairo's language school also joined Egyptian translator's community.<sup>29</sup>

During the final ten years of Kavalian Mehmet Ali Pasha's reign, there was a notable rise in the quantity of books being translated into Arabic and printed at the Bulaq Printing House. At the same time, Syrian translators experienced a decrease in their involvement. Following 1847, Syrians ceased to produce any further translations. Although the specific reasons behind the dismissal or resignation of Syrian interpreters remain unclear, it is evident that their employment was always intended to be temporary. Similar to a majority of European trainers, those who came back from student missions were promptly replaced as soon as suitable replacements were found. Additionally, it is noteworthy that none of the Syrian translators were sent overseas to study medicine, while some proofreaders of medical texts had the opportunity to go abroad for this purpose. To the best of our knowledge, only one Syrian individual was sent by Kavalian Mehmet Ali Pasha's government to Europe for education. Niqūlā Masābīqī, a Maronite hailing from Aleppo, went to Italy in 1815 with the aim of acquiring printing skills—an aspect we previously mentioned. Upon his return in 1819, al-Azhar requested him to train several sheikhs in this profession.<sup>30</sup>

When discussing literary translators, it is important to mention Salīm al-Naqqāsh, a Maronite who made significant contributions to the field. He was known for translating well-known stories and novels, many of which were also adapted for the theater. For instance, he translated Pierre Corneille's renowned play *Horace* into *Mey* and converted another story by Corneille into Arabic with the title *al-Intikām*. This particular work was published in 1880. In 1882, Edīb Ishaq joined Salīm al-Naqqāsh in translation and publishing at the al-Inshā' pen, an institution affiliated with the Egyptian Ministry of Education. Edīb Ishaq<sup>31</sup> played a crucial role in managing translation projects during this period. Notably, he translated two plays: *Shārlumān* and *Andrūmāq*.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Shayyāl, *Tarīkh al-Tarjama wa al-Hareke al-Thaqāfiyya fī 'Asr Muhammad Ali*, 91; Serkis, *Mu'jemu al-Matbū'āt al-'Arabiyya wa al-Mu'arraba*, 2/1445-1446; Tajir, *Hareke al-Tarjama bi-Misr hilāl al-Karn al-Tāsi'a 'Ashar*, 56-57.

<sup>29</sup> Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 67-68.

<sup>30</sup> Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 68-69.

<sup>31</sup> For details see Ömer İshakoğlu, *Osmanlı Dönemi Suriye'sinde Edebi ve Kültürel Faaliyetler: 1800-1918* (İstanbul: İstanbul University, Institute of Social Sciences, Doctoral Thesis, 2010).

<sup>32</sup> Muhammad Yūsuf Najm, *al-Masrahiyya fī al-Edeb al-'Arabi al-Hadīs* (Beirut: Dār Beyrut, 1956), 204-205; Darwish, *Hijrat al-Shawām ilā Misr: Hilāl al-Nisfi al-Sānī min*, 125; Rahmi Er, "Modern Mısır Tiyatrosu I", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 33/1-2 (1990), 132.

During this time period, the emerging theater movement in Egypt faced difficulties in producing original content. Most of their productions consisted of translated plays. To fill this void, al-Haddād took it upon himself to translate various plays into Arabic. One notable example is Suleiman al-Bustānī's<sup>33</sup> translation of *Ilyāzat al-Hūmīrūs*, which was rendered as a poem. Wadī' al-Bustānī also contributed to the translation scene by translating *Rubā'iyāt al-Hayyām* from Persian into Arabic and publishing it in 1912. In addition to these efforts, Khalīl Mutrān translated Shakespeare's *Othello* in the same year. Another significant contribution came from Farah Antoun, who translated Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's play *Paul and Virginie* into Arabic.<sup>34</sup>

According to Jack Tajir's book *Hareke al-Tarjama bi-Misr hilāl al-Karn al-Tāsi'a Ashar*, the translation during Mehmet Ali Pasha's rule can be divided into three periods. The first period, referred to as the new era, spanned from 1811 to 1830. During this time, translation was primarily utilized for establishing schools and training professional translators using foreign textbooks. Tajir identifies the second phase as occurring between 1831 and 1835 when educational missions were sent to Paris with the responsibility of translating materials. Translation was a significant obligation for Mehmet Ali Pasha, who made it a requirement for his students to translate all the texts they read. In Egypt, foreign educators were substituted with Egyptian teachers, and the establishment of the School of Languages in 1835 signaled the start of a new era in translation. According to Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, during this period of centralization, over 2,000 books were translated in Cairo under the guidance of the School of Languages.<sup>35</sup>

The arrival of printing in Egypt can be traced back to the French invasion led by Napoleon. The introduction of a small printing press by Napoleon marked the beginning of this new technology in Egypt. In 1821, Mehmet Ali Pasha established the Bulaq Printing House, which played a significant role in promoting the printing industry. Mustafa al-Khalabi, a Shuwām, established the first local printing house named al-Matba'atu al-Maymeniyya. Another important development occurred with the establishment of *al-Kuwaqeb al-Sharqi*, which became the first printing house for Damascene newspapers in Egypt. This notable institution printed works such as al-Zamakhshari's famous book titled *al-Mufassal* in 1874. In Alexandria, Salīm Taqlā set up another prominent print house called al-Ahrām Printing House specifically for his newspaper publication bearing the same name. Cairo also witnessed progress with 'Azīz al-Zand founding Jamida al-Mahrūse Printing House in 1884. This print house gained recognition for producing various works including Abū 'Alā' al-Ma'arrī's masterpiece called *Luzūm Mā Lā Yelzem*. Ahmad Fāris al-Shidyāq made an important contribution to Egyptian literature by publishing Ibn Manzūr's valuable dictionary known as *Lisān al-'Arab*.

al-Talīf Printing House was founded in 1889 by Jorjī Zaydān and Najīb Mītrī. However, in 1892, the name of the printing house was changed to al-Hilāl. Five years prior to that, Shāhīn Makaryos immigrated to Egypt from an unknown location. Upon arrival, he joined forces with Ya'qūb Sarrūf and Fāris Nimr to establish the al-Muqtataf Printing House specifically for publishing *al-Muqtataf* magazine. Additionally, Yūsuf Asāf set up the al-Umūmiyya Printing House which focused on producing religious, historical and literary books. Notable publications from this printing house

<sup>33</sup> For details see Ali Şakir Ergin, "Bustānī, Süleyman b. Hattār", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1992), 6/474-475.

<sup>34</sup> Darwish, *Hijrat al-Shawām ilā Misr: Hilāl al-Nisfi al-Sānī min*, 126.

<sup>35</sup> Tajir, *Hareke al-Tarjama bi-Misr hilāl al-Karn al-Tāsi'a 'Ashar*, 19-32; Maya I. Kesrouany, *Prophetic Translation: The Making of Modern Egyptian Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 56-57.

include Abu Mansūr al-Se'ālibī's work titled *al-l'jāz wa'l-l'jāz* published in 1897 and *Fadā'il al-Atrāq* written by al-Jāhiz which was printed in 1898.

The role of the Damascus printing presses in the development of Arabic printing and their contribution to reaching the same level as European printing cannot be overstated. One significant establishment, al-Ma'ārif Printing House, was founded by Najīb Mitrī in 1890. This particular printing house attracted renowned literary figures and authors such as Khalīl Mutrān, Ibrahim Hāfiz, Mustafa Lutfī al-Manfelūtī, and Qāsim Amīn. Another notable addition to the scene was the establishment of al-Shidyāq Printing House in 1894 by Khalīl Shidyāq. Furthermore, Muhammad Rashīd Rizā founded al-Manār Printing House in 1898 which published numerous religious, literary, and historical books.<sup>36</sup>

### 3. Press and Publication in Egypt among Syrians

The establishment of a Syrian intellectual community in Egypt can be attributed to the extensive efforts made in Syria to promote education. In order to attract young people, French-speaking Jesuits and American Protestant missionaries offered a modern education after their attempts to convert local Christian communities failed. This initiative posed a threat to local communities, who were afraid of losing members to the missionaries, resulting in the creation of competitive educational systems. As a result, a school system that provided accessible education in modern science and knowledge was established earlier than anywhere else in the Middle East. Graduates from these schools typically possessed advanced knowledge of French or English language and literature, as well as familiarity with modern sciences and non-traditional ideas. While they had a strong command of Arabic, their traditional education in this language was limited. Many graduates also acquired professional skills such as pharmacists, doctors, and teachers. However, despite advancements in modern education, economic development did not progress at the same pace in Syria. Consequently, society faced significant challenges when it came to accommodating this new intellectual class on a larger scale.

Khedive Ismail Pasha had a grand vision to integrate Egypt into Europe, which presented numerous opportunities for the educated and professional individuals of the time. However, Egypt lacked a robust educational system that could produce a sizable local intellectual elite. Educated Syrians, with their proficiency in both Arabic and Western languages, were particularly well-suited to contribute to Egypt's modernization efforts. Feeling unappreciated in Syria, many highly educated individuals migrated to Egypt where they took on roles as teachers, doctors and government officials. They also introduced modern theater to Egyptian audiences and played a significant role in establishing the press industry there for a period of time during which they held considerable influence over it.

The Egyptian press experienced a rejuvenation during the rule of Khedive Ismail Pasha. Out of the 41 publications that commenced before 1882, a total of 38 emerged after Khedive Ismail Pasha assumed power. The government provided financial support for both subsidized professional and emerging private press outlets. The golden age of the press occurred during British occupation, thanks to an expansion in potential readership, economic stability, and Cromer's leniency towards media freedom.

With the increasing censorship in Beirut and Syria, journalism and intellectual activities shifted to Egypt as a center. Egyptians have been more prominent in Egyptian journalism, although not

<sup>36</sup> Darwīsh, *Hijrat al-Shawām ilā Misr: Hilāl al-Nisfī al-Sānī min*, 126, 132-134.

always to their advantage. Syrians are also well-represented in this field, possibly even more so than others. To understand the extent of Syrian involvement in the Egyptian press, some statistics are worth noting. Between 1800 and 1914, a total of 790 newspapers and magazines were established in Egypt. Interestingly, Syrians owned about one-fifth of all periodicals before World War I. From 1873 to 1907 alone, there were 648 new periodicals introduced into the market; out of these, approximately 15% were founded by Syrians. The participation of Syrians in the Egyptian press is particularly remarkable when compared to the overall Syrian population residing in Egypt at that time. According to data from the Egyptian census conducted in 1907, there were around "Ottoman Syrians" who accounted for a population of about 33,947 individuals out of an entire population of approximately 11.19 million people living there during that year.<sup>37</sup>

During the latter half of the 19th century, driven by growing religious censorship laws in Lebanon and the enactment of the British law in 1882 that safeguarded writers, Syrian translators relocated to Cairo. In their new home, they established numerous daily newspapers and weekly magazines such as *al-Ahrām* (1876) and *al-Muqattam* (1889), as well as monthly periodicals like *al-Muqtataf* (which was transferred from Beirut to Cairo in 1884), *al-Khilāl* (1892), and *al-Jāmi'a* (1899). Within these publications, Syrian immigrants published captivating adventure stories and romantic tales that quickly gained popularity among readers. Farah Antoun, Muhammad Kurd Ali<sup>38</sup>, Es'ad Dāghir, Tanyūs Abduh, Niqūlā Haddād, Salīm al-Naqqāsh and Ya'qūb Sarrūf were among the most renowned translators during this time.

In 1876, Ya'qūb Sarrūf and Fāris Nimr embarked on the publication of the journal *al-Muqtataf* under the guidance of their mentor Cornelius Van Dyke. The aim was to keep readers informed about scientific advancements in the Western world. The journal encompassed various topics including religion, society, politics, and literature. In 1884, amidst debates surrounding Darwin's theory of evolution, articles defending the theory were featured alongside other related content. However, when Sarrūf opposed the school administration on this matter, he lost his position at the institution. Meanwhile, Evelyn Baring (later known as Lord Cromer), who served as British High Commissioner in Egypt at that time, extended an invitation to Sarrūf and Nimr to Cairo with hopes of utilizing their skills for promoting British propaganda through media outlets. They brought *al-Muqtataf* magazine to Egypt in March 1885 and it swiftly gained a foothold with support from the British establishment. In 1889, Ya'qūb Sarrūf, Fāris Nimr and Shāhin Makaryos collaborated once again under Evelyn Baring's patronage to publish another newspaper called *al-Muqattam*. This venture further bolstered their influence within Egyptian society. Overall, the team led by Ya'qūb Sarrūf played a significant role in disseminating knowledge regarding Western scientific developments through journals like *al-Muqtataf* along with newspapers such as *al-Muqattam*. They not only contributed towards informing Egyptian readers but also became instrumental in shaping public opinion during crucial debates like those centered around Darwin's theory of evolution. The objective behind the publication of this newspaper was to form a coalition against the *al-Ahrām* newspaper, which was being published by Syrian immigrants, namely Bishāre and Salīm Taklā. The reason for this alliance was that *al-Ahrām* had a pro-French

<sup>37</sup> Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 97-98.

<sup>38</sup> For details see İshakoğlu, *Osmanlı Dönemi Suriye'sinde Edebi ve Kültürel Faaliyetler: 1800-1918*.



stance. With Lord Cromer's assistance once again, the same group launched a newspaper called *al-Sūdān* in Khartoum, beginning in 1903.<sup>39</sup>

In the realm of intellectual pursuits, journalism held a prominent position as the primary means of expression. The readership in Egypt far surpassed that of Syria, allowing for an expansive platform for journalists to operate without government limitations. This freedom enticed many intellectuals from Syria to relocate to Egypt, particularly due to the increasing censorship and repression imposed by the Syrian government towards the end of the century. Notably, this wave of migration included educated Muslim Syrians for the first time. While Syrians played a pioneering role in journalism, it is important to note that their perspectives on Egypt and its politics varied greatly. Following British occupation, *al-Ahrām* quickly resumed publication and became a powerful voice opposing British rule throughout the next decade. Its anti-British stance was commonly perceived as patriotic and pro-Egyptian; however, it would be incorrect to assume that this stance also aligned with French interests—considering they were major supporters of Salīm Taqlā's journalistic endeavors. The newspaper served as an influential platform for nationalist activists who seized opportunities to express their ideas within its pages.

Mustafa Kāmil not only had his articles published in *al-Ahrām* starting from 1892, but he was also given an office by Salīm Taqlā. However, Mustafa Kāmil eventually came to the understanding that French interests did not align with those of Egyptian nationalists.<sup>40</sup>

Lebanese and Syrian Egyptians, feeling increasingly disconnected from Egyptian society, found it more convenient to leave the country after 1952. This was primarily due to significant changes that occurred during this time period, such as the nationalization of major businesses (including *al-Ahrām* and *Dār al-Khilāl*), restrictions on land ownership, confiscation of wealthy individuals' assets, the rise of educated Egyptians in various professions, and the political unrest under President Nasser's leadership. Some individuals chose to return to their home countries while others migrated to Europe, the United States, or French-speaking regions in Canada. As a result of these circumstances within a single generation's span, the community lost its distinctive position within Egyptian cultural life.<sup>41</sup>

At the young age of 19, Jorjī Zaydān relocated to Cairo in 1880. During his time there, he resided in a modest dwelling and found employment at a private newspaper called *al-Zaman*. In 1890, he joined forces with Najīb Mītrī and together they established *Idārat al-Ta'lif*. However, two years later, Zaydān decided to part ways and establish his own publication known as *al-Khilāl* while Mītrī founded *Dār al-Ma'ārif*. Zaydān commenced publishing articles for the journal *al-Khilāl* starting from its inception year of 1892 until his demise. This periodical served as an outlet where much of Jorjī's written work was featured. Due to political reasons aligned with supporting the Young Turks movement within the Ottoman Empire government structure, Jorjī Zaydān could only gain entry into Ottoman lands after their constitutional monarchy came into effect. Tragically, he passed away on July 21st, 1914 while residing in Cairo after being dismissed from

<sup>39</sup> Hilal Görgün, "Sarrūf, Ya'kūb", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2009) 36/166-167; Daher, *Hijrat al-Shawām: al-Hijrah al-Lubnāniyah ilā Misr*, 217.

<sup>40</sup> Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 105-106.

<sup>41</sup> Albert Hourani, "Lebanese and Syrians in Egypt", *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, ed. Albert Hourani-Nadim Shehadi (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1992), 507.

his position as lecturer at Cairo University which caused considerable controversy surrounding it.<sup>42</sup>

Jorjī Zaydān, firmly believed that the path to a better world lay not in revolution but through educating the masses. He saw scientific knowledge and thinking as crucial elements for progress and education. His extensive body of work on Arabic literature, Islamic civilization, history, and language serves as evidence of his scholarly dedication towards this cause. However, Zaydān was equally concerned with promoting education among the general population. This is evident in his efforts to create a standardized written Arabic language that catered to contemporary needs. To further engage readers' interest in their own history, he came up with an innovative approach—presenting literary works focused on Arabic history and Islamic civilization in the form of historical novels. In the end, he managed to create a total of 22 novels, with only one of them being non-historical. The majority of these novels were initially published in *al-Khilāl* magazine.<sup>43</sup>

Zaydān's appointment to the position of Islamic history professor at Cairo University was a direct result of his renowned work, *Tārīh al-Tamaddun al-Islāmī*. Despite being a Christian, Zaydān meticulously studied Islamic history within its unique context and circumstances. Another notable contribution by Zaydān is his work entitled *Tārīh al-Adab al-Lughā al-Arabiyya*, which stands as the first literature history written by an Arab using a periodic-chronological framework. Additionally, it is worth mentioning the author's *Tarājim Mashāhir al-Sharq*.<sup>44</sup>

From the 1860s onwards, when Arab journalism first emerged, until the onset of World War I, the majority of newspapers and magazines in Egypt were under the ownership and editorial control of Syrians and Lebanese individuals. Among these publications, two stood out as particularly significant. One was *al-Ahrām*, founded by Salīm Taqlā. The other was *al-Muqtataf*, a periodical established in Beirut in 1876 by Nimr and Sarrūf but later relocated to Cairo. This publication focused on promoting modern scientific and social thought through its content, with a strong Lebanese presence among its contributors. However, it was another magazine that would have an even greater impact on intellectual discourse at the time *al-Manār*. Founded in 1898 by Muhammad Rashīd al-Reza from northern Lebanon (a Muslim himself), this publication became the primary platform for expressing Salafist ideas within modern Muslim thought until al-Reza's demise in 1936.<sup>45</sup>

During that period, the Egyptian press was primarily influenced by three prominent journals: *al-Khalīl* and its competitors, *al-Muqtataf* and *al-Manār*. Interestingly, all of these publications were owned and published by Syrian immigrants. The fate of Syria specifically, as well as the eastern Arab countries and the entire Ottoman Empire, held immense significance for those who were involved in these journals—both owners and contributors alike.<sup>46</sup>

Syrian individuals also played a role in the financial support of theater and scriptwriting. Farah Antoon's themes have left a lasting impact on storytelling and composition for the stage. She was at the forefront of using theater as a platform to promote social ideas rooted in rationalism, free from religious biases. Her utilization of theater served as a means to reinforce her social and

<sup>42</sup> Muharrem Çelebi, "Corcī Zeydān", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1993), 69-71; Daher, *Hijrat al-Shawām: al-Hijrah al-Lubnānīyah ilā Misr*, 194.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Philipp, "Jurji Zaydan's Role in the Syro-Arab Nahda", *The Origins of Syrian Nationhood: History, Pioneers and Identity*, ed. Adel Beshara (London: Routledge, 2011), 81.

<sup>44</sup> Şükran Fazlıoğlu, *Arap Romanında Türkler* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2006), 143-144.

<sup>45</sup> Hourani, "Lebanese and Syrians in Egypt", 504-505.

<sup>46</sup> Philipp, "Jurji Zaydan's Role in the Syro-Arab Nahda", 79-80.

political beliefs. Similarly, Salāme Hejāzī and Lebanese playwright Najīb Haddād translated novels for the stage, which were then brought to life by Salāme Hejāzī and his cast.<sup>47</sup>

In 1898, Farah Antoun relocated to Alexandria due to restrictions on writing in Syria enforced by Abdul Hamid II. During this time, she launched the publication called *al-Jāmi'a*. Drawing inspiration from Western intellectuals like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Saint Simon, and Karl Marx, she aimed to present and defend her social and political ideologies. Initially known as *al-Jāmi'a al-'Usmāniyya*, the journal urged Eastern populations to support the Ottoman government in their struggle against Western imperialism. In its second year of circulation, Anthūn began incorporating biographies of renowned thinkers and historical figures into its content. Notably, she dedicated special attention to Russian literary figure Tolstoy.

Antūn transformed the novels by Alexandre Dumas that revolve around the historical period of the French Revolution. In addition, he assumed responsibility for being the editor of *Sadā al-Ahrām*, a daily newspaper. During the third year of his involvement with this journal, it became evident that Anthūn had been influenced by Ernest Renan's ideas, resulting in a shift in his religious perspective. Subsequently, in its fourth year, he commenced publishing the fundamental principles underlying Auguste Comte's positivist philosophy. The publication continued for another two years while based out of New York.<sup>48</sup>

Iskandar Farah, originally from Damascus, made significant contributions to the performing arts. He played a key role in establishing modern theater in Egypt after emigrating there from Syria. During his time as governor of Syria, Iskandar was tasked by Mithat Pasha with assembling a group of actors. With the assistance of Khalīl Qabbānī, he successfully formed this troupe. Together, they traveled to Egypt in 1883. In Egypt, Iskandar took on the responsibility of teaching acting while al-Qabbānī focused on teaching singing and music composition. Notably, Hijazi began his acting career as part of Farah's troupe. Iskandar Farah is recognized for laying the groundwork for contemporary theater in Egypt through his efforts and contributions.<sup>49</sup>

Syrians played a crucial role in the emergence of theater as a new literary genre. One of the key figures in this development was Salīm al-Naqqāsh, a Lebanese Maronite and nephew of Mārūn al-Naqqāsh, who established the first significant theater company. Following his footsteps, George Abyad translated European plays, while Najīb Reyhānī, an actor and playwright with Syrian roots, wrote comedies that depicted Egyptian bourgeois life.<sup>50</sup>

Literature offered a more welcoming space for Syrians compared to other foreign communities. Writing in Arabic provided unique opportunities in Egypt, different from those found in other Arab nations. Egypt boasted a large readership, greater publishing freedom than Ottoman-controlled countries, and the support of rulers and government officials. Creative writers such as Khalīl Mutrān, a prominent figure in Arabic literature, and Mey Ziyāda, a trailblazing female writer, chose to live and work there. Additionally, significant works were published in Egypt during this time period. Notably, Beirut-born Butrus al-Bustānī completed the final volumes of *Da'irat al-Ma'ārif* (The First Arabic Encyclopedia) there and translated Homer's *Iliad* into Arabic.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Caesar E. Farah, *Arabs and Ottomans: A Checkered Relationship* (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2002), 43.

<sup>48</sup> Fazlıoğlu, *Arap Romanında Türkler*, 139-140.

<sup>49</sup> Farah, *Arabs and Ottomans: A Checkered Relationship*, 43.

<sup>50</sup> Hourani, "Lebanese and Syrians in Egypt", 504.

<sup>51</sup> Hourani, "Lebanese and Syrians in Egypt", 503.

## Conclusion

The influx of Syrians to Egypt aligns with the 18th century, coinciding with the migration of Greeks to this region. Throughout the 19th century, Syrians started moving to Egypt or using it as a transit point for migration to other destinations. This shift was driven by internal instability in the Bilād al-Shām area, economic challenges, and various other factors. Additionally, family connections played a significant role in their decision to migrate, with those who left often bringing their relatives along.

Christian Syrians possessed not only fluency in multiple foreign languages but also proficiency in Arabic. They showcased their capabilities, loyalty, and adaptability, leading them to secure positions in foreign companies, banks, and various other business sectors. However, during the reign of Mehmet Ali Pasha, their most critical role involved translating information from Western sources and participating in the education sector by translating textbooks into Arabic. Their contributions extended across diverse fields such as medicine, veterinary medicine, law, and statistics. One notable Syrian individual named Niqūlā Masābīqī made a significant impact after studying in Italy by playing a crucial role in establishing the Bulaq Printing House and teaching others the art of printing. Moreover, the Syrians played an instrumental part in promoting printing within Egypt through the establishment of numerous printing presses. As translators, Syrians have contributed not only in translating scientific books but also in translating various literary works. They translated the works of world-renowned names in English and French. In addition, Syrians were also involved in the field of media, especially through newspapers and magazines. Many publications such as *al-Ahrām* newspaper, *al-Muqattam* newspaper and *al-Muqtataf* magazine were owned by Syrians. They specialized in this field in Egypt. The modernization movement, which is called the *Nahda* Movement, actually started with these people, and they made very important contributions especially in the fields of education, translation, press and literature. In later periods, we see especially Christians of Lebanese origin in the field of Mahjar literature. These literary figures shaped Arabic literature in the American continent. Syrians have made significant contributions as translators, not only in translating scientific books but also in translating a wide range of literary works. They were responsible for translating the works of renowned English and French authors. Additionally, Syrians played a key role in the media industry, particularly through newspapers and magazines. Many prominent publications such as *al-Ahrām* newspaper, *al-Muqattam* newspaper, and *al-Muqtataf* magazine were owned by Syrians who specialized in this field in Egypt. These individuals were at the forefront of the *Nahda* Movement, which initiated a modernization movement with notable contributions to education, translation, press, and literature. In later periods, we observe that individuals primarily from Lebanese Christian backgrounds dominated Mahjar literature—the Arabic literary scene on the American continent—shaping its development significantly.

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