

THE ROLE OF NINETEENTH CENTURY EGYPTIAN PRESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ARABIC LITERARY LANGUAGE-I

- Socio-Political Setting and al-Muwaylihi's *Ma Hunalik* -

Dr. Muhammet GÜNAYDIN*

ÖZET

XIX. Yüzyıl Basımının Modern Arap Edebiyat Dilinin Oluşumundaki Rolü

Ondokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Osmanlı-Arap dünyasında meydana gelen sosyo-politik ve kültürel gelişmeler modern Arap edebiyat dilinin oluşumunda önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Dönemin etkili yazarlarından biri olan ve bazı çağdaşları tarafından “zamanının Cahizi” olarak nitelendirilen Mısırlı yazar İbrahim el-Müveylihi'nin (1846-1906) çalışmaları bu yeni dilin oluşumunda önemli bir yer tutar. Mısır, İtalya, Fransa ve İngiltere'de, *Hilâfe, İttihad, Enba'* ve *Misbahü's-Şark* gibi çeşitli dergiler çıkarmış olan yazar daha çok Osmanlı aleyhtarı söylemi ile tanınmıştır. Fakat bununla beraber el-Müveylihi, İngiltere'de bulunduğu sırada kaleme aldığı, İngiltere'nin Ortadoğu politikalarını eleştiren muhalif yazıları sebebiyle II. Abdülhamit tarafından özel bir davetle İstanbul'a gelmiş, 1886-1895 yılları arasında *Maarif Nezaretinde* bir devlet görevlisi olarak çalışmıştır. Mısır'a döndükten sonra İstanbul izlenimlerini İngiliz yanlısı *el-Mukaddem* adlı aylık bir dergide seri makaleler halinde yayımlamış, daha sonra bu makaleleri toplayarak *Ma Hunalik* adıyla kitap olarak neşretmiştir (1896). El-Müveylihi kitabının başında, amacının “sultanı, etrafında dönen dolaplar hakkında uyandırmak” ve “Mısır halkını payitahtta neler olup-bittiği hususunda aydınlatmak” olduğunu belirterek bunu entelektüel sorumluluğun bir parçası olarak yaptığını ima eder. Giriş bölümü ve on üç makaleden oluşan kitap, kendisini Osmanlı'ya bağlı hisseden Mısır milliyetçisi bir yazarın, yaşadığı dönemdeki Osmanlı yönetimini eleştirel bir betimlemesidir. Yeni bir düzenlemeyle 2007 yılında Mısır'da yeniden basılan eserin İngilizce tercümesi 2008 yılında Amerika'da, Arap dili ve edebiyatı profesörü Roger Allen tarafından yapılmış, Türkçe tercümesi ise Muhammet Günaydın tarafından sürdürülmektedir.

Bu makale, on dokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Mısır merkezli olarak gelişen ve modern Arap kültür ve edebiyatının rönesansı olarak kabul edilen *Nah-*

da bağlamında, İbrahim El-Müveylihi'nin *Ma Hunalik* adlı eserinin, tarihi, edebi ve lingüistik açılardan disiplinler arası bir analizidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Müveylihi, Ma Hunalik, Mısır basımı, Mukattam, Edebiyat Dili.

ABSTRACT

The sociopolitical and cultural developments in Ottoman-Arabic world during second half of the 19th century played an important role in the creation of a modern literary language. İbrâhîm al-Muwaylihi (1846-1906), who has been called ‘the Jâhîz of his time’ by some of his contemporaries, was one of the most influential men-of-letters in Egypt during this period, and his works were significant in creation of a new literary language. As a literary-political activist he published several journals and newspapers in Egypt, Italy, France and Britain, such as *al-Khilâfah, al-İttihâd, al-Anbâ'* and *Misbâh al-Sharq*. Upon a special invitation of sultan ‘Abd al-hamîd, he went to Istanbul and worked there between the years of 1886-1895 as a member of *Majlis al-Ma‘ârif* in the Ottoman Government. When he returned to Egypt, he wrote his observations as a series of politico-literary essays published in a monthly journal, *al-Muqattam*. Al-Muwaylihi later collected and published these essays as a book called *Mâ Hunalik* (‘What Is There’ or ‘Over Yonder’). Considering it as a part of his intellectual responsibility al-Muwaylihi states his aim in the book as ‘awakening the sultan about the things happening in his surroundings’ and ‘informing the public about the truths of the affairs taking place in the capital’. The book, which is constituted by thirteen essays and an introduction, is a critical description of the Ottoman Government by an Egyptian nationalist who considers himself a loyal Ottoman as well. It is republished in 2007 in a new arrangement, and became available in English by Roger Allen in 2008, and will be available in Turkish, by the author of this article.

This article is an interdisciplinary analysis of İbrahim al-Muwaylihi's *Mâ Hunalik* from literary, linguistic and historical perspectives within the context of *Nahda*, which is often regarded as a literary-cultural renaissance of Arabic-speaking countries that began in the second half of 19th century in Egypt.

Keywords: Muwaylihi, Ma Hunalik, Egyptian Press, Muqattam, Literary language

1. The ‘Long Nineteenth Century’ and its Reflections on Socio-political and Intellectual Developments in Egypt

The true appreciation and evaluation of a politically oriented literary product requires ‘reading’ it in its politico-historical context. A politico-historical context can be identified as the totality of ‘continuums’ and ‘ruptures’

* İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi, Temel İslam Bilimleri Bölümü, Arap Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı.

that took place within a certain time period in the history of a country. The ruptures, as being specific historical events, are more visible in this picture, while the continuums are determiners or producers of those ruptures that are in turn the very beginnings of new continuums. Thus, there is a two-way relationship between continuums and ruptures that each rupture in fact is the end result of juxtapositions of a range of continuums, and in turn the beginning of a new continuum or continuums. From this perspective, history can be seen as an extended whole of continuums and ruptures related to universal human life.

Two main driving forces can be identified behind all these continuums and ruptures in history: 'Economical wealth' and 'political sovereignty'. These can be seen also different manifestations of 'power', which shapes human history according to certain ideological needs of a specific period in a specific country. The 'power' creates its own intellectual and political apparatus appropriate to disseminate its ideological premises; we may say its 'knowledge', among the people of that specific country. One of the most important apparatus of 'power' in the world was the press during the nineteenth century. Egypt in general and al-Muwaylihi's *Ma Hunalik*, which is written towards the end of 19th century, were not an exception of this theoretical framework. Thus, this paper offers a reading of *Ma Hunalik* within the broader perspective of the 'long 19th century of Egypt' (LNCE).

The LNCE, with a convenient overlapping to its European counterpart, extends from 1789 to 1914. It stands for many significant socio-political and literary-cultural changes in Egypt. In socio-political arena it represents several 'invasions by' and 'uprisings to' the European great powers as well as to the Ottomans; and occasional appreciation of partial independences. In literary-cultural ground, it refers to an 'awakening' or 'renaissance' commonly known as al-Nahda. However, these developments interactively related to each other and the press played very significant role as a political and social actor. In the following pages, in order to create a framework for a better interpretation of *Ma Hunalik*, we will survey the series of significant developments that took place in Egypt during long 19th century.

Due to its unique strategic location, Egypt became subject of successive waves of invasions until the 1952 revolution, and has been governed by foreign rulers during his long history as far back as the Persian invasion in 525 B.C. The beginning of its Arabic and Islamic period was witnessed in 642 AD. Successive Arab rulers governed Egypt as part of the Islamic empire, and at various occasions established it as the center of their imperial power such as the Fatimids. The Arabs were followed by the Mamlukes, who ruled Egypt from 1250 to 1517 when their reign ended with the Ottoman conquest of Egypt under Sultan Selim I (1512-20), known as Selim the Grim. Since then Egypt was a part of the Ottoman Empire, as were the entire Muslim world, until the beginning of the World War I in 1914.

The Ottoman Empire was a multinational/multireligious state, giving a recognized status to Christians and Jewish communities. It was also, the last great expression of the universality of the Islam by preserving religious law, protecting and extending the frontiers of the Muslim world, guarding the holy cities of Arabia and organizing the pilgrimage to them. Thus, Muslim inhabitants of the provincial cities, such as Cairo, were drawn into the system of government, and in the Arab countries there developed an Arab Ottoman culture, preserving the Arabic heritage, and to some extent developing it in new ways. The Ottoman Empire was also a bureaucratic state, holding different regions within a single administrative and fiscal system. However, from the last decades of 18th century on, it had been the center of attention for both England and France because of their African and Asian colonies. As a result, Egypt was occupied two times during the LNC, to be precise by France in 1898, and by Britain in 1982.

From the broadest perspective, these two occupations, and Muhammad Ali's (1769-1849) seizure to power in 1805, can be identified as the major historical events, the ruptures of the LNCE. While these events giving way a series of long running changes or continuums in Egypt's socio-political, economical and literary-linguistic environment, they themselves were in fact results of other continuums that were taking place in the world globally, such as the declension of Ottoman Empire, and the rising of European states as new imperial powers of the world. In the following pages, we will examine these networks of changes

and events to identify main paradigms of the socio-political and intellectual milieu in which Ma Hunalik was written.

In 1798, Napoleon's French army invaded Egypt. The immediate military objective of the expedition was to strike at Britain's communication routes with India. However, Egypt was an Ottoman province. Thus, Bonaparte had to confront not only the resistance of local Memluk ruling, but also of the Ottomans-British coalition forces. He destroyed the Mamluk ruling; however, his expeditionary forces could not be able to stand long against joint Ottomans-British forces. After only three years period, the occupation was officially brought to an end in 1801. As a result, with the Mamluks out of power and the French occupation over, Egypt was thrown into a power vacuum. Ironically, Muhammad Ali, a young officer who was sent by the Sublime Porte (Bab-i Ali, the Ottoman administration) to evacuate the French, stepped in to fill the power vacuum by himself. He established immediately a local power base of village leaders, clerics, and wealthy merchants in Cairo. Due to the lack of an alternative force to hold the safety of office, he was recognized by the Porte and appointed Ottoman viceroy (wāli) of Egypt and Sudan in 1805.

These two events, the Napoleonic invasion and the recognition of Muhammad Ali as viceroy, initiated a new phase in the social, political and intellectual history of Egypt, and have been considered the beginnings of the modern era in Egypt. Accompanying Napoleon's expedition were a number of savants and scientists who made a complete encyclopedic survey of Egypt, known as "Description de l'Égypte." (This is later going to be an influential work for the development of self-orientalizing outlook of Egyptian intelligentsia).

In this period, Egypt's modern press was also born with Napoleon's Arabic-French bilingual newspaper. The next Egyptian newspaper the official al-Waqai al-Misriyya (Egyptian events) emerged 30 years later in 1828, during Muhammad Ali's reign, was also bilingual, as Arabic-Turkish. Later, Arabic replaced Turkish altogether as the sole language of this publication. This newspaper was a report on government decrees and decisions. Muhammad Ali's ruling extended to 1849 and considered an important phase in Egypt's modern history. He initiated a comprehensive modernization project for the country, and gained

an autonomous status from the Ottoman Empire in 1841. The process of modernization was pursued by khedive Ismail, the grandson of Muhammad Ali, who rose to power in 1863, and remained there until he was dethroned and forced to exile in 1879. Ismail's reign was characterized by rapid changes and developments in all areas of Egyptian society. His accession marks a new chapter in the country's history and in that of the Egyptian press as well.

Soon after his accession, Ismail sent his close friend (later prime minister) Nubar Pasha to France with orders to purchase shares in the leading Paris paper, *Le Temps*. The paper, thus far a sharp critic of Egyptian policies adapted a pro-Egyptian attitude. Similarly, Ismail installed agents in Istanbul assigned to bribe local papers to give him favorable coverage. However, Ismail's concern with the press as a powerful medium was not satisfied merely by manipulating foreign journals. He was eager to putting publishing to good use in his various modernization efforts in the country. By the time Ismail came to power, the dissemination of printed information had become widespread. Several private and semiofficial Arabic papers existed in other Ottoman provinces, as well as one in Istanbul that was distributed throughout the empire and beyond. In Egypt itself six journals in French and a comparable number in Italian had appeared during the 16 years prior to Ismail's accession. Even an unsuccessful attempt had been made to publish an Arabic paper in Cairo, sponsored by the Sultan in 1857. Under Ismail's reign, however the country turned into a stage for lively journalistic enterprise, and eventually became the center of Arabic press activity. To this end, he reopened the royal press in Bulaq, which had been closed by Said, revitalized al-Waqai al-Misriyya by the injection of additional financial and human resources into the bulletin's operations. In one occasion during this process, he stated that it was indisputable that journals have merits and benefits for people and government alike; hence, he wishes to make al-Waqai al-Misriyya one of the most esteemed papers in the world. Thus, al-Waqai al-Misriyya under Ismail became a better product in various ways: Its format became larger, it used better

quality paper, and there were fewer typographical errors. It became also a weekly in 1865 and a biweekly thereafter.¹

Ismail also encouraged the establishment of specialized journals. Two such publications appeared in 1865: Yasub al-Tibb (“The Leader of Medicine”). It was a medical monthly for the use of students in the state schools of medicine and pharmacology. Al-Jarida al-Askariyya al-Misriyya, a monthly military bulletin published for the armed forces and for military students. More significantly, a journal started in 1870 by the Ministry of Education: *Rawdat al-Madaris* (“School Garden”). It was a biweekly, and the famous Rifaa Rafi al-Tahtawi was the first editor of it. It reflected the rapid expansion of educational activity and was a model of literary achievement for eight years. Two more state publications were established in 1873 one of them was in Arabic called Jaridat Arkan Harb al-Jaysh al-Misri, a magazine for the army general staff, and the other was in French called Le Moniteur Egyptien, a French equivalent of al-Waqai al-Misriyya.²

By the late 1870s, privately owned periodicals, benefiting from advanced technology, dominated the communications arena. These papers were mostly foreign-language journals protected and often financed by foreign powers. Under the new circumstances, Ismail realized that official bulletins could not compete adequately. Their identity as state organs greatly undermined their effectiveness in ongoing propaganda battles against unofficial papers that were backed by diverse adversaries. Thus, al-Waqai al-Misriyya and the other state publications became less vital in the increasingly important press arena. Their role restricted to the broadcasting of official notices and predictable commentary on current events by a government.³

Therefore, Ismail encouraged the emergence of private press as well. Educated Egyptians began initiating their own publishing projects. Two men made the first attempt of this kind in 1869: Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi, the author of our Ma Hunalik, and Uthman Jalal, a translator and writer. The two were

¹ Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 18-19.

² Ibid, 19-20.

³ Ibid, 20.

granted a permit to put out a political weekly called *Nuzhat al-Afkar* (“Promenade of Thoughts”). However, it must have been too dangerously assertive, because Ismail closed it down after only two issues. Four years later, in 1873, two Syrian Greek Orthodox emigrants, the brothers Salim and Abduh al-Hamawi, began a political and literary weekly in Alexandria entitled *al-Kawkab al-Sharqi* (“Oriental Star”). It was the first Arabic paper in the city, where several foreign-language journals had previously appeared. Nevertheless, it met the same fate as *Nuzhat al-Afkar*. Then, Ismail tried to justify his journal closing actions by stating, “Circumstances do not call for the publication of Arabic journals at that time.”⁴ Nevertheless, during the late 1870s, growing numbers of Lebanese writers moved to Egypt, because of relatively more tolerant atmosphere.⁵ However, due to the financial problems during the second half of 1870s, Ismail’s modernization projects resulted tensions within Egypt, both in relation to the Ottoman empire, and to Europe, specifically England and France. Consequently, in 1879, Khedive Ismail deposed and exiled to Nepal, Italy.

His friend and secretary, Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi, who joined him in Italy, served for a while as the ousted ruler’s voice through a paper he published there, *al-Khilafa* (“The Caliphate”). He was the only prominent Arab Muslim editor in Europe in opposition to Abd al-Hamid during that time. He denounced the deposition of his patron, khedive Ismail and attacked sharply the Ottoman government as well as Britain and Russia. Al-Muwaylihi then moved to France, where he continued his journalistic activity. Other intellectuals from Syria and Lebanon joined the growing Arab emigrant community in Paris, such as Khalil Ghanim, a former delegate to the short-lived Ottoman parliament and an outspoken critic of the Ottoman government. Following the dissolution of the parliament in 1878, Ghanim arrived in France and launched a journal called *al-Basir* (“The Keen Observer”). Shortly thereafter, the Arabic community in Paris welcomed an even more eminent figure, the mentor of so many young activists in Egypt, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, who was deported by Tawfiq, the new khe-

⁴ Ibid, 42.

⁵ Ibid, 48.

dive, when he acceded to power in 1879.⁶ Both Muwaylihis, the father and the son helped al-Afghani in publishing his journal *Urwat al-Wusqa*.

At home, in Egypt, however, the dethronement of Ismail did not cool down the situation. Large-scale uprisings began during 1881 because of the political situation and the economic conditions. All leading national forces filled the ranks behind the Urabi-revolt, headed by Colonel Ahmad Urabi. Their demands were a constitution and legislation after European standard, democratic representative bodies and government. The constitution was proclaimed in November 1881, and Egypt's first elected assembly with legislative authority was opened by khedive Tawfiq. These new nationalistic movements caused great agitation in France and England who wanted to protect their interests in the Suez Canal, because open passage through Suez was of vital importance to keep their colonies. Moreover, Egypt had accumulated a great foreign debt and finances were intractable. English and French shareholders in the Suez Canal and other important projects called for an increasing European intervention on Egyptian administration and finances. Finally, during the summer of 1882 these interventions turned to be a military occupation. Since the British government did not receive guarantees for their interests, British forces occupied the Canal Zone and Cairo at 13th of September 1882. The Ottoman sultan in Istanbul had no power to withstand the British forces. After this, Egypt came in reality under British administration with Lord Cromer as consul general. Britain kept khedive Tawfiq nominally in power. He appointed a pro-British government, ruling on Lord Cromer's approval. By the 1890s, Ibrahim's son Muhammad al-Muwaylihi, who is famous with his Hadish Isa ibn Hisham, was also employed as a government official under the British, while Ibrahim himself was in Istanbul.⁷

During the early years of British occupation, the press developed into an important tool to foster Egyptian nationalism. Strong nationalistic emotions began to be articulated through al-Ahram. Eventually *al-Ahram* considered "the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Alexander Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians! The Socio-Political Crisis in Egypt, 1878-1882*. St. Antony's Middle East monographs no. 14 (London: Published for the Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford [by] Ithaca Press, 1981), 327.

standard-bearer of Egyptian nationalism." The British was upset because of al-Ahram's unfriendly stance. They encouraged the publication of a new daily, *al-Muqattam* ("The Broken), with their financial support. *Al-Muqattam* began on 14 February 1889 as a weekly, and became a daily within six weeks. It was a qualitative publication, carrying up-to-date political, military, economic, and commercial reports, both domestic and foreign. It also offered extensive news analysis and commentary. The layout was logical and coherent, with a systematic arrangement of sections, headlines, and subheads. The language was elegant and effective. *Al-Muqattam* offered unmistakable journalistic quality that paid off. An English traveler visiting Egypt in 1892 says that he saw it in all the cafes from Alexandria on the Mediterranean to Wady Halfa on the frontier of the Sudan.⁸

Al-Muqattam, however, also articulated a contentious political position that drew considerable fire. It was openly supporting the British occupation. One of its articles it is said that "the British are partners of government, whether by advising it on foreign affairs and foreign relations or by working to perfect the country's irrigation, organize its army, and improve public order." Such open sympathy with the alien occupiers by the writers of *al-Muqattam* who were at the same time outspokenly critical of the Ottoman sultan with a secularists outlook, began viewed with suspicion by many Egyptians and with animosity by exponents of independence. Thus, *papers advocating a nationalistic line attacked al-Muqattam*, its editors bitterly denounced, and nationalist demonstrators occasionally targeted its premises for assaults.⁹

At the end of the year in which *al-Muqattam* established, a new daily appeared in Cairo, *Al-Mu'ayyad* ("The Strengthened) as a powerful voice of anti-British protest. It was initiated by Ali Yusuf (1863-1913), with the tacit backing of Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Riyad Pasha. Displaying unusual writing ability and an unwavering faith in the Islamic solution to the country's national problem, he gained the support of many Egyptian thinkers. More significantly he gained the support of khedive Tawfiq and of his son, Abbas Hilmi who suc-

⁸ Ayalon, *The Press*, 56.

⁹ Ibid., 56-57.

ceeded Tawfiq in 1892. He supported the *al-Mu'ayyad* constantly as the British supported *al-Muqattam*. Toward the turn of the century, *al-Mu'ayyad* turned into being the country's most widely circulated newspaper. The pan-Islamic aspect of its message also generated demand for it, as well as considerable support, outside Egypt's borders. *Al-Mu'ayyad* provided its readers with detailed news reportage and commentary; however, by focusing on the powerful Islamic theme, it also provided a voice for the views and emotions of a large segment of the public. The paper gained momentum during the 1890s Egypt, and voiced the Islamic community's protest successfully.

As the decade progressed, many other thinkers and activists entered the battle, issuing their own papers and turning the press into an aggressive combat arena. For instance, *al-Raid al-Misri* ("The Egyptian Leader"), established in 1896 by Niqula Shihada. It was echoing al-Mu'ayyad's criticism of *al-Muqattam*'s point of view. Towards the end of 19th century, the leading newspapers, al-Ahram, *al-Muqattam*, and al-Mu'ayyad, were selling thousands of copies daily, with al-Mu'ayyad, the most popular. There were other more specialized periodicals such as *al-Muqtataf*, also published by the editors of *al-Muqattam*, was one of path-finding scientific periodicals in the Arabic world. Its articles, many of them translations from leading European journals, were followed by a sophisticated audience throughout the Middle East. It was through *al-Muqtataf* that the writings of Charles Darwin, Nietzsche, Comte, Freud, and other leading European thinkers were introduced the Arabic world. Al-Manar, founded in 1898 by Rashid Rida, was a journal for the discussion of Islamic subjects, while Jurji Zaydan's Arabic literary periodical, al-Hilal, for reviving interest in the culture and literature of the Arabs. These papers, combined with a score of others, reached an audience of perhaps 200,000 readers in Egypt. They were both reflecting and stimulating heated controversies in socio-political arena, such as political and social reform, communal identity, cultural orientation, and problems of linguistic modernization.

All of these periodicals and newspapers did a great deal to familiarize educated Egyptians with the thought and events of the Western world. Among the most significant intellectual trends was the development of Western literary forms, such as novel, short story and drama. However, there was a flourishing

literary genre that can be described as Western as well as indigenous roots in Arabic heritage from the time of al-Jahiz (d. 869): al-maqala (the essay). Belonging to this category, it was this milieu in which al-Muwaylihi's series of essays, *Ma Hunalik*, was published between July 1895 and February 1896 among the pages of *al-Muqattam*, and appeared in a book form right after the conclusion of its publication in the newspaper.

2. Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi and the Significance of *Ma Hunalik* for the Development of new Literary Genres and Styles in Modern Arabic Literature

Ma Hunalik is the name of Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi's (1846-1906) collection of critical essays on Ottoman government. It reflects his observations of Ottoman elite during his prolong stay in Istanbul, between 1886 and 1895. Ibrāhīm al-Muwaylihi (1846-1906) is the father of the famous Muhammad al-Muwaylihi, the author of *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham*, the famous satirical work on Egyptian society during the last decades of 19th century, and a narrative that is considered the beginning of the Arabic novel.

Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi was one of the most influential men-of-letters in Egypt during the second half of 19th century. As a literary-political activist he published several short and long-lived journals and newspapers in Egypt, Italy, France and Britain, such as *al-Khilāfah*, *al-Ittihād*, *al-Anbā* and *Misbāh al-Sharq*. He was called as "the Jāhiz of his time" or described as "the greatest writer of his day" by some of his contemporaries, and recently as an "incisive critic" and a "brilliant stylist in the traditional mode," as well as an "inveterate political schemer" by Roger Allen, a literary critic and the translator of *Mā Hunālik* into English.¹⁰

¹⁰ Roger Allen, *Spies, Scandals, and Sultans Istanbul in the Twilight of the Ottoman Empire: the First English Translation of Egyptian Ibrahim 'Al-Muwaylihi's Ma Hanalik* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 4. Allen, one of the most famous contemporary literary critics of the Arabic literature, edited the Arabic originals of all of the writings of both Ibrahim and Muhammad al-Muwaylihi, and translated majority of them, as well as many other modern Arabic literary works.

Al-Muwaylihi was born into an upper-class textile-trading family in Cairo.¹¹ The origin of his family goes back to a small town of al-Muwaylih in Hejaz along the Red Sea coast of Arabian Peninsula. The Muwaylihi family was the Egyptian branch of the Family of Wakil (usrat al-wakil) that was appointed by Sultan Salim I as the representative of the Ottoman Government during his Egyptian expedition in 1571. The Muwaylihi family had grown prosperous in the eighteenth century with the prosperity of Egypt's Red Sea trade, and in the nineteenth century had become close political allies of the Egyptian ruling family. The first member of the family in Egypt was Ahmad al-Muwaylihi who was the main supporters of Muhammad Ali, an Ottoman Pasha who became later the founder of modern Egypt, in suppressing Wahhabi uprisings in Iraq, Syria and Arabia during the first years of the 19th century. After Pasha's own revolt against the Ottoman Government in 1805, Ahmad al-Muwaylihi moved to Egypt, and soon after establishing a silk trading business in Cairo married with the daughter of *naqib al-ashraf* Abd al-Hamid al-Bakri.¹² He had a son named Ibrahim, the first Egyptian born member of the Muwaylihi family who served as a private secretary of Muhammad Ali while carrying out managing his family business. Later, his son Abd al-Khaliq became one of the most famous merchants of the East in silk and silk-related business. This was the father of our Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi, the author of *Ma Hunalik*, along with his brother Abd al-Salam. The father kept Ibrahim with him in order to train in family business while sending his brother to al-Azhar to become the 'lettered' representative of the family. Ironically, in due course the brother was the one who pursued the family business in general, while Ibrahim seceded in literary word and became one of the most famous 'men of letters' of his time. Ibrahim established a printing house in 1868, and began to publish his first journal *al-Ittihad*, while his brother became a member of the Council of Merchants and the Court of First

¹¹ There is no definite information about his birth date in the sources. However, all sources agree that he was born in 1262 A.H. which would fit 1846.

¹² Naqib al-ashraf is a steward of the descendants of the Prophet as a member of the institution that was set up by Ottomans to record and preserve the pedigrees and genealogies of the *sayyids* and the *sharifs*.

Instance, and later distinguished as a noted orator in the Assembly of Deputies.¹³

In the 1870s, after being rescued from commercial ruin by Khedive Ismail, the viceroy of Egypt, the Muwaylihis were among those who led the nationalist movement against the commercial and financial control of Egypt by the European powers.¹⁴ Towards the end of his reign Ismail had faced to chose to hold whether the one or the other end of a shitty rod: to resign or file bankruptcy. It was the Muwaylihi's turn to help Ismail to escape from situation. By supporting Ismail's counter project La'iha Wataniya, it was them who worked enthusiastically against the British plan which propose bankruptcy of Egyptian government. Ibrahim was working actively to gain the signatures of the ulama and grandees, while his brother Abd al-Salam, as a member of Ismail's Consultative Chamber of Delegates, was directing the entire campaign by taking advantages of his connections of the Cairo press. Nevertheless, as a result of European pressure, the Sultan in Istanbul, Abd al-Hamid, ordered the removal of Khedive Ismail from viceroy of Egypt and forced to go into exile in Italy, in 1879.¹⁵

Al-Muwaylihi travelled to Italy with ex-khedive Ismail as Arabic tutor for his son Prince Fu'ad (later, King Fu'ad of Egypt). There, he continued to publish his journal *al-Ittihad*. After several years, in 1884, he travelled to Paris, together with his son Muhammad, where both assisted Jamal al-din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh in producing their famous newspaper *Al-Urwa al-Wuthqa*. In Paris he also published a further issue of *al-Ittihad* in favor of Ismail, and wrote articles so critical of the Ottoman Sultan and of Ottoman's Egyptian policy. Consequently, he expelled from France by the pressures of the Ottoman authorities on France.¹⁶ He found a way to London through Brussels

¹³ Yūsuf Rāmīṭsh, *Usrat al-Muwaylihi wa-atharuhā fi'l-adab al-°Arabī'l-hadīth* (Cairo: Dar al-Maarif, [1980]), 67-68.

¹⁴ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 116.

¹⁵ F. Robert Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives: 1805-1879* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1984), 222, 226.

¹⁶ Allen, *Spies, Scandals, and Sultans*, 3.

by pretending to be “an agent of Sudanese Mahdi.”¹⁷ He might not be able to enter to Britain if he did not conceal his identity because Egypt was under British occupation at that time, and he was known as one of the supporters of Khedive’s nationalist project against European and British intervention in Egyptian government.

In London, according to an account, he began concerning to ingratiate himself with Sultan Abd al-Hamid. To this end, he wrote the Sultan a letter claiming that he came to London in order to serve the Sultan better with pure intent. More over, to justify his criticism during his stay in Paris, he said in his letter that he had notified the Ottoman Embassy in advance about the publication of pro-Ismail articles in his journal due to, in part, Ismail’s pressure on him, and, in part, to be able to acquire Ismail’s financial support he needed for the publication of his journal.¹⁸ His claim of serving the Sultan better was in compliance with his writings in London since he began writing critically about the policies of the British government in the Middle East while favoring Ottoman government. This was highly appreciated by the Sultan, and got him a special invitation to come to the Ottoman capital, upon which he went Istanbul in 1886.

In Istanbul, he was formally appointed as a member of *Majlis al-Maārif*, the Education Council of the Ottoman government. After about ten years of actual involvement and observations of many political intrigues there, both local and international, he returned to Egypt in 1895. Soon after his arrival, he began to publish his observations as a series of politico-literary essays in a British supported monthly journal, *al-Muqatīl*.¹⁹ Immediately after the completion of the essays in the serial in 1896, they were published in a book form called *Mā Hunālik* (‘What Is There’ or ‘Over Yonder’).

Several years later, in 1898, al-Muwaylihi began publishing his most famous journal, *Misbah al-Sharq* in Cairo. The journal was termed later by Muhammad Kurd Ali in his memoirs as “the best weekly.” In *Misbah*, both al-Muwaylihi and his son, Muhammad, wrote many articles. These articles in-

¹⁷ Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-din “al-Afghani”: a political biography* (Berkeley: University of California, 1972.), 238.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Allen, *Spies, Scandals, and Sultans*, 3.

cluded commentaries on current events, political and social issues, and extracts from works of classical Arabic literature, which were collected by them as manuscripts during their residence in Istanbul.²⁰

The fame of the journal reached its height during the publication of Muhammad’s series of episodes, “*Fatrah min al-Zaman*” between November 1898 and December 1900. These episodes were going to be published in 1907 as the renowned book, *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham*. During intervals in the publication of Muhammad’s episodes, Ibrahim also contributed to the same genre, writing a series of nine episodes entitled “*Mir’at al-Alam aw Hadith Musa ibn ‘Isam*” between June-July 1899 and June-September 1900.²¹

Towards the end of the century, the son Muwaylihi Muhammad gradually took over the editorial functions of the journal, while the father Ibrahim resumed his career as political consultant to the Khedive Abbas Hilmi II. Under the editorship of Muhammad, however, the journal lost its critical spirit and diminished in both quality and quantity. Instead of original articles, some lengthy quotations from Western sources were published in it, and finally, suspended from publication in August 15, 1902. Ibrahim continued to publish articles in other newspapers and even founded yet another, named *al-Mishkah*, in 1905. Nevertheless, he fell gravely ill and died on January 29, 1906.

3. A Structural Analysis of Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi’s *Ma Hunalik* and its Significance for the Development of a new Literary Language in Arabic

Ma Hunalik consists of thirteen essays written, as indicated on the cover page, by “an honorable Egyptian littérateur (adīb fādīl min al-misriyyīn).” There is no name anywhere in the book indicating who the author was. Obviously, its title is no less mysterious than the author of the book itself which means literally ‘over yonder’ or ‘what is there?’; or interpretatively ‘all there is’ according to speculative classical Arabic grammar, as an ellipsis of the phrase “kull ma hunalik”.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 4.

The book begins with *basmala*, as it is customary in every traditional Arabic book regardless of its content being religious or non-religious. Then a verse from the Qur'an followed by a note: We could not find any better introduction for this book other than these two essays. One of them is for an 'unknown member' of the nation of Islam, the other for an 'honorable person' whose essays appear in the journal of *al-Muqattam* with the signature of 'y'.

The titles of those two essays are "The Religion is advising" and "The Nation of Ottoman."²² According to introductory note, these two essays were not the original components of the book, but added later as an introduction to contextualize the original essays. The book obviously contents some advices, and many critical descriptions of the Ottoman authorities. The advices are addressed to Abd al-Hamid who ruled the Empire for 33 years between 1876 and 1909 while the audiences of the criticism were everyone else around him.

In the first introductory essay which is titled as 'the religion is advising', al-Muwaylihi suggests that some people consider the awakening of the state (*tanbih al-dawla*) as heresy. For al-Muwaylihi, this is totally unacceptable because it is contrary not only to reason but also to the Sharia since enjoining the good and forbidding the bad is a religious duty for the believers, and awakening the state is a part of this duty. For al-Muwaylihi, the awakening the state can be performed by a variety of linguistic arts such as composition, alienating, pleading, provoking, alerting and agitation. Some other people argue, al-Muwaylihi suggests, the speaking and writing does not change anything. Against this argument al-Muwaylihi asks a series of rhetorical questions that isn't the prophets called the people to their religion with the power of the language and isn't the holy books are revealed in expressions and elucidations by words. For him there is no other thing like the crop of the word and the reason in this world. The idea of the state does not benefit from the speech or writing is a total ignorance or lack of common sense.²³

²² These two essays are skipped in Allen's translation of Ma Hunalik.

²³ Ibrahim Al-Muwaylihi, *Al-A'mal al-Kamilah* (Al-Qahira: Al-Majlis al-Ala li-al-Thaqafa, 2007), 27-28.

In this essay, al-Muwaylihi also rejects the idea that putting criticism forward about the authorities would cause some internal and external interdictions on newspapers that those criticism are published. For him this is a very weak claim because the rulers are supposed to benefit from honest and constrictive criticisms and therefore reward the owner of those criticisms.²⁴

According to al-Muwaylihi, some people argue that the sickness of the state (*da'al-dawla*) has been penetrated into the veins of its organs so deeply that it is not curable anymore. Thus, many of the bureaucrats try to accumulate as much wealth as possible for their children before the final collapse of the state. For al-Muwaylihi this is not fair, and there is no place for despair since there is no incurable sickness in the world but it is a matter of finding qualified doctors. What the state need is to find qualified doctors of politics (*atibba' al-siyasa*) for its sickness. It is expected that these doctors would try their best, if they fail that is still praiseworthy but if they succeed and cure the sickness that is doubly praiseworthy.²⁵

Yet, another group of people believes that the state is very strong and there is no defect or fault in any aspect of the system. For them, the criticisms against the state are coming from the enemies of the state because of their enmity. According to al-Muwaylihi, the proponents of this argument are those who close themselves against the world. An honest comparison of the state with other European powers reveals that it is the weakest among them. This is a reality regardless of the fact that some people do not accept it. What is expected from a responsible intellectual is not to cover the defects of the state and mislead the authorities but to show them and the solutions of the problems by uncovering them.²⁶

Finally, in this essay, al-Muwaylihi proposes that there is a specific reason for every sickness of the state, and it is an indispensable prerequisite of the treatment of that sickness is to discover the reason correctly. Only the earnest and faithful friends can do this. Here, al-Muwaylihi implies that he is a friend

²⁴ Ibid, 28.

²⁵ Ibid, 28.

²⁶ Ibid, 29.

of the state and in the following essays, he will discern the problems of the state, and illustrate how to solve them, in order to help the state to recover but not to criticize it for hostility.²⁷

In the second introductory essay, 'the Ottoman Nation', al-Muwaylihi suggests that the state authority should act calmly against disturbances of ignorant people who can see only outer appearance of things, and never be able to penetrate the inner reality. The inner reality of the things can be painful. If an intellectual does not point out these inner realities for fear of his personal interests, he would be like a doctor who restrains applying necessary practices to a sick person to cure, to avoid the pain that would be caused. Thus, it is a responsibility of a sincere intellectual to let authorities know the real situation of the nation and the government in order to fix the problems even if they are not pleasant. Here, al-Muwaylihi describes his position as the one who wants to awake the nation from its darkness and show the cure for its sickness. For him, the government should pursue the reforms, bring the constitution in effect, and reopen the parliament. In addition to these, it is also indispensable to give way to freedom of thought and speech as it is in the European countries. This is the only way to improve the current situation of the state and prevent the inevitable collapse. Moreover, there is also an example of Japan in front of us who was able to defeat the China with the advantages of this system.²⁸

Towards the end of the essay, Al-Muwaylihi poses the question of what is preventing the Ottoman government from putting in practice this parliamentary system (al-nizam al-shura) which is also instructed by the Sahria through al-Khilafa. The reason for this is that the people do not aware of their rights on the issue or else they are obliged to give them up. Moreover, there is a wall between the public and the government that prevents communication between them. In the eyes of the people in the authority, the situations that the state is in looks like a house in a fire. Whoever rescues anything for himself considers himself lucky. Thus, it is almost impossible for a free spirited intellectual to overcome this barrier between himself and those in the authority to illustrate the situation and show that their liberation from the long standing governmental problems is

²⁷ Ibid, 30.

²⁸ Ibid, 31-32.

in fact in their own hands. Nevertheless, al-Muwaylihi states his aim a realization of this tough job as much as possible²⁹ in the following essays: 'Concerning the Circumstances of the Ottoman Sultanate', 'Almabayn', 'The Chief Secretary's Department in Almabayn', 'The Almabaynjiyya Department in Almabayn', 'The Department of the Chief Eunuch in Almabayn', 'The Department of the Yavaran in Almabayn', 'Spies', 'Anniversary of the Sultan's Accession', 'Spies (II)', 'Splendor of the Caliphate and Magnificence of the Sultanate', 'Appointment to Ottoman Offices,' 'Court Proceedings in Istanbul', 'Shaykhs', 'Writing Ma Hunalik', 'The Sultan' and 'Deposition of Sultans'.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid, 33.

³⁰ The titles reflect the translation of Ma Hunalik by Roger Allen.