

The Intellectual Struggle of Murād Ramzī (1855-1935)  
An Early 20th Century Eurasian Muslim Author

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(Languages and Cultures of Asia)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2015

Date of final oral examination: 5/11/2015

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank first Professor Kemal Karpat, who encouraged me to apply to a Ph.D. program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I am grateful for his recommendation. I am most grateful to my adviser, dissertation supervisor, and friend, Professor Uli Schamiloglu, for having suggested the most appropriate possible dissertation topic for someone with my academic background as well as for providing valuable advice and support during the various stages of my graduate career, including while writing the dissertation. I would like to thank Professor Vinay Dharwadker for his academic guidance in the areas of translation studies, critical theory, and comparative literature. I would like to thank Professor Anna Gade for the knowledge I gained from the courses which I took with her in the areas of Islamic culture and Sufism. I would like to thank my committee member Professor Dustin Cowell for his valuable advice regarding Arabic-language sources. I would also like to thank Professor Efe Khayyat (Rutgers University) for serving as an outside committee member and for his comments on earlier drafts of my dissertation.

Finally, without the love, sacrifices, and support of my spouse, Hilal Tugsal Aykut, I would never have been able to enjoy the calm atmosphere and peace of mind which made it possible for me to complete this dissertation. I dedicate this dissertation to her.

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction:

#### On the Travels of a Scholar and His Books

My interest in Murād Ramzī began with a research project examining Tatar scholars of the late 19th century and the impact of their works on the Turkish intelligentsia's treatment of nationalism and political Islam. In contrast to its narrow geography and isolation from the greater Ottoman world due to five centuries of Russian occupation, the Tatar region was host to a considerable degree intellectual activity and produced many influential authors such as Qursāwī (d. 1812), Marjānī (d. 1889), and Mūsā Jārullāh/Yarulla Bigiyev (d. 1949) whose thought contributed to the cultural resistance against Tsarist rule. With the suggestion I received from Professor Uli Schamiloglu to work on Murād Ramzī, I realize another phase of this long intellectual struggle centered on the Muslim Turkic communities of the Volga-Ural (*İdel-Ural*) region.

Despite important contributions such as Adeeb Khalid's work on Jadidism in Central Asia,<sup>1</sup> the almost complete silence in the literature on Jadīdism regarding a figure of the stature of Murād Ramzī represents a significant lacuna in our knowledge of this intellectual movement. Ramzī's contribution to the reformist movement was remarkable, criticizing traditional customs incompatible with modern life, while defending the notion of classical *fiqh* and the centrality of religion in the life of his people. He clearly supported new scholars and teachers from Jadīd generations who learned the Russian language and were thus better suited to work within the

<sup>1</sup> Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

government bureaucracy in Kazan to push for their reforms. He was a supporter of Ismail Bey Gasprinsky (d. 1914), the leader of the Jadīd movement, skillfully defending him against extremely traditional scholars known as the Qadīmists, without offending the establishment. He also criticized overzealous Jadīd authors whose extreme radical program risked alienating the public and provoking a state suppression of the movement. He was neither an extreme Jadīdist, nor a Qadīmist. Rather, Ramzī's scholastic career covered a greater part of the intellectual terrain of his day, from Sufism and Islamic philosophy to national history. In addition, his command of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish afforded him access and influence across the Islamic world.<sup>2</sup>

Given the diversity of his scholarly pursuits, it is impossible to place him in just one of the categories which made up his contemporary milieu, such as Naqshī master of the Volga-Ural region, Qadīmist author, translator, or theologian. In fact, Ramzī participated in, and had a unique impact on, all these fields. Moreover, through translations of works such as the *Maktūbāt* of Sirhindī (d. 1624), he contributed to the development of Sufism, not only in the Volga-Ural region, but also in Anatolia and throughout the Ottoman Empire. This Arabic translation, and its re-translation into Turkish, would go on to influence the worldview of many young Turkish intellectuals after the second half of the 20th century.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For the few studies discussing the life and works of Murād Ramzī see: Ahmet Temir, "Doğumunun 130. ve Ölümünün 50. yılı dolayısıyla Kazanlı Tarihçi Mehmet Remzi, 1854-1934", *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten*, vol. 50, no. 197 (1986), pp. 495-505; Nuriya G. Garayeva, "Traditsii tatarskoy istoriografii XIX v. i 'Talfik al-axbar' M. Ramzi", *Problema priyemstvennosti v Tatarskoy obshchestvennoy mysli* (Kazan, 1985), pp. 84-96; "Kem ul Morad Rämzi?", *Kazan utları* 1990:2, pp. 171-174; Michael Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baskirien, 1789-1889: der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen 218 (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998), pp. 9-10, 89, 96, 99, 174, and 447; D Garifullin, "Morat Rämzi—Bikchura Khan Onıgı", *Gasırlar avazı—Ekho vekov*, no. 1/2 (2001), pp. 223-227; and İl'ya Zaytsev, "Murad Ramzi i Armini Vamberi", *Gasırlar avazı—Ekho vekov*, no. 3/4 (2001), pp. 71-75.

<sup>3</sup> Ramzī's Arabic translation was well known among Naqshī *dargāhs* of Istanbul. After the 1970's, a new wave of *Maktūbāt* translations would start with the works of translator Abdulkadir Akçiçek. See: İmam-ı Rabbani, *Mektūbât-ı Rabbani*, translated by Abdulkadir Akçiçek from the Arabic translation of Ramzī, 2 vols. (İstanbul: Çile Yayınları, 1977). I observe that this new wave of translations came after the famous poet and author Necip Fazıl's strong attraction to the Naqshī order and Sirhindī. Necip Fazıl (1904-1983) was one of the most influential authors

Because his *Maktūbāt* translation was the most popular of his works, Ramzī is remembered as a Sufi. As he was finishing his famous book on history, however, he was becoming a person who was quite different from the Sufi for which he is remembered. This shift in his thinking led him to an engagement with nationalist ideologies by the end of 1910. After publishing in 1908 his *Talfīq al-akhbār wa talqīh al-āthār*, a nationalist history of the Turkic-Tatar peoples of the Volga-Ural region, Ramzī traveled to Eastern Turkistan where he disappeared from the historical record. Anything that may be said of his post-1914 intellectual path remains mere speculation. Whether he continued along the trajectory we can trace from the *Maktūbāt* translation to the *Talfīq al-akhbār* and became an ultra-nationalist, or returned to religious revivalism, is unclear. Even without a complete picture of his intellectual development, a comparison of the documents he left behind is sufficient to prompt a revision of the conventional understanding of Ramzī as merely an old Naqshī sheikh. Clearly, his thinking was much more complex. Moreover, the vacillations in the manner he responded to the challenges of his day can teach us a great deal not only about the state of Russian Muslims in late 19th to the early 20th centuries, but also about the particular dilemma that all Muslims, in fact, all non-Europeans, faced with the westernization of the world.

The fact that the conflict that provoked feelings of alienation in the mind of an author writing at the turn of the 20th century continues to affect us today is evidence of the continuing relevance of the debates in which Ramzī was engaged. The *Maktūbāt* continued to exercise a strong influence upon our interpretation of his legacy despite his metamorphosis as evidenced in *Talfīq al-akhbār*. Our misunderstanding of Ramzī reflects a common condition suffered by any

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on the young conservative Muslim generations from 1950-1980. Many Turkish publishing houses (including Çelik, Semerkand, Merve, and Yasin) are still printing Turkish translations of the Arabic version of *Maktūbāt* (in the translation by Ramzī) in different forms.



author fortunate enough to achieve widespread recognition. Although he may abandon his texts by traveling beyond the territory in which they circulate, though a change in his outlook may lead him to disown the utterances of an earlier stage in his intellectual evolution, his words, once written and circulated, will forever cast a specter that follows him wherever he goes and will continue to speak in his name after his death. This is the predicament of writing as such, and philosophers have remarked upon this dilemma since the emergence of the technology of writing.<sup>4</sup> After the author's words are inscribed on paper, reproduced, and distributed, they take on a life of their own and they travel wherever fate might bring them.

Like his published works, Ramzī also traveled from Kazan to Mecca (*al-Makka*) and back again, making his final journey to Eastern Turkistan. His movement through space coincided with his traversal of various intellectual stations. And as both the author and his texts were traveling about, their paths must have crossed several times. We can imagine, as his thinking evolved, that his encounter with his older work was an awkward one. Even as he sought to go beyond the mentality of his formative years, the world inaugurated by the emergence of print media is one which forces an author to repeatedly revisit and account for earlier iterations of himself. In fact, texts and other forms of representation characteristic of the modern, westernized world are at the heart of the kinds of issues with which the non-western intelligentsia as a whole has grappled. Ramzī's confrontation with and alienation from his own texts is a model of the broader problem ushered in with the dawning of the modern world. Seen in this light, the failure to assign an author like Ramzī his proper place in history is not the result of bad scholarship, but is rather a symptom of the great divide between two ways of writing. Since the modern nation-state emerged by differentiating itself against religion, since nationalism

<sup>4</sup> A. Sait Aykut, "Ten Üzerine Kış Gecesi İlhamları" [Winter Night revelations on the body: An aphorismic essay on the nature of human as an author], *Cogito*, no. 46 (Istanbul, 2006), pp. 10-12.

and secularism were born together, it is no surprise that Ramzī could only fall into one of two categories: Sufi mystic or nationalist historian. But, as we have seen, Ramzī was both a Sufi disciple and a nationalist, and this is exactly why the author's place in our memory is fragmentary. In thinking both as a Muslim and a nationalist, his mental theater traversed a division that remains unresolved to this day.

Given the singularity of Ramzī, we cannot expect to approach his work with the conventional perspectives coming to us from intellectual history or scholarship on Sufism. As mentioned above, because our modern categories cannot accommodate a scholar whose work is at the same time religious and nationalistic, Ramzī remains a fragmentary figure. Given such a figure, it is unadvisable to search for something like a unifying feature in his work. Instead, my method is equally fragmentary, focusing on special bits and pieces of Ramzī's major works, passages that carry us off in a multitude of directions. The selections I have chosen to examine will enable us to follow Ramzī's thoughts like a map of the world in which the author and his books traveled. Following such an author will require us to assume many different guises rarely found woven together in a single text. Approaching the text in this way is akin to giving in to its particular logic. We must take it seriously, so seriously that we begin to resemble its author. This is the only way we can learn the lessons Ramzī has to teach us about matters both religious and secular.

Some final words may be helpful in explaining this way of reading texts and how my academic training enabled me to read Ramzī's work in this way. If we are to read these texts as though we truly believe in them, then at some points we are forced to read like medieval *shāriḥ* commentators. (Indeed, before joining my cohort at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I was a translator and commentator of old Arabic and Ottoman Turkish books to be found throughout

Anatolia.) At other points, we must become critical scholars along the literary critical lines. Attending the fruitful lectures of Professor Dharwadker, who could follow a single paragraph to an infinite number of meanings, taught me to examine texts like a scholar of comparative literature. So, in a sense, what prepared me to read texts with such incongruence was that I, like Ramzī, had to travel the intellectual universe. I had to mime him.

### **1.1. Methodology: Theoretical framework and concepts**

My survey aims to interpret the intellectual trajectory of an early 20th century Muslim scholar from a region near Kazan, Russia drawing upon my interpretation of al-Jābirī's triad of *ʿIrfān–Bayān–Burhān*. This triad, which I translate as “Scripture–Gnosis–Reason”, will provide a valuable resource in our evaluation of a historical Muslim author, even though it may seem very unusual for readers unfamiliar with it. As I explain in what follows, I am trying to read Ramzī on his own terms, employing some concepts and categories domestic to the disciplines of politics, history, Islamic philosophy, and Sufism along the lines with which he was familiar. I investigate his intellectual life and try to determine where shifts occur, determine distinct trends in his thought, and offer explanations of the changes which occur in it. Just as I refer to many thinkers from the Islamic cultural heritage such as Ibn Sīnā, al-Dawānī, Ibn ʿArabī, Al-Suhrawardī, Ibn Khaldūn, and Sirhindī, I also draw upon modern thinkers and scholars such as al-Jābirī, Partha Chatterjee, and Dimitri Gutas.

Because I am trying to deconstruct the structural elements and derive the key points in the major texts of Ramzī, this survey is, in the end, a critique of Ramzī. But it is a critique which does its utmost to remain inside of the reality that he constructed in his texts and the intellectual climate in which he lived. Therefore, my work is not only a description of what he wrote in those

major texts, but also an evaluation of how he maintained his balance among the aforementioned triad of “Scripture–Gnosis–Reason” (*Bayān–‘Irfān–Burhān*). At times, I will put forward long paragraphs from Ramzī because, considering that his Arabic treatises—as primary sources—are absent from the scholarly record, they would be necessary information for readers of Ramzī in the future.

After providing information on Ramzī’s cultural background and education, I focus on the major themes in his works. I do not, however, dwell upon his long polemics with Jārullāh, due to the extent of background material such a discussion would require. Therefore, my study focuses exclusively on his works devoted to Sufism and history.

We have some authoritative lenses through which we can account for Ramzī’s spiritual approach and Sufi connections. To indicate the social position of Ramzī the Sufi, I employ the methodological approach of Alexander Knysh in his breakthrough article “Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm”<sup>5</sup> in which Knysh criticized both the Russian fixation with *muridizm*, *tarikizm*, and *ishanstvo* in Central Eurasia and the western-style “Neo-Sufism” thesis which can be traced back to 19th century European fears of “secret societies”. Here, I observe that Ramzī’s scholarly effort can be described neither as a blind affiliation along with other Naqshbandī followers, nor a continuation of warrior-style *murīdism* in Dagestan. He was not a member of a secret society which assigned its clandestine projects to creating terror or to exploiting the religiosity of the people to expropriate their material goods. He was a laborer, one of the early modern professional authors of the Islamic world, gaining his livelihood from his

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Knysh, “Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm: The Issue of the Motivations of Sufi Resistance Movements in Western and Russian Scholarship”, *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 42, no. 2 (2002), pp. 139-173.

own written works; later, he was a peculiar nationalist historian, trying to respond to the needs of his society.

Ramzī's educational experience and Islamic philosophical background need different approaches and terms, such as the "Illuminationist Avicennism" of Dimitri Gutas<sup>6</sup> and the "'*Irfān*-based structure" of al-Jābirī.<sup>7</sup> Even though Dimitri Gutas' approach differs from al-Jābirī—especially in the definition of Ibn Sīnā as an Aristotelian thinker or a Gnostic—both researchers' theoretical approaches are instrumental for my explanation of the conceptual structure of the Sufi treatises which Ramzī studied and the treatises which he himself authored in Mecca.

It is obvious that the most important figure in Ramzī's mystical works is Aḥmad Sirhindī. Here, Subrahmanyam's essay on the reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia and millenarian movements is very important,<sup>8</sup> as is Buehler's approach to Sirhindī as "juristic Sufism".<sup>9</sup>

When it comes to the translations by and literary issues of Murād Ramzī, I focus on his ideas concerning translation and his immense love for the texts, comparing his method to the other translators in Islamic civilization within the frame of the "Arabic Cosmopolis" (see below). I also try to find intertextual relations between the texts themselves and his introductions and

<sup>6</sup> Dimitri Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 29, no 1 (May 2002), pp. 5-25.

<sup>7</sup> Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth* (Beirut, 1993), pp. 81-92 and 211-260. See also my translation with annotations into Turkish: Muhammed Abid Cabiri, *Felsefî Mirasımız ve Biz*, trans. A. Sait Aykut (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2000), pp. 265-273.

<sup>8</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia", *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3 (July 1997), pp. 735-762. This volume is a special issue entitled: "The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400-1800".

<sup>9</sup> Arthur F. Buehler, "Shari'at and 'Ulama in Aḥmad Sirhindī's Collected Letters", *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 43, no. 3 (2003), pp. 309-320. This number is a special issue entitled: "Transformations of the Naqshbandīya, 17th-20th Century".

commentaries. Murād Ramzī's works are rich for understanding the contemporary conventions of Sufi textual practice, including their usage of terms and allusions, as well as the rules under which old masters could be "plagiarized".<sup>10</sup> In this section, we are introduced to Ramzī the Sufi who falls in love with the texts of his Naqshbandī masters. His progression along the path of Sufism continued until his writing became a perfect reflection of the style of his masters. The kind of comparison I am engaging in here is inspired by the Naqshī notion of *rābiṭa* (رابطه) meaning "connection". The use of *rābiṭa* here, albeit in a slightly altered form from the way it was understood and practiced by the Naqshī Sufi masters, is deliberate as a way of approaching texts according to their own logic.

Inspired by Sheldon Pollock's "Sanskrit Cosmopolis,"<sup>11</sup> I seek to describe a particular "Arabic Cosmopolis" as the world in which Ramzī's thought was engaged. Because each language and culture contain a unique representation of the world, Ramzī's command of Arabic and knowledge of Islamic culture undoubtedly had a profound influence on him, and he becomes researchable as an Arab-Muslim thinker, but from a rare position within the Islamic world. But, on the other hand, we must be careful not to overestimate the particularity of his position because no great differentiation existed between a Muslim Turkic writer and an Arab one in the Ottoman world at the end of 19th century. Authors from various ethnic backgrounds formed a common

<sup>10</sup> In Turkish divan poetry, this phenomenon is called *miri malı çalmak*, literally 'stealing the property of the Amir (or the ruler)'. This statement is said when an author quotes from a famous poet who is so popular that everybody knows or memorizes his/her poems, so, the copyright of his/her poems is likely removed and it enters the "public domain", so to speak, in time. When some people asked the great poet Şeyh Galip (d. 1799) why he quoted from, or was inspired by some poems by Rumi, he said: *Esrârımı Mesnevî'den aldım/çaldımsa da mîrî malı çaldım*. "I receive my secrets from the Mesnevi of Rumi/If I am a thief, I take it from the property of the Amir". See: Şeyh Galip, *Hüsni ü Aşk*, ed. Orhan Okay and Hüseyin Ayan (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1975), p. 348.

<sup>11</sup> Sheldon Pollock, *Language of Gods in the World of Men* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 14. See also his comparison between Latin and Arabic vernacularization, pp. 481-494.

community with its own ideas concerning education, colonialism, nationalism, and westernization.

A major division emerged within this community after World War I. The division we witness is not an intellectual crossroads in which opposing camps formed around a particular debate. Rather, it was the result of the uniformity of their thoughts on nationalism. Carried to its ultimate fruition—either as it was thought by educated individuals in the region, or imposed by colonialist powers—nationalism configured the community according to nationality, as we observe in the case of Sâṭi' al-Ḥuṣrî (d. 1967), who was first an Ottoman educator producing pedagogical solutions for the schools around Istanbul before becoming one of the pioneers of Arab nationalism during the war.<sup>12</sup> While the transformation from Ottoman to Arab nationalist is dramatic in its own right, the transformation of a Sufi mystic like Ramzî to a nationalist is even more striking.

In this recognition, the *Talfîq al-akhbâr* is valuable not only as an example of Ramzî's approach to national history and a detailed narrative of the efforts at cultural survival by the Muslims of the Volga-Ural region, but, more importantly, as a rare work in which a traditionalist approach to religion, family, and women is combined with a modernist approach to politics and technology.<sup>13</sup> I analyze this through the concepts of “inner” and “outer” domains employed by Chatterjee.<sup>14</sup> I should admit that when I chose Ramzî as the topic of my doctoral research, my

<sup>12</sup> See: William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sâṭi' al-Huṣrî* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 147-149.

<sup>13</sup> Ramzî and his peers might behave “by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains—the material and the spiritual.” See: Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 6. In fact, the whole introductory section of this book (pp. 3-13) is considered a breakthrough in the field of nationalism studies.

<sup>14</sup> Bourdieu's terminology can also be helpful—in particular his concepts such as “habitus”, “field”, “player”, and “cultural capital”—in an interpretation of the Tatar cultural resistance movement represented by Sufi leaders and

focus was limited to the themes of nationalism, history, and the response of a Muslim Tatar author to the system of the cultural campaign being carried out by the Russian Empire. Over the course of my research and writing, however, many new ideas like “élitist Sufism” appeared, forcing me to think beyond the original scope of my topic.

To clarify the meaning of history and nationalism according to Ramzī, we should mention that the Islamic world in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries was involved in complicated issues such as a crisis of identity, colonialism, and religious reform. It might be a suitable approach to observe the particular way in which the Tatar intelligentsia of the late 19th century represented these three different movements as connected, as noted by Rafik Mukhammetshin.<sup>15</sup> These three movements are:

1. Traditionalism (*Qadīmism*)
2. Reformism (*Jadīdism*)
3. Modernism

Ramzī, as our research subject, does not like to come into any explicit direct contact with these three movements. Besides, his body of work can be seen to exhibit a unique synthesis of traditionalism, concerning his opinions on religion; reformism, concerning his thoughts on education; and modernism concerning his particular version of romantic nationalism. His approach as a young madrasa student, or as a Sufi in his Meccan years, underwent a drastic alteration in his later years. For this reason, the complex positions of Ramzī and the drastic

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intellectuals such as Zaynullāh (see below). See Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp.19-22, 98-99, and 133-134.

<sup>15</sup> See Rafik Muhametshovich Mukhametshin’s article about these three movements: *Islam v Srednem Povolzh’ye: Istoriya i Sovremennost’* [Jadidism in the Middle Volga: Some methodological approaches], (Kazan: Russian Islamic University, 2001): <http://www.archipelag.ru/authors/muhametchin/?library=1229> (accessed February 21, 2014).



change that occurred amongst them may be considered using the analytic concepts of “epistemological rupture” and “problématique”.<sup>16</sup>

## 1.2. Employing al-Jābirī’s triad to understand Ramzī’s crisis as a Muslim intellectual

Many left-wing thinkers have employed “epistemological break” and similar terms for their research, such as Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī of Morocco (d. 2010), who established his huge project “The Critique of Arab Intellect” (*Naqd al-‘Aql al-‘Arabī: نقد العقل العربي*) with the help of these concepts and others he created or renovated from Islamic philosophical heritage. In this project, al-Jābirī indicates the three different epistemological domains that form the principles of Arab Intellect, or Muslim mind: *Bayān*, *Irfān*, and *Burhān* (بيان، عرفان، برهان).<sup>17</sup> *Bayān* refers to the divine scripture (*al-Qur’ān*) and the Prophetic tradition (*al-Sunna*) with regard to the rules of Arabic language and grammar.<sup>18</sup> *Irfān* (Gnosis) is commonly associated with Sufism, esoteric exegesis of the Qur’ān, *al-ishrāqī* philosophy, theosophy, alchemy, astrology, magic, and

<sup>16</sup> “Epistemological rupture” or “epistemological break” is an influential notion introduced first by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard and employed later by Louis Althusser. Through the concept of “epistemological break”, Bachelard underlined the discontinuity at work in the history of sciences. However, the term “epistemological break” was never used literally by Bachelard, but it became popular through the French structuralist Louis Althusser, who showed that new theories could be integrated into old theories in new paradigms and transfer the sense of concepts. “Problématique” is a network of problems, issues, terms, concepts within which we think in a certain period. It means the theoretical/ideological framework within which a group of thinkers uses certain concepts and definitions in order to communicate with each other. See: Gaston Bachelard, *The Formation of the Scientific Mind. A Contribution to a Psychoanalysis of Objective Knowledge*, Clinamen Series on Philosophy of Science (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2002), pp. 8-10. Bachelard generally used “epistemological obstacle”. See pp. 85, 98, 104, 162, 182-186, 212, and 237 in his aforementioned work. See also: Louis Althusser, “Elements of Self-Criticism”, *Essays in Self-Criticism*, trans. Grahame Lock (London: NLB, 1976). Prepared for the Internet by David J. Romagnolo: <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/ESC76.html#s2a> (accessed March 11, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> See: Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth* (Lebanon, 1993), pp. 15-55. After a severe critique of the methods and approaches of some modern Arab thinkers, he starts to explain his project with the help of *al-maghribī* Arab thinkers, like Ibn Bājjā (pp. 167), Ibn Rushd (pp. 211), and Ibn Khaldūn (pp. 309). I translated this critical book into Turkish and wrote a short critique of it, see: M. ‘Ābid Cabiri, *Felsefî Mirasımız ve Biz*, trans. A. Sait Aykut (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2000), pp. 4-20.

<sup>18</sup> *Irfān* employs *ilhām*, *kashf*, *ru’yā* (mystical intuition, dreams, and illuminations of the spiritual masters such as Sufi sheikh, *‘arīf*, and *ghawth*) as devices to go to the truth. This domain is generally popularized by Sufis, free mystics, occultists and Gnostic philosophers.

numerology.<sup>19</sup> *Burhān* indicates logic, realist philosophy, argumentation, and reasoning.<sup>20</sup> For al-Jābirī's specific project, *Burhān* is crucial because of both the intellectual rigor of its function and its long tradition of deployment within the work of such influential scholars as Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn Bājja, Ibn Tūmart, et al.

Al-Jābirī criticizes the *ʿIrfān*-based (Gnostic) domain in Islamic thought, trying to re-establish the *Burhān*-based (rationalist) structure for his project. Al-Jābirī approves Ibn Rushd's ability for critical reasoning,<sup>21</sup> Ibn Bājja's élite approach to the city and its citizens,<sup>22</sup> and Ibn Khaldūn's contribution to the philosophy of history and the science of urban life (*ʿilm al-ʿumrān*: علم العمران).<sup>23</sup> Al-Jābirī believes that these thinkers form the epistemological fault lines that broke up the intellectual world of the Eastern Muslim thinkers. For example, al-Jābirī argues that al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā established their epistemological world on the basis of *ʿIrfān* (Gnosis), not on the basis of the rational scientific empiricism and argumentation specified by *Burhān*. Al-Jābirī thinks that a new epistemology in Arabic-Muslim thought could be reconstructed with the help of the aforementioned *al-maghribī* ("western") Arab-Muslim thinkers, not with the method of *al-mashriqī* ("eastern") thinkers because the eastern thinkers traditionally have demonstrated a stronger affinity with the doctrine of *ʿIrfān*.

<sup>19</sup> *Bayān* employs the major religious scripture, the Qurʾān, and secondary religious texts with the help of Arabic language and grammar. Secondary texts (*naql* and *riwāya*) are authoritative narratives transmitted from the Prophet by the trustworthy transmitters. This domain is elaborately studied by the expert Qurʾān commentators, *faqīhs*, and the collectors of the prophetic traditions.

<sup>20</sup> *Burhān* employs methods of reasoning, logic and inference, in order to reach reasonable answers or to solve the problems. This domain is studied mainly by the *faqīhs* of "*Raʿy*" (such as Abū Ḥanīfa), Muʿtazilī intellectuals, scientists, many political leaders, and other practitioners throughout history.

<sup>21</sup> al-Jābirī, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*, pp. 211-220.

<sup>22</sup> al-Jābirī, *ibid.*, pp. 167-180.

<sup>23</sup> al-Jābirī, *ibid.*, pp. 309-325.

Even though al-Jābirī is concerned with the specifically Arab segment of Muslim culture and takes as his project the eradication of irrationalism from Islamic thought, I believe that his concepts—minus his hostility toward *ʿIrfān*— can lead us to create more fruitful works on the intellectual heritage of the Muslim peoples. My thinking has been influenced as much by his critics among the great thinkers and scholars of the Arabic world as it has been by al-Jābirī’s thought itself.<sup>24</sup> I criticized al-Jābirī on some points of his project, especially in his endorsement of an East-West binary and in his approach to al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā. For example, while al-Jābirī locates Ibn Sīnā in a Gnostic place in the “East” of his imagination, I see Ibn Sīnā as more dynamic, a historical philosopher changing his ideas from *Burhān* (in his youth) to *ʿIrfān* (in his later years). Even though I have some reservations, I take into consideration al-Jābirī’s elaborate techniques and the results at which he arrived in his long investigations based on reason and argumentation. I believe that his method and triad (*Bayān*, *ʿIrfān*, *Burhān*) can be applied, with some disclaimers, to the authors and intellectuals who wrote or produced inside of the “Arabic Cosmopolis” of Islamic culture.

Before al-Jābirī systematized the working mechanism of the Arab-Muslim mind with his famous triad, these three concepts were already noted by al-Qushayrī (d. 1072), the well-known Sufi author, but within a slightly different context. Al-Qushayrī’s usage of these concepts is not the same, but is still somehow similar to what al-Jābirī employed in his modern project on “The critique of the Arab Intellect”. I translate here Qushayrī’s historical usage of these terms:

Light in the beginning is the light of intellect (*al-ʿaql*); the light in the middle is the light of knowledge [of religion]; and, the light at the end is the light of Gnosis (*al-ʿIrfān*). The one endowed with intellect is with *al-Burhān*; the one endowed with knowledge [of

<sup>24</sup> See for a comprehensive critique to the discourse of al-Jābirī: George Tarabīshī, *Naẓariyyat al-ʿAql: Naqd Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* [A Theory for the Intellect: A Critique of the Critique of the Arabic Intellect of al-Jābirī], Second Edition (London: Dār al-Sāqī, 1999).

religion] is with the scripture (*al-Bayān*); the one endowed with Gnosis is in the realm of [divine] witness.<sup>25</sup>

I interpret Qushayrī's approach to intellect, religious scripture and Sufi wisdom as follows:

1. At the foundation level lies the domain of human intellect => *Burhān*.
2. In the middle level stands the domain of religious wisdom => *Bayān*.
3. At the highest level is rising the domain of divine witness => *'Irfān*.

As we see here, the original text of al-Qushayrī offers one of the first concrete hierarchies of knowledge in the Islamic cultural heritage. While the basic foundation is established with reason, the middle level, which is suitable for the common people and is known as *al-wasā'it*, is established by the religious principles that guide one's behavior in the world and along the path of salvation. Lastly, the highest level must be established only by divine illumination, *'Irfān*.

Al-Jābirī developed a new interpretation of these concepts for the benefits of his own project. I believe that he succeeded in creating a meaningful mechanism to understand the structural points in the intellectual heritage of Islamic civilization. For al-Jābirī, the struggle is indeed based on an epistemic inquiry summarized in the following question: In which frame and by which mechanism can I find solutions for the problems related to science, belief, and society? Preferring *al-Maghribī* Muslim thinkers to *al-Mashriqī* ones, al-Jābirī wants to instigate an epistemic break and to advocate for modern ways of thinking under the Kantian tradition of European thought. According to al-Jābirī, *Burhān* is an epistemic bridge that poses the possibility of connecting the past of Muslims-Arabs to modern western thought. Even though I

<sup>25</sup> Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-miṣrīya al-āmma li al-kitāb, 1981), vol. 2, p. 194:

نور في البداية هو نور العقل، ونور في الوسائط هو نور العلم، ونور في النهاية هو نور العرفان، فصاحب العقل مع البرهان، وصاحب العلم مع البيان، وصاحب المعرفة في حكم العيان

do not want to let the Sufi- *ʿIrfānī* cultural heritage pass away from the contemporary Muslim mind, as al-Jābirī somehow wished, I find his method very useful in terms of the evaluation of different domains with their respective positions.

Unlike al-Jābirī, I observe that those three domains share many things with each other in a subtle way; therefore, they must coexist. I observe that when a Muslim intellectual tried to solve a problem with the help of one domain without evaluation of the others, he/she might have faced a long chain of problems. On the other hand, if he/she merged one method with another, without balance, it might also lead to another anomaly. Let me elaborate: Trying to find “a solid solution” for the problem of a schizophrenic man by means of *ʿIrfān*, or mystical approaches alone, without the help of *Burhān* (reason => science=> medicine, the current level of the science of psychology) and *Bayān* (simply, praying to God) might lead to inevitable misunderstandings and misinterpretations. For example, it might turn out to be a case of dark occultism, as we observe in the magic books of Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. 1225).<sup>26</sup> Why?

The mind of a historical Muslim (or many modern Muslims) works in a world where these three domains are integrated, similar to the three horses of a troika. At times, the red horse can become the lead, the alpha; but, only with the help of the other two horses can the troika run in balance. Similarly, the black horse can become the lead; but, again only with the help of the other horses can the troika work properly. Many Muslim intellectuals rely heavily on one of the three domains as a point of departure in his/her road, or a gate to a solution in his/her own puzzle when he/she cannot see suitable answers in the other two domains for the problems imposed by his/her social conditions. A Muslim intellectual can also live or refer to the experience of *Bayān*

<sup>26</sup> His famous book *Shams al-Maʿārif al-Kubrā* is a classic work on magic, talismans, and numerology. There are dozens of different editions of this book published in Istanbul, Cairo or Baghdad. See: A. Dietrich, “Al-Būnī”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 12: Supplement (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 156.

in an early period of his/her life, then the experience of *Burhān* in his/her mature years, and finally the experience of *ʿIrfān* in his/her last years. Another Muslim intellectual can experience a different order of these domains with a different combination in her/his life, such as *Burhān* first, then *ʿIrfān*, and finally *Bayān* (or *ʿIrfān*, then *Bayān*, then *Burhān*). Furthermore, a group of Muslims or Muslim intellectuals can fight under the flag of extreme *ʿIrfān* against another group of Muslims or Muslim intellectuals who raise the flag of literalist, unbalanced *Bayān*. Both groups (*ʿIrfān* and *Bayān*) can struggle to survive under the heavy effect of *Burhān*, which may turn into a dictatorship in the hands of an élite group of Muslim politicians. We can create different models including more economic or social factors, but we observe that an unbalanced locating of those three domains is one of the the major crises in the mindset of Muslims throughout history. The most important thing here is balance.<sup>27</sup>

Now, what has been said thus far should become more systematic. At many points, my views are the opposite of what al-Jābirī suggested. First, I do not see a progressive linear path for the development of the Islamic intellectual heritage along the lines of Western European thought, given that it has a path particular to itself. Instead, each subject can be read as an independent portrait of a specific period. Besides, not only a group of intellectuals in a specific period, but individual authors can also travel along a path particular to them. The ideas we encounter are instantaneous pictures, with antecedents in the past, and they can be so in the future, in different geographies. Second, I repeat that I believe in the possibility of a balance and coexistence of *Bayān*, *Burhān*, and *ʿIrfān*, albeit not without tension. This tension, even the dynamic relations among the horses of this troika, is something to be celebrated instead of suppressing their

<sup>27</sup> In this context, my thesis will also analyze whether the balance (among *Bayān*, *ʿIrfān*, and *Burhān*) is reflected in the mind of Ramzī or not.

codependence in order to praise one at the expense of the others. I should also confirm that al-Jābirī never employed the following schematic representations in his project:

**Example of the Ideal Position of the Triad in the Historical Muslim Mind  
(‘Abbāsīd Age)**

Scripture (*Bayān*) is at the top, with suitable domains for both rational methods (*Burhān*) and Gnostic intuition (*‘Irfān*). The three domains are sharing some common points to connect to each other in a natural way; there are open gateways to each other among the three domains. The results are confidence in ideology and the development of both the religious and natural sciences. We also see great philosophers (al-Kindī, d. 873), great schools of law with the tendency to *ra’y* and *ijtihād* (Abū Ḥanifa, d. 772), and critical thinkers (al-Nazzām, d. 845),

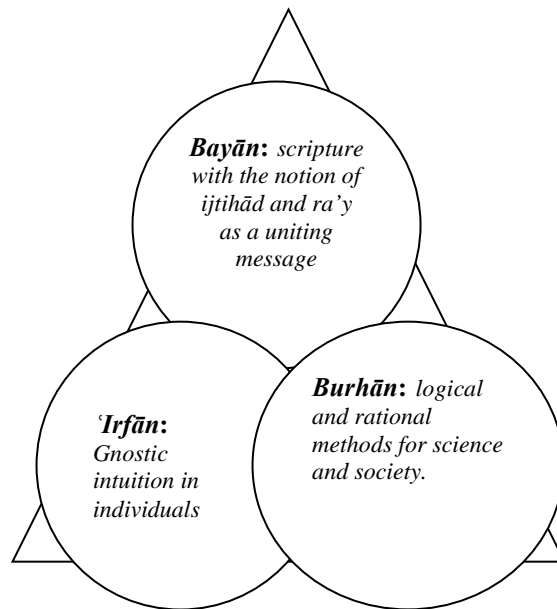


Figure 1. The Ideal Position of the Triad: *Bayān*, *Burhān*, and *‘Irfān*

**Turbulent Times, or Creative, Unstable Times**  
**(Following the Crusades and the Mongol Invasions)**

A remarkable disruption among the three domains, with the emergence of scripturalist experts (Ibn Taymiyya) and Gnostic figures (Ibn ‘Arabī). Very tense relations among the three domains. Every domain has some peoples, notions, and situations to escape to, or to accept from other domains. Unstable economy and politics, sectarian wars among the different orders, doctrines, and ethnic groups in the Muslim world. The sharp polarization among the scripture-based groups and Gnosis-based communities (Ahl al-Ḥadīth versus Ahl al-Taṣawwuf). New solutions and new figures in statesmanship and political ideology.

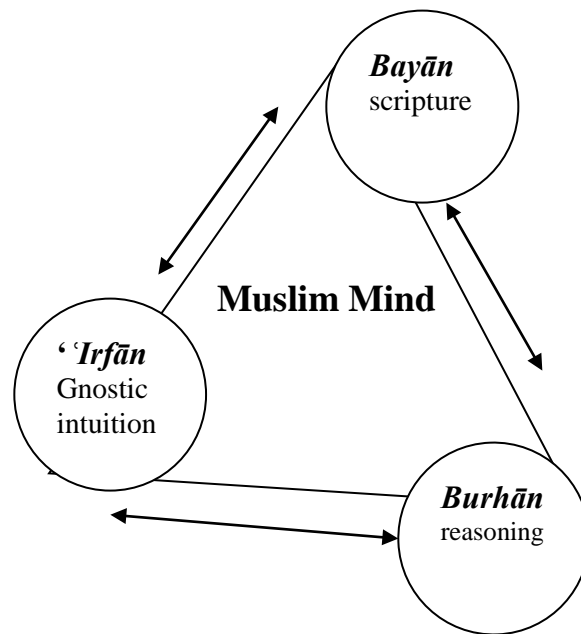


Figure 2. Turbulent Times for the Triad



### 1.3. Ramzī's works as main sources and other references

Ramzī authored several books and succeeded in publishing them. His articles on the cultural problems of Muslims or religious polemics were also published in Kazan, Orenburg, and Istanbul. He generally sent his articles to the periodicals *Te'āruf-i Muslimīn* and *Dīn ve Ma'īshat*. First, I will present his best-known works in chronological order, followed by a discussion of his lesser-known works.

1. *Tarjamat Rashaḥāt 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt fī manāqib mashāyikh al-ṭarīqa al-Naqshbandīya* (ترجمة رشحات عين الحياة في مناقب مشايخ الطريقة النقشبندية). This is a translation of the *Rashaḥāt*, a Persian hagiography written by Fakhr al-dīn 'Alī Ṣafī Kāshifī dealing with the Naqshbandī Sufi masters of Central Asia, especially with the Saint of Samarkand, Naṣīr al-dīn 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār (1403-1490), who was commonly known by the epithets “Ḥaḍrat Ishān” and “Khwāja Aḥrār”. Much of the *Rashaḥāt* is related to Aḥrār's speeches and his method.<sup>28</sup> Murād Ramzī's translation of the *Rashaḥāt*<sup>29</sup> must have been very popular among the Muslim intellectuals and authors of the early 20th century. The well-known Bashkort historian and political figure Zeki Velidi Togan mentioned that he had read Murād Ramzī's translation of the *Rashaḥāt* and enjoyed comparing this “translated *Rashaḥāt*” to its Persian original in his uncle's library.<sup>30</sup> Aḥrār, the wealthy and charismatic Sufi sheikh, should be among the most important persons in Murād Ramzī's spiritual world. At the age of 24, Aḥrār went to

<sup>28</sup> H. Beveridge, “II. The Rashaḥāt Ainal-Hayat”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, New Series, vol. 48, no. 01 (January 1916), pp. 59-75.

<sup>29</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Tarjamat Rashaḥāt 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt* (Mecca, 1890).

<sup>30</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan, *Memoirs: National Existence and Cultural Struggles of Turkistan and Other Muslim Eastern Turks*, trans. H. B. Paksoy (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012), p. 22.

Herat where his interest in Sufism began. His spiritual master was Ya‘qūb Charkhī (d. 851 AH/1447 AD), one of the principal successors of Bahā’ al-dīn Naqshband.<sup>31</sup>

2. *Dhayl Rashaḥāt ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt* (ذيل رشحات عين الحياة) or *Nafā’is al-Sāniḥāt fī Tadhyīl al-Bāqiyāt* (نفائس السانحات في تذييل الباقيات). This is a work on the Naqshbandī Sufi path and its last sheikhs around Mecca, Medina (*al-Madīna*), Central Asia, and the Volga-Ural region.<sup>32</sup> A manuscript of this book can be found in the Egyptian National Library and Archives (*Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya*, Cairo) under the number: 5/394.<sup>33</sup> As a supplement to the *Rashaḥāt* it provides short biographies of some unmentioned saints and contemporary Naqshbandī Sufi masters with whom Murād Ramzī was already connected. *Dhayl* was printed in the left and right margins of the translated text of the *Rashaḥāt*. There is an independent section on the method and manners of the Naqshbandīya in the last pages of *Dhayl* in which Murād Ramzī explained some practices of his special branch of the Naqshbandīya.<sup>34</sup> This is one of the most important sources on 19th century Naqshbandī masters such as Muḥammad Maḥzar,<sup>35</sup> ‘Abd al-ḥamīd al-Shirwānī,<sup>36</sup> Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Zawāwī,<sup>37</sup> and Mawlānā Khālīd al-Baghdādī and his important

<sup>31</sup> Hamid Algar, “Aḥrār”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition (Brill Online, 2015): [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ahrar-SIM\\_8303](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ahrar-SIM_8303).

<sup>32</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *Dhayl Rashaḥāt ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt* (Mecca, 1890), printed together with the translation of *Rashaḥāt*.

<sup>33</sup> See full information on the manuscript preserved in the Egyptian National Library and Archives in Cairo, Egypt: Muḥammad Murād b. ‘Abdullah al-Qazānī (محمد مراد بن عبد الله القزاني), *Nafā’is al-Sāniḥāt fī Tadhyīl al-Bāqiyāt* (نفائس السانحات في تذييل الباقيات), manuscript no. 5/394.

<sup>34</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *Dhayl Rashaḥāt ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt*, p. 189.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

deputies.<sup>38</sup> Mawlānā Khālīd is central to our understanding of the Sufi movements of modern Turkey, the Caucasus, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.<sup>39</sup> In just one generation after his death, his followers were found everywhere from the Balkans and Crimea to Southeast Asia (namely Indonesia).<sup>40</sup> He also discussed Zaynullāh Rasūlī, the most prominent figure of the Volga-Ural region who was also a sheikh from Khālīdī branch of the Naqshbandī order. The majority of contemporary Muslim Tatar authors, intellectuals, and educators appreciated Rasūlī's work and activities.<sup>41</sup> For this reason the *Dhayl* is a very important source.

**3. *Mu'arrab al-Maktūbāt al-Sharīfa al-Mawsūm bi al-Durar al-Maknūnāt* (معرب المكتوبات الشريفة الموصوم بالدرر المكنونات).** This work is a detailed translation of the "Collected Letters of Aḥmad Sirhindī" from Persian into Arabic. In the beginning of this translation Murād Ramzī wrote a beautiful *dībāja*, a classical preface decorated with literary flourishes.<sup>42</sup> This *dībāja* shows that Ramzī had a firm grasp of the major themes of Sufi thought and Arabic literature. Sheikh Aḥmad Sirhindī, also known as Imām Rabbānī (1564-1624), was an Indian Islamic scholar from Punjab, a Ḥanafī jurist, and a prominent

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>39</sup> Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), p. 44.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>41</sup> Hamid Algar, "Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev: The Last Great Naqshbandi Shaykh of the Volga-Urals Region", *Muslims in Central Asia*, ed. Jo-Ann Gross (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 89-112; see also İbrahim Maraş, "İdil-Ural Bölgesinin Cedidei Dini Lideri Zeynullah Rasuli'nin Hayatı ve Görüşleri", *Dini Araştırmalar*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1998), pp. 76-92.

<sup>42</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *Mu'arrab al-Maktūbāt* (Mecca, 1316 AH [1898]), vol. 1, pp. 1-10.

member of the Naqshbandī Sufī order within Aḥrārī tradition.<sup>43</sup> When he was 28 he went to Delhi and joined the Naqshbandīya order and soon received *khilāfa* (the mission of deputy) from Khwāja Bāqībillāh.<sup>44</sup> Most of the Naqshbandī suborders today, such as the Mujaddidī, Khālīdī, Saifī, Tāhirī, and Qāsimī suborders, trace their spiritual lineage through Aḥmad Sirhindī, often referred to as “Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī”.<sup>45</sup> Aḥmad Sirhindī’s *Maktūbāt* is widely studied in Turkey, Syria, and the Balkans with the help of the Arabic translation undertaken by Ramzī. Ramzī’s translation of *Maktūbāt* is so popular and compelling that some publishers and readers in Turkey think that Aḥmad Sirhindī originally wrote these letters in Arabic.<sup>46</sup> One cannot study socio-religious thought in Turkey after 1950’s, without referring to the Naqshbandīya culture formed around the *Maktūbāt* and other classics.

4. *Tarjamat Aḥwāl al-Imām al-Rabbānī Aḥmad Sirhindī* (ترجمة احوال الإمام الرباني (أحمد سرهندي)). This booklet is about the life and defense of Aḥmad Sirhindī, printed as an independent section in the second volume of the translation of *Maktūbāt*.<sup>47</sup> Ramzī added a lengthy “question and answer section” about Sirhindī, including a biography and

<sup>43</sup> Aziz Aḥmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 189.

<sup>44</sup> Burhan Aḥmad Faruqi, *The Mujaddid’s Conception of Tawhid* (Lahore, 1940), pp. 7-14.

<sup>45</sup> Muḥammad Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sufism and Shari’ah: A Study of Sheikh Aḥmad Sirhindī’s Effort to Reform Sufism* (Leicestershire, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1997), p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> I saw an interesting statement in the introduction of a *Maktūbāt* publisher: “Elinizde tuttuğunuz bu *Mektubat*, İmam Rabbani hazretlerinin dostlarına yazdığı mektupların Arapçasından Türkçemize tercüme edilmiş halidir!” (Dear Readers! The *Maktūbāt* you receive right now is the Turkish translation of the letters that the Honorable İmām Rabbani wrote [originally] in Arabic and sent to his friends!) The publisher wished to emphasize the “originality of the translation” whereas in reality it is another translation of a creative translation by Ramzī! See the introduction section and cover: İmam Rabbani, *Mektubat-ı Rabbani*, trans. Abdulkadir Akçiçek (İstanbul: Çelik Yayınevi, 2011).

<sup>47</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *Tarjamat Aḥwāl al-Imām al-Rabbānī*, in the margin of vol. 1 of *Mu’arrab al-Maktūbāt* (Mecca, 1316 AH [1898 AD]).

reports of other scholars. In this section he explains why Imām Rabbānī is very important for Muslims in general and for Sufis in particular.<sup>48</sup> Even though the book has many reports and sentences excerpted from other sources, it is a new work unnoticed before by biographers of Murād Ramzī, including Ahmet Temir. As Ramzī clearly wrote at the end of his work, he collected the data in 1309 AH/1891 AD. After correcting and summarizing some points, he finished this work on the first day of Rajab, 1314 AH [Sunday, December 6, 1896].<sup>49</sup> It is possible that Murād Ramzī was concerned with the crisis emerging among the Sufi members of Arabian peninsula and other parts of Islamic world. He must have thought that Aḥmad Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt* would give them a fresh breath to revive Sufi ideas among the younger generation.

**5. *Ta'rib al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād* (تعريب المبدأ والمعاد).** This work is a translation of the *Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād* of Sirhindī, which is about the key points of Sirhindī's Sufi theology and spiritual experience.<sup>50</sup>

**6. *Ta'rib Fiḡarāt al-Khwāja 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār* (تعريب فقرات الخواجه عبيد الله الاحرار).** This work is the translation of the *Fiḡarāt al-'ārifīn* of 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār from Persian into Arabic. It is about some difficult issues within intellectual speculative Sufism, including an explanation of key concepts such as *ma'rifa*, *'ibāda*, and *ḥaqīqa*.<sup>51</sup>

**7. *Tarjamat Aḥwāl al-Mu'arrib* (ترجمة احوال المعرب).** This work is a short autobiography of Murād Ramzī which he published in the back matter of his translation

<sup>48</sup> This section appears in volume 4 of the İhlas Vakfi edition, see: *Mu'arrib al-Maktūbāt* (Istanbul: İhlas Vakfi, 2002), vol. 4, pp. 1-70.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 125-176.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-120.

of the *Maktūbāt*. This autobiography is important to understand the intellectual world of Ramzī, even though it was very short and incomplete.<sup>52</sup>

8. *Talfīq al-akhbār wa Talqīḥ al-Āthār fī Waqā'i Qazān wa Bulghār wa Mulūk al-Tatār* (تلفيق الاخبار وتلقيح الآثار في وقائع قزان وبلغار وملوك التتار).<sup>53</sup> This is a very detailed work (1250 pages in large format, printed in Orenburg in 1908) concerning the history of the Muslim Turkic peoples of the Volga-Ural region, Crimea, Eastern Turkistan, the Uzbek cities, and the Kazakh steppe. *Talfīq al-akhbār* claims to cover all major events of those peoples from their appearance in history down to the late 19th century. Even though he mentions only the names Tatār, Bulghār, and Qazān in the title of his work, the book covers the huge area once dominated by the Muslim descendants of Chingiz Khan and the Kipchak (*Kıpçak*) Turkic tribes. The main body<sup>54</sup> is about the history of the Muslim Turko-Mongol peoples from the second half of 13th century (the age of Chingiz Khan) to the conquest of the Khanate of Kazan by the Muscovite Grand Duke Ivan the Terrible in 1552. The author offers detailed information about this era based on different sources written in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian. The last parts of the book (vol. 2, pp. 150-532) include the most important and unique sections on the history of the Turkic peoples under the rule of the Russian Empire, including details of local Muslim military leaders, Kazakh tribes, and Muslim scholars.<sup>55</sup> The details he gives here are very vivid because it is a first-hand account of Ramzī's close friends, social network, and struggles.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 301-307.

<sup>53</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 160-713; and vol. 2, pp. 12-150.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 150-532.

9. *Mushāya‘at Hizb al-Raḥmān wa Mudāfa‘at Hizb al-Shayṭān*.<sup>56</sup> This book is written to criticize Mūsā Jārullāh Bigiyev on the history of religions and the theory of “universal divine mercy” which was highly problematized in the end of 19th century among young Muslim reformist intellectuals. The work was published as a series of small booklets, one section after another, in the famous Orenburg-based Qadīmist review *Dīn ve Ma‘īshat* in 1917.<sup>57</sup> He wrote it in Kazan Tatar.

10. *Qasīde-i Hurriyet* (قصیدهء حریت). This work is a didactic poem about freedom written in Tatar language and printed in Orenburg in 1917.<sup>58</sup> The historian Zeki Velidi Togan mentioned some of its verses in his famous book *Bugünkü Türkili (Türkistan)*.<sup>59</sup>

#### ***Other works mentioned by the scholar Ahmet Temir***

We do not know much about his other works, except for some names mentioned by the Turkish scholar of Tatar origin, Ahmet Temir, son of Rashīd Jārullāh, who was a student of Ramzī in Mecca.<sup>60</sup> Some of the works with their obvious names indicate that Ramzī

<sup>56</sup> Khayr al-dīn Ziriklī, *Qāmūs al-A‘lām* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 2002), vol. 7, p. 95. Ziriklī mentioned this booklet referring to another title by Muḥammad Ma‘šūmi in the magazine *Majallat al-ḥajj*, no. 7, p. 354.

<sup>57</sup> See: *Dīn ve Ma‘īshat*, no. 2 (January 1917), p. 1. The announcement was in the first page of the review:

“eş-Şeykh Muḥammed Murād el-Mekkī cenablarının *Mušāya‘at Hizb al-Raḥmān ve Mudāfa‘at Hizb al-Shayṭān* bir, ikki, üçüncü cüz’ları basılıb çıqdı. Risale Mūsā Bigi tarafından meydana qoyulğan Tarikh-i Edyan meselesi ve Rahmat-i İlahiye umumiyyeti nazariyelerine reddiye olu emeliyle ta’lif idilüb herkim anlarlıq surette yazılğan.”

<sup>58</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Qasīde-i Hurriyet* (Orenburg, 1917).

<sup>59</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan, *Bugünkü Türkili (Türkistan) ve Yakın Tarihi* (İstanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1981), pp. 541-543.

<sup>60</sup> Ahmet Temir, “Doğumunun 130. ve Ölümünün 50. yılı dolayısıyla Kazanlı Tarihçi Mehmet Remzi, 1854-1934”, *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten*, vol. 50, no. 197 (1986), p. 505. Professor Ahmet Temir, the Mongolist and historian of Mongol and Central Asian history was a well known scholar in Turkish academic circles.

changed his focus from Sufism (‘*Irfān*) and national history to his particular approach to the Arabic and Qur’ānic studies (*Bayān*). Here are those last works mentioned by Temir:

1. *Translation of Talḥīq al-akhbār into the Turkish language*. I have clear evidence that some parts of the book were translated from Arabic into Ottoman Turkish. However, Ramzī may not have done the translation. After thorough research in Istanbul libraries, I discovered a short manuscript, a clear translation of some sections from *Talḥīq al-akhbār*, but no more.<sup>61</sup> The collection, including this manuscript, was brought from the private library of the famous scholar Tahirülmevlevi (1877-1951), the spiritual master of the Mevlevi order. He was a poet, journalist, well-known intellectual, “Mesnevi” reciter (مثنوی خوان), and literary historian.<sup>62</sup> I consider Tahirülmevlevi to be the likely translator of this work. Because this small manuscript was named “the second notebook”, it must be a part of a larger project undertaken by the translator.

I observe as well that some introductions without signature to Tatar history might have been influenced by *Talḥīq al-akhbār* or an abbreviated translation of it. A small but well-organized Ottoman Turkish booklet about the history of the Muslim Tatars in Russia was published in Cairo in 1318 AH/ 1900 AH.<sup>63</sup> This booklet might have been written by another author, ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm. However, I observe some crucial similarities between this booklet and some sections of *Talḥīq al-akhbār*. Obviously, at that time

<sup>61</sup> See a small manuscript under the name of *Terceme-i Telfiq*: Fethi Sezai Türkmen Section, Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul, Turkey), manuscript no. 144, folia 78-130. This small section is about the Mongols, in particular Batu Khan (c. 1207-1255), founder of the Golden Horde.

<sup>62</sup> See: Âlim Kahraman, “Tâhirülmevlevî”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV, 2010), vol. 39, pp. 407-409; Mehmet Sılay, “Ankara İstiklal Mahkemesi Cumhuriyetin Engizisyon Aygıtı”, *Derin Tarih*, no. 20 (November 2013), p. 83.

<sup>63</sup> See: *Rusya’da Müslümanlar yahut Tatar Akvamının Tarihçesi*, trans. Şâlih Jamāl (Cairo: Matbaa-ı Osmaniye, 1318 AH [1900 AD]).





book (88 pages) into Istanbul Turkish. On the cover of the book is: *İşbu tarihçe Kazan fuzalasından bir zatın eseridir*, ‘This small history book is written by a person from the noble scholars of Kazan’.

2. *Tanzīh al-Kashshāf ‘ammā fīhi min al-‘Itizāl wa al-Inkishāf*. This is most likely a collection of critical annotations on the famous Qur’ānic exegesis *al-Kashshāf* by Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144). Even though al-Zamakhsharī was a hard-core Mu‘tazila (rationalist) scholar, his *al-Kashshāf* was one of the best-received works of Qur’ānic exegesis in all medieval Muslim scholarship, Sunnī and Shiite alike.<sup>64</sup>

3. *Translation of the meaning of the Qur’ān into Turkish*. Even though Ahmet Temir said “Turkish”, he might have translated it into Tatar. In the time of Ramzī, many authors used the term “Turkī” as a general description of a Turkic orthography that was commonly understood by intellectuals among the Anatolian Turks, Crimean and Kazan Tatars, Bukharan Uzbeks, and Azerbaijani Turks. However it was mostly influenced by the Istanbul dialect of Turkish.<sup>65</sup>

4. *Mawlid al-Nabīy*. This might be a short poetical work especially composed for and recited at the Prophet’s nativity celebration.

5. *‘Arūd*. This might be a traditional study of Arabic poetic meters.

<sup>64</sup> I myself studied many Sūras such as Taha and al-Baqara from this exegesis when I was a student of classical Arabic studies in Istanbul during the period 1982-1987.

<sup>65</sup> Ahmet Temir, “Doğumunun 130. ve Ölümünün 50. yılı dolayısıyla Kazanlı Tarihçi Mehmet Remzi, 1854-1934”, p. 505. Many books and periodicals printed in Kazan Tatar and Istanbul Turkish had a kind of mutual understandability, thanks to the common Arabic-based alphabet and Ismā‘īl Gasprinsky of Crimea (d. 1914), who put a conscious effort to create a mutually understandable Turkic language of publications among Turkic peoples and regions, even though this project was halted by the Tsarist authorities (Ilminsky) and later by the Soviets.

6. *Al-Naḥw al-‘Arabī*. This was most likely a treatise on Arabic syntax.

7. *Al-Şarf al-‘Arabī*. This was probably a treatise on Arabic morphology.

### ***Major periodicals to which Ramzī submitted articles***

Ramzī also sent articles to:

1. *Şirāt-i Mustaqīm* (1908-1925). This periodical (*Sırat-ı Müstakim* in modern Turkish orthography) was one of the most influential political-cultural periodicals of the late Ottoman and early Republican era. After 1912, its name changed to *Sebilü’r-Reşad*. Ramzī sent his letters to this periodical from Mecca and wrote about his projects and the problems of education there.<sup>66</sup> As an Istanbul-based periodical, it supported a progressive Islamist agenda with an extremely wide range of authors, including the nationalist Yusuf Akçura, the Islamist Mehmet Akif, and the nationalist-liberal Ahmet Ağaoğlu. Some researchers described it as the intellectual center of the national progressive movement based on Islam as the religion of “spiritual culture” and western-style technology as “material culture”.<sup>67</sup> It was opposed to the British invasion of Istanbul. Its readers sent their letters from almost every city of Anatolia, the Balkans, Central Asia, and even from Cairo and Kazan. The first detailed exposé on the Kazan Tatars and other Turkic minorities in the Volga-Ural region was also published here by Ayaz (Gayaz) Ishaki

<sup>66</sup> See Ramzī’s two letters as examples: A letter about his translation of *Maktübāt*: Kazanlı Murād Remzi (Mekke-i Mukerremede mukim), “Ta’rīb-i Maktübāt-i Imām Rabbānī”, *Sebilü’r-Reşad*, vol. 12, no. 299 (Istanbul, May 1914), p. 244. Another letter was about the foundation of a Kazan Students Community in Medina (*al-Madīna*): Medine Kazanlı Talebesi Cemiyeti, “Muḥarrir Efendi!”, *Şirāt-i Mustaqīm* (1327 AH [1909 AD]), no. 20, p. 127.

<sup>67</sup> For a thesis on this journal, see: Selçuk Akşin Somel, “*Sırat-ı Müstakim*: Islamic Modernist Thought in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1912”, M.A. Thesis in History (Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, 1987).

(1878-1954), a famous figure of the Kazan Tatar national movement who was later an emigré author in Turkey.<sup>68</sup>

2. *Te'āruf-i Muslimîn* (1910-1911). This was another center for opposition to Western colonialism. This review was under the leadership of 'Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm, the famous Tatar traveler and pan-Islamist political figure. As Nadir Özbek notes, this periodical was published in Istanbul by Muslim Tatar authors opposed to both Russian and English colonialism.<sup>69</sup> Ramzī sent several letters to this periodical on freedom of speech in Islam, the legality of freedom of the press,<sup>70</sup> and the declaration sent from the Japanese Ajia-Gikai Daito ("Great East Society").<sup>71</sup> It seems that here Ramzī was involved in anti-colonialist discussions that would be continued until his death in Eastern Turkistan (today the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of the Peoples Republic of China).

3. *Dīn ve Ma'īshat* (1906-1918). This was an Orenburg-based periodical occupying a special place among Tatar periodicals in the early 20th century. It was the advocate of Tatar traditional religious scholars and middle class conservatives. This periodical severely attacked the Jadīdist authors, conducting an ideological struggle

<sup>68</sup> See the series about the Muslims of Kazan: Kazanlı Ayaz, "Alem-i İslam-Rusya Muslumanları", *Sırat-ı Müstakim* (Istanbul, August 1909), vol. 02, no. 51, p. 398; vol. 02, no. 52 (August 1909), pp. 415-416; and, vol. 03, no. 53, pp. 014-016 (August 1909).

<sup>69</sup> See: Nadir Özbek, "Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1857-1944", M.A.Thesis (Boğaziçi University, 1994); Nadir Özbek, "İkinci Meşrutiyet İstanbul'unda Tatar İslamcıları: Te'āruf-i Müslimîn Dergisi", *Müteferrika*, (Istanbul-Kadıköy: Summer 2002), no. 21, pp. 45-67.

<sup>70</sup> See: Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, "İslamiyette Hürriyet-i Kelam ve Serbesti-i Matbuatın Meşruiyeti", *Te'āruf-i Muslimîn*, vol. 1, no. 5 (June 9, 1910), pp. 78-80; and vol. 1, no. 6 (June 28, 1910), pp. 90-92.

<sup>71</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, "Asya Gi-Kay Cemiyeti Riyaseti tarafından gönderilen mektup münasebetiyle", *Te'āruf-i Muslimîn*, vol. 1, no. 23 (November 24, 1910), pp. 365-368.

against the opponents of the traditional approach.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, it also included much valuable and detailed research on *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* published with the help of great traditionalist scholars. Ramzī's longest refutations against the revolutionary theological approach of Mūsā Jārullāh Bigiyev were published in this periodical. He wrote his longest polemics on the theory of universal divine mercy and other problematic issues.<sup>73</sup>

We see here a sad and angry face of the scholar Ramzī. He was deeply concerned with the confusion and loss of Islamic identity among the Muslims living under Russian rule. In his first refutation against Mūsā Jārullāh, he started to blame him in a strong yet lofty tone, similar to Shakespearean English:

*Mūsā herifin üteden berü bustan-i şeriat-i garraya girüp hayli eşcar-i şeriat-i garrayı kuparup atmaya mühavele itdüğini müşâhede iderek bununçun ezhercihet canım sıkılmada iken...*

Since I have been totally disturbed with the observation of this fellow called Mūsā who has already entered the radiant garden of Sharī'a and attempted to cut so many trees in this garden...<sup>74</sup>

Ramzī continued to write about similar issues under different titles.<sup>75</sup> It seems that these long theological (and literary) discussions were the major focus of his last book

*Mushāya'at Hizb al-Raḥmān ve Mudāfa'at Hizb al-Shayṭan*. The other issue Ramzī wrote

<sup>72</sup> For a detailed thesis on *Dīn ve Ma'īshat*, see: Rustem Garifzyanovich Mukhametsin, "Problemy Tatarskogo Traditsionalizma na Stranitsakh Zhurnala 'Din Va Magishat': 1906-1918", Ph.D. dissertation in History (Kazan: Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, 2004). Here, the second section of Chapter 1 is important (pp. 51-69). It deals with the ideological differences between the Qadīmist and Jadīdist movements in early 20th century Tatar society.

<sup>73</sup> Ramzī wrote more than 15 articles against Jārullāh. His first article in this long series of polemics was published in 1910. See: Muḥammad Murād Mekki, "Mūsā'ga Mekke Polemiti", *Dīn ve Ma'īshat* (1909), no. 30, pp. 467-469. Every article was more than 2 large pages in 2 columns, except the last one which was only three columns (1.5 pages), published in no. 46 (1910), pp. 736-737.

<sup>74</sup> Muḥammad Murād Mekki, "Mūsā'ga Mekke Polemiti", *Dīn ve Ma'īshat* (1909), no. 30, pp. 467-469.

<sup>75</sup> Muḥammad Murād Mekki, "Nasihāt li erbabi'd-diyane", *Dīn ve Ma'īshat* (1910), no. 47, pp. 744-747.

about was the social-political attitude declared in both the First All-Muslim Congress of Russia in Moscow (May 1917)<sup>76</sup> and the All-Muslim Scholars Congress in Kazan (July 1917).<sup>77</sup> This series of articles was written from a traditional standpoint about the problems of the Russian Muslims, especially Muslim women. Ramzī was very conservative on issues related to women and family. He supported technological material culture (outer domain) coming from Russia or the West, but was a staunch opponent of any changes in religious creed and the social position of the family and woman (inner domain).

### *Other references*

We have some historical records about Ramzī in the Ottoman Archives related to the Muslims from Kazan in Mecca,<sup>78</sup> the German Orientalist Spies' records on Ramzī's private library in Mecca,<sup>79</sup> some personal evaluations by the Tatar traveler 'Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm,<sup>80</sup> the Bashkort scholar and political figure Zeki Velidi Togan,<sup>81</sup> the leader of the

<sup>76</sup> This congress ("Umum Rusyali Muslumanlar İlk Kongresi Moskova, Mayıs 1917") has been studied in detail: Shafiqa Daulet, "The First All Muslim Congress of Russia, Moscow, 1-11 May 1917", *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1989), pp. 21-47.

<sup>77</sup> As Murād Ramzī named in Turkic-Tatar: "Kazanda Bütün Rusya Uleması Nedvesi—18'nci İyul 1917". See: Muhammed Murād Ramzī, "Kazan'da Nedvetu'l-ulemada hatun kızlara muteallik meselelerni tarika hal kılındı", *Din ve Ma'ishat* (1917), no. 32, pp. 359-361.

<sup>78</sup> The official document number in the Ottoman Archive: DH. MUI, 66-1/ 38. See: Yusuf Sarıncay, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kazan* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü-Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2005), pp. 188-189.

<sup>79</sup> Otto Spies, "Die Bibliotheken des Hidschas", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 90 (1936), pp. 87 and 91.

<sup>80</sup> Abdurresid Ibrahim, *Alem-i İslam*, ed. Ertugrul Ozalp (Istanbul, 2003), vol. 2, pp. 487-488.

<sup>81</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan, *Bugünkü Türkili Türkistan ve Yakın*, p. 542; see also Zeki Velidi Togan, *Hatıralar* (Istanbul, 1969), pp. 44-45.

Eastern Turkistan Movement Mehmed Emin Buğra,<sup>82</sup> and some Arabic *ijāza* documents (certifications of mastery) he gave to his students in the Islamic disciplines, such as the *ijāza* he gave to ‘Abd al-sattār ibn ‘Abd al-wahhāb al-Dihlawī (d. 1936).<sup>83</sup> However, these should be considered only very limited records for such a remarkable translator whose translations have been read or translated again and again into regional languages in Anatolia, the Balkans, and Southeast Asia.

It could be possible that a rich source of documents and narratives exists in the personal papers of his pharmacist son Fehmī Murād, if they have not been lost after the death (2003) of the scholar Ahmet Temir. Ahmet Temir’s father, Jārullāh Rashīd, was a student of Ramzī in Mecca. The both were from the same region of Älmät in Russia.<sup>84</sup> When Fehmī Murād died in 1965, his remaining documents were mailed to Ahmet Temir in the same year. According to Ahmet Temir, this package included manuscripts of Ramzī such as small booklets, travel accounts concerning Eastern Turkistan, Afghanistan, and India, some essays he wrote in Mecca and Medina, and the memoirs of Fehmī Murād.<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have any knowledge of whether these precious remnants ever survived and, if so, where they might be located.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Mehmed Emin Buğra, *Sharqi Turkistan Tarikhi*, ed. Dr. Yakup Buğra (Ankara, 1998), p. 36 (Uyghur text in Arabic alphabet).

<sup>83</sup> This Arabic manuscript is just one page. For the details see: Muḥammad Murād al-Qazānī, *Ijāza li- ‘Abd al-sattār ibn ‘Abd al-wahhāb al-Dihlawī* (إجازة لعبد الستار بن عبد الوهاب الدهلوي), Maktaba al-ḥaram al-makkī (Library of the Haram al-Sharifayn in Mecca), Saudi Arabia, manuscript no. 3/752, date: 1307 AH [1889].

<sup>84</sup> See Chapter 2, n. 86.

<sup>85</sup> Ahmet Temir, “Doğumunun 130. ve Ölümünün 50. yılı dolayısıyla Kazanlı Tarihçi Mehmet Remzi, 1854-1934”, *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten*, vol. 50, no. 197 (1986), pp. 495-505.

<sup>86</sup> I asked the relatives of Ahmet Temir in Turkey about this package. They know nothing about the fate of this shipment.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Life and Cultural Background of Murād Ramzī

#### 2.1. A short sketch of the life of Murād Ramzī

Murād Ramzī (born December 25, 1855) informs us that he was born in the month of Rabīʿ al-Awwal of 1272 AH in Älmät-Minzälä, which was situated between Ufa and Kazan.<sup>87</sup> Murād Ramzī used pseudonyms such as Tūṭī, ʿAndalīb, Abū al-Ḥasan, Akmal, and M. M. Ramzī in his shorter works. He signed his books in Arabic as al-Minzalawī, al-Qazānī, or al-Makkī.<sup>88</sup> He wrote that he belonged to the Bikçura clan,<sup>89</sup> a noble family descended from Bikçura (Bik-Chura) Khan.<sup>90</sup> This clan supposedly ruled a vast area in Central Asia, including the Aral Sea, the Amu Darya, the Syr Darya, and sections of the

<sup>87</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *Muʿarrab al-Maktūbāt al-sharīfa al-marsūm bi al-durār al-maknūnāt al-naḥṣa* (Mecca, 1316 AH [1898]), vol. 3, p. 188. (This is Murād Ramzī's translation of the *Maktūbāt* by Aḥmad Sirhindī.) The place of his birth, Älmät-Minzälä (*Menzelinsk*), is not to be confused with the city of Älmät (*Al'met'evsk*), Republic of Tatarstan, Russian Federation; rather it is in the Sarman region (administrative center: Sarmanovo), which is located between the city of Älmät (*Al'met'evsk*) and Yar Challı (*Naberezhnye Chelny*) in the Republic of Tatarstan. Personal communication (July 16, 2015) from Färit Urazayev of the World Congress of Tatars, Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan to Professor Uli Schamiloglu, who first learned of the Urazayev family's connection with Murad Rämzi in June 2015. I would like to thank Prof. Schamiloglu for on passing this information to me. Today the village Älmät of (*selo Al'met'evo*) is located in the rural district of Älmät (*Al'met'evskoe sel'skoe poselenie*), Sarman region (*rayon Sarman*), Republic of Tatarstan. On Sarman region, see: [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A1%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9\\_%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BE%D0%BD](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A1%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9_%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BE%D0%BD) (accessed July 16, 2015).

<sup>88</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Ramzī provided us with a clear family tree in his history, see: Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *Talḥīq al-akḥbār wa talqīḥ al-āthār fī waqā'i 'Qazān wa-Bulḥār wa mulūk al-Tatār*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-dīn (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīya, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 339-340.

<sup>90</sup> For Bikçura Khan, see: Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and "Bulghar" Identity among the Tatars and Bashkorts of Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 79-89 and 135.



Uzbek and Turkmen territories in the 16th century.<sup>91</sup> His grandfather ‘Ādil-Shāh was the local ruler of the town of Älmät. Damir Garifullin, a relative of the poet Tukay and a regional historian of Älmät, wrote about Murād Ramzī’s ancestors, his relationship with Kazan nobles, and other discussions pertaining to Ramzī’s travels to Mecca, Medina, and Turkistan. According to this article, the satirist Tukay harshly ridiculed the lifestyle of Ramzī as well as his opinions.<sup>92</sup>

Before he was born, his elder brother Ḥasan Shāh was accused of setting up a secret political group and executed in Siberia (1844). At the age of eight, Ramzī was enrolled in the madrasa of his uncle Ḥasan al-dīn, disciple of the great scholar Ismā‘īl Qishqārī. There he studied Arabic grammar, medieval logic, ethics, and theology until the age of 18.<sup>93</sup>

When he was 18 years old (1873), he went to Kazan to study Islamic disciplines at the madrasa of Shihāb al-dīn Marjānī. At that time, Marjānī (d. 1889) was already a famous intellectual, historian, and scholar. Murād Ramzī was not pleased with Kazan’s educational environment and went to Bukhara to study logic, Islamic philosophy, Qur’ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) and the prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) with the texts preferred in the madrasa system of that era. On the road to Bukhara, he stayed two years at Trosky where he continued to study Islamic disciplines under the scholarship of Sharaf al-dīn

<sup>91</sup> See: Ahmet Özel, “Remzi, Muhammed Murad”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı (TDV) İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 34 (Ankara, 2007), pp. 566-568. This is a fair article, even though it lacks of some important details such as the documents in the Ottoman Archive about the Kazan Student Community in Medina (*al-Madīna*), and Murād Ramzī’s private library in Mecca (*al-Makka*), as described by the German Orientalist Spies (see note 79 above).

<sup>92</sup> D. Garifullin “Morat Rämzi—Bikchura Khan Onıgı”, *Gasırlar avazı—Ekho vekov*, no. 1/2 (2001), pp. 223-227.

<sup>93</sup> Ahmet Temir, *ibid.*, pp. 495-505.

and Muḥammad Jān. Then he was introduced to the most famous Naqshbandī master of Central Asia, Zaynullāh Rasūlī (Zeynulla Rasulev).<sup>94</sup> He arrived in Tashkent and met some other scholars there. As a result of the invasion of Russian troops in the 1860's, the Kokand Khanate had been abolished and the Turkistan Governor-Generalship was established on July 11, 1867, with the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva each receiving the status of protectorate.<sup>95</sup>

In 1876 he arrived in Bukhara, where he met ‘Abdullāh Sartāwī and ‘Abd al-shakūr Turkmānī. In the same year, he came back to Tashkent where he met ‘Abd al-mun‘im Ishān and other Sufi scholars. As he declared in his personal account, he was dissatisfied with traditional *fiqh* education and he started to search for his own ethical-spiritual path. One day, he saw the Prophet Muḥammad in his dream; then, he met Sufi brothers from the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*, the most influential spiritual order in the Central Asia. After this event, he was initiated into the Naqshabandī order.<sup>96</sup>

Around 1878 he intended to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca (*al-ḥajj*), passing through some Afghan and Indian cities such as Lahore, Bombay, and Karachi, where he boarded a ship traveling to Jedda in the Arabian Peninsula. He came to Hejaz and continued his education in the Amīn Aghā (Emin Ağa) and Maḥmūdiya madrasas and became a disciple of the Naqshabandī Sufi Master Muḥammad Maẓhar. Because Medina was a rich city home to many great scholars and libraries, he was happy there. At that time, there was a Tatar community living in Mecca–Medina consisting of students in

<sup>94</sup> See for Zaynullāh: Algar, “Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev: The Last Great Naqshbandi Shaykh of the Volga-Urals Region”, pp. 89-112.

<sup>95</sup> Rafis Abazov, *Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Central Asia* (New York, 2008), p. 71.

<sup>96</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *Mu‘arrab al-Maktūbāt* (Istanbul: İhlas Vakfı, 2002), vol. 3, p. 302.

Islamic disciplines and traders. In 1880, he married Asmā', the noble daughter of Muḥammad Shāh, a member of the Kazan community in Mecca. Around those years, he became ill and went back to Kazan but, after a few months, he returned to Mecca where he took lessons from 'Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī, 'Abd al-raḥmān Sirāj, and Sheikh Surūr al-Sūdānī.

When both Muḥammad Maẓhar and 'Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī died in 1884, Sheikh Muḥammad al-Zawāwī assumed the position of Dāghistānī, and Ramzī continued his spiritual education under the mastership of al-Zawāwī. In 1885, al-Zawāwī went to Medina and gave an *ijāza* (certification of mastery) in the Naqshī spiritual path to both Ramzī and a sheikh from Java, the East Indies (today's Indonesia). In these years Ramzī translated the *Rashaḥāt 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt* of Kāshifī, a very important biography of Naqshī masters, and started to translate the *Maktūbāt-i Rabbānī*, that is "The Letters" of Aḥmad Sirhindī. As he mentioned in his personal accounts, he was also intrigued by the books of Ibn 'Arabī and read *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya* and *Fuṣūs al-Ḥikam* ("The Bezels of Wisdom"). In Mecca, he was a productive scholar sharing his experience with many students coming from diverse locations around the Muslim world, including Muḥammad Rāshid Jārullāh, father of the famous Turkish scholar Ahmet Temir (see above). Mecca of 1885 was under the influence of Sufi orders such as the Qādirīya and Khālidi-Naqshbandīya. As Weismann indicates in his book,<sup>97</sup> when the Dutch scholar Snouck Hurgronje arrived in Mecca in 1885 to investigate the position of residents and pilgrims from the East Indies, he found four Naqshbandī Sufi masters in the city, with the

<sup>97</sup> Itzhak Weismann, *The Naqshbandīya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition* (Routledge, 2007), p. 98.

Khālīdī-Naqshbandī masters being the most popular among them.<sup>98</sup> Murād Ramzī was one of the most prominent Islamic scholars who had a private library in Mecca.<sup>99</sup> His library included some rare Islamic manuscripts and other precious books, as the Indian scholar Sulaymān al-Nadwī mentioned in the journal *Ma‘ārif*.<sup>100</sup> However, his private library was incorporated along with other small libraries into the General Library of al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf (مكتبة الحرم الشريف) when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established.<sup>101</sup>

Between 1902 and 1914 he traveled to Istanbul, Kazan, and Turkistan. For his final journey he went to Tashkent, Andijan, Khokand, and Bukhara with his son Fehmī Murād. In fact, he intended to return to Mecca. However, the war between the Russian Empire and Ottomans must have prevented his return. Then he went instead to Orenburg where his aunt’s son, Muṣliḥ al-dīn Nogaybek, was a local teacher in the village of Toztoba.

The Russian Empire was going through politically turbulent times and the government forced him to stay in Toztoba as a civilian prisoner. The problem was Murād Ramzī’s famous book *Talfīq al-akhbār*, a clear and bold refutation of the Russian Empire’s policy of referring to the population of the Central Asia, Siberia, and Far East Asia as “aliens” (*inorodtsy*: Ино́родцы). The Russian imperial censors tried to remove all

<sup>98</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *Dhayl Rashaḥāt ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt* (Mecca, 1890), p. 156

<sup>99</sup> Otto Spies, “Die Bibliotheken des Hidschas”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 90 (1936), pp. 87 and 91.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Duhaysh, *al-Maktabāt al-Khāssa fī al-Makka al-Mukarrama* (Mecca: Matba‘a al-Nahḍa al-ḥadītha, 1408 AH [1988]), pp. 19-20.

printed copies of this book.<sup>102</sup> Ramzī was writing his work to attack the hegemonic discourse of the Empire. He worked in the libraries and archives of St. Petersburg to collect some materials for *Talfīq al-akhbār* and traveled around the country. At times, he had to move suddenly to escape the authorities. Around 1915 he was arrested and sent to Siberia. Following great efforts he was able to escape and return to his family in Orenburg.

During the Revolution and the Civil War which followed, Ramzī wanted to leave the country as soon as possible. It was not until 1919 that he was able to flee to Coghachag (Tacheng) in Eastern Turkistan (today's Xinjiang)<sup>103</sup> in China where he continued to teach as a scholar until he died on April 2, 1934, as Ahmet Temir relates. However, Zeki Velidi Togan disputes this date, declaring that Murād Ramzī died on October 5, 1935.<sup>104</sup> Muḥammad Amīn Bughra (Mehmed Emin Buğra, 1901-1965), the leader of the Eastern Turkistan Freedom Movement, describes Murād Ramzī as his mentor in his book *Sherqi Turkistan Tarikhi* "History of Eastern Turkistan".<sup>105</sup> It seems that Murād Ramzī was busy in Turkistan. According to Gaynetdinov, he was actively interested in the politics of Eastern Turkistan around 1920.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> See: Il'ya Zaytsev, "Murad Ramzi i Arminiy Vamberi", *Gasırlar Avazı-Ekho Vekov*, no. 3/4 (2001).

<sup>103</sup> On Tarbağatay, also known as Coghachag (*Chuguchak* in Mongolian or *Chöchäk* in Uyğur), see: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tacheng> (accessed November 3, 2015).

<sup>104</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan, *Bugunku Turkili Turkistan ve Yakın Tarihi*, p. 542.

<sup>105</sup> Mehmed Emin Buğra, *Sharqi Turkistan Tarikhi*, p. 36.

<sup>106</sup> R. B. Gainetdinov, *Tyurko-tatarskaya politicheskaya emigratsiya nachala XX veka—30-ye gody: Istoricheskiy ocherk* (Naberezhnye Chelny: Kama, 1997), pp. 100-101.

Ahmet Temir states that Murād Ramzī's son Fehmī Murād studied medicine and pharmacology at the University of Berlin. Afterwards he became a doctor in Jedda and Mecca, where he attended to the Foundation of Tatar-Kazan Immigrants, and died in 1965.<sup>107</sup> Another Arabic source, written by an Uzbek descendant called al-Bukhārī al-Andijānī, indicated that Fehmī Murād Ramzī was the person who founded the first pharmacy shop in Mecca around 1940-1945.<sup>108</sup> According to the same source, Ramzī traveled around Eastern Turkistan, visiting all the major cities including Urumchi, training scholars and political activists such as Muḥammad Sulṭān al-Ma'sūmī, Ibn Yamīn al-Sā'ātī, and Muḥammad Amīn Bughra, as we mentioned above. This small but precious document show that the last years of Ramzī's life as a bold scholar of Islamic disciplines were spent as a mentor of members of the Eastern Turkistan movement.<sup>109</sup>

### 2.1.1. Conclusion

Many questions revolve around why Ramzī did not become a more active and powerful player in Tatar intellectual life compared to other Tatar scholars of that era, such as Turkist nationalist thinker Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935), Islamic scholar Mūsā Jārullāh Bigiyev (1875-1949), and Tatar national poet Gabdullah Tukay (1886-1913). Even though he was a great Sufi translator and a prominent scholar, he is rarely mentioned in the literature, except by a few experts of history and Sufism. On this point, Bourdieu's explanation may help us to understand the situation of Ramzī.

<sup>107</sup> Ahmet Temir, *ibid.*, p. 505

<sup>108</sup> Maṣṣūr 'Abd al-bāqī al-Bukhārī al-Andijānī, '*Ulamā' Mā warā al-nahr*' (Medina: Dār al-Mirāth al-Nabawī, 2013), p. 81.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

According to Bourdieu, the dual structure of the academic world indicates two different kinds of scientific capital for scholars. A scholar or author can increase his/her power and fame either through membership on official boards, contributing to decisions taken by those boards, close relations with those who have power, or else through his/her outstanding works, translations, research, and titles published and appreciated in the milieu of high culture. However, under practical conditions, it is difficult to have these two different investments at the same time. Besides, this “field of power”, as an arena of contest, is structured around on-going struggles amongst scholars, authors, and social actors because of a desire to have “distinction”.<sup>110</sup>

It seems that Ramzī was among the second category of authors and scholars who had nothing to do with the “official world of scholarship”, even though he was a great scholar. He had no membership on any boards or official societies, and no help from political structures. Perhaps he did not want to be visible as a “distinguished” scholar at all. This is why we see only a few witnesses to his achievements and a small number of admirers among his coevals. Bashkort historian Ahmed Zeki Velidi Togan mentioned that Ramzī was a close friend of his family and that he sometimes stayed with them in the Togan’s big villa. Zeki Velidi was influenced by Ramzī’s ideas on national history, Sufism, and Islamic disciplines, as he reports in his memoirs.<sup>111</sup> The traveler ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm (1857-1844) also mentioned that Murād Ramzī was a devoted Muslim, a great scholar of *tafsīr* (Qur’ānic exegesis), *ḥadīth* (prophetic tradition), *uṣūl*, and

<sup>110</sup> See a detailed analysis about Bourdieu concerning this issue: Taner Timur, *Marksizm, insan ve toplum. Balibar, Sève, Althusser, Bourdieu*. Second Edition (Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2011), pp. 229-231. See also: Pierre Bourdieu, *Les usages sociaux de la Science* (Paris: INRA Editions, 1997), pp. 12-13.

<sup>111</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan, *Hatıralar*, pp. 44-45.

*furū*’.<sup>112</sup> According to ‘Abd al-rashīd, Ramzī was fluent in the Ottoman Turkish, Kazan Tatar, classical Arabic, and Persian, and he could easily expound in these languages on any social or religious topic. ‘Abd al-rashīd said:

Nobody knows the value and the importance of this great humble man! He lives here by the sweat of his hard work and the books he wrote. There is no help to make life easy for him.<sup>113</sup>

Murād Ramzī also mentioned that he lived in Mecca with the help of revenue from his books and the generosity of his fellow citizens.<sup>114</sup> He spent almost half of his life around Mecca and Medina without entering into political discussions, just writing books, translating Sufi classics, and living mystical experiences. Furthermore, he had never taken an official position from the Russian authorities in Kazan or the Ottoman bureaucrats in Istanbul.

However, we have a unique document including his small petition about the Muslim students from Russia in Hejaz. He and his friend Şükür Efendi sent a short request to Mehmed Emin, the deputy of the Ottoman governor in Mecca–Medina, where Ramzī wanted to establish an official “Research Center for the Kazan Student Community”. His petition was eventually accepted.<sup>115</sup> Another similar document is a

<sup>112</sup> As I know from my experience in the classical Arabic and Islamic disciplines, if the term of *uṣūl* is used in a general way (without subordination), it means the two major Islamic disciplines: “creed system” and “methodology of Islamic jurisprudence”. If it is used as *uṣūl al-dīn* it means “creed system”. However, if it is used as *uṣūl al-fiqh* it means the “legal theory of Islam” (i.e., the methodology of Islamic jurisprudence). *Furū*’ means the “secondary problems of *fiqh*”. This testimony is very important, inasmuch as Ibrāhīm was a smart and sui generis person who could evaluate the level of Ramzī in Islamic disciplines.

<sup>113</sup> Abdurresid Ibrahim, *Alem-i İslam*, ed. Ertugrul Ozalp (Istanbul: 2003), vol. 2, pp. 487-488.

<sup>114</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Mu‘arrab al-Maktūbāt* (Mecca: 1316 AH [1898]), vol. 3, p. 192.

<sup>115</sup> The Ottoman Ministry of Internal Affairs accepted Ramzī’s petition on Safar 7, 1328 (February 18, 1910). The official Ottoman archive document number: DH. MUI, 66-1/ 38. See: Sarıncay, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kazan*, pp. 188-189.



Turkish letter sent by the “Kazan Student Community in Medina” (*Medine Kazanlı Talebesi Cemiyeti*) to *Şirāt-i Mustaqīm*, the Istanbul-based periodical in which Tatar students explained how they established on Muḥarram 18, 1327 AH/February 9, 1909 AD a small new institution based on scientific standards with regular exams and evaluations. Murād Ramzī helped them to determine reasonable standards for exams in this small center of Islamic disciplines.<sup>116</sup>

Another question relates to his political and ideological position among Volga-Ural intellectuals. Was he a Qadīmist or Jadīdist? We will talk about this problem in the next chapters, but we can say briefly that he should be considered a complex intellectual who traveled between Qadīmist, Jadīdist, modernist, and nationalist movements throughout his life. Because he wrote a strong critique of Mūsā Jārullāh Bigiyev, a prominent Jadīdist Islamic scholar of that time, some researchers considered Ramzī to be a Qadīmist.<sup>117</sup> In fact, Murād Ramzī was close to the Qadīmist movement only in his thoughts pertaining to religion and family, whereas he supported the political and educational ideas of Jadīdist/progressive intellectuals without hesitation. Furthermore, he also supported the notion of a “nation” around the Volga-Ural region.

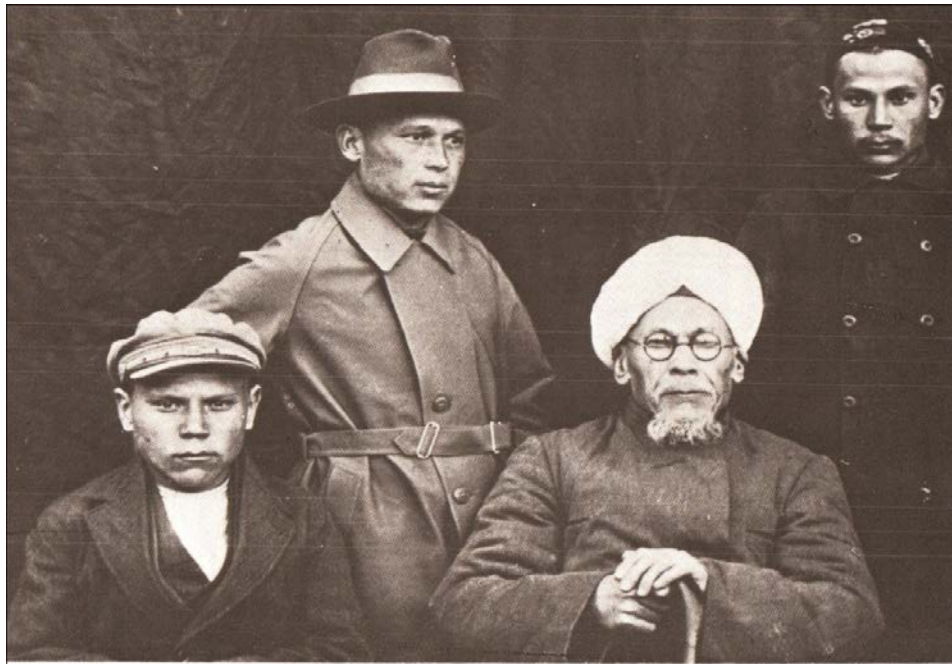
He bridged the pre-modern and modern eras with a critical soul from the past and a dignified exterior with which to face the future, as we saw in his photograph from 1927

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<sup>116</sup> See: Medine Kazanlı Talebesi Cemiyeti, “Muḥarrir Efendi!”, *Şirāt-i Mustaqīm*, no. 20 (1327 AH [1909 AD]), p. 127.

<sup>117</sup> Ahmet Kanlidere, *Kadimle Cedit Arasında Mūsā Carullah: Hayati, Eserleri-Fikirleri* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2005), pp. 54-57, 63-65, 205, and 239.

taken with his three boys.<sup>118</sup> It is a portrait of a family rich in meaning, depicting the struggle and the changes occurring at that time. In this picture, he appears confident with the surcoat of a Muslim scholar, still ready to write without stopping. His smallest child Enver (Anwar) (seated to Ramzī's right) displays the sour taste of emigration in his nervous face with a working class hat; his middle son Munīr (standing to Ramzī's left) in a cap in the style of the local Muslim population. The older son Fehmī Murād (standing to Ramzī's right) looks westernized, but has a hidden concern in his lips, wearing a



Murad Remzi 3 oğlu ile: Ayakta solda Fehmi Murad, sağda Münir, solda oturan Enver.  
(Çögecek, Doğu Türkistan 1927)

Figure 4. Ramzī with his sons in Coghachag (Tacheng), 1927.

<sup>118</sup> This picture is published in Ahmet Temir's aforementioned article: "Doğumunun 130. ve Ölümünün 50. yılı dolayısıyla Kazanlı Tarihçi Mehmet Remzi, 1854-1934".

European-style hat and overcoat, one that he must have bought in Berlin when he was a medical student. After this photograph, Fehmī Murād was to go to Mecca and open a pharmacy. He would stay in Mecca until his death there in 1965.

## **2.2. The intellectual formation of a 19th century Tatar-Bashkort madrasa scholar**

Murād Ramzī received a classical madrasa education comparable to that of other scholars of the 19th century Muslim world. His education indicates that there was a common syllabus of books for Arabic language instruction and Islamic disciplines among the traditional Muslim intelligentsia until the early 20th century, based on a common language (Arabic) and a shared canon of texts for the various disciplines of religious learning. A similar program might be seen among the pre-modern era madrasas in Istanbul, Crimea, the Balkans, Isfahan, Baghdad, Cairo, Bukhara, Tunis, Damascus, and Hindustan, including major cities of this subcontinent such as Delhi, Bombay, Lahore, and the Deccan cities.<sup>119</sup> Robinson indicates that the goal of madrasa scholarship was “to transmit the central messages of Islamic society and the skills which made them socially useful”.<sup>120</sup> We can observe that the goal of major disciplines in a madrasa could be linguistic (Arabic texts: to understand the Qur’ān, to communicate in a cosmopolitan language, etc.),<sup>121</sup> spiritual and ethical (*taṣawwuf* texts), practical (*fiqh* texts), and finally

<sup>119</sup>Francis Robinson, “Ottomans-Safavīds-Mughals: Shared Knowledge and Connective Systems”, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1997), pp. 151-184.

<sup>120</sup> Robinson, *ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>121</sup> The linguistic goal (Arabic) also is considered by some experts as a tool (*ālet*) to achieve higher goals such as ‘*aqā’id*, *fiqh*, and *ḥadīth*.

ideological and political (*‘aqā’id* and *kalām* texts) in the sense of the “ideological apparatus” that Althusser mentions in several of his works.<sup>122</sup>

This classification is valid for common students and teacher of the madrasa. On the other hand, if a small but powerful élite group of culture and philosophy wanted to create a different “circle of *‘ilm*” (a different ideological tradition under the rule of the current authority), they would employ a peculiar language concealed and armored with allusions and metaphors. They would use “polysemous” texts (words and statements with multiple meanings) due to the political and economic restrictions. Many scientists, thinkers, and scholars of the classical era such as Ibn Sīnā, al-Fārābī, and Ibn Rushd, exercised this method of discourse in order to escape from harsh critiques by the dominant popular intellectuals or persecution by the political authorities. Related to this phenomenon, *al-maḍnūn ‘alā ghayri ahlihī* (المضنون على غير أهله) is an interesting term in the Islamic intellectual heritage. It means ‘forbidden to those who are not connoisseurs’ or ‘not given to the non-qualified’.<sup>123</sup>

After the introduction, we may study in closer detail the function of the madrasa, the method of production and dissemination of knowledge and distribution, and how it functioned within the greater society. The madrasa as an institution was not established first in order to study math, astronomy, philosophy or other sciences. If we look for the traces of “science” and “philosophy” in Islamic history, we do not have to count the number of madrasas in a specific era or geographical area. Instead, we should search for

<sup>122</sup> Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971). See also: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm> (accessed March 11, 2015).

<sup>123</sup> See, al-Jābirī’s interpretation of this term: Muhammed Abid al-Cabiri, *Felsefî Mirasimiz ve Biz*, trans. A. Sait Aykut (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayıncılık, 2000), p. 34.

alternative parameters, ones that are not as recognizable and quantifiable as institutions, such as “the late night conversation” circles of noble men (*musāharāt al-nubalā’*: مساهرات النبلاء), sultanate palaces (*al-quṣūr*: القصور), private libraries (*al-khizānāt al-khāṣṣa*: الخزانات الخاصة), history of paper makers and book shops (*tarīkh al-warrāqīn*: تاريخ الورّاقين), instances of welfare in a peculiar era, and records of architects.<sup>124</sup> Math, astronomy, philosophy, or medicine in the Islamic world were not developed in the madrasa, even though some madrasas incorporated magnificent texts of philosophy, science, and technology into their curriculum.

The prototypes of the institution called the madrasa (*al-madrasa*) were first established around small mosques, in the form of study circles, characterized by an intimate bond between the master (‘ālim) and the pupil (*muta‘allim*), in order to transfer a creed or a tradition from generation to generation.<sup>125</sup> However, after the ‘Abbāsīd era, new cultural and ideological developments required a revolution in the curriculum of the madrasa. Only then did some madrasas start to include new branches in their curriculum, such as astronomy, Greek philosophy, math, medicine, and other subjects required by a worldly empire. This curriculum changed from time to time, according to the tendency of

<sup>124</sup> As an example for the factors of *musāharāt* and *warrāqīn*, we have a wonderful name on the history of science and philosophy, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī أبو حيان التوحيدى (d. 1023), who was one of the most intriguing authors in the Buyid era (Āl-e Būye or al-Buwayhīyūn). His book *Kitāb al-imtā‘ wa-‘l-mu‘ānasa* gives us precious information about philosophy, psychology, and social conflicts of that time. The book was a collection of the accounts of late night conversation among Buyid statesmen and the author. He was not a product of a madrasa, but his works give us astonishing details on how the culture, philosophy, and sciences were produced in private circles. See my translation with long annotation: A. Sait Aykut, “Otuz Beşinci Gece: Ruh, Can, Hayat, Ölüm, Akıl ve Öte Dünya Üzerine” [The 35th Night from *Kitāb al-Imtā‘ wa-‘l-mu‘ānasa* of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī], *Cogito*, no. 40, (Istanbul, 2004), pp. 20-37. For the original work see: Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-imtā‘ wa-‘l-mu‘ānasa*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad al-Zayn (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣrīya, 1953).

<sup>125</sup> George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), p. 12.

the scholars and politicians, but the main goal, which was to reproduce the dominant ideology, generally remained intact.

After the 15th century, the madrasa created a peculiar universalism in the Islamic world, as Robinson noted, with the help of a common language (Arabic), and common texts (*mutūn*), and scholarly chains (*silsilāt al-ijāza*). This new system was tailored to protect and feed some parts of the inner world (ideology, creed, and ethics) sufficiently for the people around it. Certainly, it was not a lab for scientific research, investigation, or innovations, as some have suggested.

The critics of the “madrasa system” among the Muslim intellectuals came out first in the late 17th century, such as the prolific Ottoman author Kâtip Çelebi (1609-1657), who condemned the madrasa curriculum for its lack of rational sciences,<sup>126</sup> even though the problem was not only with the science. At the end of the 18th century, many Muslim states and communities were so weakened economically, militaristically, and politically<sup>127</sup> that they could not cope with the changing world: they could not develop a socio-political synthesis for the new era, a reliable political ideology, a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) which once was created in the madrasa and spread by the common texts.

<sup>126</sup> See the sharp critique of the madrasa curriculum and its lack of rational sciences and philosophy by the Ottoman encyclopedist Kâtip Çelebi (1609-1657): Kâtip Çelebi, *Mizân al-Haqq fî Ikhtiyâr al-Aḥaqq* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ebuzziya, 1306 AH [1888-9]), pp. 10-12.

<sup>127</sup> It is interesting that the famous beginning point of the decline in the Ottoman Empire was the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (July 1774, so the end of the 18th century) between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. It was a clear defeat of the Ottomans in front of the Russian Empire. It also marked the first significant retreat for “Invincible Ottomans”. Then, similar types of defeats in military and economy in the Islamic political structures would lead the peoples to ask about everything including the center of ideological system (the madrasa). Sure, they must have asked, “What is wrong with us?”

The failure was not the result of declining scientific curriculum in the madrasa such as math, astronomy, or medicine as some authors have stated.<sup>128</sup> Rather, it was the huge transformation in the social life of the Islamic community; a painful transition in the minds of Muslim intellectuals that came to prominence in the second half of 19th century with the beginning of total loss in Muslim states and societies throughout Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia.

The real crisis in the madrasa was pertaining to diffidence, an ache of dislocation in a strange world that was once familiar, but which had now become a jungle. At the end of the 19th century, the madrasa neither protected the inner world nor created a balance between the inner and outer worlds. It seems that the Jadīdist and reformist educators of the Muslim world were partially right to criticize this curriculum and traditional books. Nonetheless, Jadīdist authors could not put forth a stronger alternative for new generations of Muslims at the dawn of colonialism. Furthermore, some of them rejected many valuable practices and precious texts which were the real sources to protect the inner world of the Central Asian Muslims. Ramzī was born in the middle of that age of crises, at the most remote point of Muslim populated cities in the world, under the heavy influence of ongoing discussions about the madrasa.

We may continue to argue the nature and the history of the madrasa, but we should admit that the texts and treatises of the 19th century madrasa system were not just basic introductions or primitive old works. Instead, many of them included extremely complex and important issues related to the inner world of a Muslim. The comments, annotations, and compendiums were still fruitful in their own spaces. Since they reflect

<sup>128</sup> See Kâtip Çelebi, *ibid.*, p. 11.

major themes in the mindset of traditional Muslim scholars, we must analyse the curriculum of Ramzī carefully.

### 2.2.1. Reading scripture (Qur'ān) as a bridge to reading other books

When Ramzī was 6 years old he started reciting the Qur'ān,<sup>129</sup> a tradition generally shared among Muslim communities at that time. A Muslim child's first introduction to the Qur'ān would be with small Arabic booklets called *Elifbā* (Ottoman Turkish ألفبا) which would improve the child's ability to read other books. Ramzī's first teachers were his father Batur-Shah and his mother Ustaz Bike, an educated woman in Tatar-Bashkort Muslim society. Ramzī took his initial education at a *maktab* established by his mother where he must have learned first religious tenets, folkloric stories, and legends in his native language followed by an introduction to the Arabic and Persian languages. This *maktab* is comparable to our modern elementary schools, whereas the *madrassa* was the equivalent of institutions of higher learning such as religious colleges or theological seminaries. As modern researchers indicate, in the second half of the 19th century there were 300 *madrassas* around Kazan and some of the instructors were scholastically and intellectually "far above the Russian parochial teachers in urban schools", despite the specificity of the knowledge given.<sup>130</sup>

Because books in the diverse languages of the various Muslim communities were generally published in Arabic-based alphabets, this introduction to the Qur'ānic

<sup>129</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Mu'arrab al-Maktūbāt* (Istanbul: 2001), vol. 3, p. 301.

<sup>130</sup> On the *madrassas* of Kazan province in the late 19th and early 20th century see: L. V. Gorokhova, *Medrese Kazanskoy gubernii vtoroy treti XIX—nachala XX v.* (Kazan: Glavnoye Arkhivnoye upravleniye pri Kabinete Ministrov Respubliki Tatarstan, 2012), pp. 34-35.



orthography amounted to literacy in the works written in their mother tongues, including Turkish, Tatar, Persian, Arabic, and Urdu. That was a distinctive beneficial feature of madrasa education uniting many Muslim communities in the spread of their common faith and ideas. Qur'ānic literacy enabled the child to read other small texts, creed statements, and manner booklets. In addition, the child could understand the songs and lullabies of his/her mother, old prayers, and *dastāns* (epic stories). The tradition of learning the script of the Qur'ān in childhood years had a profound impact on the development of the identity and culture of the Muslim community since the early times of the system of maktab-madrasa education.

### **2.2.2. Arabic as a tool to harvest the fruits of Muslim societies**

Murād Ramzī continued to study Arabic morphology ( *ʿIlm al-ṣarf*: علم الصرف ) until the age of 9.<sup>131</sup> The study of Arabic morphology, far beyond imparting knowledge of just the Arabic language, also offers a window to understanding the roots of and derivations from Arabic words found in all the languages of the various communities touched by Islam. Therefore, he was well poised to develop an understanding of other cultures within his *Umma*. At that time, the famous book on Arabic morphology was *Taṣrīf al-ʿIzzī* ( تصريف العزّي ) authored by ʿIzz al-dīn Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Zanjānī (d. 13th century).<sup>132</sup> It was also famous as “the third grammatical treatise to be made available in the West.”<sup>133</sup> The Ottoman madrasa system employed this book for hundreds of years, which means it was

<sup>131</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>132</sup> Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām* (Damascus: 1954-1959), vol. 4, p. 330.

<sup>133</sup> “Al-Zandjanī”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 12: Supplement (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 841-842.

a common source for Arabic instruction from the Balkans to Iraq, or from Crimea to Egypt.<sup>134</sup>

After finishing *Taṣrīf al-‘Izzī* at the age of eleven, Murād Ramzī studied a famous book on Arabic syntax called *‘Awāmil al-Jurjānī* (عوامل الجرجاني) which was also known as *al-‘Awāmil al-Mi’a* (“The Hundred Elements”).<sup>135</sup> This small book is slightly different from other Arabic syntax books. It gains in clarity and organization with the help of the concept of *‘āmil*, meaning ‘the factor affecting the case endings of Arabic words’.<sup>136</sup> Al-Jurjānī’s *‘Awāmil* was a prominent grammar book studied not just by Arabs, but by Iranians, Kurds, Indian Muslims, Turks,<sup>137</sup> and Javanese Muslims as well.<sup>138</sup> It was even translated into local languages and received commentary from Muslim scholars writing in other languages.<sup>139</sup> It still holds a high status in the canon of classical Arabic education in many countries. This systematic work was written by the great linguist ‘Abd al-qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 1078), a renowned Persian scholar and literary theorist who wrote on rhetoric, literature, the meaning of legends, and the study of language as a structure of

<sup>134</sup> Şükran Fazlıoğlu, “Manzûme fî tertîb el-kutub fî el-ulûm ve Osmanlı Medreselerindeki Ders Kitapları”, *Değerler Eğitimi Dergisi*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 2003), pp. 97-110. Al-Zanjānī’s text was so popular that I began my study of Arabic with this book in the 1980’s, but with the help of *Sharḥ-i Taftāzānī*, a great commentary on the text, filled with questions and answers on the philosophy of language in the medieval register.

<sup>135</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>136</sup> See for the concept of *‘āmil* and related linguistic issues: Aryeh Levin, *Arabic Linguistic Thought and Dialectology* (Jerusalem: Academon Press, 1998), pp. 218-220.

<sup>137</sup> See: Fazlıoğlu, *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>138</sup> Martin van Bruinessen realized that this book was one of the main classical sources to learn Arabic in the Southeast Asian Muslim tradition. See: Bruinessen, “Pesantren and kitab kuning: Maintenance and continuation of a tradition of religious learning” in Wolfgang Marschall (ed.), *Texts from the islands. Oral and written traditions of Indonesia and the Malay world. Proceedings of the 7th European Colloquium on Indonesian and Malay Studies, Berne, June 1989* (Berne: University of Berne, 1994), pp. 121-145.

<sup>139</sup> I studied it under my mentor İzzet Şener in 1983 with the help of a Kurdish commentary found in its margins.

signs and a product of the human mind. For modern scholars, al-Jurjānī is significant for his theoretical work on stylistics and poetic imagery.<sup>140</sup> As Professor Günaydın mentions, al-Jurjānī believed: “There is not only one meaning in a text, instead, there are an abundance of ‘meanings’ that intertwiningly coexist in a single text.”<sup>141</sup>

Ramzī continued to study Arabic grammar books named *kutub ‘ilm al-naḥw* which made him familiar with the particular aspects of Arabic syntax, which would lead him to invest in Arabic as the lingua franca of literature for both Muslim and non-Muslim writers alike.<sup>142</sup> In thinking of such an Arabic literary-philosophical cosmopolitanism, we see resemblances in the Sanskrit world which was well studied by Sheldon Pollock. Arabic as a “cosmopolitan code” became the thread that could bind people together and form a community.<sup>143</sup> Pollock’s theory and approach differs from my argument in several ways, but nonetheless these two lines of thought are concerned with the process by which a language becomes cosmopolitan and, specifically, the place each gives to the linguistic arts, from grammar books to literary arts, in that phenomenon.<sup>144</sup> The linguistic study of the literary arts in Arabic are strongly represented in the madrasa system. Although the Qur’ān is quite unclear concerning the sanctity of the language of revelation, the strong

<sup>140</sup> K. Abu Deeb, “al-Djurdjānī”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 12: Supplement (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 277-278.

<sup>141</sup> Muhammed Günaydın, “The idea of multiple meanings in al-Jurjānī’s theory of composition”, *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, no. 17 (2008), pp. 128-143.

<sup>142</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>143</sup> Sheldon Pollock, *Language of Gods in the World of Men* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), p. 14. See also pp. 481-494 for a comparison between Latin and Arabic vernacularization.

<sup>144</sup> See the section about the coherency between grammatical and political correctness: Pollock, *ibid.*, pp. 177-180.

emphasis on language study in the religious education of Muslims resulted in the sanctification of the Arabic language.<sup>145</sup>

In the second half of the 19th century, a large number of Arabic, Turkish, and Persian books related to almost all human interests had already been printed and distributed in most of the largest Islamic cities such as Kazan, Istanbul, Cairo, Damascus, Delhi, and Mecca.<sup>146</sup> Ramzī's access to the ideas of a wide variety of authors both modern and vintage imparted to him a profound respect for the traditional opinions of old masters such as al-Ghazālī and al-Taftāzānī, as well as a curiosity for the revolutionary ideas of his contemporaries, such as Marjānī. In the books printed in Istanbul, Kazan, Orenburg, Damascus, and Cairo, the new Muslim intelligentsia wrestled first with the implications of modernity and later nationalism for the organization of their political community.

In Ramzī's early teens, when the author shifted his attention from the classics of Islamic scholarship to the works of his contemporaries, the first series of crises might have appeared. While we would be inclined to ground Ramzī's intellectual development in the content of books, meaning the ideas they present, I assert the primacy of the book itself. The publishing revolution had a profound impact on the production and circulation of discourse, which in turn had a determining effect on those who were integrated into this system of textual production and exchange. A published language is distinct from

<sup>145</sup> As a reaction to the sanctification of Arabic, a curious genius from Cordoba, Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī, wrote an opposing treatise: "There is no proof of superiority for any language in the world". See: Ibn Ḥazm al-'Andalusī, *al-'Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad 'Abd al-'azīz (Cairo: Maktabat 'Aṭif, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 37-39.

<sup>146</sup> See for the late 19th century printed books circulation among Muslim communities: Moinuddin Aqeel, "Commencement of printing in the Muslim World: A view of impact on Ulama at early phase of Islamic moderate trends", *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, vol. 2-2 (March 2009), pp. 10-21.

other forms of communication in that it makes it possible for its reader to be alienated from his fellows and his homeland, but compensates for this estrangement with the possibility of finding satisfaction in other thinkers from faraway countries or bygone eras.

### 2.2.3. Integration into the community

In a traditional Islamic society, it was expected of a teenager to be well versed in Islamic ethics and knowledgeable about the logic of Islamic law. Thus, between the ages of 12 and 18, Ramzī received his education in logic (المنطق), Islamic ethics (الاخلاق), and religious practices of daily life.<sup>147</sup> Islamic ethics and law as normative disciplines enabled an understanding of the order of the community in which he lived and instilled in him the morals and values of his community. As part of this education, he read the well-known commentary of al-Taftāzānī on *The Creed of al-Nasafī*.<sup>148</sup>

Abū Ḥafs al-Nasafī (d. 1142), a follower of al-Māturīdī (d. 944) in creed,<sup>149</sup> was an exalted expert of the Islamic belief system. His text *al-‘Aqā’id* (العقائد النسفية) is one of the famous creed texts of Ahl al-Sunna of the last period (*muta’akhkhirīn*). It is recognized also among the foundational texts of the Ḥanafī school,<sup>150</sup> which boasts a

<sup>147</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>148</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>149</sup> See for al-Nasafī: A. J. Wensinck, “Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Nasafī”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), p. 969. See for Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī: Al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīya fī ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīya*, ed. ‘Abd al-fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw (Cairo: 1978-1979), vol. 3, pp. 360-361; Ibn Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-Tarājīm* (Baghdad, 1962), p. 59; and Kātip Çelebi, *Kashf al-zunūn ‘an asāmī al-kutub wa al-funūn* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1943), vol. 1, pp. 110-111.

<sup>150</sup> See for al-Taftāzānī’s *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id* and its influences: Sadeddin Taftāzānī, *Kelām İlmi ve İslâm Akaidi: Şerhu’l-Akaid*, ed. Süleyman Uludağ (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1991), pp. 79-84; W. Madelung, “Al-Taftāzānī Sa’d al-dīn Mas’ud b. ‘Umar b. ‘Abdullah”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 88-89.

great number of adherents within a vast geography from China to the Balkans, and from Syria to Russia. *Al-‘Aqā’id* became very popular before it received a commentary (*Sharḥ*) from the prominent al-Ash‘arī author Sa‘d al-dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390), who was a well-known authority on treatises on grammar, rhetoric, theology, logic, law, and Qur’ānic exegesis. Both al-Nasafī and al-Taftāzānī’s works were circulated widely as the basis of the curriculum for many centuries under the Ottoman madrasa system.<sup>151</sup> *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id*, the famous commentary of al-Taftāzānī, clarifies several difficult issues within Islamic theology and belief. Its beauty also lies in the creative style of the author and his deep knowledge of the literary arts. Several Turkish translations of *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id* were made before the modern era. At the end of 19th century, al-Taftāzānī’s book was again translated by Sırri Efendi of Crete into Ottoman Turkish and included a new commentary.<sup>152</sup>

We should be careful not to prioritize the original madrasa text over its translation or the commentary and annotations it receives.<sup>153</sup> There are many instances of a commentary that is more favorable and brilliant than the original text. Furthermore, these

<sup>151</sup> See: W. Madelung, *ibid.*; and Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire* (New York: Sterling Publishing Company Inc., 2000), p. 175.

<sup>152</sup> Sırri Giridî Paşa, *Şerh-i ‘Akāid Tercemesi*, 2 vols. (Ruscuk: Tuna Vilayet Matbaası, 1875). I should mention that I read this commentary by al-Taftāzānī in 1985; however, our study was enriched by newly published Islamic creed books, such as *Kubrā al-Yaqīnīyāt al-Kawnīya* of Muḥammad Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī (d. 2013), a peaceful Kurdish scholar from Syria, killed in the current civil war. There is a good article about Ramaḍān al-Būṭī’s life and works: Andreas Christmann, “Islamic Scholar and Religious Leader: A portrait of Sheikh Muḥammad Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1998), pp. 149-169.

<sup>153</sup> Some of the late 19th century Turkish and Tatar authors such as Jārullāh Bigiev and Mehmet Akif (the National Poet of the Modern Turkey) believed that “annotations and commentaries had never been valuable works; they were, even, just empty but noble explanations!” For sharp critiques directed to the tradition of commentary and annotation, see: Mehmet Akif, “Hasbihal”, *Şirāt-i Mustaqīm*, vol. 4, no. 96 (24 Haziran 1326 [July 7, 1910 AD]), pp. 304-05.

textual devices can teach us a great deal about the evolution of the particular discipline within which the text is written.

The intriguing point here is that al-Nasafi (d. 1142), a follower of al-Māturīdī as mentioned above, wrote a text which combined some positions between the al-Mu‘tazila (المعتزلة) rationalist group of Islamic thought and the al-Ash‘arīya (الأشعرية) mainstream group of Ahl al-Sunna of the last period. This text was concerned with polemics, addressing issues of epistemology from its first sentence, beginning with a realistic approach to the world in which we live, attacking those who negate the realness of this world, such as the Sophists in the ancient Greece and some mystical Sufi thinkers of the medieval ages:

The People of Reality<sup>154</sup> say that the real essences of things exist in reality and that the knowledge of them is verifiable as real, in contradiction to the Sophists; and that the causes of knowledge for all creation are three: the sound senses, true narrative, and Reason... And that illumination<sup>155</sup> is not one of the causes of the cognition of the soundness of a thing with the People of Reality.<sup>156</sup>

However, at some point al-Taftāzānī changes direction, making it appear that he is presenting a system similar to that of al-Ash‘arīya, criticizing some sections from the standpoint of a supporter of al-Ash‘arīya.<sup>157</sup> In fact, the system of al-Māturīdī differs from the system of al-Ash‘arīya on several key points concerning the nature of belief,

<sup>154</sup> The original statement is *Ahl al-ḥaqq*.

<sup>155</sup> ‘Illumination’ is the translation of *al-Ilhām* (الإلهام).

<sup>156</sup> Al-Nasafi’s creed text with the comments of Sa‘d al-dīn al-Taftāzānī is translated with an introduction and notes. See: Sa‘d al-dīn al-Taftāzānī, *On the Creed of Najm al-dīn al-Nasafi (A Commentary on the Creed of Islam)*, trans. Earl Edgar Elder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), pp. 15-16.

<sup>157</sup> See Uludağ’s critiques towards al-Taftāzānī’s interpretation on the text of al-Nasafi: Taftāzānī, *Şerhu’l-Akaid*, ed. Süleyman Uludağ (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1991), pp. 70-81. Süleyman Uludağ is also the author of the “Introduction”. I should note that I am not in agreement with some criticisms by Professor Uludağ concerning al-Taftāzānī’s style and expertise.

free will, and the place of human reason.<sup>158</sup> For example, the followers of al-Māturīdīya believe that the human mind alone, without the help of God, can determine the immorality of major sins, such as adultery, robbery and murder, and that the human intellect can also understand evil without the assistance of *wahy* (الوحي): ‘divine revelation’ such as the Qur’ān). Al-Ash‘arīya condemns these opinions as false. Furthermore, the followers of al-Ash‘arīya believe that the human mind cannot determine if something is good or evil, lawful or unlawful, moral or immoral without the help of the divine revelation.<sup>159</sup>

The Ash‘arī-based commentary of al-Taftāzānī had caused the early 20th century discussions between the traditionalist scholars of Kazan and the reformist ones who preferred al-Mu‘tazila or al-Māturīdīya to al-Ash‘arīya. Jārullāh Bigiyev, one of the greatest scholars of that age and a clear opponent to Murād Ramzī, began a fierce debate concerning “the freedom of man in his acts” and “universal divine mercy”. Inspired by the great Sufi Ibn ‘Arabī, Bigiyev argued that “even people from other religions will enter Heaven (*al-Janna*)”.<sup>160</sup> According to Jārullāh Bigiyev, the principle of *al-Qadar* (القدر: ‘predestination’ or, the ‘decisive power of God in the universe’, according to another interpretation) was misinterpreted; it even prevented Muslims from progress and development, making them lazy and abstinent from worldly affairs. Jārullāh did not reject the belief of *al-Qadar*, choosing instead to accommodate predestination with absolute

<sup>158</sup> Hanifi Ozcan, “İlk Müslüman Türk Devletlerinde Düşünce”, *Türkler* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002), vol. 5, pp. 463-481; and L. Gardet, “‘İlm Al-Kalām”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), pp. 1145-1150.

<sup>159</sup> See: Ozcan, *ibid.* and also: L. Gardet, “İlm Kalām”.

<sup>160</sup> Mūsā Jārullāh Bigiyev, *Rahmat-i İlahiye Burhānları* (Orenburg: Vakıf Matbaası, 1911), pp. 22.



free will.<sup>161</sup> During these polemics, Ramzī wrote long critiques and refutations against Jārullāh Bigiyev.<sup>162</sup>

At this point, we can conclude that the traditional face of al-Taftāzānī's *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id* (شرح العقائد) was where Ramzī's intellectual trajectory began as a sincere defender of his own traditional path. Another important dispute between Ramzī and Bigiyev concerned the role of women in society. As a traditionalist author on religious issues, Ramzī feared the inevitable changes in the position of Muslim Tatar women in Russia. For this reason, he criticized Bigiyev's support for the new position of women in the "First All-Muslim Congress" (Moscow, 1917).<sup>163</sup>

Ramzī's education also included a book on logic and its annotations, *Sullam fī al-manṭiq*, which he studied when he was in Troyski (Troitsk).<sup>164</sup> Even though the study of logic had a long tradition, beginning with great philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, it was not officially recognized in the Islamic world as a subject worthy of instruction until al-Ghazālī's famous *fatwa*, which reads: "Nobody can respect the knowledge of a man who does not know logic (*manṭiq*)."<sup>165</sup> *Sullam* was written by the Algerian scholar 'Abd al-raḥmān al-Akhḍarī (d. 1546) as a 144 line poem for the course

<sup>161</sup> Mūsā Jārullāh Bigiyev, "Cebir ve Kader Meseleleri", *Selamet Gazetesi* (Trabzon: February 13, 1948), no. 39.

<sup>162</sup> Ramzī wrote more than 15 long articles in Kazan-Tatar language against Jārullāh. See: Muḥammad Murād Mekki, "Mūsā'ga Mekke Polemiti", *Dīn ve Ma'īshat* (1909), no. 30, pp. 467-469. Every article was more than 2 large pages in 2 columns, except the last one which was only three columns (1.5 pages) published in 1910, no. 46, pp. 736-737.

<sup>163</sup> See for an analysis of the discussions: Rafik M. Mukhametshin, *Islam v Srednem Povolzh'ye: Istoriya i Sovremennost'* (Kazan: Russian Islamic University, 2001), pp. 290-291.

<sup>164</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>165</sup> Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā fī uṣūl al-fiqh* (Cairo: 1392 AH [1972 AD]), vol. 1, pp. 10-11.

on logic in the madrasa system. It summarized the principles of Aristotelian logic and explained how logic could be employed to support the Islamic religion and maintain its jurisprudence.<sup>166</sup> The heuristic verses were so popular in the Ottoman madrasa system that there were multiple translations being published at the end of 19th century in Istanbul, such as the translation of Qarshīzāde which included new content relevant to the day.<sup>167</sup>

Based on Ramzī's accounts related to the period of his early teens we observe that he did not study some of the important books on logic and philosophy of the original madrasa system. Therefore, he did not focus on the challenging works of great Islamic disciplines such as *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *kalām* (the discipline pertaining to the discourse of religious creed). That might have been one of the crucial reasons why he had a strong leaning toward the Sufism of Aḥmad Sirhindī in the following years<sup>168</sup> instead of logic, philosophy, law, or politics. The absence of those canonical texts in his formative education might have influenced him throughout his life; hence, he was always hesitant to refer to philosophical issues in his polemics, even though he loved to talk about the legal and political offenses of the Russian government and the turbulences of daily life in his homeland. If we carefully review his education as a whole, we observe that it was

<sup>166</sup> J. Schacht, "al-Akhḍarī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), p. 321.

<sup>167</sup> See a famous translation for this classic into Ottoman Turkish: Qarshīzāde Maḥmūd Nedīm, *al-Sanad al-Muḥkam fī Tarjamat al-Sullam* (Istanbul: Süleyman Efendi Matbaası, 1303 AH [1885 AD]). I did not read this book during my classical education. Instead, my mentor İzzet Şener recommended *al-Shamsiyya* of Najm al-dīn ibn 'Umar al-Qazwīnī (d. 1276) and the *Ḥāshiyat Qūl Aḥmad* of Ibn Khidr Qūl Aḥmad (d. 1383) as our textbooks for the study of logic when I was in his 'ilm circle around 1985. We were told that *Sullam* was very short and incompatible with our need for higher level books on *uṣūl al-fiqh* (legal theory, the methodology of Islamic Jurisprudence).

<sup>168</sup> See for the concept of "juristic Sufism" of Sirhindī: Arthur Buehler, "Sirhindī, Sheikh Aḥmad", *Encyclopaedia of Islam and Muslim World*, ed. Richard C. Martin (New York: Macmillan Reference & Gale Group, 2004), vol. 2, p. 632. "Juristic Sufism" means following strictly the prophetic example (*al-Sunna*) and Islamic law (*al-Sharī'a*) in all Sufi practices.

perhaps the lacuna of the study of logic and philosophy in his teenage years that actually prepared him for the unique career he would have.

#### 2.2.4. Pursuing high intellectual interests: Under the wings of *ʿIrfān*

The caliber of scholarship Ramzī was yearning for could not be found in his native land, and so he traveled to the area called *Mā warāʾ al-nahr* (Transoxiana) where students of the Islamic disciplines had sought training throughout the ages. When he arrived in Tashkent, he began his studies with the *Sharḥ Hikmat al-ʿAyn* (شرح حكمة العين) of Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Mubārakshāh al-Bukhārī (d. 1340),<sup>169</sup> a commentary on *Hikmat al-ʿAyn*, a metaphysical, philosophical, and natural scientific treatise by Najm al-dīn ʿAlī ibn ʿUmar al-Kātibī (d. 1276), a Persian author and student of Naṣīr al-dīn al-Ṭūsī. Najm al-dīn also wrote the famous book on logic entitled *al-Risāla al-Shamsīya*, a work much influenced by the great scholar Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī. Najm al-dīn discussed problems of logic such as predication and contradiction, and other philosophical problems like the proof of necessary existence.<sup>170</sup> Najm al-dīn al-Kātibī’s all works were motivated by the logical system of Ibn Sīnā.<sup>171</sup> Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) was considered one of the preeminent philosophers of Islamic civilization, especially in India, Iran, Central Asia, Syria, and Anatolia. The metaphysics and logic of Ibn Sīnā, including the adaptations of his work made by al-Suhrawardī, became the authoritative basis for philosophy and theology in the

<sup>169</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>170</sup> M. Mohaghegh, “al-Kātibī Nadjm Al-Dīn Abū al-Hasan”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), p. 762.

<sup>171</sup> Tony Street, “Toward a History of Syllogistic after Avicenna: Notes on Rescher’s Studies on Arabic Modal Logic”, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 11:2 (2000), pp. 209-228.

eastern Islamic world. However, in the western areas of Islamic civilization, other figures in the fields of philosophy and logic were more influential, such as Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and Ibn Bājja, as the Moroccan historian of philosophy Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī has suggested.<sup>172</sup>

In some aspects, *Ḥikmat al-‘Ayn* can be considered an introduction to higher level philosophy and theology centered on the medieval Islamic concept of “emanation” (*ṣudūr*: صدور) that was examined by al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, and Ibn Sīnā and further developed by al-Suhrawardī, who incorporated a mystical intuition in the tradition of emanation. Even though the Islamic medieval concept of “emanation” appears to have been inspired by the *Enneads* of Plotinus (d. 270), we should know that it has been formed under influence of secondary sources such as the *Theology* of “Pseudo-Aristotle” with different ideological goals. The book *Ḥikmat al-‘Ayn* is an elaborate explanation of how higher-level beings or “intellects” (*al-‘uqūl*: العقول) emanated from a single necessity of being (*wājib al-wujūd*: واجب الوجود). According to this tradition, the first intellect emanated from the first principle and other levels of beings preceded from the latter respectively, connecting all forms of being from the lowliest to celestial objects to the Supreme Being.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>172</sup> Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth* (Beirut, 1993), pp. 81-92 and 211-260. See also my translation with annotations into Turkish: Muhammed ‘Ābid Cabiri, *Felsefî Mirasımız ve Biz*, trans. A. Sait Aykut (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2000), pp. 265-273.

<sup>173</sup> See the Chapter Four of *Ḥikmat al-‘Ayn*, “The proof of the necessary existence” (*al-Maqāla al-Rābi‘a fī ithbāt wājib al-wujūd*) and the other discussions about the first intellect emanating from the first principle: Najm al-dīn ‘Alī ibn ‘Umar al-Kātibī al-Qazwīnī, *Ḥikmat al-‘Ayn*, ed. Şālih Aydın (Cairo, 2002), pp. 49-51. Also, see the same section with the commentary of Muḥammad ‘Alī ibn Mubārakshāh al-Bukhārī and the annotations of Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī: *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-‘Ayn* (Kazan: Kerimov Matbaası, 1319 AH [1901 AD]), pp. 203-213.

By reading these kinds of sophisticated medieval texts, Ramzī understood philosophy as a theological effort leading to God and a systematical explanation of the universe which emanated from the one Supreme Being. In fact, Murād Ramzī and his traditional colleagues were producing scholarship within the theology established by Ibn Sīnā and al-Suhrawardī, locating the most important sources of knowledge in *al-Ilhām* and *al-Kashf* ('mystical illumination' and 'unveiling', respectively),<sup>174</sup> even though *al-Ilhām*, and *al-Kashf* were not considered acceptable sources for investigation into the truth in nature and religion, according to the original creed text of al-Māturīdī (d. 944), the most venerated creed scholar in the Central Asian Ḥanafī tradition.<sup>175</sup> After Ibn Sīnā and al-Suhrawardī, many Muslim scholars produced their intellectual works within the tradition of Sufi illuminationism which was established by the combination of both Islamic and Gnostic thought in addition to the influences of neighboring civilizations.<sup>176</sup>

In the first stages of his education, Ramzī encountered again the robust spiritualist tendency instead of the rational philosophy of al-Mu'tazila or the strong practical logic of the Ḥanafī school. In the eastern region of Islamic civilization, almost all the great

<sup>174</sup> All the introductions of Ramzī include bold statements on the importance of Sufi-style revelation, illumination, and intuition. He described the divine role and glory of Aḥmad Sirhindī: "... As it is revealed to him from the universe of the unseen (*al-ghayb*).” The original statement: “حسب ما يظهر من عالم الغيب لديه”. See: Murād Ramzī, *Mu'arrab al-Maktūbāt* (Istanbul: 2001), vol. 1, p. 3.

<sup>175</sup> See the original text of al-Māturīdī and its annotated sections: Ebū Mansūr el-Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhīd* ed. Bekir Topaloğlu and Muhammed Aruçi (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2003), pp. 6-11.

<sup>176</sup> Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1: *The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 394. I am not saying that Sufism was established only with the help of foreign sources. However, I am thinking that Sufism with different branches had already been integrated with the cultural productions of neighboring civilization centers, such as Faris, Nishapur, Damascus, Alexandria, and Harran where the famous emanation theories were produced and commented by Neoplatonist thinkers.

authors of Sufism after the 14th century have walked in the same path paved by Ibn Sīnā, al-Suhrawardī, or Ibn ‘Arabī.

Ramzī was not content with *Hikmat al-‘Ayn* for medieval philosophy in Bukhara; he also studied the famous commentary of al-Dawānī<sup>177</sup> on the logical work of al-Taftāzānī called *Sharḥ al-Dawānī ‘alā Tahdhīb*. This is another logic-philosophy book highly praised in medieval madrasa education. However, the commentator is an interesting thinker following the path of Ibn Sīnā in philosophy and logic, and the path of al-Suhrawardī in *‘Irfān*, which forms the intellectual roots of Gnosticism in Islamic civilization. In the line of great books studied by Ramzī, we see always three important thinkers: Ibn Sīnā, al-Suhrawardī, and al-Dawānī as the holy trinity of “Illuminationist Avicennism.”<sup>178</sup> Let us focus then on these three names.

Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) was the great master (الشيخ الرئيس), the most popular and influential thinker in the fields of medicine, logic, and Neoplatonist philosophy. Even though he made a huge revolution in medicine with his experimental method and deep investigation into the causes and effects of diseases, he might have also tried to develop an “Eastern Wisdom” called *al-Hikmat al-Mashriqīya* (الحكمة المشرقية), self-consciously defining himself against the Aristotelian logic, ethics, and metaphysics and approaching the apocryphal writings of Plotinus.<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, the general opinion is that Ibn Sīnā

<sup>177</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>178</sup> I use the term of “Illuminationist Avicennism” as used by Professor Gutas in his trailblazing article: Dimitri Gutas, “The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2002), 29:1, pp. 5-25. See especially the diagram on page 7.

<sup>179</sup> See for Ibn Sīnā and his metaphysics: A. M. Goichon, “Ibn Sīnā”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), pp. 941-947: “In Metaphysics, the doctrine of Ibn Sīnā is illuminated by his personal antecedents... his thought was fashioned by three teachers. The third was Plotinus, who

remained a powerful Aristotelian in his major books, and we have never found a clear and detailed project of “Eastern Wisdom” for him. One can argue that he did indeed author a booklet called “Eastern Wisdom” (*al-Ḥikmat al-Mashriqīya*: الحكمة المشرقية), yet, this is nothing but a name which his student Jūzajānī mentioned in his account. Surely, Ibn Sīnā spoke about a different wisdom in his last book *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, in the 8th and 9th chapters of the 4th volume. However, it seems to me that the great master tried only to develop a philosophy of ethics or some ethical principles and nothing more.<sup>180</sup>

On the other hand, al-Suhrawardī (d. 1168), the prominent mystical philosopher of Persia, systematized a path called *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, or *al-ishrāqīya* (حكمة الإشرافية-الإشراق), which may be translated as the “philosophy of divine illumination”. Al-Suhrawardī, as a revisionist follower of Ibn Sīnā, would not be satisfied with the terminology of Ibn Sīnā; thus, he went beyond it and looked to the older masters for inspiration, such as Zardosht (Zarathustra) and other mythological figures of Persia.<sup>181</sup> Besides, al-Suhrawardī was somehow in opposition to al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā regarding

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came down to him under the name “Theology of Aristotle” which was composed of extracts from Plotinus’s *Enneads*...”

<sup>180</sup> See my translation and annotations: A. Sait Aykut, “İşaretler ve Uyarılar Kitabı I” [A long fragment from the book of *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* by Ibn Sīnā], *Cogito* no. 44-45 (İstanbul: Yapi Kredi Publications, 2006), pp. 26-43. Also, see the original Arabic book: Abū ‘Alī Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1967), vol. 4, pp. 7-46 and 47-109. Those sections are just a little bit different from the other works of Ibn Sīnā, with an enormous concentration on *taṣawwuf*, ethics, and spiritual situations, but not more. By the way, this work is printed together with the annotations of Naṣīr al-dīn al-Ṭūsī, the famous commentator on Ibn Sīnā.

<sup>181</sup> See for al-Suhrawardī and his revolutionary thoughts: Maḥdī Amīnrazavī, *Sohrwardī va Maktab-e Ishrāq* (Tehran: 1377 AH [1957 AD]), pp. 75-110. Especially the section called “Tasavvuf-e Falsafī” (تصوف فلسفی) is very important. Note: the method of romanization of Iranist scholars is different, therefore I wrote “Tasavvuf” rather than “Taṣawwuf”, following their usage.

Aristotle, believing instead that Plato and his predecessors must be the vessels of real wisdom.

It seems that Ramzī was heavily influenced in his youth by the Illuminationist Avicennism of the eastern Islamic world in which we observe innumerable groups of thinkers and authors following the path of al-Suhrawardī. Furthermore, they tried to interpret the works of Ibn Sīnā, al-Fārābī, and other Muslim philosophers through al-Suhrawardī. Of course, Muslim communities throughout history have produced a dizzying array of figures in the fields of philosophy and the natural sciences, such as al-Rāzī, Ibn al-Haytham, al-Kindī, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Bājja, and Ibn Khaldūn; however, none of the above has influenced the eastern Islamic cultural geography as much as Ibn Sīnā and al-Suhrawardī. It was obvious that al-Suhrawardī offered an extreme mystical response to philosophy; nonetheless, he might have narrowed the range of ideas available to the minds of the following generations of intellectuals.

Jalāl al-dīn al-Dawānī (d. 1501), a follower of Illuminationist Avicennism and a great interpreter of al-Suhrawardī, was the leading figure of his era in both religious disciplines and philosophical sciences. He was also the supervisor of the Karakoyunlu Turkman Ruler Yūsuf, son of Jahānshāh (841-873 AH /1438-1468 AD). Al-Dawānī's books on *kalām*, *uṣūl*, *ʿIrḩān*, and philosophy were followed, memorized, and officially recognized as standard curriculum in the upper levels of classical madrasa education in the Ottoman, Safavīd, and Mughal Empires, as well as in the Central Asian khanates.<sup>182</sup>

<sup>182</sup> See for al-Dawānī (or Davani) and its works as curriculum in the madrasa: Andrew J. Newman, "Davānī, Jalāl-al-dīn Moḩammad", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/davani> (accessed January 24, 2014); see also his books on the curriculum of the madrasa system: Francis Robinson, "Ottomans-Safavīds-Mughals: Shared Knowledge and Connective Systems", pp. 176-184.



Ramzī did not choose this kind of unilateral education consisting primarily of philosophy with a certain mystical tendency. It was imposed on him as the only accepted curriculum for high-level schooling in philosophy, logic, and rhetoric in late 19th-century Central Asia's madrasas. His education restricted to the canonical texts, Ramzī was forced to look outside of the madrasa system for the education he sought. While, to a certain extent, his intellectual development was structured by the contemporary condition of the religious education system, Ramzī's Sufi brotherhood, his immense translation activities, and unique interests lent him a great deal of cultural capital with which he influenced the approach of his friends. This dialectic structuring is what Pierre Bourdieu termed "habitus".<sup>183</sup> Neither a subject-based nor an object-based approach can be considered as a decisive factor in the explanation and understanding of a social phenomenon.

We may speculate that had Ramzī been introduced to Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn Rushd, and similar figures of Islamic civilization in his early education, as their influence is seen in the works of Cevdet Paşa, he would not have become the thinker that we remember today. As we analyzed here, in his twenties, Ramzī again engaged with mysticism through the logical and philosophical works of *al-ishrāqī* thinkers. Actually, his mind was profoundly affected by *al-ishrāqī* style mysticism.

### **2.2.5. A critical change in late youth**

After a period of education in Arabic language and *al-ishrāqī*-style logic and philosophy, Ramzī began to study *taṣawwuf*, the common name for the Islamic mystical tradition. At

<sup>183</sup> See: Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 98-99 and 133-134.

this point he experienced a change in his intellectual life, seeing the Prophet Muḥammad in his dream. After this vision, Ramzī became disillusioned with the madrasa curriculum in Bukhara.<sup>184</sup> In his own words: “I finally recognized that what [I] considered to be excellence was nothing but imperfection.”<sup>185</sup> This dramatic shift in Ramzī’s intellectual pursuit begs the question of why he chose to embark upon “a pure Sufi path” instead of rhetoric, linguistics, or jurisprudence. It was possible for him to pursue a variety of career paths, ranging from the position of *qāḍī* (judge), or *imām*, or Arabic instructor giving lessons in the schools. But he chose none of these. Why?

We may answer this question in two ways. First, he must have realized that the curriculum he received in the madrasa was not satisfactory for the students and people living in the cities he visited. Even though these books met the needs of a narrow circle of individuals, he realized that this traditional education left its pupils ill-equipped to address the problems of the modern age. The solutions to the cultural and political conundrums faced by the Muslim population of Russia required a great deal more than a normative Islamic education could offer. Second, the only other alternative to the madrasa was the mystical approach, which spoke the language of interior and exterior worlds and offered protection from western ways of thinking such as atheism and positivism to which many late 19th-century Ottoman and Tatar intellectuals such as Abdullah Cevdet, Ahmed Riza, Yusuf Akçura, and others, had already fallen victim. Sufism was not a choice of convenience but of necessity if Ramzī was to develop a program for the cultural and religious survival of his people. Furthermore, the entire

<sup>184</sup> Ramzī, *Maktūbāt*, vol. 3, p. 302.

<sup>185</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 302.

Muslim *umma*h was under attack from colonial powers. The religious and cultural identity of the world's Muslim population was at stake with the dismantling of an entire belief system and centuries of tradition. As a Sufi scholar, only two options were left open to Murād Ramzī: conserve what he could from the mystical dimension of his culture and attack what he saw as the obvious enemy, that is, the Russian colonial and bureaucratic system.

#### **2.2.6. Diving into the major Islamic disciplines to respect and be respected**

Though while in his youth Ramzī was dissatisfied with the narrow scope of the madrasa canon, he would return to the central Islamic disciplines later in life, realizing how these well-established intellectual traditions were essential as a bulwark to the threat of cultural extinction posed by the Russian authorities. In his adult years, he started to receive again the central Islamic disciplines such as *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, and *tafsīr* when he stayed in Mecca and Medina.<sup>186</sup> For him, the practice of *fiqh* was a way of thinking that sought practical solutions for the Muslim community in daily life, providing an archive for the practical application of the law. In the late 19th century, Mecca was truly the “Mecca” for Muslim scholars and famous Sufi leaders representing the entire range of Islamic geography from Central Asia, Anatolia, Rumelia, the Balkans, Kurdistan, India, and North Africa to even the Malay Peninsula and the East Indies (today's Indonesia). In this multi-ethnic space, one thing was extremely important in all aspects of the life: Arabic.

Fluency in Arabic, both oral and written, was essential to securing a place in the community of this competitive city. The claim by a newly-arrived scholar regarding his

<sup>186</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 303.

knowledge of Arabic was initially met with skepticism by the *‘ilm* circles (حلقات العلم) until the aspirant scholar demonstrated his ability by elaborating the most difficult texts. Only after one demonstrated his mastery of the language would he be considered a respected scholar in Mecca. The standard education offered in Mecca began with the major Arabic linguistic disciplines: *‘ilm al-badī* (علم البديع), *‘ilm al-bayān* (علم البيان), and *‘ilm al-ma‘ānī* (علم المعاني), with an emphasis on *al-‘arūd* (العروض).<sup>187</sup> In fact, these disciplines are related to Arabic rhetoric and poetry. *‘Ilm al- badī* is “the branch of rhetorical science which deals with the beautification of literary style”.<sup>188</sup> *‘Ilm al-bayān* is “the science that deals with the various possibilities of expressing the same idea in various degrees of directness or clarity”.<sup>189</sup> *‘Ilm al-ma‘ānī* is defined as all the literal arts in Arabic language such as simile, metaphor, analogy, metonymy, epiphrases, and apostrophe as mentioned by al-Sakkākī (d. 1229).<sup>190</sup> When it comes to *‘ilm al-‘arūd*, it is defined generally as a “discipline of poetry” or “science of versification”, but it is somewhat more than that. It is related to how to create a poem with the well-known measures and forms in Arabic prosody, or merely the study of meters in a poem. It is not only the science of meter but also science of rhyme, too.<sup>191</sup> We should also note that *al-‘Arūd* was a discipline limited not only to Arabic poetry, but is also present in the literary traditions of Persian, Ottoman

<sup>187</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>188</sup> M. Khalafallah, “*Badī*”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), pp. 857-858.

<sup>189</sup> G. E. Von Grunebaum, “*Bayān*”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), pp. 1115-1116.

<sup>190</sup> B. Reinert, “*al-Ma‘ānī wa al-Bayān*”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), pp. 898-902.

<sup>191</sup> G. Meredith-Owens, “*‘Arūd*”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), pp. 667-677.

Turkish, Chaghatay Turkic, and Urdu, in all of which we see particular practices of *al-‘arūḍ* which are distinct from the Arabic-style *al-‘arūḍ* meters.

These subbranches of the study of Arabic literature and verbal arts would enable Ramzī to write and speak in an Arabic that conformed to the highest standards of eloquence, gaining the admiration of his colleagues in Mecca and other Muslim cities. It is this atmosphere that sharpened Ramzī’s linguistic skills and enabled him to author *Dhayl* and translate Persian Sufi classics such as the *Maktūbāt* into Arabic. These activities, of course, made him a venerated scholar and a renowned orator and author in Arabic, the language of the divine text in Islam. But command of one language, no matter how masterful, is not the only prerequisite to being a good translator, which can at times be more difficult than writing a book.

In Mecca, the competition among the scholars was so fierce that every man of letters had to know theoretical points on the methodology of jurisprudence, even though he would not have to be an expert (*faqīh*) on all matters within Islamic law. Now Ramzī would study *al-Tawḍīḥ* (التوضيح), a very detailed commentary on the difficult points of *al-Tanqīḥ* (التنقيح), a famous short text on the methodology of jurisprudence by Ḥanafī school, printed together with the well-known annotation *al-Talwīḥ* (حاشية التلويح).<sup>192</sup> Here we have three different books: The annotation *al-Talwīḥ* belongs to al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390), a genius Persian polymath who lived in the age of Tamerlane, as mentioned earlier. Al-Taftāzānī’s books spread throughout the Ottoman Empire and are still studied today in classical Arabic education and other disciplines.<sup>193</sup> The text *al-Tanqīḥ* and its

<sup>192</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>193</sup> See: W. Madelung, *ibid.*; Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 175.

commentary *al-Tawdīh* belong to ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Mas‘ūd al-Maḥbūbī (d. 1346), an eminent scholar of natural sciences, logic, grammar, rhetoric, and poetry and Islamic disciplines such as *ḥadīth*, *‘aqa’id*, *fiqh*, and *uṣūl* (legal theory).<sup>194</sup> His famous work *Kitāb Ta‘dīl hay’at al-aflāk* was, at the time of its writing, the strongest critique of Ptolemy’s astronomy.<sup>195</sup>

It was common practice in Islamic scholarship for an author to write a small but difficult text followed by a long explanation of his own text, as we observe in the famous *Mirqāt al-wuṣūl* and *Mir’āt al-uṣūl*, which were written by the same expert, Mulla Khusraw (d. 1480).<sup>196</sup> This is a dense text with sentences loaded with logical and semi-philosophical material, yet perhaps more intriguing than the modern texts of *uṣūl al-fiqh* printed in Egypt or Syria in recent times.<sup>197</sup> These books are still studied as curriculum in Islamic disciplines.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> See for his biography: Muḥammad ‘Abd al-ḥayy al-Laknawī, *al-Fawā'id al-bahīya fī tarājīm al-ḥanaḥīya* (Karachi: Nūr Muḥammad Karkhāna-i Tijārat-i Kutub, 1973), p. 112. I studied *al-Tawdīh* and *al-Talwīh* during my classical Arabic education in Istanbul at the end of 1987 with the aid of the thoroughly annotated critical edition printed in Kazan in 1883.

<sup>195</sup> See his book in a critical edition by Ahmad Dallal: ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Mas‘ūd al-Maḥbūbī, *An Islamic response to Greek Astronomy: Kitāb Ta‘dīl hay’at al-aflāk of Ṣadr al-Sharī‘a*, ed. Ahmad S. Dallal (Leiden: New York: Brill, 1995).

<sup>196</sup> See for his life and works see: Ferhat Koca, *Molla Husrev* (Ankara: Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2008); and Müjdat Uluçam, “Hüsrev, Molla”, *Yaşamlarıyla ve Yapıtlarıyla Osmanlılar Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayıncılık, 1999), vol. 1, p. 596.

<sup>197</sup> This book was a large work whose every page had 36 lines without an empty space or paragraphed entry. See: Sa‘d al-dīn al-Taftāzānī and Ṣadr ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Mas‘ūd al-Maḥbūbī, *Tawdīh ma‘a al-Talwīh* (Kazan: al-Maṭba‘a al-Imperatorīya–Sharikat Shams al-dīn ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Qursāwī, 1883).

<sup>198</sup> I also read some important sections of the *Mir’āt al-usūl* by Mulla Khusraw in my studies on the methodology of Islamic jurisprudence.

While the newer modern texts are easier to grasp, they do not reflect the classical beauty and comprehensiveness of the older texts of *uṣūl al-fiqh* which construct their arguments out of a variety of medieval Islamic disciplines, such as *kalām*, Arabic literature, and philosophy. In the Arabic world of today, the authors of new curriculum on *uṣūl al-fiqh* generally produce standardized, easy to use books that rely heavily on *ḥadīth* narratives at the expense of Islamic thought and argumentation, suggesting an attitude of Salafī simplicity toward the medieval classics in these disciplines.

Eventually, Murād Ramzī received an *uṣūl al-fiqh* education between the ages of 25 and 30.<sup>199</sup> Ramzī was finally introduced to this great discipline, which is typically taught to youth between the ages of 14 and 17. Because *uṣūl al-fiqh* is the most crucial of all Islamic disciplines—one which encompasses medieval philosophy, law, literature, grammar, theology, and linguistics—it is an essential component of a real madrasa education. Adolescence, when the mind is extremely sharp and arrogant, is considered the ideal period for the mastery of these subjects, because appropriate arrogance and aggressive questioning are considered beneficial in the classical madrasa education. In his twenties Murād Ramzī must have needed an excellent master in his *‘ilm* circle to overcome the challenging problems of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. His mastery of Arabic is evident in his books; his interpretations of the *ḥadīth* and Qur’ān also display the shadings of the traditional Ḥanafī School, despite his weakness in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, as we will see in the chapter related to the problem of *rābiʿa* in the Naqshī tradition.

<sup>199</sup> Ramzī mentioned that he was on the road to Arabia in the middle of 1295 AH [1878 AD], then he arrived in Mecca, stayed there, found his friends, and then started to take other lessons after months. It seems that he took the *uṣūl al-fiqh* lessons around 1880, which means he might have been around 25 years old when he started to study *al-Talwīḥ* and *al-Tawḍīḥ*. See: Ramzī, *ibid.*, pp. 302-303.

### 2.2.7. A synthesis between Scripture and Gnosis (*Bayān* and *ʿIrfān*)

For Ramzī, Mecca was a sacred place where he could enter a new phase of spiritual education with the great Sheikhs such as ʿAbdullāh Dāghistānī, Muḥammad Ṣālīḥ al-Zawāwī, and others and explore such wonderful books as *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (“The Revival of the Religious Sciences”) of al-Ghazālī (d. 1057).<sup>200</sup> He found himself among great fellows and unique masters from various branches of the Naqshbandī order focusing on al-Ghazālī’s *al-Iḥyāʾ*, especially textual interpretation. The book *al-Iḥyāʾ*, regarded as one of the greatest works of Muslim spirituality, is a lengthy interpretation of how a Muslim should understand the purpose of worshipping God. It is divided into four parts, each containing ten chapters. For a Sufi, the most intriguing sections would be parts 3 and 4, which are concerning the inner life of Muslims.<sup>201</sup> Al-Ghazālī had an immense influence on the Islamic cultural heritage, leading some researchers to hold him “responsible for the decline of philosophy” in Islamic civilization.<sup>202</sup> However, it is hard to say that philosophy declined after him, especially if we carefully observe the works of al-Suhrawardī, Qutb al-dīn al-Shīrāzī, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī, and Mullā Ṣadrā of the eastern Islamic world, and Ibn ʿArabī, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn Khaldūn in the western region of Islamic civilization. Nevertheless, we may assume that in the later years of his life, al-Ghazālī increasingly favored a kind of spiritual attitude that made him come closer to Ibn Sīnā and even to some *ʿIrfānī-Bāṭinī* authors who were supposedly his archenemies at whom his older critical writings were aimed. While al-Ghazālī may well

<sup>200</sup> Ramzī, *Muʿarrab al-Maktūbāt*, p. 303.

<sup>201</sup> See: W. Montgomery Watt, “al-Ghazālī”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1965), pp. 1039-1041.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1041.



have contributed to a revival of *ʿIrfān*-based Gnosticism following Ibn Sīnā, it does not mean that he is responsible for the decline of philosophy in Islamic civilization. The presupposition of this argument is the mutual exclusivity of philosophy and mysticism. This problem is still discussed among specialists on Islamic philosophy and Sufism.

By reading *al-Iḥyāʾ*, Ramzī must have found abundant guidance for the conceptual approach of his forthcoming books as well as for the interpretation of daily life among the rival sheikhs and their followers in Mecca and Medina. As we observe from his autobiography, he was a very humble person among other Sufis, refusing the role of Sheikh of the order, even though his master Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Zawāwī gave him both the written document known as *al-ijāza* (certification) and *al-khirqa* ('Sufi cloak': الخرقة).<sup>203</sup> It is obvious that al-Ghazālī's conception of spiritual maturity (*al-kamāl*) influenced his behavior and made him hesitant to have these kinds of responsibilities. He clearly mentions al-Ghazālī when articulating his sadness with the loss of the Grand Sheikh ʿAbdullāh Dāghistānī:

Because he [Ramzī] discerned the wine of the Sufi circle, and recognized the truth within it, he clearly believed that there is no spiritual maturity except their wine with its delicious taste and wonderful atmosphere, as al-Ghazālī says...<sup>204</sup>

Memorizing the Qurʾān in adulthood as another impressive achievement relevant to our discussion. Ramzī said that he completed the memorization of the Qurʾān when he arrived in Medina and took *ijāza* (certification) from the famous scholars of this city.<sup>205</sup> It

<sup>203</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303.

is likely that he began the process of memorization of the Qur'ān before he arrived in Arabia and continued his efforts until finally completing it at Medina because it is unlikely that he memorized it within the single year he spent in Arabia, especially at the age of 26. Ramzī displayed a great enthusiasm in attempting to memorize the Qur'ān at this late age, as instances of this sort are extremely rare. I assume that Ramzī was much influenced by the spiritual atmosphere of Mecca and Medina, stirring within him a great zeal.

The process of memorization of the Qur'ān varies according to each Muslim country, depending on the particular structure of local education. The standard process of memorization for an individual in Turkey begins around the age of 10-11 years at a Qur'ān School (Kuran Kursu) with the final and easiest section of the Qur'ān (Juz-i 'Amma). After he/she is assessed in terms of ability and memorizing experience, the school committee decides if he/she is suitable for continuing the process of memorization. If the child is selected, he/she immediately starts to memorize the entire Qur'ān. Because the student is required to continue his normal secular education in the state schools, the duration of memorization from start to finish cannot be more than 2 years, which is sufficient time for most students.<sup>206</sup>

<sup>206</sup> Each Muslim country has a different experience for the Qur'ānic studies, depending on how and when it was introduced to Islam. Turkey has a long history in the tradition of Qur'ānic studies and memorization. In Anatolia, the first educational institution concerning to the Qur'ān was established at the time of Seljûq Sultanate (around 1200) under the name of *Dār al-ḥuffāz*, i.e., "The House of Qur'ān memorizers", then *Dār al-qurrā'*, "The house of expert for the Qur'ān reciting" in the Ottoman era. See: Ziya Kazıcı, "Bir Eğitim Kurumu Olarak Dâru'l-Kurrâ", *Kur'an Kurslarında Eğitim Öğretim ve Verimlilik Sempozyumu* (Istanbul, 2000), pp. 34-35. See a good survey on the problems of institutions of Qur'ān memorization in modern Turkey, see: Mehmet Emin Ay, *Problemleri ve Beklentileriyle Türkiye'de Kur'an Kursları* (Istanbul: Düşünce Kitabevi, 2005).

As a Sunnī scholar and a follower of the Mujaddidīya, a strictly Sunnī branch of the Naqshbandīya order, the *ḥadīth* and the important books of this field must have occupied a large space in his education. For example, he participated in lessons on the *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (سنن أبي داود) of Abū Dāwūd of Sijistān (d. 889),<sup>207</sup> a very famous collection of the Prophetic tradition. Abū Dāwūd was interested especially in *fiqh*, so he arranged the *ḥadīth* narratives according to legal categories. This book is an eminent collection for devoted Sunnī Muslims with an excellent organization and clear headings that addresses the problems of daily life. There are other books of *ḥadīth*, such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, which are respected and even memorized among Sunnī Muslims. Features such as its clarification of individual cases of *fiqh* and its reduction of redundant similar “narratives” (*riwāyāt*: روایات) have made the *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* a reference source for *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* students around the world.<sup>208</sup> While Ramzī’s accounts fail to mention works other than the *Sunan-i Abī Dāwūd*, it is unlikely that Ramzī did not encounter other *ḥadīth* collections as well such as those of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. We can interpret this scarcity of reference to other famous works of *ḥadīth* to mean that his interests were beyond the mere memorization or reading the prophetic tradition, an insistence that the *ḥadīth* be studied not for its own sake, but with the aim of better understanding Islamic jurisprudence.

By the final years of Ramzī’s time in Mecca, the promising scholar must have established many connections, earning both followers and rivals in this competitive

<sup>207</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>208</sup> See for a discussions about him: M. ‘Abd al-raḥmān al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥwadhī* (Cairo, 1386 AH [1967 AD]), vol. 1, pp. 352-353; J. Robson, “Abū Dā’ūd al-Sidjīstānī”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), p.114.

atmosphere. Now, Ramzī became a point of reference for the study of his peculiar branch of the Naqshbandīya.<sup>209</sup> Among his Naqshbandī friends were sheikhs and Sufis coming from Java, Crimea, Anatolia, and Central Asia. He mentioned especially some good friends from Java. The connections made in Mecca would ripple outwards, affecting the global community of the Naqshbandīya. Woven together by the connections between their different Sheikhs, Naqshbandīya followers from disparate parts of the globe displayed similar attributes and shared remarkably similar experiences, as shown by the uniformity between Kurdish and Turkish Sufi sheikhs and the late period of the Indonesian Sufi tradition which spanned the second half of 19th century.<sup>210</sup> Ramzī studied many books related to the Naqshbandīya order, such as *The Collected Letters* of Aḥmad Sirhindī (*Maktūbāt*: مکتوبات),<sup>211</sup> the *Maqāmāt-i Maẓharī*, a hagiography written by Ghulām ‘Alī ‘Abdullāh Dihlawī (d. 1824) about the Naqshbandī Sheikh Mirzā Maẓhar-i Janān (d. 1781),<sup>212</sup> the *Rasāil-i Aḥmad Sa‘īd*, the booklets of Sheikh Aḥmad Sa‘īd (d. 1860), the *Maqāmāt-i Dahbīdī*, the hagiography of Sheikh Makhdūm A’ẓam Dahbīdī (d.

<sup>209</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>210</sup> See: Martin van Bruinessen, “After the Days of Abu Qubays: Indonesian Transformations of the Naqshbandīya-Khālīdīya”, *Journal of the History of Sufism*, vol. 5 (2007), pp. 225-51.

<sup>211</sup> See for Aḥmad Sirhindī and his method: Arthur F. Buehler, “Shari’at and ‘Ulama in Aḥmad Sirhindī’s Collected Letters”, *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 43, no. 3 (2003), pp. 309-320; Yohanan Friedmann, *Sheikh Aḥmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000); and J.G.T. Haar, *Follower and Heir of the Prophet: Sheikh Aḥmad Sirhindī* (Leiden: Het Oosters Instituut, 1992).

<sup>212</sup> The author Ghulām ‘Alī ‘Abdullāh Dihlawī was a very famous Sufi Sheikh in Delhi as a master of the Naqshbandī, Qāḍirī, and Chishtī orders during 19th century. His book about Mirzā Muḥammad Jānān has been published in an Urdu translation. See: Shāh ‘Abdullāh Ghulām ‘Alī Dihlawī Naqshbandī Mujaddidī, *Maqāmāt-i-Maẓharī*, translated into Urdu by Muḥammad Iqbal Mujaddidī (Lahore: 2001).

1542),<sup>213</sup> and finally *Manāqib al-Imām al-Rabbānī*, the hagiography of Aḥmad Sirhindī.<sup>214</sup>

On this reading list we see the famous Naqshbandī Sufi poet of Delhi, Mirzā Maḥzar-i Jānān, who was also one of the greatest Urdu poets.<sup>215</sup> Mirzā Jānān believed in the divine origin of the Vedas. Therefore, he accepted the Hindu people as *Ahl al-kitāb* (“people of the book”). It meant that Mirzā Jānān was in favor of coexistence with Hindus and affirmed the legitimacy of including them in the Islamic political community, as Jews and Christians were. Curiously enough, he was also known to be a “Sunnicizer” for his complete loyalty to the *Sunna*, the lifestyle of the Prophet Muḥammad. That means he was a normative member of the large Muslim community who also favored coexistence within Hindu people. In his spiritual genealogy, he reunited several lines of descent deriving from Aḥmad Sirhindī.<sup>216</sup> Another interesting name from Ramzī’s list of books is Sheikh Aḥmad Sa‘īd, with whom the Mujaddidīya strengthened in Mecca. A

<sup>213</sup> See: Bakhtiyar Babajanov, “Biographies of Makhdum-i A’zam al-Kasani al-Dahbidi, Sheikh of the Sixteenth-Century Naqshbandīya”, *Manuscripta Orientalia*, vol. 5, no. 2 (St. Petersburg: June 1999), pp. 3-8. We have a very detailed analysis by Alexandre Papas about Dahbidi’s treatise “Risāla Adab al-Salikin”, see: Alexandre Papas, “No Sufism without Sufi Order: Rethinking Tarīqa and Adab with Aḥmad Kāsānī Dahbidī (1461-1542)”, *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2008), pp. 4-22.

<sup>214</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>215</sup> See the place of Mirzā Jan-i Jānān in Urdu poetry: Muḥammad Husain Azad, *Ab-i Hayat* (Lahore: Naval Kishor 1907), pp. 130-134; see also a good translation of this book: Muḥammad Husain Azad, *Āb-e Hayāt: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*, trans. Frances W. Pritchett (Oxford University Press, 2001). The section related to Mirzā Jan-i Jānān is to be found here: <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/books/PK2155.H8413/123141d3.html> (1/30/2014).

<sup>216</sup> See: Itzhak Weismann, *The Naqshbandīya*, pp. 63-67.

follower of Sirhindī, Saʿīd continued to guide disciples on the path and was succeeded by his three surviving sons.<sup>217</sup>

With the help of those colorful mystical authors, Ramzī must have begun to think about the different styles of political and intellectual systems. Reading Mirzā Jānān, he could hardly have failed to draw parallels between Mirzā Jānān's Hindu people and the situation of his people under the Russian rule. Perhaps the idea of coexistence with Russians, Siberians, Cossacks, and other non-Muslim groups under constitutional principles, with a degree of regional autonomy, was born with the reading of Jānān. Perhaps reading Mirzā Jānān provided a background to Ramzī's comments on Yadrintsev's program for Siberian autonomy mentioned in Zeki Velidi Togan's memoirs.<sup>218</sup> A colorful intellectual environment enriched with diverse sources of spiritualism might have made Ramzī open to new ideas in politics, philosophy, and education.

For Ramzī, this era was a second period of intellectual cultivation which grappled with the complicated issues of Sufi teachings and practices. Sirhindī's notion of orthodox Sufism would influence him throughout his life, but at the same time he never abstained from reading unorthodox sources. This effort would make him comfortable with the traditional sources of Naqshbandī wisdom. He would also need to read other books and treatises written by non-Naqshbandī authors in order to answer potential questions and critiques of rival Sufi branches or hostile political movements, such as modern Salafism which was arising then in Arabia.

<sup>217</sup> Weismann, *ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>218</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan, *Memoirs: National Existence and Cultural Struggles of Turkistan and Other Muslim Eastern Turks*, p. 38.

Ramzī also studied some important classics of Sufism, with a deep concentration on key issues such as the ‘*Awārif al-ma‘ārif*’ of al-Suhrawardī (1234) and the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* of Muḥyī al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240) along with their respective commentaries.<sup>219</sup> Here one should be careful about the names, for we have three different famous persons named al-Suhrawardī.<sup>220</sup> The aforementioned al-Suhrawardī here is different from al-Suhrawardī of *al-ishrāq*, the school of divine illumination. As we mentioned earlier, al-Suhrawardī of *al-ishrāq* was an unruly mystic philosopher whereas al-Suhrawardī of ‘*Awārif*’ was an orthodox Sufi who wrote a classic work about the balanced spiritual life in Islam.<sup>221</sup> Therefore, his book sometimes is considered a second *al-Iḥyā’* or a compendium for *al-Iḥyā’*. Both are printed together in some editions.<sup>222</sup> ‘*Awārif*’ has been studied throughout the centuries to follow an orthodox Sufism compatible with the major principles of Islam. It means that Ramzī was still searching for a balance between the extreme ‘*Irfānī*’ Sufism and the orthodox Sufism based on the principles of *taqwā* (piety) and *ittibā‘ al-rasūl* (following the Prophet).

<sup>219</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>220</sup> The first is Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 1168) a Sufi, *faqīh*, and founder of the al-Suhrawardīya order. The second is Shihāb al-dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī, the most famous al-Suhrawardī, also known “al-Maqtūl” or Sheikh of *al-ishrāq* (d. 1190’s) whom we mentioned earlier. The third is Abū Ḥafs ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 1234), an orthodox Sufi, the author of ‘*Awārif*’.

<sup>221</sup> See for Abū Ḥafs ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī: Qamar-ul Huda, *Striving for Divine Union: Spiritual Exercises for Suhrawardī Sufis* (London-New York 2002), p. 41; Abū ‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān, *Waḥayāt al-a‘yān wa anḥā’ abnā al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), vol. 3, pp. 204 and 446; Ṣihābeddīn Sūhrevardī Ebu Hafs, *Avārifü’l-Ma‘ārif* (introductory section) translated into Turkish by Ḥasan Kamil Yılmaz and İrfan Gündüz (Istanbul: 1990), p. XI.

<sup>222</sup> This edition was a large book; every page had 37 lines. The body was for the *Iḥyā’* of al-Ghazālī but the right and left margins were for the *Ta‘rīf al-Iḥyā’* of ‘Abd al-qādir Muḥyī al-dīn al-‘Aydārūs Bā‘alawī and the ‘*Awārif*’ of al-Suhrawardī. See: Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī and Abū Ḥafs al-Suhrawardī and ‘Abd al-qādir Bā‘alawī, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn, ma‘a Ta‘rīf al-Iḥyā’ wa ‘Awārif* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Maymanīya, 1312 AH [1894 AD]).

It is well known to researchers of Islamic cultural history that Ibn ‘Arabī is one of the most controversial names among all Muslim scholars and groups.<sup>223</sup> The conflict between these two poles of Sufism was so widespread that one could find both supporters and enemies of Ibn ‘Arabī in the same dynastic family, even in the same juristic *madh’hab* or in the same spiritual community. For example, we observe that many Ḥanafī Ottoman scholars such as Ibn Kamāl (d. 1536)<sup>224</sup> supported Ibn ‘Arabī, whereas other Ḥanafī jurists like ‘Alī al-Qārī (d. 1605) harshly criticized him with the accusation of blasphemy.<sup>225</sup> Some Naqshbandī scholars defended Ibn ‘Arabī, but others attacked him. He was considered as both the “Greatest Master” (*Sheikh Akbar*: شيخ أكبر) and the “Greatest Infidel” (*Sheikh Akfar*: شيخ أكفر) in the same era.

Ultimately, however, the controversy surrounding Ibn ‘Arabī is more the result of the form of his writing rather than the content of his writing. His style of writing and world of imagination is similar to a labyrinth where one cannot find one’s way. Some would let loose and enjoy abiding in the labyrinth’s grip, without worrying about the way out. Others would become embittered and wish to return from whence they came. An

<sup>223</sup> For a discussion of Ibn ‘Arabī, see: Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 45-46, 50-51, and 81-89.

<sup>224</sup> Ibn Kamāl, or Kemalpaşazade of Tokat was Sheikh al-Islām under the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror. He was a poet, lawyer and a historian. See: V.L. Menage, “Kemal Paşazade”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 879-881. See for Ibn Kamāl’s supportive *fatwa* on Ibn ‘Arabī: Esad Efendi Collection, Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), manuscript no: 3743, folio no. 12b. See also some comments on this supportive *fatwa*: Mustafa Tahralı, “Muhyiddin İbn Arabî ve Türkiye Tesirleri”, *Endülü’s’ten İspanya’ya* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 1996), pp. 9 - 78.

<sup>225</sup> Nūr al-dīn ‘Alī al-Qārī of Harāt (d. 1605) was a scholar of *ḥadīth*, *fīqh*, language, and history. He wrote a sharp *fatwa* against Ibn ‘Arabī, focusing on Ibn ‘Arabī’s famous book *Fuṣūṣ*, especially, on the section of “al-Kalima al-Nūḥiyya”. He described Ibn ‘Arabī as an arrogant infidel. See for his famous refutation against the theory of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Nūr al-dīn ‘Alī al-Qārī, *al-Radd ‘alā al-qā’ilīn bi-waḥdat al-wujūd*, ed. ‘Alī Riḍā ‘Abdullāh (Damascus: Dār al-Ma’mūn, 1995), pp. 101-102; and Alexander Knysh, *ibid.*, pp. 100-101.



orthodox reader of Ibn ‘Arabī is perplexed, while a freer spirit wonders and enjoys the ecstasy of love in the middle of immense imagination contemplating “the Divine Being”, becoming a perpetual wanderer in the imagined land of Ibn ‘Arabī. However, one may prefer being lost in the garden of the beloved to being a straight walker in a well-guarded park. If we evaluate the ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī as pure subjects of literature within the frame of “ecstatic Sufi utterances” (*shaṭaḥat*: شطحات) we barely find a coherence that would lead to reconciliation between his doctrine and orthodox Islamic belief.

To continue with the story of Ramzī, in his last years in Mecca Ramzī concentrated on the specific books of Akbarī-style ecstatic Sufism, the movement heavily influenced by Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>226</sup> From this school he read and studied *al-Tā’īya al-Kubrā* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235) with different commentaries.<sup>227</sup> Ibn al-Fāriḍ was one of the greatest poets of intellectual speculative Sufism, who wrote this long poem *al-Tā’īya al-Kubrā* to describe his immense love of God. Ottoman scholars studied this long poem with the

<sup>226</sup> The term *Akbarīya* or “Akbarī School” must be a popular new term invented by modern researchers on Ibn ‘Arabī. I have never seen a generally accepted term such as *Akbarīya* (أكبرية) or *Maslak-i Akbarī* (مسلك اكبرى) for Ibn ‘Arabī in pre-modern Sufism or creed books. Instead, I saw the terms *ḥulūl* (حلول) *ittiḥād* (اتحاد) *wujūdī* (وجودی), used with a negative tone, in some old works written by creed authors; or *waḥdat-i wujūd* (وحدت وجود) in the books of intellectual Sufis, such as al-Qūnawī. I think modern scholars have chosen this term after systematic analysis of *‘Irḥān*-based products resembling Ibn ‘Arabī’s style, “smell”, or quotations. Another possibility is the great sympathy of the Traditionalist School (a new branch of Perennials) towards Ibn ‘Arabī. Because they have found virgin soil in America, they succeeded in popularizing their philosophy by employing Ibn ‘Arabī for their goals. Some famous historical Sufi authors considered as followers of the *Akbarīya* include Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274) of Konya, Fakhr al-dīn ‘Iraqī (d. 1289) of Mesopotamia, Aziz al-Nasafī (d. 1300) of Central Asia, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 1351) of Kayseri, Bāli Efendi (d. 1552) of Sophia (Bulgaria), and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1641) of Persia. See a website for modern researchers on the “Akbarī School”: <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/> (accessed February 1, 2014).

<sup>227</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 307.

commentary of Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, focusing on the word plays and mystical approaches mixed with sublime notion of Beloved God and Beloved Servant.<sup>228</sup>

Ramzī studied also *Lama'āt* (لمعات) of Fakhr al-dīn al-'Irāqī (d. 1289), *Lawā'ih* (لوائح) of 'Abd al-raḥmān Jāmī (d. 1492), then Jāmī's commentaries on his own *Ruba'iyāt* and *Khamrīyāt*.<sup>229</sup> Fakhr al-dīn al-'Irāqī was a very popular poet and well-known qalandari dervish in Anatolia. During his lifetime, he spent many years in Multan (India) and in Konya and Tokat in present-day Turkey. He is one of the great Persian poets, a follower of Ibn 'Arabī and Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī.<sup>230</sup> He wrote his book *Lama'āt* (*Divine Flashes*) in the Persian language when he was in Anatolia. *Lama'āt* is considered the most creative commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* of Ibn 'Arabī in Persian. Ottoman scholars knew him in very early times; they loved *Lama'āt* and studied it with *Ashi'at-i Lama'āt*, a Persian commentary by 'Abd al-raḥmān Jāmī on *Lama'āt*.<sup>231</sup> One of the brilliant comment-translations of *Lama'āt* was produced in the late Ottoman era by Ahmed Avni Konuk, who was a great commentator on both Jalāl al-dīn al-Rūmī and Ibn 'Arabī.<sup>232</sup>

<sup>228</sup> Ibn al-Fāriḍ of Egypt (d. 1235) was born in Cairo, lived in Mecca and died in Cairo. He is considered to be the greatest mystic poet of the Arabic language. See: R. A. Nicholson and J. Pedersen, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), pp. 763-764. The commentary of Dāwūd on *al-Tā'īya* has been published recently in Beirut, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ Tā'īya Ibn Fāriḍ al-Kubra*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya 2004). The pure text of the poem is appended at the end of the book (pp. 194-221).

<sup>229</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>230</sup> See: Sa'īd Neffīsī, "Dibāja", *Kullīyāt-e Irāqī* (Tehrān: Entishārāt-e Kitābkhāna-e Sanā'ī, 1991), pp. 6-8; H. Massé, "'Irāqī, Fakhr al-dīn Ibrāhīm 'Irāqī Hamadānī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), pp. 1269-1270.

<sup>231</sup> For a nice edition of the *Ashi'at*, see: 'Abd al-raḥmān Jāmī, *Ashi'at-i Lama'āt*, ed. Hādī Moghaddem Gōharī (Qum: Būstān-e Kitāb-e Qum, 2004). See also the English translation of the *Lama'āt*: Fakhr al-dīn Ibrāhīm 'Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, translated and introduced by William Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1982).

<sup>232</sup> See for his *Lama'āt* commentary: Fahreddin-i Irakī, *Lemaât-Aşka ve Âşıklara Dair*, translated and commented by Ahmed Avni Konuk, ed. Ercan Alkan (Istanbul: İlkharr Yayınları, 2011).

Ramzī must have felt very close to the peculiar line of the Naqshī-Ibn ‘Arabī tradition, the late literary-mystical tradition of Anatolia, Central Asia, and India. Ramzī mentions Jāmī’s other works and commentaries, such as *Lawā’ih*, *Ruba’iyāt*, and *Khamrīyāt* which are full of sophisticated notions such as “Divine Love” and “Unity of Being” created by Ibn ‘Arabī and other intellectual Sufis. The interesting point is that Jāmī was also a disciple of ‘Ubaydullāh Aḥrār (d. 1490), the prominent Naqshbandī leader in Afghanistan and Central Asia. After legendary masters such as Khwāja Aḥrār, Khwāja Bāqībillāh, and Jāmī, Naqshbandī literature became closer to the Akbarī (Ibn ‘Arabī) tradition, even though the Naqshbandīya is considered to be one of the most orthodox Sufi orders in the Islamic world today. This is a peculiar blend of wisdom that has its own paradoxical points.<sup>233</sup> However, as we will see in the next chapters, Sirhindī’s system of *wahdat al-shuhūd* (‘testimonial unity’) was not far removed from Ibn ‘Arabī’s *tawhīd wujūdī* (‘existential unity’). It is possible to consider Sirhindī as a reformer of Ibn ‘Arabī with great aspirations in politics and prodigious abilities of propaganda.

Jāmī,<sup>234</sup> one of the favorite authors of Ramzī, was not only popular for his mystical poems and commentaries, but also because of his extraordinary works on the

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<sup>233</sup> See for the relation between the Naqshbandīya and the tradition of Ibn ‘Arabī: Hamid Algar, “Reflections of Ibn ‘Arabī in Early Naqshbandī Tradition”, *The Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*, vol. 10 (1991); and Hamid Algar, “The Naqshbandī Order: A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance”, *Studia Islamica*, vol. 44 (1976), pp. 123-152, especially p. 144.

<sup>234</sup> See for Jāmī: Clement Huart and H. Masse, “Djāmī, Mawlana Nūr al-dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1965), pp. 421-422.

Arabic language and grammar, including his famous book *al-Fawā'id al-ḍiyyā'iya* (الفوائد الضيائية).<sup>235</sup>

After a long period filled with walking on unlimited boundaries of Akbarī literature, Ramzī would need to reconstruct the balance between the high level of Akbarī imagination and the common level of social religious life, at which point he started to read again the books and treatises of Aḥmad Sirhindī. As he clearly articulated, he undertook a long survey of Ibn 'Arabī and Aḥmad Sirhindī, comprehending the differences between those two famous Sufī thinkers. It was through this contemplation that he found a balanced way.<sup>236</sup> In the last lines of his autobiography, Ramzī said that he focused on mystical works more than others. This was during the 1880's.<sup>237</sup> As we will see in an examination of his adventures, Ramzī would move away from purely 'Irfān-based intellectual ideas following his foray into writing history.

#### 2.2.8. After the autobiography: A *Burhān*-based shift in Ramzī's worldview

We do not have a clear list of books or authors that might have influenced Ramzī except what he clearly mentioned in his short autobiography and his detailed opinions in *Talḥīq al-akhbār*. Even though his mind was shaped first by 'Irfān-based books and ideas, it

<sup>235</sup> This is Jāmī's commentary on *Kāfiya* of Ibn al-Ḥājjib (d. 1249). *Kāfiya* was a very famous text on Arabic syntax. See: 'Abd al-raḥmān Nūr al-dīn Jāmī, *al-Fawā'id al-ḍiyyā'iya* (*Sharḥ Kāfiyat Ibn al-Ḥājjib*), ed. Usāma Tāhā al-Rifā'ī (Baghdad: Wizārat al-awqāf, 1983). I finished Jāmī's *al-Fawā'id al-ḍiyyā'iya*—also known as "Molla Cami"—during 1983-1984, as the last book of my classical Arabic grammar education with the *ḥāshiya* (annotation) of 'Abd al-ḥakīm Siyālkotī of India. I studied this book from the older edition (Istanbul: Daru't-Tibaati'l-Amira, 1870). With this book and others, I felt a strong affinity with the classical education that once had a common curriculum in India, Central Asia, Iran, Northern Arabia, Anatolia, and the Balkan countries.

<sup>236</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

seems that the spiritual Sufi literature would not be enough for him in his later years. For this reason, he would go under the flag of *Burhān*, or “Reason”, in the name of nationalism. When he was preparing his book *Talfīq al-akhbār* as a history project, he was interested in Ibn Khaldūn and other colorful Muslim authors from the western and eastern regions of the Islamic world.<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, he was also interested in discussions on “Science vs. Religion” which became an article of the famous Ottoman public intellectual Aḥmad Midḥat Efendi (d. 1913).<sup>239</sup> Ramzī mentioned the book *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* by John William Draper (d. 1882), which Aḥmad Midḥat Efendi translated and thoroughly annotated.<sup>240</sup> Other western authors who find their way into his *Talfīq al-akhbār* include Eugene Schuyler (d. 1890),<sup>241</sup> who was an explorer and the first American diplomat to visit the Russian Central Asia.

Many strong signs of a remarkable shift in Ramzī’s mind can be seen also in the letters he sent to *Te ‘āruf-i Muslimīn*, an Istanbul based anti-colonialist review published by Tatar authors. It was under the control of ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm, an influential political figure of his age. Ramzī’s letters to this periodical were on the topics of freedom of speech, the legality of press freedom,<sup>242</sup> and a report on the Japanese Daito (“Great

<sup>238</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīya, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 32-33 and 37-38.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50. See: William Draper, *Niza-i Ilm u Din - Islam ve Ulum*, translated with annotations and contributions by Ahmed Midhat (Istanbul: Tercüman-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1897-1900).

<sup>241</sup> Ramzī mentioned the book of Schuyler via an Ottoman translation of it. See: Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1876). It was translated two years later by Sağkolağası Ahmed Efendi into Ottoman Turkish under the title: *Musavver Türkistan Tarih ve Seyahatnamesi* (Istanbul, 1877). See: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 45.

<sup>242</sup> See: Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, “İslamiyette Hürriyet-i Kelam ve Serbesti-i Matbuatın Meşruiyeti”, *Te ‘āruf-i Muslimīn*, vol. 1, no. 5 (June 9, 1910), pp. 78-80; and vol. 1, no. 6 (June 28, 1910), pp. 90-92.

East”) society.<sup>243</sup> Ramzī’s article on the Daito society was much influenced by the idea formulated by ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm, who, when he was invited to Japan, advocated for “taking the technological and political developments of the West, while keeping the religious and ethical values of the East.” As Komatsu Hisao indicates, ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm asserted that “national spirit” was the most significant among all Japanese characteristics. Ramzī’s close friend Ibrāhīm believed that the motive for the rapid development of the Japanese was their simultaneous acceptance of western science and maintaining Japanese spiritual values and traditions.<sup>244</sup>

After 1910, Ramzī adopted this idea as the guiding principle with which to address both Russian cultural oppression and the “reactionary” mindset of some old scholars in the Volga-Ural region. With this gesture, he would part ways with the “old style” authors in the domain of politics, education, and technology while maintaining an affinity towards them when it came to traditional values, family law and religion.

### 2.2.9. Conclusion

Murād Ramzī was influenced first by the classical madrasa education similar to the other scholars of the 19th century Muslim world. Until the early 20th century, these thinkers encountered in their madrasas a common curriculum for studying the Arabic language and Islamic disciplines. This phenomenon can be described as an “Arabic Cosmopolis”

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<sup>243</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, “Asya Gi-Kay Cemiyeti Riyaseti tarafından gönderilen mektup münasebetiyle”, *Te’āruf-i Muslimān*, vol. 1, no. 23, (November 24, 1910), pp. 365-368.

<sup>244</sup> Komatsu Hisao, “Muslim Intellectuals and Japan: A Pan-Islamist mediator, Abdurreshid Ibrahim”, *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, transformation, communication*, ed. Stéphane A. Dudoignon, Komatsu Hisao, and Kosugi Yasushi, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 276.

based on Arabic language as an instrument of scholarly communication<sup>245</sup> and a shared set of canonical texts produced in classical Arabic.

A great many Muslim intellectuals of the 19th century engaged in discussions on the nature and development of the madrasa system. The consensus was that “the madrasa declined only after it abandoned the teaching of science, philosophy and technology”. This was a perception shared amongst a wide range of intellectuals, from pre-modern authors like Kâtip Çelebi to early modern ones like Mehmet Akif, Jārullāh Bigiyev, and many others. The weakness of this analysis is shown by the fact that the goal of madrasa education had never been to support science, philosophy, or technology. This institution was established to ensure the integrity of the religion, maintain the inner world of religious identity, and reproduce in the minds of its students the ideology on which the political system was based. The degradation of the madrasa system was the result of the multifaceted challenges leading to weakness in the mindset of madrasa supporters in the 19th century. It was an inevitable result of defeats on economic, political, and military fronts. These frustrations forced a significant change in the worldview of Muslims who were once upon a time depending generally on the madrasa to protect and feed the spirit, as well as to meet practical and ideological needs. To get rid of this outdated “haunted house”, many Jadīdist and reformist authors left no aspect of the madrasa system unquestioned and critiqued, including its fundamental goal of cultivating the Muslim spirit and the most effective guardian of identity, the inner world.

<sup>245</sup> When I say scholarly communication, I mean that they wrote their major booklets, texts, books, and *risāla*-style surveys in Arabic. Of course it was not the same as we do in the modern times; yet we can find a similarity between the articles of modern reviews and old *risāla*-style texts. At times a *risāla* would open with a fierce critique about a current issue, then another author would write a response to the first essay, another would respond, and so on.

Unlike many Jadīdists, Ramzī tried to keep the most necessary goals alive in the madrasa tradition in order to meet the needs in the hearts of his people. However, to respond to the hegemonic discourse of the Russian Empire on culture and history, he preferred flexibility in shaping national ideology and politics. With his impressive educational background, he possessed suitable instruments to reach his goal: command of the cosmopolitan language of Arabic, a deep knowledge of *taṣawwuf*, and a firm commitment to resistance.

Ramzī's education included, in addition to the books of language and literature, many texts from *al-ishrāqī* (illuminationist) Avicennism, such as al-Dawānī, Mubārakshāh al-Bukhārī, and al-Kātibī. Despite his study of rationally-centered texts from the traditional curriculum, the mysticism of *al-ishrāqī* Avicennism encouraged Ramzī to trust his *ilhām* ('mystical intuition') as a source of knowledge not contingent on tangible proof or evidence, which contributed to Ramzī's weakness as a historian in the modern sense.

Another question is the reason for his break with the "wider" path of Ibn 'Arabī and other "open" mystics and his return to the normative scholarship of the Muslim community despite his engagement with the seductive treatises of Ibn 'Arabī in his last years in Mecca. Interestingly, Ramzī's rival Jārullāh Bigiyev attempted to find a common ground between the others and himself in the readings of Ibn 'Arabī. And this would be the point at which the two men could meet, but to no avail. The problem was with the difference in mindset and priorities between Bigiyev and Ramzī. Bigiyev experienced an epistemological break with the traditionalist movement many years before Ramzī's foray into modern European thought in the form of his national history. Bigiyev wanted to



make the “mental frame” of Muslims wide enough to include “others” and render the curtain between Muslim and non-Muslim transparent, thinking that a wider frame could theoretically solve the problems surrounding religion, identity, and social structure at the dawn of 20th century. However, Ramzī saw this strategy as an unwarranted interference in the lives of Muslims, one that would lead to further conflict for his community. In this way, Ramzī consciously kept his thinking within the epistemological bounds of traditional Islamic scholarship, sharing the same problématique with his old peers. Perhaps he was afraid of the possible emergence of a new syncretic religious construction that would be far removed from the worldview and praxis of the authentic Muslim. Many new sects and religions throughout history emerged from an ostensibly minor deviation from the old beliefs. However, when that deviation became embodied in a text and resonated with the dominant political structure, the eccentric form of one doctrine suddenly and unexpectedly emerged as a religion in its own right. Similarly, in the last decades of 19th century, the Muslim world witnessed proliferating revisions of what had been universally accepted as fundamental to Islam since its emergence in the 7th century. Some of these new beliefs and their disciples produced new religions. One such example is the Baha’i faith, which was born in Iran and subsequently spread, as the leaders fled persecution, to the Ottoman territory and eventually to the rest of the world.<sup>246</sup> Ramzī was cautioned that a revolution in Islamic doctrine and practice could lead the total disruption in the culture and identity of the religion in general. And, the Muslims amongst the Volga-Ural (*Idil-Ural*) peoples were especially exposed to such threats, living as they were under a hostile Christian government. Faced with the severe threat of

<sup>246</sup> A. Bausani, “Bahā’ī’s”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), pp. 915-918.

religious fragmentation and cultural extinction, Ramzī's firm commitment to the preservation of Islam amongst his people might have triggered in him a staunch opposition to the reformist Jārullāh, even though both shared hostility towards sectarian groups inside of Islam.

Despite the fact that his mind was formed first by *ʿIrfān*-based books and ideas, it seems that the Sufi works were inadequate to the thought processes he was engaged in during his mature years. When he wrote *Talfīq al-akhbār* as a romantic nationalistic project, he was interested in the works of colorful thinkers and authors such as Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), Rifāʿa al-Taḥṭāwī Bek (d. 1873), Aḥmad Midḥat Efendi (d. 1913), and John William Draper (d. 1882). The clear signs of the remarkable shift in Ramzī's mindset are observable in the letters he sent to *Teʿāruf-i Muslimīn*, the journal of ʿAbd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm.

### **2.3. Murād Ramzī's social network**

Ramzī's first inner circle consisted of those enrolled in the madrasa of Shihāb al-dīn Marjānī (d. 1889), a well-known Muslim scholar who might have been the first author to promote the idea of Tatar nationalism.<sup>247</sup> In the second circle we find the members of Naqshbandī order in Mecca and Medina where Ramzī experienced a sense of community with the international members of that powerful Sufi order. The third circle was the madrasa of Zaynullāh Rasūlī, who instructed Ramzī in the methods of cultural resistance

<sup>247</sup> Uli Schamiloglu, "The Formation of a Tatar Historical Consciousness: Shihabāddin Märçani and the Image of the Golden Horde", *Central Asian Survey*, 9:2 (1990), pp. 39-49.

in a colonized society. The final circle was the cultural atmosphere in Kazan and other Volga-Ural cities following Ramzī's return from Mecca.

By the first decades of the 20th century, Ramzī may have become a tolerant individual propelled by a prodigious curiosity. His eclectic intellect allowed him to engage in debates on matters both profane and sacred. But he always considered his treatment of the subjects about which he wrote and the purpose for which they were written within the bounds of Islamic doctrine. In these years, he must have influenced other Tatar-Bashkort scholars and authors on the creation of a Muslim Turkic nation around the Volga-Ural region, as we follow his name and suggestions in the Memoirs of Zeki Velidi Togan.<sup>248</sup> Considering his last years in the Chinese border town of Tacheng as a mentor of Mehmed Emin Buğra, the national leader of Eastern Turkistan Movement,<sup>249</sup> we cannot assume that Ramzī resembled an ordinary Sufi in anything like the original sense of that title. A Sufi with nationalistic leanings, Ramzī became epistemologically far away from both his traditional madrasa fellows and Naqshbandī brothers concerning ideas of nationalism, history, and political culture.

### **2.3.1. The first circle: Marjānī's School**

When Ramzī was 18 years old (1873) he went to Kazan to study in the madrasa of Shihāb al-dīn Marjānī, who wrote more than 30 volumes about religion, Tatar history, education, and Turkic-Tatar literature. Educated in Bukhara where he was initiated into the

<sup>248</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan, p. 38.

<sup>249</sup> Mehmed Emin Buğra, *Sharqi Turkistan Tarikhi*, p. 36.

Naqshbandī path by Niyāzqulī's son and successor, Sheikh 'Ubaydullāh (d. 1852),<sup>250</sup>

Marjānī returned to take office as preacher and teacher in the Grand Mosque of Kazan.<sup>251</sup>

He would inspire a generation of Jadīdist intellectuals. Murād Ramzī allocates four pages of his masterpiece *Talfīq al-akhbār* to Marjānī.<sup>252</sup>

The great scholar Shihāb al-dīn, son of Bahā' al-dīn, son of Subhān, son of 'Abd al-karīm of Marjān and then of Kazan went to Bukhara in 1253 AH [1827 AD] and studied in the circle of Qāḍī Abū Sa'īd son of 'Abd al-ḥayy and others. After that, he turned back to his homeland in 1264 AH [1847 AD]. He became *imām* and preacher of the first mosque in Kazan in 1266 AH [1849 AD]. Many smart students gathered around him. His method (*maslak*: مسلک) was totally different from the classical system of the old scholars; but it was similar to the method of al-Qursāwī.<sup>253</sup> ... Shihāb al-dīn Marjānī warned old scholars that their method was not fruitful, and it should be criticized. According to him, many titles, books, and issues should be changed in the classical madrasa system.<sup>254</sup>

Murād Ramzī clearly realized the difference between Qadīmism and Jadīdism in terms of pedagogy, indicating that Marjānī had a totally different style of instruction in his study circle. Ramzī sincerely admired Marjānī's commitment to and the practicality of his plans. According to Ramzī, Marjānī was a man of action, a hard-working scholar, and an excellent organizer, who was able to plan and execute a plethora of works from literature to education. Marjānī was "working day and night, without rest".<sup>255</sup> However, it

<sup>250</sup> Weismann, *The Naqshbandīya*, pp. 133 and 146.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908), vol. 2, p. 478-482.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 479.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 11.

seems that Marjānī's diligence and sincerity were insufficient to redeem him in the eyes of Qadīmist scholars, as Ramzī explains:

Another reason of the Qadīmist scholars' hatred for Marjānī was his honesty and avoidance of long speeches of praise to the Qadīmist scholars. Just for this reason, he lost his position in the madrasa, receiving an inimical critique from Ibrāhīm Bāy al-Yūnusī, one of his madrasa professors.<sup>256</sup>

Here again we have Ramzī's personal observations on the great scholar. Even though Murād Ramzī harbored some "Qadīmist" tendencies in his religious opinions, he always appreciated the efforts of Marjānī and his influence on Volga-Ural cultural life. And, unlike the old-style conservatives, Ramzī was aware of the inevitable changes in society. Furthermore, Ramzī implicitly supported moderate Jadīdist discourse, even concerning some religious and legal issues. It is during his discussion on the orthodox critique of Marjānī that Ramzī broke the silence on the fragmentation of the Muslim intelligentsia over the crisis of modernity. Depicting some of them as "stupid" and "dumb", Ramzī says:

Marjānī was the most brilliant scholar of his era in this country (انه كان أعلم علماء تلك (الديار في عصره), the noblest intellectual of his age, the real expert on what is done wrong here. However, he did not respect any opinion or response of old scholars as a solution to new problems. He was not an imitator (*muqallid*: مقلد), instead, he always tried to solve the problems with his own opinions in his own mind. From time to time, he criticized sharply some old dignified scholars, such as Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī and al-Taftāzānī. Therefore, Marjānī was also criticized very harshly by some stupid and dumb persons.<sup>257</sup>

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 479-480.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 480.

At the same time, Murād Ramzī logged some objections against Marjānī, in a very gentle way, showing the inconsistency between the past and the current positions of Marjānī and drawing attention to the boldness of his claims. He said:

Marjānī criticized what had never been criticized before. After stating that he was initiated into the Naqshbandī spiritual order, he criticized some common beliefs and rituals of Naqshbandī Sufis. He [Marjānī] said that: *“The late Naqshbandī followers invented a chain of succession from Salmān al-Fārisī to Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (may Allah give them his blessing). Furthermore, they always mention this unreal connection when they perform the ceremony of ijāza. Nevertheless, none of the trusted old “naql” scholars [experts of ḥadīth] said that it was possible! The other crucial issue is that nobody from among the trusted scholars claimed a meeting of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī with Imām ‘Alī—may Allah give them his blessings—as Naqshbandī followers believe.”* This critique, in fact, was one of the strongest refutations to all Sufi theories of succession. Almost all Sufi orders claimed this connection, the link between Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Imām ‘Alī.<sup>258</sup>

Here, Ramzī mentions Marjānī’s doubt of the uninterrupted connection of Sufi saints to the Prophet in a very calm and relaxed way. He was incredibly tolerant about this objection which aimed at one of the fundamental tenants of Naqshbandī dogma. Ramzī continues in the role of a model scholar who can address a serious problem in a detached way:

What I am talking about here does not mean that I do not like his method. Instead, I want to indicate that nobody is infallible in the world. I am warning some extremist students who are exaggerating the role of gracious Marjānī in scholarship. Otherwise, I really love him sincerely and respect him as a great academic in this country. However, I should mention the truth, only the truth, without overstating it.<sup>259</sup>

Indeed, Marjānī’s questioning of Sufi succession is also valid for other Sufi orders’ fantastically-produced theories of succession. There is no clear evidence for the

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 480-481.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*

connection of the saints—in any Sufi order—to the Prophet Muḥammad. I have never found any sound proof of it, even though I have researched many old books, manuscripts, and historical records. Perhaps this was a way for Sufi groups to legitimize their institutions, customs, and ceremonies. In order to insert their founding saints into a chain that goes back to the Prophet, the Sufi brotherhoods imitated the path of *ahl al-ḥadīth* (the collectors of the *ḥadīth* narratives) by crafting a narrative that conformed to the logic of *isnād* (الإسناد), a rigorous system concerning chain of attribution within the boundary of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, but cannot provide evidence acceptable in modern historiography. By imitating the *isnād* system, the Sufis fabricated many flamboyant genealogies of sheikhhood, almost all of them purportedly connecting their patron saints to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. With this practice, legitimacy could be conjured, at least in theory, but not in concrete history.

With the help of these confessions, we realize that Murād Ramzī appreciated Marjānī as one of his “role models” as a scholar, even if he did not believe what Marjānī claimed about the real history of Sufism and its saints. It seems that Marjānī was the inspiration behind Ramzī’s search for a new method (*uṣūl-i jadīd*) in education. The mode of education, and of other areas of life in general, was what mattered. This is why the content of what one said was less important than how one said it. This is why, regardless of Marjānī’s refutation that railed against the legacies of the most sacred figures in Sufism, Ramzī could “love him sincerely, and respect him as a great academic”. We must then locate Marjānī’s influence on Ramzī in the style and format of modern authorship, the way of doing scholarship, and the form of writing. In subscribing to modern genres of scholarship, Ramzī began to see the limits of “traditional”

scholarship, a development we will examine in Chapter 3. And it was only with the help of Marjānī that Ramzī could grasp the nature and the logic of the dispute between the Qadīmist and Jadīdist movements by going beyond them.

### 2.3.2. The second circle: Naqshī–Mujaddidī Sheikhs in Hijāz

When he traveled to Mecca and Medina, Ramzī found great Sufi masters like Aḥmad Saʿīd, Muḥammad Maẓhar, and al-Zawāwī there. Medina was an interesting city with scholars and libraries and Ramzī was happy there. Moreover, there was a large community of Tatar students and traders in Mecca. We have some records on Ramzī's activities as a scholar and a representative of his community. Ramzī and Shukur (Şükür) Efendi sent a short request to the deputy of the Ottoman governor in Mecca to receive permission for a research center for the Kazan Students Community, with their request finally accepted.<sup>260</sup> We also see a letter sent from “Kazan Students in Medina” to the review *Şirāt-i Mustaqīm*, stating that Tatar students built a new institution where a system of modern regular exams was applied. As an experienced scholar, Ramzī must have managed this small center of Islamic disciplines.<sup>261</sup> Even though at that time Mecca was under the influence of Sufi orders,<sup>262</sup> the precursors of new Salafīs could already be seen there. Finally, the Sufi presence in the Hijāz would come to end in 1925, following the Saudi takeover of the Holy Places. As Ramzī clarified, his Sheikh Aḥmad Saʿīd did not

<sup>260</sup> Ottoman Ministry of Internal Affairs accepted Ramzī's petition on 7 Safar 1328 [February 18, 1910]. The official Ottoman archive document number is: DH. MUI, 66-1/38. See: Sarıay, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kazan*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>261</sup> See: Medine Kazanlı Talebesi Cemiyeti, “Muḥarrir Efendi!”, *Şirāt-i Mustaqīm* (1327 AH [1909 AD]), no. 20, p. 127.

<sup>262</sup> Weismann, *The Naqshbandīyya*, p. 98.



mention anyone with evil qualities, except the “deviant group of al-Wahhābīya”. Ramzī’s sheikh wrote a book about this movement with the name “The Obvious Truth for the Refutation of al-Wahhabīs” (*al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn fī radd al-Wahhābīyīn*).<sup>263</sup> His son Sheikh Muḥammad Maẓhar also authored some short but important booklets about the manner of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*, as his father had before him.<sup>264</sup> He applied the famous rule mentioned in the *ḥadīth*: “Show them leniency and do not be hard upon them.”<sup>265</sup>

Another master of Ramzī’s, Sheikh ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī Shirwānī, was a colorful man who spoke fluently and wrote easily in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. He started to study Islamic disciplines in his birthplace of Dagestan in the Caucasus, and then he continued to take lessons in Qusṭanṭīniya (Istanbul), Cairo, and Mecca from great scholars such as Muṣṭafā of Vidin (today’s Bulgaria) and Ibrāhīm of Bajur (Egypt).<sup>266</sup> ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Daghīstānī was generally practicing “scholarly behavior, a strict seriousness” in daily life, not as relaxed as a Naqshī sheikh in a *dargāh*. Ramzī said: “Whenever I went to his room I observed him to be very busy. He was correcting some points in his long annotations (حاشية الشرواني الداغستاني).” He died in 1301 AH/1884 AD.<sup>267</sup>

The most respected sheikh in Ramzī’s Mecca accounts was Muḥammad Ṣālīḥ al-Zawāwī, who told a story about the positive emptiness of the heart for God. He said that: “If all peoples in the world praise me, nobody can create boasting in my heart. If everyone in the world blames me, nothing can make me upset.” Ramzī asked: “To reach

<sup>263</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Dhayl Rashaḥāt ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt* (Mecca, 1890), pp. 109-110.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121-123.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123. The original text of the *ḥadīth* is as follows: *بَسُّوْا وَلَا تُنْفَرُوْا وَبَسُّوْا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوْا*

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

this spiritual level, should we mention God more than we do usually with certain large numbers?” He answered:

“No! This situation is just a gift from God. Yet, if you don’t have this ability, you should follow the path of the camel boy.” After that, Ramzī asked him to tell about the camel boy. Then he said: “One of the great masters once invited his students to the front of his home, saying ‘Bring your camels to the roof of my home!’ Among them were many smart scholars and practical men of world. They were just bewildered and asked ‘How could a camel climb to the roof?’ Only a ‘fakir’ [dervish] boy came slowly in front of the home with his camel, thinking about the issue, his eyes seriously staring at the roof. At that moment, the great master said: ‘Come here, boy! Right now, you don’t need the camel!’ Nobody understood why the great master first ordered them to bring the camel, and then just said: ‘No need for the Camel.’ The sincerity and strong intention of that boy were obvious. Only those who make truthful attempt, will be successful to achieve the goal in the spiritual path.”<sup>268</sup>

In another account, Muḥammad Ṣālīḥ al-Zawāwī asked “What is the world? I mean, what is the bad in the world?” Then he defined the bad world with an explanation: “Your world is what makes you forget your Lord. If your rosary even leads you to forget your Lord, it becomes your world.”<sup>269</sup> Here we observe the honesty of Murād Ramzī, his immense effort and faithfulness in belonging to a mystical path. Remembering the admonitions of his master al-Zawāwī and the challenges a Sufi had to face at that time, he wrote:

Al-Zawāwī said that some people would say: “How can we waste five years or six years in attaining this path when it is not certain if you will reach the goal during this period or not?” This saying points to their remoteness from the field of felicity. If a man refrains from dedicating five years of his life to the search of God most praised and high, on what will he spend his entire life?<sup>270</sup>

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>270</sup> Weismann, *The Naqshbandīyya*, pp. 98-99; Murād Ramzī, *Dhayl*, p. 156. The anecdote started with this sentence: ان بعض الناس يقول كيف نضيع خمس سنين

Al-Zawāwī and his son also became the most popular Sufi leaders in Southeast Asia. As Bruinessen mentioned, the al-Zawāwī family left strong traces in the East Indies. They called themselves Naqshbandīya-Maḥzarīya or Aḥmadiya.<sup>271</sup> Through the help of newly developed seaways, especially the Suez Canal, Muslim pilgrims were visiting Mecca and Medina with greater ease than they had in the past. In addition to that, they brought newly-printed periodicals, booklets, and propaganda books, which meant a lot of discussions, new ideas, and the creation of new movements all around the Islamic world. With those new means of transportation, we observe an overwhelming process of cultivation of Southeast Asian Muslims around Sufi orders and other revivalist movements. Paradoxically, the new instruments of international transportation created by colonial rulers gave an opportunity to the resistant Sufi movements in the Dutch East Indies. Obviously, some of those resistance movements were first propelled by the Sufi brotherhood connections established in Mecca and Medina, a phenomenon which Michael Fallan diagnosed as the “Ḥijāzī Experience”.<sup>272</sup>

It seems that Ramzī was not jealous of other great Naqshī masters of his time. For example, he started to talk about Mawlānā Khālīd al-Baghdādī al-Shahrazorī al-Kurdī, saying:

If we do not mention the great master Khālīd al-Baghdādī here, our book would be lacking in blessing. I will talk about him and his deputies shortly, with the help of some books written after him.<sup>273</sup>

<sup>271</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, “The Origins and Development of the Naqshbandī Order in Indonesia”, *Der Islam*, no. 67 (1990), pp. 167-168.

<sup>272</sup> Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic nationhood and colonial Indonesia: The umma below the winds* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 47-77 and 114-142.

<sup>273</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Dhayl Rashaḥāt ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt* (Mecca, 1890), p. 161.

In fact, there must have been a great competition between two branches of Naqshbandīya–Mujaddidīya in Hijāz, one coming from Sheikh Muḥammad Maẓhar and the other from Sheikh Mawlānā Khālīd al-Baghdādī. On the other hand, Zaynullāh Rasūlī, who was initiated into the Khālīdī–Mujaddidī branch of the Naqshī order in Istanbul (the *dargāh* of Gümüşhanevi), might have been the real reason why Ramzī mentioned Khālīd al-Baghdādī here. As we read in *Talfīq al-akhbār*, Ramzī was supported by Zaynullāh Rasūlī in the printing and distributing of his famous historical work. Therefore, he addressed Khālīd with regard to his good deeds, even though they had differences in their methods and approaches. In fact, when Muḥammad al-Zawāwī and his son ‘Abdullāh al-Zawāwī became popular among Southeast Asian Muslims, a great rivalry appeared between the *murīds* of Aḥmad al-Zawāwī and Khālīd al-Baghdādī among the Sufi Muslims of the East Indies. Ramzī might have wanted to reduce the tension by mentioning here Mawlānā Khālīd al-Baghdādī, the leading figure of the rival Naqshī group. The third possibility is that Mawlānā Khālīd al-Baghdādī was the strongest figure among all Naqshī groups in the last decades of the 19th century. Even state officials, the Ottoman bureaucrats, were respecting the followers of Mawlānā Khālīd al-Baghdādī in Istanbul, Anatolia, and other places, inasmuch as Khālīd gave firm support to the Ottoman state as the last power in the world against British colonialism and the newly- emergent Wahhābī movement. In the middle of these touchy conditions, Murād Ramzī must have mentioned Khālīd al-Baghdādī with his good deeds.<sup>274</sup>

Mawlānā Khālīd al-Baghdādī al-Kurdī wrote poems and booklets in Arabic, Persian and Kurdish languages. It means that Naqshī masters contributed in their own

<sup>274</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 161-162.

mother tongues (vernacularism) with the help of the cosmopolitan language (Arabic) they employed in their major books.<sup>275</sup> They must have imitated some literary genres and forms of the current cosmopolitan language, and then they would create original works in the local-regional tongues they were speaking

According to Ramzī, the most famous deputy of the Naqshī–Khālīdī branch in his time was Aḥmad ʿIyā al-dīn Gümüşhanevi (d. 1893, from Gümüşhane, Turkey). During his long journeys Ramzī stayed in Istanbul, listening to Aḥmad ʿIyā al-dīn Gümüşhanevi's *ḥadīth* lessons in 1306 AH/1888-1889 AD. Sheikh Aḥmad was giving lessons from a very thick *ḥadīth* book called *Rāmūz al-aḥādīth* ("The Ocean of the Prophetic Tradition") that he had prepared. He was very old and his voice could not be heard clearly, but lots of students, Sufi followers, and young scholars were listening to him very carefully.<sup>276</sup>

Murād Ramzī's Meccan connections were truly international. He met here state officials, students, diplomats, scholars, traders, and immigrants coming from all Muslim cities around the world. Now he understood the seriousness of the multi-faceted problems Muslims were facing under colonial rulers. We have many interesting figures to evaluate the cultural nature of his network in Mecca, such as 'Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm (1944), the famous Tatar traveler and Pan-Islamist author, who was one of the important guests of Ramzī in Mecca. Let us give a clear example for the results of Ramzī's unique experience with the multi-ethnic network in Mecca and Medina, enriched with his attempt to translate the *Maktūbāt*, the official handbook of the Naqshī–Mujaddidī path.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>276</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, p. 181.

As we mentioned before, Ramzī's second great sheikh, Muḥammad Maẓhar, was an expert on the *Maktūbāt*, for he concentrated on this book with the lessons given by his father Sheikh Aḥmad Sa'īd. He was easily solving the most difficult lines in the text of *Maktūbāt*.<sup>277</sup> Maybe he was the first person to encourage Ramzī to translate the *Maktūbāt*. Here we also observe the interesting adventures of printed Sufi texts in the beginning of 20th century:

Ramzī (d. 1935), a Turkic scholar, started to translate the Persian letters of Sirhindī (d. 1624), the Punjabi-Indian Sufi thinker, into the Arabic language with the encouragement of Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Zawāwī (d. 1891), the Algerian-Meccan 'Arab Sufi leader in Ḥijāz. Ramzī's close friend Wan Sulaiman Wan Siddik (d. 1935), a descendant from a Malay noble family, studied Ramzī's translations of the *Maktūbāt*, *Rashaḥāt*, and *al-Raḥma al-Hābiṭa*, after which he became the first Sufi scholar who theorized all details of the Naqshbandī–Mujaddidī–Aḥmadī branch in the Malay Peninsula and the East Indies, relying upon Ramzī's works.<sup>278</sup> Ramzī clearly talked about a Javanese friend who was another disciple of al-Zawāwī. This Javanese friend shared together with Ramzī the position of sheikh after al-Zawāwī left Mecca in 1302 AH/1884 AD.<sup>279</sup>

We observe here a great meeting of authors, translators, mystic leaders, and financial resources from many continents; all those factors just came together over the

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>278</sup> Muḥammad Khairi Mahyuddin, "Aḥmad Al-Sirhindī's Stations of Muraqabah in the Naqshabandi Order Taught by Wan Sulaiman Wan Siddik, A 19th Century Malay Scholar in the Malay World", *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, vol. 4, no. 6 (June 2013), pp. 137-146.

<sup>279</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Mu'arrab al-Maktūbāt* (Istanbul, 2001), vol. 3, p. 305.

translation, publishing, and interpretation of Sufi texts. Of course, there might have been some followers of the Naqshbandī order in the Malay Peninsula before Wan Sulaiman; however, he was the first to offer a comprehensive theory for Naqshbandī–Mujaddidī–Aḥmadī teachings there. That was an immense consequence of the efforts of one humble translator whose works would become a major reference for thousands of Sufi heirs in Southeast Asia.<sup>280</sup> As Malay scholar Mahyuddin mentioned: “Wan Sulaiman’s reference to Muḥammad Murād Ramzī al-Qazānī’s writings signifies that he has a trust in his authority.”<sup>281</sup> As Mahyuddin mentioned, Wan Sulaiman would say at the end of his project about the Naqshbandī rite:

At the end of my writing in this epistle, I had collected and cited from the authentic Naqshbandī literature such as *Rashaḥāt*, *al-Raḥmah al-Hābitah* and the collective letters of Sheikh Muḥammad Murād al-Qazānī, and other lessons that I had received from my Master’s tongue.<sup>282</sup>

Here an interesting point is that if the translator is right, Wan Suleiman Siddik considered the collected letters of Aḥmad Sirhindī to be a creative contribution by Murād Ramzī, declaring that he had studied all the data about Naqshī tradition while depending on the sources prepared by Murād Ramzī. In fact, he must have known that the real author was Sirhindī, but at the same time, he realized also that the Arabic *al-Maktūbāt* should be counted somehow as an independent contribution of the great translator and commentator Murād Ramzī to Naqshabandīya or universal Sufi culture.

<sup>280</sup> See for Sufi orders in Southeast Asia: Martin van Bruinessen, “The origins and development of Sufi orders (tarekat) in Southeast Asia”, *Studia Islamika-Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1994), pp. 1-23.

<sup>281</sup> Mahyuddin, “Aḥmad Al-Sirhindī’s Stations of Muraqabah in the Naqshabandi Order Taught by Wan Sulaiman Wan Siddik”, pp. 137-146

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

We should also mention the decisive influence of Ramzī's translations in Anatolia, where whole branches of the Naqshabandīya had already turned to follow Khālīd al-Baghdādī (d. 1827), the Kurdish Naqshī–Mujaddidī Sheikh.<sup>283</sup> He provided an indirect effect on the dissemination of *al-Maktūbāt* in this crowded arena, which meant the popularization of Ramzī's translations. In this era, Istanbul, the capital city of the Ottoman Empire, became a leading center of Khālīdī–Mujaddidī branches of the Naqshabandīya through the efforts of Sheikh Aḥmad Gümüşhanevi (d. 1893) and, of course, with the clear support of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>284</sup> As a result, the *Maktūbāt* became one of the favorite books there. Although the oldest translation of the Persian *Maktūbāt* into Ottoman Turkish by Mustakimzade (d. 1788) had been printed in Istanbul in 1860, it was already considered old fashioned.<sup>285</sup> We observe that all subsequent new versions of the *Maktūbāt* in Turkish were translated or regenerated from the Arabic text of Ramzī. Furthermore, Ramzī's Arabic text of the *Maktūbāt* (1898) was reprinted again in Istanbul in 1969 and it was disseminated widely throughout the major Naqshī *dargāhs* in Istanbul and Anatolia. Until now, I have seen different types of *Maktūbāt* adaptations, translations, selections, even, a “Kırk Manalı” type of translation in which the Arabic text of Ramzī was translated literally “word by word” and then the total meaning of the sentence was given in Turkish with a commentary. This huge monumental commentary

<sup>283</sup> For the importance of Sheikh Khālīd al-Baghdādī in the Naqshabandīya order, see: Weismann, *The Naqshbandīya*, pp. 85-91.

<sup>284</sup> Weismann, *The Naqshbandīya*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>285</sup> See for Mustakimzade Suleyman Sadeddin Efendi: B. Kellner-Heinkele, “Mustakim-Zade”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 724-725. See also his work on the *Maktūbāt*: Mustakimzade Sadeddin Efendi, *Mektubat-i Kudsiyye* (Istanbul, 1860).



was based entirely on Ramzī's Arabic text of the *Maktūbāt*. It was completed two years ago, in eight volumes, 6673 pages!<sup>286</sup> Nowadays, another publisher in Turkey says:

The *Maktūbāt* you receive right now is the Turkish translation of the letters that Honorary Imām Rabbani Aḥmad Sirhindī wrote originally in Arabic and sent to his friends!

This publisher seems to have believed, or at least suggested, that the *Maktūbāt* was originally written in Arabic!<sup>287</sup> That is the awe-inspiring result of a magnificent translation deliberately created by the very intelligent scholar Murād Ramzī of Kazan.

### 2.3.3. The third circle: Sheikh Zaynullāh Rasūlī in Kazan

In the first decade of the 20th century (1895-1908), Ramzī was trying to complete his historical opus *Talfīq al-akhbār*. It was also for him the period of *Burhān* (Reason), as we will explain in Chapter 5. In this new phase, Ramzī was making abundant use of Ibn Khaldūn, Ahmed Cevdet (Aḥmad Jawdat), Draper, and other authors for his project to write a national history, the *Talfīq al-akhbār*. He was very grateful to Zaynullāh for helping him get this book into print.

Zaynullāh Rasūlī (d. 1917), the Naqshbandī sheikh of the Volga-Ural region, would be the last but also the most influential person in Murād Ramzī's spiritual life. As Hamid Algar indicated, Zaynullāh was the leading person among all the Naqshī-Khālīdī

<sup>286</sup> See: Imām Rabbani, *Mektubat-ı Rabbani-Kelime Anlamlı*, translated and prepared by Taha Alp, Mustafa Alp, Orhan Ençakar, Ömer Faruk Tokat (Istanbul: Yasin Yayınları, 2011) in 8 volumes (5673 pages). This was the major classical way of translation in the living madrasa tradition in Turkey. Especially, the community of Mahmud Efendi (a traditional Mujaddidī-Khālīdī branch of the Naqshbandīya in Istanbul) is highly expert in these kinds of exhaustive works of translation and commentary.

<sup>287</sup> See the introductory section and cover: İmām Rabbani, *Mektubat-i Rabbani*, trans. Abdulkadir Akçiçek (Istanbul: Çelik Yayınevi, 2011).

sheikhs of the region. He was in fact more important than many famous figures and his career bears “witness to the continuing centrality of the Naqshbandī order among the Tatars and Bashkorts until the Bolshevik revolution”.<sup>288</sup> Obviously, he was a strong guardian for Volga-Ural Muslim identity and one of a few men respected by all traditionalists, reformists, and modernists, even though he had a colorfully turbulent and controversial style of life.

As Murād Ramzī mentioned in his book, Zaynullāh son of Ḥabībullāh—known later as Sheikh Zaynullāh al-Khālīdī, Zaynullāh Ishān, and Zaynullāh Rasūlī—was born in 1250 AH/1835 AD in Sharīf, a Bashkort town in the Zlatoust district of Orenburg province.<sup>289</sup> He began his education at the age of ten in the village of Muynaq under the tutelage of Muḥammad al-Bukhārī. When this Bukharan teacher died, Zaynullāh studied for two more years in Muynaq under the tutelage of Ya‘qūb ibn Aḥmad al-Ākhundī. Zaynullāh traveled in 1859 to Chardaqlī, a village near Chelyabinsk, for initiation into the Naqshbandī order at the hands of ‘Abd al-ḥakīm son of Qurbān ‘Alī Chardaqlī (d. 1872). About ten years after his initiation by ‘Abd al-ḥakīm Chardaqlī (1870), Zaynullāh left to perform the pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj*), stopping in Istanbul en route in order to see this great metropolis, as was the custom for pilgrims coming from Russia and Central Asia. From among the famous Sufī scholars he met there, Sheikh Aḥmad Ḍiyā al-dīn Gümüshanevi (d. 1893) was the most prominent Naqshbandī sheikh of Istanbul.<sup>290</sup> Murād Ramzī wrote

<sup>288</sup> See Algar, “Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev: The Last Great Naqshbandi Shaykh of the Volga-Urals Region”, p. 112.

<sup>289</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908), vol. 2, p. 491.

<sup>290</sup> See Algar, “Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev: The Last Great Naqshbandi Shaykh of the Volga-Urals Region”, p. 112.

more than eight pages about Zaynullāh Rasūlī in his book *Talfīq al-akhbār*. Zaynullāh is represented as the most influential sheikh of the age, not only in the Volga-Ural region but in the whole of the Central Asian regions. He was considered by Murād Ramzī “a balanced man between the spiritual and profane”.<sup>291</sup>

According to Murād Ramzī, Sheikh Zaynullāh Rasūlī was always under surveillance by the Russian government’s police network. They were suspicious of Rasūlī but could not understand exactly what he was doing. Many times they exiled him to faraway points in isolated areas of Siberia, but the sheikh succeeded in finding new followers to create a barrier of cultural resistance against Russian colonial hegemony. Another problem for Zaynullāh was the jealousy of some traditionalist sheikhs and scholars around Kazan. Murād Ramzī indicated this difficult position of Zaynullāh:

When he returned to Kazan, people gathered around him. He was so popular that some local *khojas* and scholars became severely upset, inasmuch as all their former students left them, and went to the madrasa of Sheikh Zaynullāh. The new pupils of Zaynullāh were zealous. They were crying and mentioning the name of Allah loudly in the circles of *dhikr* [remembrance of God, by repeating His names]. However, this was not good news for Zaynullāh. Old rivals finally found a reason for accusing the great sheikh, then they sent written complaints to the government in order to make Russian official surveillance network (شبكة الحكومة) concentrate on his activities. They were so jealous that they claimed that Zaynullāh must be a sorcerer, attracting all people around him with his magical powers!<sup>292</sup>

For Ramzī, one of the most significant qualities of Zaynullāh was his ability to mobilize a great community to transform a small local district into a cultural center where the people would live and experience a strong consciousness of Muslim identity, even

<sup>291</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908), vol. 2, pp. 491-499.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 492.

though the Russian official and educational powers had already organized a long campaign to separate the Tatars, Bashkorts, and other Muslim groups from their own religious and cultural heritage. This is a typical example of habitus or “theory of practice” in which Zaynullāh created, consciously or unconsciously, his strategic solutions with the limited instruments he had at his disposal, in a battlefield where his rivals had more dominant instruments and opportunities, as Bourdieu stated:

Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore, constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures.<sup>293</sup>

The Russian Empire as a colonizer and game-maker power was trying to disrupt the fabric of Tatar and Bashkort Muslim society for more than 350 years in order to achieve its major goal.<sup>294</sup> Imperial Russia’s goal was to eradicate or assimilate Muslim ethnicities to Russian Orthodox values, separating them from their cultural sources and finally subjugating what they had in their hands (steppes, forests, property), in their minds (the honor of belonging to the same Khanate of Kazan or their common history), and in their hearts (believing that they were Muslims). The Russian Empire applied different types of instruments to its sophisticated project such as exiling intellectuals and respected resistance leaders to Siberia or encouraging them to use the Cyrillic alphabet with the help of Il’minsky, the religious educator and “civilizer”.

<sup>293</sup> Here I refer to “habitus”, “field” and “player” from Pierr Bourdieu’s terminological universe. See: Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp.19-22, 133-134; see also his explanation about the “game” and “player”, pp. 98-99.

<sup>294</sup> The Khanate of Kazan was conquered by the Grand Duchy of Muscovy in 1552. Over the course of four centuries it has been exposed to different types of assimilation projects. Only, the reign of Catherine II the Great (1762-1796) was considered wiser and a little bit fairer for the Muslim Tatars, as Murād Ramzī mentioned in *Talfīq al-akhbār*.

However, Zaynullāh and other smart players created their unique strategies in this long ideological war, changing and being changed by outsider factors, but also converting the towns of Siberia into vivid centers of Tatar–Bashkort Muslim culture with the help of cultural capital they had, i.e., the deep knowledge of Sufism, popular *dastāns*, folktales, and the narratives of their fathers. Murād Ramzī said:

They exiled our master Zaynullāh Rasūlī from one isolated point to another. Finally, he was sent to a small district of Troyski [Troitsk] which was called Amur. Then, it became one of the most beautiful centers of God believers. With the spiritual help and the great efforts of honest Sufis, a wonderful mosque was established there. Finally, this place became a focal point for students from all around the Volga-Ural region, and then, Sheikh Zaynullāh gave the name al-Ma‘mūriya to this district.<sup>295</sup> The students and peoples were coming from Kazakh towns and Tatar cities to establish new buildings for education and to worship Allah. He spent more than 8,000 ruble from his own pocket (من جيبه) to build the famous Stone School (*al-Madrassa al-Ḥajariyya*).<sup>296</sup>

Now, we observe that Murād Ramzī’s real passion was to protect the identity of Volga-Ural Muslims against the Russian cultural campaigns. Even though he chose methods of cultural resistance, he was never afraid of criticizing both the Russian institutions and some Qadīmist (old conservative) scholars terrified of saying anything against the Tsarist instruments of suppression.

Ramzī’s accounts also indicate that large number of followers of the Khalidī-Mujaddidī branch of the Naqshbandīya were active around the Volga-Ural region. These followers would be the last strong group to revive the identity of Muslim Tatars there as prolific educators and intellectuals. For instance, Muḥammad Dhākir Efendi of Chistay (Chistopol’, southeast of Kazan) was the most famous deputy of the

<sup>295</sup> *al-Ma‘mūriya* (المعمورية) means ‘the vivid, vibrant, thriving city’.

<sup>296</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908), vol. 2, pp. 491-499.

Naqshī–Khālidi branch in Kazan. He received all rational and traditional disciplines from the famous scholar ‘Abdullāh of Machkara, and then he was initiated by Maḥmūd Efendi of Dagestan from the Naqshī–Khālidi branch. As we mentioned before, Zaynullāh Rasūlī Efendi also was first initiated by ‘Abd al-ḥakim of Chardaqli from the Naqshī–Mujaddidī branch, then by Aḥmad Diyā al-dīn Gümüşhanevi of Istanbul from the Naqshī–Khālidi–Mujaddidī branch. Ramzī said that the both were sending letters to each other about spiritual issues.<sup>297</sup> However, because we know that Zaynullāh was always supporting many cultural activities in Kazan—including printing Ramzī’s historical work *Talḥīq al-akḥbār*—and by educating many Tatar nationalist intellectuals, the letters might have also had political and cultural aspects.

Here the game was played with different types of tools: When the Russian officials tried to make Muslim autochthons in Siberia, the Volga-Ural region, and the Caucasus “culturally Russified peoples” with the help of a strong surveillance system and through tools of educational hegemony, Sufi masters such as Sheikh Zaynullāh, Muḥammad Dhākir, ‘Abd al-ḥakim of Chardaqli, and ‘Abdullāh of Machkara tried to protect the identity of Tatars, Bashkorts, Siberian Muslims, and peoples of the Caucasus by alternative means such as sending letters to each other, printing key books, meeting in homes, and praying together as much as they could. In other words, they attempted to construct their peculiar social reality in the middle of an Orthodox Christian Russian Empire using modern and traditional methods.

However, no one would be absolutely successful to reach a desired aim in this long game. The Russians could not destruct the feeling of belonging to a Muslim heritage

<sup>297</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 181-184.

in the hearts of Tatars and others. On the other hand, the Tatars could not establish their own independent political-cultural structure in the heart of Russian Empire, but they succeeded in transferring their cultural codes to the next generation to the extent possible. We see no unique specific factor influencing the struggle between Russian colonialism and the Volga-Ural Muslim peoples. Instead, many factors and different engagements were present and observable.

#### **2.3.4. The fourth circle: The new bourgeoisie centered around the Volga-Ural cities**

When Ramzī was participating in discussions in Kazan and other cities of the Volga-Ural region, his enemy was neither the Russian people nor some traitorous descendants of Tatars, Bashkorts, or Kazakhs. At different times, he severely criticized the Christianization policy of Nikolay Ivanovich Il'minsky (d. 1891) and Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev (d. 1907) in the sphere of education. According to Ramzī, the real and longstanding enemy of Volga-Ural Muslim culture was the method and approach imposed by Il'minsky and Pobedonostsev. Because Il'minsky consciously sought to destroy the common cultural achievements of Muslim and Turkic peoples with his project for the Cyrillic alphabet, Murād Ramzī called Il'minsky the “Pharaoh of this *Umma*” (فرعون هذه الأمة) with a decorative tone only an intellectual Muslim reader would understand. He also believed that the Russian Orthodox Church under the influence of zealots such as Pobedonostsev and Il'minsky was the the real ruler over the Russian imperial bureaucratic system.<sup>298</sup> He generally did not abstain from critical statements

<sup>298</sup> See for details about the Christianization process and Il'minsky and his negative effects on Tatar educational life, see: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 268-272.

about the wrongs of the Russian Empire, but he directed his sharpest criticism towards Il'minsky. If we look at the problem from a different perspective, we may see some strange similarities between Il'minsky and Ramzī. While Iminsky was aiming at an education which was “national in form, Orthodox in content”,<sup>299</sup> Ramzī tried to establish a Turkic national history with Islamic content in his *Talfīq al-akhbār*. Perhaps the first moments of the rivalry between Russian (Orthodox) and Turkic (Muslim) intellectuals might go back to when the Crimean intellectual İsmail Gasprinsky published his first writings which must have also influenced Ramzī after many years. We will return to this issue in Chapter 5.

Murād Ramzī was not a silent man in the intellectual circles in Kazan and other Tatar and Bashkort centers. His passion for the protection of the national and cultural identity of Volga-Ural Muslims was so obvious that the famous Bashkort nationalist politician and historian Zeki Velidi Togan mentioned Murād Ramzī in his memoirs with a deep admiration:

A scholar of our country called Murād Ramzī is one of the major historians of our nation. He and Kene Sari gave us the idea of liberation. Murād Ramzī had been a guest of ours during the summer months. I spent an entire winter reading his masterpiece *Talfīq al-akhbār*, a 1300 page work on the history of Kazan Turks and Muslims in Russia. My maternal uncle had read many portions of this work while still in draft stage.<sup>300</sup>

These lines are clearly indicating that Murād Ramzī was weaving a national consciousness in the hearts of Muslim peoples around Kazan and the neighboring

<sup>299</sup> Isabelle Kreindler, “A Neglected Source of Lenin’s Nationality Policy”, *Slavic Review*, vol. 36, no. 1 (March, 1977), pp. 86-100.

<sup>300</sup> Z. V. Togan, *Memoirs: National Existence and Cultural Struggles of Turkistan and Other Muslim Eastern Turks*, trans. H. B. Paksoy: <http://zvtoganmemoirs.blogspot.com> (accessed May 27, 2012).



regions, as even the young Zeki Velidi was deeply impressed by the conversations in his home and Ramzī's writings. It is clear that Ramzī did change in the last visits to his homeland, even he was clearly articulating a special history for Turkic peoples living around the Volga-Ural region. However, he was not supporting a micro-nationalist approach such as Tatarism or Bashkortism. He was supporting a common Turkic discourse in Eurasia similar to what Zeki Velidi Togan advocated later, but with a bit more emphasis on the Tatars. He was clearly stating his intention to write a history of the Turkic peoples in the first pages,<sup>301</sup> but he also severely criticized those who were embarrassed of being Tatar. According to Ramzī, "Being a Tatar is not a shame as Russian imperial discourse suggests, instead, it is an honor." And he added: "Your fathers established great empires of Asia."<sup>302</sup>

Actually, he had never been an escapist from the real conditions of life and the problems his people faced. Furthermore, he wrote more than two sections of his book about the severe obstacles the Russian government put in front of his people. To criticize what was going on in Central Asia he translated some letters and reports of Russian high officials about how they manipulated the education of Muslims of Kazan.<sup>303</sup>

In the last chapter of the *Talfīq al-akhbār* Murād Ramzī added biographies of some important persons living around the Volga-Ural region. Here we observe that almost all of these persons had a reasonable amount of money and experience. They traveled to faraway centers of Islamic cultures in order to gain money, knowledge, or

<sup>301</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908), vol. 1, p. 13.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 9.

<sup>303</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, p. 269.

good manners.<sup>304</sup> These kinds of journeys should be considered a precious experience for new traders, young students, adventurous persons, artisans, and men of letters. When we make a short survey of this group of individuals, we realize that there was a colorful rising bourgeois class among the Tatars, especially from Kazan, as Yemelianova mentions in connection with other matters for that era.<sup>305</sup> They went to Tashkent and the Kazakh steppe not only for trading goods, but also for mediating between the Russian government and indigenous local peoples. Adventurers coming from Kazan were not just religious scholars or poor students, they could also be translators, bureaucrats, agricultural experts, and artisans. Those who ventured outside Kazan should not have to return there. Some of them traveled to Harbin (Manchuria), Baghdad, Istanbul, and Cairo. Later they went back within new families and scholar groups. Some of them came back to Kazan with fresh information on the Muslim world and practical knowledge on the needs of daily life.

Another interesting tendency in the information given by Ramzī was that the new young Muslim scholars were not going to Bukhara to learn Islamic disciplines, although this region was once the most prominent center for Islamic disciplines. Even Murād Ramzī complained about this city at different times, claiming that: “It has nothing to do with ‘ilm (العلم)!” According to Ramzī, the people of this city had become so ignorant that they could not separate between a valuable ‘ālim (scholar) and a charlatan. Furthermore, their scholars were inclined to accept old-style fallacies without searching in the books or without real life experience. In the final lines of his complaints, Murād Ramzī clearly said

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 332-405.

<sup>305</sup> Galina M. Yémelianova “The national identity of the Volga Tatars at the turn of the 19th century: Tatarism, Turkism and Islam”, *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 6: 4 (1997), pp. 543-572.

“No need to go to Bukhara!”<sup>306</sup> With the enormous contributions to Islamic civilization by Tatar scholars such as al-Qursāwī, Marjānī, and other unique figures, the Volga-Ural region surpassed the level of Bukhara in Islamic disciplines and in understanding the new problems of the Muslims.

Whenever Murād Ramzī talked about his network in Kazan and other Islamic cultural centers of the Volga-Ural region, he generally appreciated the works and projects of Jadīdist scholars, especially their passion for new methods in education.<sup>307</sup> Although he criticized some ultra-Jadīdists who were extreme in religious disciplines, he generally defended great Jadīdist figures such as Gasprinsky and Marjānī.<sup>308</sup> He appreciated the many scholars going to and from Egypt and Hijāz, though he had reservations regarding their new opinions about women and other touchy issues related to inner spiritual culture.<sup>309</sup>

Among the scholars and colleagues Ramzī mentioned in his network are very intriguing persons with different life stories and backgrounds. As the last decade of the 19th century approached, many scholars from the Volga-Ural region and Daghestan began to organize major journeys to Istanbul and Anatolian cities. Some of them died there.<sup>310</sup> The cultural and emotional relations between Anatolia and the Volga-Ural region was at its peak in this era. Some scholars of the Volga-Ural region also went to

<sup>306</sup> See for the details: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 381-382.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 305-306.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 330 and 334.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 346-347.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 347-352.

Egypt and Hijāz. For example, Shams al-dīn, a great scholar of Qur'ān recitation, later became the head professor of the Egyptian ruler Ibrāhīm Paşa, eldest son of Muḥammad 'Alī.<sup>311</sup> A close friend of Murād Ramzī was the famous traveler 'Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm, whose thoughts on the political unity of Muslims influenced Ramzī in his last years.<sup>312</sup> Another scholar, Tāj al-dīn, wrote a short Qur'ān commentary in the Turkish language.<sup>313</sup> A scholar called Dawlatbaqī wanted to learn astronomy in order to understand clearly the exact times of prayers, so he traveled to distant countries. When he came back to his birthplace he taught astronomy and donated all his books and tools to the museum of the city of Tobol.<sup>314</sup> 'Abd al-ghafūr was a great religious scholar and a respectable mathematician who taught math to the people of his city.<sup>315</sup> Shah Aḥmad Yūsuf was an officer in the Russian Army who served as cavalryman and scout, later he returned to his town and served as an expert and scholar, explaining what was going on in the borderlands of the Russian Empire.<sup>316</sup> Dhulqarnayn ibn Khalīl was a very famous sheikh influencing many people in faraway towns, villages, and cities in Siberia, finally earning the title of "Sheikh of Siberia".<sup>317</sup> Baymurād Muḥarrām of Kazan was a great scholar and a very famous trader of cloth and texture whose father had been a rich man, too.<sup>318</sup> 'Abd

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 356-357.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 359-360.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 362.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 363.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 369.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 372.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 373.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 375.

al-ṣālīḥ ‘Abdullāh, a friend of Murād Ramzī in Mecca, made a great deal of money by beekeeping when he returned to his town. Then he established a large madrasa and paid all needs of this institution from his own pocket.<sup>319</sup> Muḥammad Dhākir Efendi, a close friend of the author, became a remarkable bureaucrat of the Ottoman Empire in Mecca, organizing Sufi *dargāhs* and madrasas there.<sup>320</sup> Another friend of Ramzī named Muḥammad Karīm of Teknesh went to Istanbul and became a famous scholar there. His sons made a great deal of money through engaging in trade. What is more, one of them became *Kürkçübaşı*, the official whose job was keeping furs in the Ottoman Palace.<sup>321</sup> A person from Kazan named Sa‘īd became a prominent scholar in Istanbul and went to the inner regions of Anatolia where he died many years later.<sup>322</sup>

It seemed that Ramzī’s Tatars of Kazan were a truly cosmopolitan people one could find in every spot in the world. As Ramzī would confess in the last chapters of his historical work, something must have been good with the Russian Empire, especially in the last years. Otherwise, it would have been impossible to see positive effects to the extent he described here.

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<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 377.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 392.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 395.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 400.

### 2.3.5. Conclusion

Murād Ramzī experienced four remarkable circles in his life. First, he encountered the school of Marjānī, who heavily influenced Ramzī through his educational project and the art of authorship which was reflected in Ramzī's great historical work *Talfīq al-akhbār*.

Ramzī's second circle was al-Zawāwī's *dargāh* in Mecca and Medina that had once been the center of global Sufi orders. Here, he experienced a multi-ethnic, transregional brotherhood within which he realized the connective power of translating. In Mecca, he completed the translation of the *Maktūbāt*, which was distributed and studied over a wide geography stretching from Anatolia to the East Indies.

Ramzī's third circle was Zaynullāh's school. Zaynullāh was able to transform a small town into a bustling cultural center. In the face of an organized effort to fragment the religious solidarity and cultural unity of Muslims along ethnic lines, Zaynullāh's efforts promulgated an awareness of Islamic identity amongst the multitudes of Muslims. Limited by the austerity of his resources, Zaynullāh formulated remarkably effective and feasible solutions in his "theory of practice" on a battlefield where his opponent seemed to dominate overwhelmingly. Against all odds, Zaynullāh succeeded, accomplishing his goal with the unique methods he devised, gaining in the process hard-earned cultural capital.

After many years Ramzī returned to his homeland, where he would occupy a singular position in new discussions unfolding around questions of nation and society. He would play the role of a conservative in religious issues, a reformer in matters of pedagogy, and a modernist in the quest to build a new Muslim Turkic nation around the

Volga-Ural region. But the wealth we find in Ramzī's various intellectual positions was not exclusive to the Muslim intelligentsia of the region.

The people as well as the scholars of the Volga-Ural region attained a unique station both materially and spiritually for a number of reasons. The people of this region look to the future, and, when they do reflect on their history, it is not to lament cultural and political degradation or to mourn over a golden age long since past. Instead, we find amongst the peoples of the Volga-Ural region a tradition of attending to the problems at hand or writing their own prognosis for the future they will face, as we observe in Marjānī's discussions. This psychological disposition put such thinkers on the offensive, thus gaining them an advantage over obstacles the government had put in place. Marjānī and his followers meticulously studied Russian law and the governmental machinery of the Tsarist state and succeeded in being a mediator in trade routes to the Kazakh steppe and Turkistan. However, many people around Bukhara could not understand yet what was going on outside of their boundaries. Because a strong state apparatus was established earlier in the Volga-Ural region, its population experienced the European methods of publication, trade, and agriculture. Moreover, they had already started to redefine their Islamic cultural identity in line with the Jadīdist ideology first expressed by Kazan and Crimean Tatar intellectuals, such as al-Qursāwī, Marjānī, and Gasprinsky. Besides, the Jadīdism of Kazan was different from the Jadīdism of the Uzbek and Bukharan tradition. The Tatars had already created a small but efficient group of traders, translators, governmental mediators, and bureaucrats as we read in the life stories of Murād Ramzī's close friends. They established their own masjids, madrasas, dormitories, and religious foundations without the help of the central government. This small but

sustainable development, both in monetary terms and in terms of cultural preservation, would pay off later under new conditions.



## CHAPTER 3

### Murād Ramzī and the Naqshī-Sufi Heritage: The Rise of *ʿIrfān*

#### 3.1. The principles and responsibilities

Murād Ramzī wrote *Dhayl Rashaḥāt* on Sufi ethics and the Naqshbandīya. He saw the Naqshbandīya as a lifestyle, a source of ethical principles to apply to all interactions and relationships. The Naqshbandīya remains important today as a spiritual path as well as a strategic political instrument for its followers around the world.<sup>323</sup>

Ramzī believed that a strong Naqshī ethic could obstruct corruption, degeneracy, and alienation in society. Even within his homeland, the Volga-Ural region, he was confronted with dissoluteness. He believed that a Naqshī ethic would enable societies to effectively solve problems, protect their identities, and guide them towards a superior existence both in this world (*al-Dunyā*) and in the hereafter (*al-Ākhira*). Ramzī's accounts of Sufi networks in Mecca include interesting details of how a Sufi leader passes his teachings on to his aspirants, how he approaches difficult situations, and how he explains complicated and sophisticated issues. The *ʿIrfān* (Gnosis) of Ramzī influenced his ethics and systems of interpretation while providing a social contract whose goal would be the consolidation of the Sufi brotherhood, putting the domains of *Bayān* (Scripture) and *Burhān* (Reason) as consistent with the lifestyle of a Sufi. Thus the Sufi brotherhood was recognized as equal to the *Umma*.

<sup>323</sup> Within the cities of present-day southern Anatolia, to name just one region, its followers include large Turkish and Kurdish communities.

***ʿIrfān* as the Leading Domain in Ramzī (post-1878 until the Last Years of the 19th Century)**

In response to colonialism and problematic political developments there arose an urgent need for solidarity within *ʿIrfān*-based brotherhoods. This Sufi brotherhood was reconstructed as if it was the *Umma*, with a goal to safeguard and strengthen both body (the *murīds*) and mind (the Sufi sheikh) of this society. The purpose of *Bayān* here was to support *ʿIrfān*.

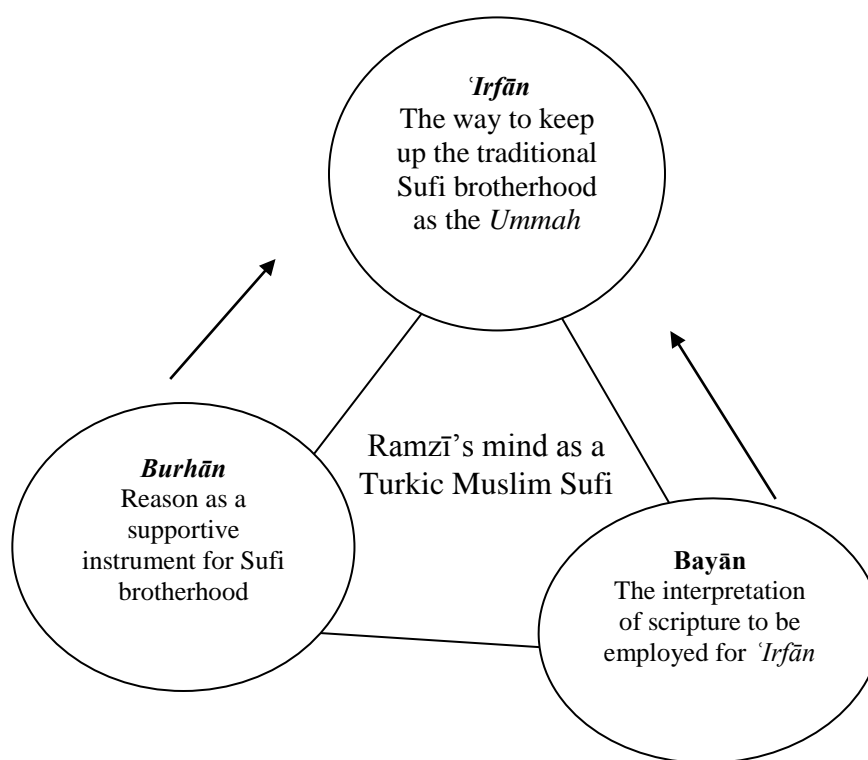


Figure 5. The Period of the Sufi Brotherhood as Reflected in Ramzī

Ramzī's short book known among scholars by different names such as *Dhayl Rashaḥāt*, *Tadhyīl Rashaḥāt*, or *Nafā'is al-sāniḥāt fī tadhyīl al-bāqiyāt* (نفائس السانحات فى تذييل الباقيات)<sup>324</sup> includes new biographies of some important Naqshī masters not mentioned in the original *Rashaḥāt*. It also declares the peculiar features of his own Aḥmadīya–Maḥzarīya branch within the Naqshī tradition. He emphasizes some elements of a particular Sufi tradition other than the famous “Eleven Naqshbandī principles” known as the *Kalimāt-i Qudsīya* (‘sacred words’) in Sufi terminology.<sup>325</sup> We will not focus here on the rather well-known Naqshī concepts. Instead, we will focus on other features Ramzī emphasized in his work.

Ramzī's peculiar Aḥmadīya–Maḥzarīya branch is different from the Khālīdī branch within the Naqshī tradition. His account includes some polemics against groups whom he saw as following a corrupted version of the original Naqshī path. According to Ramzī, the Naqshabandīya was not a path that could be followed independently. Instead, all signs, stations, and levels in this path should be supervised under the guidance of a master. The stature and responsibility of a sheikh are thus considerably greater than that of a *murīd*. Also, any failures on the part of the *murīd* can threaten the reputation of the sheikh.

<sup>324</sup> See: Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *Dhayl Rashaḥāt ‘ayn al-ḥayāt (Nafā'is al-sāniḥāt fī tadhyīl al-bāqiyāt)* (Mecca 1890), pp. 2-3. The long name of the book can be translated as: “Jewels of the inspirations as supplemental for the remaining biographies”.

<sup>325</sup> For these famous principles, see Ramzī's commentary: Murād Ramzī, *Tarjamat Rashaḥāt*, pp. 27-29. For detailed information in English, see also: Hamid Algar, “The Naqshbandī Order: A Preliminary Survey of its History and Significance”, *Studia Islamica*, vol. 44 (1976), pp. 133-134.

### 3.1.1. Strong intention to reach the Divine Truth

According to Ramzī, a *ṭālib* (‘sincere seeker of the divine truth’) will strive to both encounter and adhere to a path whose goal is one of spiritual development. If this man is to be considered a genuine *ṭālib*, it is essential that these primary indicators of the designation be revealed through a special inspiration from God. When a *ṭālib* is researching the appropriate path, an auspicious sign should appear in front of him/her. Ramzī indicates what the great Sufi scholars of Naqshī path (*al-Akābir*, *Khwājagān*) underlined: if a man or woman sought an appropriate spiritual path (*ṭarīqa*) to reach the Divine Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*), a clear sign from God will manifest itself. This event is called the “Epiphany of the Will” (*al-Tajallī al-Irādī*), because the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) has entered into the heart of the *ṭālib* making his/her own “will” (*al-Irāda*) coincide with the will of God. There should be no doubt on the part of the *ṭālib* when this event has occurred. Because this “epiphany” is ephemeral, the *ṭālib* must find a “perfect and perfecting” guide (*al-kāmil* and *mukammil*) who can guide the seeker to his/her goal. If a suitable guide is not found, the *ṭālib* will lose his/her gift, as has been observed many times.<sup>326</sup>

After the strong will is demonstrated by the human, the first sign or the “epiphany” comes from God. This means that if a human is indifferent to the Divine Truth or does not have a strong intention to seek Goodness, nothing will come from God. The term “will” here indicates that Naqshī philosophy might have been influenced by the al-Māturīdīya doctrine of *irāda* which asserts the power of human will in this universe to do something, but with the permission of God to achieve it. In the theological system of al-Māturīdīya, one can have willpower to do anything one wants, but it is God who

<sup>326</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl Rashaḥāt*, pp. 189-190.

creates the conditions appropriate to the accomplishment of the goal.<sup>327</sup> On the other hand, Jabrīya theology (supported by some medieval Sufi groups) approaches the problem of freewill with a tendency toward fatalism, asserting that there is no will but God's.

### 3.1.2. Inference and observation to find a good master

According to Ramzī, a *ṭālib* can find a good master only after long investigation, research, and observation. The perfect master cannot be found merely by selecting one among the so-called Sufi masters to be found lingering around mosques, preaching houses, or bazaars. For Ramzī, it is a serious and painstaking endeavor to find the perfect and perfecting guide (*al-murshid al-kāmil* and *al-mukammil*) when one wants to receive the love of God in one's heart. To understand if a master is a perfect guide or not, a *ṭālib* should follow the method of inference (*al-istidlāl*) and observe the behavior and activities of the candidate.

According to Ramzī, the observed candidate should follow first the River of Muṣṭafā, the last Messenger in the religion, namely Muḥammad. When he says “the River” (*al-Sharīʿa*) he meant not only the social religious law as some modern scholars would mean, but also the famous conceptual tripartite nature of this river: *Islām*, *Īmān*, and *Iḥsān*. The River of Muṣṭafā means more than socio-legal rules to be observed in daily life. It also implies “worshipping God sincerely as if you see Him, and if you do not

<sup>327</sup> For al-Māturīdīya and its approach to Free Will (*al-irāda*), see: W. Madelung, “Māturīdī” and “Māturīdīya”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), pp. 846-847.

see Him then He sees you”.<sup>328</sup> Second, the potential master should follow the lifestyle (*sunna*) of the last Messenger. Third, the master should have a deep understanding of the method of Khwājagān Sufis, the old masters of Naqshī tradition. If some pupils around the potential master are also showing a positive reflection of the spirituality, it is a good sign for him.<sup>329</sup> After long observation and research, a *ṭālib* can get closer to the master who has the requisites for training disciples and spiritual tutoring. If careful attention is not paid to selecting the right master, the *ṭālib* may devote a life time of energy and resources without ever gaining an understanding of the true greatness of the Divine Love.

### 3.1.3. Repentance (*tawba*) as the first step for initiation

Ramzī devotes a significant amount of his sentences to discussing the initiation rituals for the path. When the *ṭālib* tries to find a good master, he/she should first have the sincerity of the intention to travel in the path and take repentance (*tawba*). These gestures comprising the first station, are seen as the foundation upon which everything the *ṭālib* will do in the future. *Tawba* is accomplished by a strong intention to give up all sins the *ṭālib* partook of before. As Ramzī explains, repentance consists of several practical steps. These include giving back all items the *ṭālib* took unlawfully from people if it is possible; begging God for forgiveness and wishing the best gift from God for the owner of the taken item if it is not possible to give back the purloined item; performing immediately

<sup>328</sup> This idea is from the famous Prophetic *ḥadīth*: “The Prophet came out to people and a man came to him and asked, ‘What is *imān*?’ He said, ‘*Iman* is that you believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, the meeting with Him, His Messengers and that you believe in the last rising [from the grave].’ He asked: ‘What is *Islām*?’ He said, ‘Islam is that you worship God without associating anything with Him as a partner, establish the obligatory prayer, and pay the obligatory *zakāt* (for poor people) and fast during Ramadan.’ He asked: ‘what is *iḥsān*?’ He said, ‘That you worship God as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him then He sees you.’ See: *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, The Book of Faith (*Kitāb al-Īmān*), *ḥadīth* no. 431.

<sup>329</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl Rashaḥāt*, p. 190.

the practices stipulated by Islām such as prayer, fasting, and alms-giving but disregarded by the *tālib*; wishing forgiveness from God for the consumption of alcohol, adultery, and other sins; and sincerely praying to never turn back to the sins. After this ceremony, the *tālib* can perform the rituals stipulated by the master such as repeating one of the names of God or reciting an *āya* from the Qur’ān after the master.<sup>330</sup>

### 3.1.4. Seclusion as a method of purification from inner darkness

Ramzī describes seclusion (*inziwā’* or *khalwa*) as one of the appropriate ways for spiritual purification. It could be also an opportunity for a critical approach to the deeds and activities the *murīd* does in everyday life. However, it does not mean a total isolation from society, mosque, school, or bazaar. It is rather a necessary and regular practice a *murīd* should repeat whenever he/she needs. Here, Ramzī offers explanations about seclusion by quoting from the book *Manāzil al-sālikīn* written by the famous Sufī author ‘Abdullāh al-Harawī al-Anṣārī (d. 1089). In this book, ‘Abdullāh al-Harawī quotes Abū Madyan’s statement: “Among the good qualities of a *murīd* is staying away from people as the Prophet went to the Cave Hira to worship God.” Ramzī continues his explanation on seclusion by quoting from the famous Sufī poet ‘Abd al-raḥmān Jāmī.<sup>331</sup> In another account he says:

Seclusion is not among the necessary principles of the Naqshbandī path even though it is recommended to stay away from strangers. Seclusion is still considered to be one of the important duties by the consensus of great masters.<sup>332</sup>

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 199-201.

According to Ramzī, regular seclusion, or “solitary retreat for 40 days” (*Arba ‘in*)<sup>333</sup> is not what the great masters have always preferred. They have preferred conversation (*ṣuḥba*) among *murīds* during the solitary retreat. However, Ramzī thinks that solitary retreat can make the practice of conversation more useful in spiritual life. It is also one of the crucial rituals which has come down to us from the Prophet under the name *i‘tikāf*. According to Ramzī, some of the late Naqshī masters, such as Khālīd, chose solitary retreat and then his admirers followed this method, too. Ramzī does not object to Khālīd Baghdādī, who was also mentioned among the great masters in his account.<sup>334</sup>

### 3.1.5. The master as an extended shadow for his followers

According to Ramzī, a Sufi sheikh is like an extended shadow of his/her followers. Any sin, bad behavior, inappropriate manner, or rudeness emerging from the follower (*murīd*) could be tracked in the inner world of the master. It means that if something goes wrong, obviously the master must have done something wrong before. When the head of a spiritual community observes a deviance among the members, he/she should ask first, “What is wrong with me?” Otherwise, a true spiritual achievement will have never been provided. In this context, Ramzī told a story from Bāqībillāh. Khwāja Bāqībillāh (d. 1603) believed that he has an extended identity of his followers. It means that whenever he observed bad behavior among of his *ṭālibs* he counted it from among his own sins. He

<sup>333</sup> In Turkish Sufi culture it is called “Erbain çıkarmak”. The original term is coming from Persian: *Chila-nashīnī* (چله نشینی).

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.



said: “In fact, this is a part of our faults; it just appeared as a reflection from us! These poor guys could not do that!”<sup>335</sup> Another account is about Ramzī’s sheikh Aḥmad Sa‘īd, son of Abū Sa‘īd. He said: “If one of my *murīds* did a misdeed, it should be counted as my misdeed. If I were a good guide, he/she would never have done that. That is just a reflection of our bad aspects!”<sup>336</sup>

Here we observe a different understanding of personality, putting the whole responsibility on the shoulder of the Sufi master, not on the individual members of the community. It is neither similar to the modern notion of competence, individuality of the punishment and award, nor to the meaning of the Qur’ānic *āya*: “And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another” (Sūra Fāṭir, 35:18). However, it can be interpreted with the famous metaphor of “heart and body” in a living community of believers, as the Prophet indicates.<sup>337</sup> The heart in the Sufi community here is the sheikh, and all other organs of the body are members of the community in which any bad sign is eventually related or connected to the heart, the Sufi sheikh. This is a positive interpretation of the aforementioned principle.

However, a negative interpretation also can be produced, as in the following: The members have no right to speak against the sheikh; moreover, they should be annihilated

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>337</sup> The metaphorical *ḥadīth* on the ethical rules the head of the community should follow: (ألا وإن في الجسد (مضغة إذا صلحت صلح الجسد كله). It is reported by Bukhārī with *ḥadīth*, no. 52: “There is a clump of flesh in the body. If it becomes good, the whole body becomes good, and, if it becomes bad, the whole body becomes bad. It is the heart.” Some interpreters commented on this *ḥadīth*, saying that what is intended here is not the head of the Muslim community, but the conscience or intellect of the human being. If it enters a sinful area, it is difficult to save it and the other senses cannot help it.

in the persona of the sheikh. They do not have even the power to will to be sinful. What is really existent is the Sufi sheikh as an extended shadow of God in the visible world.

By using the same metaphor, one can put the *pādishāh* of an empire, the president of a state, or the generalissimo of a military coup (or the civilian leader of a coup d'état) in the place of the sheikh. Then, this analogy can be easily switched to the area of political terminology and be employed in the service of “divine states” in the world. It is obvious that every state or political structure, as a worldly construction, can be employed as an instrument of cruelty, even though it is supported by so-called divine principles. This is the clear portrait of many religion-based political structures which are considered to be “heavenly” in theory, but turn out to be a place of unjust punishments in practice. Yet, this is not a problem pertaining only to the mental structure of religious-mystical communities. We observe that a strict secularism mixed with ethnic nationalism or atheist socialism also can create negative results in another way. Here, Eric Voegelin’s ideas and warnings on the false spirituality in modern times may help us to create a balanced relationship between the state, its citizens, and the system.<sup>338</sup>

### 3.1.6. Trusting in the Master

According to Ramzī, trust in the master is important to receive divine blessings from God. In this world, every blessed gift comes by this trust, even though some can play tricks behind the seeker. Without trust, the sheikh cannot be master, just as the pupil cannot be *murīd*. Here, Ramzī quoted from his sheikh Muḥammad Maẓhar:

<sup>338</sup> This is known as “immanentizing the eschaton”, i.e., trying to bring about the eschaton in the immanent world. See: Eric Voegelin, “Science, Politics and Gnosticism”, *Collected Works of Voegelin*, ed. Manfred Henningsen (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), vol. 5, pp. 256-290.

The *murīd* should not be together with bad strangers (*al-aghyār*) who do not believe in the sheikhs of this path. Especially, he/she cannot stay together with those who criticize incessantly the sheikh, or who never like the sheikh. Because friendship with those doubtful people is like a poison, the *murīd* should move away from them as much as possible.<sup>339</sup>

This advice is not an extraordinary thing for a spiritual order that wants active social relations with the sheikh or the deputies. Instead, it could be counted as one of the key points for such a world-wide spiritual organization. With these kinds of principles, the Naqshbandī path would strengthen the ties between the *murīds* and the sheikh, no matter when, no matter where they may go. After this short quotation, Ramzī commented:

From this passage, it is understood that those who oppose this rule will be left outside, and they shall not enter in the path (*ṭarīqa*), even if they ostensibly reach the last stations of the visible rituals.<sup>340</sup>

However, this key point can lead also to blame of some smart persons who may criticize the sheikh. Even though the principle of “no criticism of the master” creates a strong connection inside of the local social group, it may turn out to be a source of weakness in this *ṭarīqa* as a global organization. The crucial concept of “trust without question” may lead the close members of the path to construct their own social reality in a peculiar way that helps them strengthen the interior structure if they live as a small community. However, over time it can make them very weak if some members choose to

<sup>339</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, p. 193.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

live separately as independent individuals in the event they are exposed to critical questions from “bad strangers” (*al-aghyār*) who have strong reasons to ask questions.<sup>341</sup>

### 3.1.7. Clear tendency toward the *Malāmatī* way

As Murād Ramzī mentioned, we observe a robust *Malāmatī* attitude in the old masters of the Naqshī path. In Sufi handbooks and encyclopedias we can see hundreds of definitions for the *Malāmī*/*Malāmatī* path.<sup>342</sup> Here, by the term of *Malāmatī* I mean elimination of all traces of selfhood, a critical position towards the self, a deep honesty, and the nothingness of the servant in front of God. This ethical principle leads the sheikh to be honest and humble in everything he does, without “showing off”.

According to Murād Ramzī, the old masters did not attempt to show off in front of the *murīds*. Instead, they modestly hid their unordinary abilities. It also does not mean a hidden arrogance or an implicit way of arrogance. A perceivable modesty can emerge from two different sources: one is a basic feeling of honesty and humbleness coming from the *qalb* (‘spiritual heart’), the other is an immense arrogance hidden in the *nafs* under the cover of modesty. Many preachers, scholars, or religious persons can have hubris, but try to hide it with decorative styles of “modesty”. To be really modest, one should not reveal the source. In this context, Murād Ramzī mentions Mawlānā Khojakī al-Amkanawī (d. 1599), the son of Dervish Muḥammad al-Amkanawī. Khojakī completed his education of religious disciplines in Samarqand and became one of the

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>342</sup> See: Abū ‘Abd al-raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Uṣūl al-malāmatīya wa ghalatāt al-ṣūfiya*, ed. Dr. ‘Abd al-fattāḥ Aḥmad al-Fāwī (Cairo: Maṭba‘a al-Irshād, 1985), pp. 138-139; ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta’rīfāt*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabī, 1984), p. 295.

great scholars there. However, he employed this position to hide his tendency to the Sufi path:

Just like a curtain hiding the treasures, he hid his spiritual ability and never employed his precious experience in order to lead the people to the personal goals he could want. If some would come to his home to be *ṭālib* he would reject him/her and say: “First, you should find out what the best is for you, and make an *istikhāra*, and then come back again, if you have still an enthusiasm for the path.”<sup>343</sup>

Another account contained in Ramzī’s work is about Bāqībillāh. He was a Malāmī-style Sufi, a type of dervish hiding his good behavior, blaming himself for sins. One day when he was going to Dihli he saw an old man, then he took him on his own horse. Bāqībillāh put a *ḥijāb* (‘scarf’) on his own face, so no one could identify him or appraise him as a modest friend of God for this act. This is a behavior typical of a Malāmī Sufi, who does not like to be known/called as a “dervish” by others.<sup>344</sup> As Ramzī stated, he was blaming himself sincerely and counting himself as an ordinary person.

Ramzī’s sheikh Muḥammad Maẓhar said:

If one claims that he loves God, but escapes from hard exams (*al-balā’*), he is just a liar, not a sincere lover. A pupil can become a real *murīd* (seeker) of God only when he empties himself/herself from all that he/she could want, except the love of God. Under the order of God, he/she should be like a dead person at the hands of corpse washer.<sup>345</sup>

Interestingly, some traditional Sufi groups have employed the last metaphor “a dead person at the hands of corpse washer” for the position of dervish in front of the

<sup>343</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

spiritual master (sheikh).<sup>346</sup> However, Muḥammad Maẓhar employed this metaphor for the dervish in front of God. Perhaps the newly-arising scriptural critique towards traditional Sufism in 19th century Arabia might have led this kind of revisionist interpretation among the members of Sufi movements. Another reason would be that Muḥammad Maẓhar was an educated man who knew Arabic and the Qur’ān well, therefore he would not say something in opposition to the major principles of the Scripture.

The Malāmatī way was attracting the Turkic peoples living in the Central Asia. Even some old students of Sirhindī-style Sufism were following the Malāmatī way. As Ramzī explained, Muḥammad Ma’ṣūm, the youngest son of Aḥmad Sirhindī, was a smart and well-educated person with a strong ability in public relations.<sup>347</sup> His famous *ṭālib* Allāhyār (1650-1715) wrote his popular book *Murād al-‘arīfīn-Makhzan al-muṭī’in* in Persian, then its translation under the title *Thabāt al-‘ājizīn* into Chaghatay Turkic in a language similar to the language of Babur (d. 1530) in his *Bāburnāma*. Allāhyār says in his book in a truly Malāmatī way:

گیل ای عابد اوزونکنی ایلغیل خا<sup>۱۳۶</sup> حرām وشبهه دین حلقنکنی قبل پاک  
آچوق قوللوق کشاده یوزلی بولغیل<sup>۱۳۷</sup> مروتلیک ملایم سوزلی بولغیل

*Gel ey ‘ābid, özüñni ılgıl khāk, –harām ū şühbedin khilqatiñni qıl pāk,  
Açuq qolluk küşāde yüzli bolgıl, –mürüvvetlik mülāyim sözli bolgıl.*

<sup>346</sup> In Turkish, they say: *Gassal elinde meyyit gibi olmak*. However, this principle is highly criticized and considered a clear deviation from the path of God.

<sup>347</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 40-41.

O worshipper! Pull yourself to the Earth, –clean up from sins and all doubts!  
Open your arms, with a smiling face, –be human, a kind a human can embrace!<sup>348</sup>

### 3.1.8. *Himmat* to get the heart of the dervish, not the wallet

According to Murād Ramzī, a perfect sheikh can attract the wandering pupils into the path of spiritual heights with his *himmat*, good behaviour, and deep “look”. Murād Ramzī mentions literally “eyes” that should have a peculiar meaning in the Naqshī tradition. In conversation in daily life, the term *himmat* (هَمَّة) means ‘commitment, importance, will, inspiration, determination’. However, it means also the “charisma” of a master in the Sufi terminology. It is about the inner beauty of the master, not about the outer attractiveness or financial resources the sheikh or the *murīd* might have. Murād Ramzī talks about the master Khwāja Bāqībillāh:

When he looked at someone deeply, the other person [his interlocutor] was changed and engaged in good manners. He was extremely influential with his behaviour and even with his eyes.<sup>349</sup>

For Murād Ramzī, the meaning of *taṣarruf* or *himmat* (تَصَرَّفٌ أَوْ هَمَّةٌ) of the sheikh is a positive change in the *murīd*, without hypocrisy or bias.

### 3.1.9. Kindness with an appropriate attitude

Murād Ramzī gives many examples on the kindness of a Sufi master. A Sufi master should be kind, not impolite or rude. Otherwise, he can never arrive to the high level of

<sup>348</sup> Allāhyār al-Şūfī, *Thabāt al-‘ājjizīn* (Kazan, 1806), p. 69.

<sup>349</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, p. 14.

humanity nor can he grasp the meaning of the good human. He told another story about Khwāja Bāqībillāh:

Aḥmad Sirhindī sent a sweet dish called *falūzag* with his servant Bāmā, who was known to be a rude person. When Bāmā came to the house of Khwāja Bāqībillāh, everybody was asleep. Khwāja Bāqībillāh woke up and received the gift, then asked: “What is your name?” He said: “Bāmā!” Then, Khwāja Bāqībillāh said: “Since you are the servant of Aḥmad Sirhindī, you are with us, too!” In Persian *bāmā* means ‘with us’. This short reception made the servant happy and he even cried with happiness.<sup>350</sup>

### 3.1.10 Mercy for all, including sinners and animals

According to Murād Ramzī, a perfect master should be merciful for all peoples and animals as a reflection of the name Raḥmān (‘the Merciful’) of God. A Sufī must consider living creatures to be his/her brothers. Especially animals are innocent inasmuch as they do not have language with which to defend their rights. Sinners also deserve to be respected as we do not know who has the purest heart in front of God. A responsible sheikh should first understand the psychological position of a *murīd*, only then can he follow an appropriate way to reach his heart. With respect to the mercifulness of Khwāja Bāqībillāh, Ramzī tells us a story about the responsibility of a good sheikh:

Once a young sinner was complained about by his neighbors. Some of Khwāja Bāqībillāh’s *ṭālibs* brought this young man to the police. Then, Bāqībillāh listened to the story, and became very upset, criticizing the *ṭālibs*: “How can you do that? You know that you are also sinners and bad servants of God! Even though we know this obvious reality, does anyone of you go to the police to complain of himself?” He immediately went to the police station and took the young man from prison with a thousand excuses. After years had passed this young man changed and became a good man in society.<sup>351</sup>

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.



Ramzī told another story about Khwāja Bāqībillāh. Once he woke up in the middle of a winter night to go to the toilet. When he returned to his bed, he saw a small cat sleeping there! Because he was a friend of all animals, he could not wake this cat up; instead, he waited in an open area where he was exposed to the cold air for long hours.<sup>352</sup>

### **3.1.11. Respect for the law in order to live in accordance with the law**

In the Naqshī tradition law and order have been respected generally as a final gate to solve the legal problems in society under the existing political system. Unlike the unruly dervish groups (such as *Qalandarīs*), the Naqshī followers generally tried to find a solution in the judicial system established by the existing political structures, such as the Central Asian khanates and the Mughal and Timurid empires. As Algar said, “political involvement has been seen by many writers to be a frequent feature of Naqshbandī history”.<sup>353</sup> However, it does not mean a total obedience to the head of the state. They supported many pupils on the road to the bureaucratic and legal system of the political structures. Therefore, we may observe a sustainable relationship between the members of the Naqshī order and the bureaucrats, legal officials, and military commanders of the state, except in the extreme conditions of the 19th-early 20th centuries when some branches of the Naqshī order led an underground rebellion movement or even an “open war” against colonial rulers as we see in the Middle East (British colonialism) and Central Asia and the Caucasus (Russian colonialism). Even in this position, they tried to

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>353</sup> See: Hamid Algar, “Political aspects of Naqshbandī history”, *Naqshbandis: Historical development and present situation of a Muslim mystical order. Proceedings of the Sèvres round table, 2-4 May 1985*, ed. M. Gaborieau, Th. Zarcone, A. Popovic, Varia Turcica 18 (Istanbul: Isis, 1990), p. 118. The entire article is a very important contribution to Naqshbandī studies.

find a way to continue to be in line with the law if the colonial rulers would open a gate in front of them. Legality might be considered one of the key points behind the successful spread of the Naqshī order throughout history, even in modern times.

In that context, Ramzī indicates the attitude of Khwāja Bāqībillāh towards the law. He said that whenever Khwāja Bāqībillāh faced a problem with regard to a legal issue, he would not take any unusual steps or try to find a solution with his own initiative; instead, he would immediately going to the expert in law (*al-faqīh*) and ask him.<sup>354</sup> However, we have an interesting account about Ramzī's sheikh Muḥammad Maḥzar. According to Ramzī, Muḥammad Maḥzar did not fear the state authorities. Instead, they were afraid of him. He did not collect anything from worldly goods such as money, material capital, or gifts generally given by an official person. He never felt happy or proud with the praise of people for him; furthermore, he was not upset with people's satirical approach to him.<sup>355</sup>

### 3.1.12. Ability, accessibility and love in the spiritual education

Ramzī quoted many sentences from the old and new masters about how to raise a good dervish. Some accounts are really interesting. In this context, he emphasized the ability and capacity of the *murīd*. As Ramzī indicates, his sheikh Aḥmad Sa'īd was applying the most appropriate methods for the *ṭālibs* as an educator doing what is suitable for a student depending on his abilities and tendencies. Sheikh Aḥmad Sa'īd took care of every follower properly with his/her capacities. Then, the follower could pass from one level of

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

spirituality to the higher without difficulty. For example, he just gave admonitions to some *ṭālibs* and then advised that they should spend a period of time in seclusion (*al-inziwā*). However, he also advised others to maintain what they did before such as everyday jobs. According to Ramzī, his mercy on his *ṭālibs* was stronger and deeper than a mother could have on her sons and daughters. Furthermore, every *ṭālib* in his circle was thinking that the mercy and kindness he received from his sheikh was so unique that no other received it.<sup>356</sup>

### 3.2. The late Naqshabandīya masters

Ramzī gives us a colorful portrait of the late 19th-century Naqshī masters who lived in Mecca, Medina, and Central Asia. Among them were very strict scholars, *faqīhs*, preachers, influential officials, and travelers from different ethnic backgrounds. Interestingly, he is not concerned with the internal competence and long discussions. Instead, he respects almost all well-known masters and sheikhs without distinction. If we read his text very carefully we may realize that he must have been afraid of new splits in the order. Therefore, he did not reflect some of the big conflicts surrounding new branches of the great Naqshī order. For example, he has never entered into the details of the discussions between his Aḥmadīya–Maḥzarīya branch on the one hand and the Khālīdīya branch on the other. However, we know that some conflicts between these two branches did exist, as mentioned earlier.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

### 3.2.1. Aḥmad Sa'īd (d. 1860)

Aḥmad Sa'īd was the grand sheikh of all Naqshī sheikhs, according to Ramzī. He came to Mecca from Hindustan. He must have immigrated to Mecca because of the bad conditions in his birthplace of Rampur in northern India. He had both of the possible lineages from Aḥmad Sirhindī, meaning that he was coming from Aḥmad's descendants and also belonged to the Mujaddidī branch of Naqshī tradition. As Ramzī related, he was applying what was suitable for a *murīd* depending on the adept's abilities and tendencies.<sup>357</sup> As Ramzī explains, he studied different books on Sufism such as the *Mathnawī* of Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī and supported a close connection between the sheikh and *murīd*. Aḥmad Sa'īd believed that the *murīd* should love the sheikh and consider him to be a gift from God. Only with this condition could the *ṭālib* (or *sālik*) find 'dissolution in the sheikh' (*fanā' fī al-sheikh*) which is the first step for the absolute dissolution in the Divine Being (*fanā' fī-allāh*).<sup>358</sup> Ramzī also thinks that Aḥmad Sa'īd was spiritually inspecting his *ṭālibs* remotely without seeing them. This kind of inspection is called *tawajjuh*.<sup>359</sup> According to Aḥmad Sa'īd, for the beginners of this spiritual path nothing is worse than getting married. Whoever goes through a marriage just quits and turns immediately to profane things.<sup>360</sup> This is unusual advice for a Naqshbandī master, inasmuch as the common Naqshī ethics generally advise what is normal in practice for a Muslim in daily life, such as getting married, taking meals, and sleeping properly. This

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

kind of advice can be interpreted as a tendency toward the *Qalandarī* style dervishhood which also has deep roots in India, Iran, and Anatolia.<sup>361</sup>

Aḥmad Saʿīd was tending to the Akbarī method; furthermore, he claimed that Aḥmad Sirhindī had never rejected the doctrine of existential unity (*tawhīd wujudī*)<sup>362</sup> and that no one could apply the deep results of this doctrine to the Sharīʿa as plain statements. According to Aḥmad Saʿīd, only sophisticated tools of interpretation can make it possible, as was the case with some great masters who succeeded in it before.<sup>363</sup> His arch-enemy was naturally the newly emerging Wahhabīya movement in Arabia.<sup>364</sup> He died in Rabīʿ al-awwal 1277 AH/1860 AD and was buried in Baqīʿ al-Gharqad.<sup>365</sup>

### 3.2.2. Muḥammad Maẓhar (d. 1883)

Ramzī's sheikh Muḥammad Maẓhar was an expert of the *Maktūbāt* for he deliberately worked on this book with private lessons given by his father Sheikh Aḥmad Saʿīd.<sup>366</sup> As we mentioned before, he was similar to his father in adopting the famous rule “show them leniency and do not be hard upon them”.<sup>367</sup> He wrote some short but important

<sup>361</sup> Tahsin Yazici, “Kalandarīya”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 473-474.

<sup>362</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, p. 107.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

booklets about the manners and rituals of the *ṭarīqa*.<sup>368</sup> He was not afraid of authorities. He had never taken money or gifts from rich men or state officials.

As a man of letters and son of a great master in Mecca, Sheikh Muḥammad Maḥzar would have adopted an aristocratic attitude towards the rich men, local officials, and traders. As we mentioned before, he was also a popular scholar among Southeast Asian Muslims. Ramzī indicates that he was followed by a large number of *murīds* from Khurasan, Anatolia, Transoxania (*Mā warā al-nahr*), India, and the Volga-Ural region where he sent his brilliant deputies.<sup>369</sup> Like his former masters, Muḥammad Maḥzar also was tending to the Malāmatīya in his attitudes. His book *Maqāmāt-i Saʿīdīya* is full of blame towards himself, especially the last sections. He was really humble and modest. Muḥammad Maḥzar died in Muḥarram of 1301 AH/1883 AD<sup>370</sup> and was buried close to his father's tomb in Baqīʿ al-Gharqad. After his death many scholars wrote long poems in the *marthīya* style (which is written for a deceased person as a lament). Ramzī also wrote an Arabic *marthīya* for his sheikh, which is important for appreciating the level of the poetry in Ramzī's literary works.<sup>371</sup>

Ramzī's first sheikh Abū Saʿīd, his son Aḥmad Saʿīd, and the grandson Muḥammad Maḥzar all came to Mecca from Rampur, an Indian Muslim cultural center in Uttar Pradesh, India.<sup>372</sup> It means that Ramzī's background in sophisticated Sufi

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

terminology is heavily influenced by the great Indian masters of the Naqshī tradition. Ramzī was an Indian-style Muslim mystic in his peculiar Sufism, but a cosmopolitan author in his expert use of Arabic language and culture in his first Meccan period (1878-1895).

### 3.2.3. ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī Shirwānī: An aristocratic scholar (d. 1884)

Sheikh ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī Shirwānī was an interesting scholar. He wrote and spoke in the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages as well as his own native tongue from Dagestan. He started to study Islamic disciplines in his birthplace in Dagestan and then he continued to take lessons in Istanbul and Cairo from great scholars such as Muṣṭafā of Vidin (in present-day Bulgaria) and Ibrāhīm of Bajur (in Egypt).<sup>373</sup>

As Ramzī indicates, Sheikh ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī Shirwani was first initiated by Aḥmad Sa‘īd, then by Muḥammad Maḥzar. When he entered the Naqshī path, he abandoned the study of Islamic disciplines except for some booklets necessary for the spiritual way of Naqshī Sufism. After he was cultivated in the path, he continued to study those Islamic disciplines again.<sup>374</sup> ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī was a hard working Sufī, so he successfully received *ijāza* and *khilāfa* (‘full certification’) from his sheikh Muḥammad Maḥzar, who also gave him his own *khirqā* (‘cloak’), which was considered an important sign of respect.<sup>375</sup>

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

‘Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī had a great charisma among his friends and *murīds*. He explained this charisma (*baraka*) by his strong faithfulness to his sheikh. According to ‘Abd al-ḥamīd, the *murīd* should always turn his/her face spiritually to the master.<sup>376</sup> Here, Ramzī commented: “He followed his sheikh’s orders and always turned his face to the master, even in absentia (*al-tawajjuh al-ghā’ibī*).”<sup>377</sup> Even though the common Naqshī concept for these positions is called *rābiṭa*, Ramzī did not mention this peculiar term here. Instead, he mentioned the term “in absentia” (*al-ghā’ibī*) more than one time. As Ramzī mentions, ‘Abd al-ḥamīd was sending to Sheikh Muḥammad Maẓhar some letters called *murāsalāt* and *mukātabāt*. He indicates that the correspondence between two sheikhs included questions, answers, and explanations on difficult issues regarding the Naqshī path.<sup>378</sup> He did not speak much, but his circle of ‘ilm was very vivid and rich.

Unlike the general tendency of Naqshī followers to the Ḥanafī School, he belonged to the Shāfi‘ī school of jurisprudence. Therefore, some of the pupils must have thought that he was intolerant of the other schools. However, Ramzī praised ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī and distinguished between two different attitudes in religion: a) *taṣallub* which means ‘firmness and coherence’ in the method followed, and b) *ta‘aṣṣub* which means ‘fanaticism’.

He acclaimed *taṣallub* but criticized *ta‘aṣṣub*.<sup>379</sup> According to Ramzī, all great masters and scholars were distinguished by firmness and coherence in the method they

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.



followed, yet they did not support *ta‘aṣṣub* (fanaticism). That is an interesting statement which might include a hidden defense of Ramzī’s traditional approach to the religion and other problematic topics. With this long explanation, Ramzī probably wanted to say that he (Ramzī) was not a fanatic, but a balanced man regarding religious issues. An author can make the hero of the anecdote say something about his problems. That is an easy way to escape from clearly spelling out “I” and “Me”.

Sheikh ‘Abd al-ḥamīd must have been an aristocratic man in his general attitudes. He always loved seclusion. Whenever he took his meal he went to his special room in the Sulaymānīya madrasa, sitting there, reading books, or dealing with *murāqaba* (‘spiritual concentration’) until the late noon. He did not let anyone enter his room except for his sons.<sup>380</sup> He was applying this strict program every day except Fridays and Tuesdays, when one could come into his room and ask about a scholarly problem. As Ramzī mentions, other Naqshī sheikhs such as Aḥmad Sa‘īd and Muḥammad Maẓhar were not as strict as Dāghistānī regarding issues of time.<sup>381</sup> He was generally taking an attitude of “scholarly behavior, a remarkable seriousness” towards activities of daily life, not relaxing as a Naqshī sheikh in a *dargāh*. Ramzī said:

Whenever I went to his room I saw him being very busy, correcting some lines in his long annotations (حاشية الشرواني الداغستاني) on the *Tuḥfa* of Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī [d. 1503].<sup>382</sup> Dāghistānī completed his work in eight volumes with key explanations and interesting discussions.<sup>383</sup>

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>382</sup> It is a massive annotation (8 volumes) on Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī’s *Tuḥfa* (تحفة ابن حجر) which is a long commentary on the *Minhāj* of Imām al-Nawawī, one the most referenced books in the Shāfi‘ī *madh’hab* of jurisprudence. For a good edition of this see: ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī, “Ḥāshiyat Dāghistānī Shirwānī”, *Ḥāwāshī ‘alā Tuḥfa* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-tijārīya al-kubrā, 1934).

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

As Ramzī indicates, ‘Abd al-ḥamīd was giving “spiritual lessons” to 6-7 students from Kazan. He did not recommend them to repeat a great number of *dhikrs* except for one person who still had desire for profane things. He assigned a great number of *dhikrs* only to this person. It is inspiring that a pupil here receives many more *dhikrs* (repetition of the name of God) if he/she has greater interest in worldly affairs and material things. It means that if a *ṭālib* reaches a higher level, he/she will not need as great number of *dhikrs*. Just a few times of *dhikr* or a small number of them will be enough for him to be a good *murīd*. That would be another issue for discussion in the pedagogy of a *murīd*.<sup>384</sup> He was clearly explaining some spiritual levels and degrees, drawing circles, and writing comments under those circles to give details about difficult concepts of Naqshī-style Sufism. Sheikh ‘Abd al-ḥamīd was very brave to explain the details of *rābiṭa*

#### **3.2.4. Al-Zawāwī: the last great Naqshī sheikh in Mecca (d. 1891)**

Sheikh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Zawāwī was the deputy and absolute heir of sheikh Muḥammad Maẓhar. He was descended from an Arab family from Mecca. He was busy in his first years of education with the common Islamic disciplines. Then he approached the spiritual disciplines and caught the spirit of the *ṭarīqa* from Muḥammad Maẓhar. He created great enthusiasm for the Naqshbandī order among the people to be initiated in this

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<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

path.<sup>385</sup> As we mentioned before, he was the person who encouraged Ramzī to translate the *Maktūbāt* and other Sufi classics into Arabic.

According to Ramzī, when the great master Muḥammad Maḥzar felt that he was going to go to “the other world” (i.e., die), he started to send letters to his three deputies: Muḥammad al-Makkī, ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Dāghistānī Efendī, and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Zawāwī. Muḥammad al-Makkī performed his mission for a very short time and went to “the other world”, but Sheikh al-Zawāwī was in Java. When the great master arrived to his Friend (God), the *ṭālibs* started to gather around Sheikh ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Efendī. However, he stated that he was old and he had no power to perform everything related to the manner of the path. He immediately sent a letter to Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Zawāwī to return to Hijāz and sit in the place of the great master Muḥammad Maḥzar.<sup>386</sup>

Al-Zawāwī came back to Hijāz and sat in the *dargāh* at a critical time when Sheikh ‘Abd al-ḥamīd suddenly died. Because the sheikh did not mention any name for his place, the *murīds* of Sheikh ‘Abd al-ḥamīd Efendī became extremely perplexed. They sheltered at the *dargāh* of Sheikh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Zawāwī. He tried to organize everything properly for the spiritual needs of the *murīds* coming to his *dargāh*. Finally they were satisfied with the great help of al-Zawāwī and loved him as a master. He was a master of pedagogy, too.<sup>387</sup> After al-Zawāwī, Ramzī started to mention other names who were not from Ramzī’s Aḥmadīya–Maḥzarīya lineage, but very important in the history of the Naqshī path.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139-141.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

### 3.2.5. Khālīd al-Baghdādī: Innovator of spiritual techniques (d. 1827)

Khālīd al-Baghdādī was the most authoritative Naqshī sheikh of the 19th century, without a doubt. As Ramzī indicates in his accounts, he came to Baghdad and started to invite new *ṭālib*s in his path. However, some older members of other groups became upset, even very jealous. They complained about him to the Ottoman governor of Baghdad. Some of them even wrote *fatwās* accusing him of heresy and blasphemy (*taḍlīl wa takfīr*).<sup>388</sup>

Even though Ramzī did not give us an exact name, we know this person from another Naqshī Sufi classic of the late 19th century, *al-Ḥadā'iq al-wardīya fī ḥaqā'iq ajillā' al-Naqshbandīya*, written by a famous Kurdish scholar, 'Abd al-majīd al-Khānī (d. 1901).<sup>389</sup> 'Abd al-majīd clearly stated in this biographical work the name of Ma'rūf al-Nūdahī al-Barzanjī (d. 1838), who became extremely upset with this newly-emergent and highly intelligent scholar, the great Sheikh Khālīd al-Baghdādī. Therefore, he sharply criticized him in his booklet. After a long investigation, the Ottoman governor of Baghdad said:

This booklet is nothing but a rotten piece of wood (*al-khashab al-bālī*)! Who would be a Muslim in this world if the great Sheikh Khālīd al-Baghdādī were not a Muslim? Oh my God, the author of this booklet should be a crazy Mullah, or a man whom God made blind due to his jealousy of Sheikh Khālīd!<sup>390</sup>

When the Ottoman governor supported Khālīd, many scholars started to write refutations against Ma'rūf al-Nūdahī al-Barzanjī. Khālīd found strong friends in

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 173.

<sup>389</sup> 'Abd al-majīd al-Khānī, *al-Ḥadā'iq al-wardīya fī ḥaqā'iq ajillā' al-Naqshbandīya* (Erbil: Dār Arās, 2002), pp. 311-315.

<sup>390</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 173-174.

Baghdad, so, he employed his political and cultural ties to start a propaganda war against those who accused him.

According to Ramzī, Khālid was a charismatic sheikh, an extremely smart and bold scholar, never afraid to speak in front of any person with any degree of political power or scholarly depth.<sup>391</sup> He was a brilliant debater, winning almost all the debates in which he participated in Baghdad and Damascus. At times more than five hundred scholars were receiving lessons before him. For Ramzī, he was the master of masters, just like the great *mujtahids* in *fiqh* (the four leading scholars of Islamic jurisprudence schools).<sup>392</sup> This description also indicates that Khālid was considered an innovator, a fascinating author with a deep imagination bringing totally new techniques to Naqshī spiritualism. Therefore Ramzī found a resemblance between great *mujtahids* and Khālid in a positive sense.

However, we may also count this description as a hidden confession of the strange position of Khālid. It means that the opponents of Khālid could have the right to discuss what Khālid brought as a *mujtahid* to this area, especially in the fields of belief and spiritual practice. For example, the practice of *rābiṭa* (رابطة) was arduously supported, elaborately defined, and carefully reshaped and applied by Khālid and his followers, even though it was never mentioned or referred to implicitly in the first authentic sources of the religion of Islam, even in the early sources for the Naqshī path. Furthermore, other Sufi orders also criticized Khālid, especially for the problematic position of *rābiṭa*. (We

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

will discuss *rābiṭa*, its likely sources in Islamic philosophy, and Neoplatonist influences in a later in this study.)

Following long debates and numerous events, Khālīd received great support from state officials, jurists, and some powerful families. In this context we should mention that the famous 19th century Syrian *faqīh* (jurist) Ibn ‘Ābidīn (d. 1836) wrote a booklet called *Sall al-Ḥusām al-Hindī li nuṣrat Mawlānā al-Sheikh Khālīd al-Naqshbandī* printed among the *Majmū‘at Rasā’il Ibn ‘Ābidīn* in support of Khālīd against those who accused him of sorcery, blasphemy, and heresy. It is an intertextual episode where the texts speak to each other.

The opponents of Khālīd must have been puzzled by his enormous influence around Baghdad, Damascus, Hijāz, Istanbul, Kazan, the Balkans, and even in Java. Therefore they might have considered this success as possible only as the result of black magic (*al-Siḥr*: السحر). According to Ibn ‘Ābidīn, they accused Khālīd of sorcery, augury, killing members of the *jinn*, and taking service from earthly evil spirits. Naturally, Ibn ‘Ābidīn as a state jurist and an intellectual of late 19th-century Damascus proved first that Khālīd was not what they said, and then he strongly satirized their claims.<sup>393</sup> However, the fascinating point is that when Ibn ‘Ābidīn extends the so-called discussion to the nature of the *jinns* (i.e., how they get married to a human, with their endless sexual desire, etc.), one cannot understand if Ibn ‘Ābidīn was serious or just mocking the opponents of Khālīd very badly!

<sup>393</sup> Ibn ‘Ābidīn, “Sall al-Ḥusām al-Hindī li nuṣrat Mawlānā al-shaykh Khālīd al-Naqshbandī”, *Majmū‘at Rasā’il Ibn ‘Ābidīn* (Istanbul: Şirket-i Sahafiyye Osmaniye Matbaası, 1321 AH [1903 AD]), vol. 2, pp. 286-289.

According to Ramzī, Sheikh Khālīd was extremely careful about his important deputies. Whenever he felt that it was the right time, he would immediately send a deputy to a city where he wanted to spread his order. For example, he sent his capable student ‘Abdullāh al-Erzincānī (of Erzincan, Turkey) first to Erzincan, then to Erzurum, then to Quds (Jerusalem), then to Mecca. Finally, it was understood that ‘Abdullāh al-Erzincānī would be his head deputy observing all other deputies. At this point, Khālīd ordered al-Erzincānī not to take any gift or financial assistance from anyone there. He would just keep working on invitation to the *ṭarīqa* for the sake of God.<sup>394</sup> As Ramzī mentioned, the deputy of the Khālīdī branch in Mecca after ‘Abdullāh of Erzincan was Sulaymān son of Ḥasan al-Qirīmī (from Crimea, perhaps a Tatar) and then Sulaymān al-Zuhdī of Mihalic (a native Turk from Bursa, Turkey).<sup>395</sup> These three names are very important for the Southeast Asian Sufi world because many large Naqshī–Khālīdī–Mujaddidī groups in Sumatra and other parts of the archipelago received initiation into the *ṭarīqa* from this chain.<sup>396</sup> According to Ramzī, when Khālīd died in 1242 AH/1826 AD during an epidemic,<sup>397</sup> the most famous sheikh from the Naqshī–Khālīdī branch in his time was Aḥmad Ḍiyā al-dīn Gümüşhanevi (d. 1893) in Istanbul and the most successful deputy of the Naqshī–Khālīdī branch in the Russian Empire was Muḥammad Dhākir Efendi of Chistay (southeast of Kazan).<sup>398</sup> Even though there was a competition between the two rival Naqshī groups, the Aḥmadiyya–Maḥariyya and the Khālīdiyya (Khālīd’s followers),

<sup>394</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, p. 178.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>396</sup> Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, pp. 164-167.

<sup>397</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, p. 175.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-184.

we never observe an inimical description by Ramzī about this conflict. As a faithful follower of the Aḥmadīya–Maḥzarīya, Ramzī gave us long details about his own branch, but he never criticized the rival Khālīdīya group. It seems that the discussions between two groups were not as fierce in Mecca when Ramzī wrote this work. The central point of the conflict must have increased in Java and the Malay peninsula when al-Zawāwī focused his missionary activities as a representative of the Aḥmadīya–Maḥzarīya branch.<sup>399</sup> However, we may think also that the real reason of this long competition was the changing position of Sulaymān al-Zuhdī (Khālīdī) in Jabal Abū Qubays, Mecca. He was the most powerful Naqshī sheikh around Mecca, but the new Malay followers of al-Zawāwī (Maḥzarī) changed the game. Then a great competition started first in Mecca and later spread to the Malay peninsula and the East Indies.

### 3.3. Controversial issues: *ṣuḥba*, *rābiṭa*, and *khatm-i khwājagān*

Murād Ramzī handled some controversial issues in the Naqshī tradition using very careful language. In his book *Dhayl Rashaḥāt* Ramzī devotes an entire section to a discussion of his own Maḥzarī branch of the Naqshbandīya order, as we mentioned earlier. In this section he describes his own Sufi path: how a *ṭālib* could be initiated into this path, what kinds of problems a *ṭālib* faces under the current conditions (the late 19th century), and what major features separate this path from others.<sup>400</sup> In this context, we

<sup>399</sup> See for the details: Syofyan Hadi, “al-Ṭarīqa al-Naqshabandīya al-Khālīdīya fī Minangkabau: Dirāsāt Makḥṭūṭāt al-Manḥal al-‘Adhbī li-Dhikr al-Qalb”, *Studia Islamika*, Jakarta: State Institute for Islamic Studies of Syarif Hidayatullah, vol. 18, no. 2 (2011), pp. 287-344. The article can also be found in Arabic at: الطريقة النقشبندية الخالدية في مينانجكاباو: دراسة مخطوطة المنهل العذب لذكر القلب : [http://al-adab.blogspot.com/2013/01/blog-post\\_6.html](http://al-adab.blogspot.com/2013/01/blog-post_6.html) (accessed March 29, 2014). There should be a small correction here: the word “al-‘Adhbī” in the article should be corrected to “al-‘Adhb”.

<sup>400</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 189-276.



can focus on two issues in his book, namely *rābiṭa* (رابطه) and *khatm-i khwājagān* (ختم خواجگان). When he explains the formal categories for initiation into the path, he says:

There are three ways of formal initiation: 1. Conversation (*ṣuḥba*), 2. Remembrance (*dhikr*), and 3. Contemplation (*murāqaba*).<sup>401</sup>

Ramzī indicates that contemplation (*murāqaba*) protects the heart from sins, purifies the mind from bad things, and leads the divine flood of light to the heart.<sup>402</sup>

According to Ramzī, when a new pupil starts to practice remembrance (*dhikr*), there is no determination of the number of repeated words or short prayer sentences. However, he mentions that some Naqshī masters of the last period had observed the presence of laziness and lack of concentration among the *murīds*, therefore, they obliged *murīds* to repeat the name (of God) in certain numbers. Yet, they had no consensus on the exact number of times the name was to be repeated. For Ramzī, persistence in this duty is the most important act, as the Prophet said: “The most beloved deed to Allah is the most regular and constant even if it were little.”<sup>403</sup> After every *dhikr*, the *murīd* should turn to God and say: “O God! You are my goal! Your contentment is my desire! Give me your love! Love me! Give me the awareness [of the spiritual truth] (*ma’rifā*)!”<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, p. 193.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>403</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book 81, *Ḥadīth* no. 53. See: <http://www.sunnah.com/bukhari/81> (accessed March 20, 2015).

<sup>404</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 205-206.

### 3.3.1. The conversation (*ṣuḥba*)

According to Ramzī, the conversation (*ṣuḥba*) can be actual, as a dialogue in daily life, or spiritual in the absence of the sheikh; this is called *rābiṭa* in their terminology. First, he defines the actual conversation in which the *murīd* should consider the sheikh as a unique gate to enter the Divine Universe of Truth, the *‘Ālam al-Ḥaqīqa*, as though other gates have already been closed. Thus, the *murīd*’s heart will reflect what is in the heart of the sheikh with the help of spiritual love between the two. Ramzī indicates that the great masters recommended this method as the most appropriate and easiest way to reach to the desired beloved, God.<sup>405</sup>

It seems that Ramzī’s literary style here is somewhat elegant and sophisticated, even though the conversation is a very basic but important practice established to address the social needs of the community. As I observed in Turkey, the conversation (*sohbet* in Turkish) is the most successful method for a Sufi order to spread its teachings. Especially in Anatolia, even in a small town in a rural area, Naqshī masters employed this method to draw new *murīds* into the circles and to solve problems in daily life. First, the tea kettle is put on the fire. If they are a large community, a samovar is better.<sup>406</sup> In Anatolian Naqshī culture, tea prepared with a samovar symbolizes the sincerity and beauty in the hearts of the *murīds*.<sup>407</sup> With its relaxing sound and refreshing aroma, the earlier groups come and

<sup>405</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, p. 198.

<sup>406</sup> A samovar is a metal urn with a spigot at the base, used in Caucasus, Crimea, Anatolia and Russia to boil water for tea. In Turkish Sufi literature there are tens of hymns mentioning the samovar as a symbol of friendship, beauty, and the cry for love and desire for God.

<sup>407</sup> The first samovars were produced in Russia. However, after large waves of Sufi immigration from Russia to Anatolia in the last quarter of the 19th century, the first production of samovars started in Anatolia, especially in Tokat. Also, a new type tea called *Tokat Çayı* (‘Tokat tea’) was produced around Tokat with the help of Caucasian immigrants. Later it became very famous and was even exported to

sit down in the first line of the circle. Then, the later groups come in and wait for the sheikh. When the sheikh arrives in the room, a short conversation rises around problems of daily life. The sheikh tries to answer to crucial questions pertaining to general issues of the community.

After drinking tea and a short chat, the *dhikr* starts. It can take one hour, depending on the kind of ceremony. At the end, personal problems are handled. For example, if a member has a financial, social, or personal problem, he/she can open the issue to the sheikh and then the sheikh tries to solve the problem with the help of his close *murīds*. Here, the method of conversation is not just a purely spiritual exercise, but at the same time it is also a social and practical phenomenon to meet the urgent needs of the community. We have many colorful stories and memoirs related to the social place of Sufi teachers and their conversation circles in Turkey. My Turkish advisor Professor İsmail Kara's personal accounts about his father Kutuz Hoca (1918-2011) are one remarkable example among countless narratives pertaining to Sufi and social life in the rural regions of modern Turkey.<sup>408</sup>

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Russia as a desirable product. See for the story of the samovar, Sufi culture, and Tokat tea: Kemal İbrahimzade, "Semaverin Öyküsü", *Antropoloji*, Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, vol. 21 (2005), pp. 89-105; and Kemal İbrahimzade—Niyazi Özdemir, "Kültürlerarası Etkileşim Bağlamında Tokat'ta Çay Kültürü ve Semaver Olgusu", *Tokat Sempozyumu (November 1-3, 2012)* (Tokat, 2012), vol. 3, pp. 127-132.

<sup>408</sup> İsmail Kara is a distinguished specialist in political and intellectual history. See: *Kutuz Hoca'nın Hatıraları: Cumhuriyet Devrinde Bir Köy Hocası* [The Memoirs of Kutuz Hoja: A Town Imām in the Republican Era of Modern Turkey], ed. İsmail Kara (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2000). For some interesting points on the functions of an imām in a rural area, see: pp. 140-145.

### 3.3.2. *Rābiṭa*

After describing the actual conversation method, Ramzī talks about *rābiṭa* in detail. The technical explanation of *rābiṭa* is as follows: “Keep the face of the Sheikh in your heart in his absence [visualization of the sheikh with deep meditation]. Try to be with him spiritually and respect him!”<sup>409</sup> After this short definition of the technique, he gives us other details:

*Rābiṭa* means the contact of the *murīd* with the sheikh in terms of spiritual love and attention. It is the power of concentration and patience. Its essence is based on the merging of the *murīd*’s heart with the heart of the sheikh. Here, the *murīd* seeks a way unto Allah with the help, or intercession, of the sheikh.

Ramzī thinks that this way has been already been an accepted method, one even praised by scholars. According to Ramzī, the following Qur’ānic verse (*āya*) is evidence concerning the validity of *rābiṭa*:

O, you who believe! Be careful [of your duty to] Allah and seek means of nearness to Him, and strive hard in His way that you may be successful.<sup>410</sup>

He believes that the means of nearness (*al-wasīla*: الوسيلة) includes everything possible to seek a way unto God, be it good behavior or a friend from among God’s friends. However, Ramzī’s interpretation here is based on a weak “indication” (*dalāla*: دلالة). According to Ramzī, no one can reject this evidence except those “who have arrogance toward God” (*ahl al-ghurra billāh*), which refers to the last part of another verse in the Qur’ān: “And do not be deceived from God by arrogance.”<sup>411</sup> However, this

<sup>409</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl Rashaḥāt*, p. 198.

<sup>410</sup> Sūra Mā’ida (5:35).

<sup>411</sup> Sūra Luqmān (31:33).

*āya* was clear evidence against the understanding of *al-wasīla* as an intercession by God's friends. If we reconsider the total meaning of the *āya*, it may suggest an interpretation opposite to what Ramzī defends with his partial approach:

O mankind, you reverence your Lord, and fear a Day when a father cannot help his own child, nor can a child help his father. Certainly, God's promise is truth. Therefore, do not be deceived by this worldly life; and do not be deceived from God by arrogance.<sup>412</sup>

Indeed, this part from the Scripture (the Qur'ān) is not suitable to be employed as evidence for *rābiṭa*, but rather as evidence against *rābiṭa*. Ramzī just wanted to make a sarcastic comment on the rejecters of *rābiṭa*, using the same *āya* for his claim, accusing them of arrogance toward the friends of God, which for him meant arrogance toward God.

We also need to consider the meaning of *tawassul* and its connection to the current interpretation of *rābiṭa* in Naqshī terminology. In summary, Ramzī believed that *tawassul* with the meaning of 'intercession' is an acceptable practice in Islam; consequently, *rābiṭa* as a kind of *tawassul* is also acceptable. In his peculiar strange logic, whoever rejects *rābiṭa* or *tawassul* must be considered to be arrogant, even ignorant of obedience toward God.

However, his argumentation is not based on strong evidence, but rather on weak ties. Indeed, a man trained in *uṣūl al-fiqh* cannot trust this kind of weak indication.<sup>413</sup>

<sup>412</sup> Sūra Luqmān (31:33).

<sup>413</sup> We put this kind of question before Ramzī because he said in his autobiography that he had studied *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Here, the problem is pertaining to the weakness of the indication (*dalīl*) to arrive at a clear result which is claimed by Ramzī in his argumentation. See for the details on *dalīl* and *dalāla* in the method of reasoning in Islamic legal theory: Wael Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 113-131.

Another possibility is that Ramzī was always aware of these kinds of incoherencies and weaknesses in his unusual Sufi discourse; however, he purposely neglected the key points here in order to support his position against other Sufi orders or *uṣūlī* groups who did not accept the theory of *rābiṭa*.<sup>414</sup>

Interestingly, *rābiṭa* is also in contradiction with the pure *ʿIrfānī* (Gnostic) view that cannot accept a negotiator, or “official gatekeeper”, between the Supreme Being and the human. It also contradicts the clear meaning of another Islamic scriptural tenet that obviously articulates the unnecessariness of intervention, or “gatekeeping”, between human and God because God is very close to humans: “We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein.”<sup>415</sup>

Ramzī might have considered *rābiṭa* as a technique for connection and contact between a social-spiritual leader and the members of the community around him. Therefore, it would turn out to be a strong tool to protect the social identity against new dangers coming from outsiders, as we observe in the case of Zaynullāh Rasūlī. Zaynullāh created an immense barrier against Russian cultural attacks with the help of spiritual

<sup>414</sup> Some scholars and Sufi authors discussed the theory of *rābiṭa* before, and also, in the age of Ramzī, who must have had attention of what was said in this problem. Many scholars denied *rābiṭa* and described it as a newly invented practice that had never been taught in early times of Sufism. However, the very idea of “spiritual connection between the *murīd* and sheikh”, or “annihilation in sheikh” (*fanāʾ fī al-shaykh*) might be the leading factor for the development of the theory of *rābiṭa* in the late centuries. See: Butrus Abu-Manneh, “Khalwa and Rābita in the Khālīdī Suborder”, *Naqshbandis: Historical development and present situation of a Muslim mystical order. Proceedings of the Sèvres round table, 2-4 May 1985*, ed. M. Gaborieau, Th. Zarccone, A. Popovic, Varia Turcica 18 (Istanbul: Isis, 1990), pp. 289-302; Hāfiz Seyyid Hoca, *Risāla fī ibṭāl al-rābiṭa*, MÜIF KTP (Library of the Faculty of Theology, Marmara University, Istanbul), no. 6941, add. 8, folia 1b-8a. See also the refutation of *rābiṭa* by Dihlawī and Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, and the rejection of this refutation by Muḥammad As ʿad Ṣāhibzādah: Muḥammad As ʿad Ṣāhibzādah, *Nūr al-hidāya wa al-ʿirfān fī sirr al-rābiṭa wa al-tawajjuh wa khatm al-khājagān* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿilmiyya, 1311 AH [1893 AD]), pp. 3-4; Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān al-Bukhārī el-Qannaujī, *al-Tāj al-mukallal* (Riyad: Maktabat Dār al-Salām, 1995), pp. 519-522.

<sup>415</sup> Sūra Qāf (50:16).

techniques and practices such as *rābiṭa*, open *mawlid* ceremonies, and meetings in his house, even in the coldest towns of Siberia. However, Ramzī did not talk about this kind of consideration for *rābiṭa*. Now, we may ask, how did he support the notion of *rābiṭa*? Here I shall analyze his logic behind the notion of *rābiṭa* in light of his own words and argumentations.

I observe that Ramzī considers *rābiṭa* to be an intercessional instrument between high sacred entities and low ones in a hierarchically-organized spiritual world. Interestingly, he used the term of *mustafīd* (المستفيد) for those who need help or intercession, i.e., the *murīd*. He used the term *mufīd* (المفيد) for those who can help, i.e., God. Finally, he used the term of *mutawassiṭ* (المتوسط) for those who perform the intercession, i.e., the sheikh/‘*arif/ghawth* who supposed to serve as the bridge between the *murīd* and God.<sup>416</sup> The line of reasoning here is based on the following logic: “Common people can only behave in an earthly, worldly, and sinful manner. Therefore, they need to be forgiven. However, the forgiver (God), is so high and supreme that they immediately need an intercessor, that is, the Sheikh.” Now we should ask: what is the problématique here? What kinds of mental concepts does Ramzī utilize?

This logic should be familiar for those who know the theory of emanation (*ṣudūr* and *fayd*: صدور و فيض) in Islamic philosophy under the strong influence of Neoplatonism. This theory assumes that there is a hierarchical system between the First Divine Being (God) and other creations which emanated from the first being, or created as a part of the

<sup>416</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 198-199.

flowing of light from it.<sup>417</sup> The exact term *fayḍ* (فيض) which means ‘flowing’ is used by Ramzī in order to interpret the meaning of “intercession” between the Divine Supreme Being and the inferior “earthly servants.”

Ramzī is still walking in the same line that has been employed since the early creators of Islamic philosophy under Neoplatonist influence. Obviously, Ramzī’s mental-intellectual structure was connected again to the old emanation theories supported by Ibn Sīnā, al-Suhrawardī, and al-Dawānī, “the Golden Chain of *al-ishrāqī* Avicennism”, as I mentioned earlier. Ramzī, the great scholar and brilliant translator, is not concerned with the approaches of other Sufi thinkers, scholars, and intellectuals about the problem of *rābiṭa*, even though he was a real expert in Arabic and Islamic disciplines. It means that he could not epistemologically break up ‘*irfān*’-based structures; instead, he was walking along the same path as his old traditionalist Sufi *al-ishrāqī* fellows, at least when he wrote his book *Dhayl* in Mecca around the 1880’s. Perhaps, as a faithful and devoted Muslim, he just wanted to support his opinion with the help of Qur’ānic verses, even though his point of interpretation was obviously weak in terms of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

### 3.3.3. The *khatm-i khwājagān* ceremony

Ramzī gives us also information on the *khatm-i khwājagān* ceremony (ختم خواجگان), a special type of group *dhikr* performed by the Naqshbandī followers.<sup>418</sup> According to Ramzī, the early great masters of this path (*khwājagān*) performed this special tradition

<sup>417</sup> See the story of emanation in the books that Ramzī studied in his youth: Najm al-dīn ‘Alī ibn ‘Umar al-Kātibī al-Qazwīnī, *Hikmat al-‘Ayn*, ed. Šālih Aydin (Cairo, 2002), pp. 49-51; Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ Hikmat al-‘Ayn* (Kazan: Kerimov Matbaası, 1319 AH [1901 AD]), pp. 203-213.

<sup>418</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 232-233.



only for emergency situations when a massive disaster included every person in the community, such as a war and a flood, with the regard all conditions and principles of the *khatm*, such as repeating the sentences and prayers with certain numbers. Thus, they wanted to concentrate on the spiritual protection ways from the massive disaster they faced. They never performed the *dhikr* of *khatm-i khwājagān* in an arbitrary way.<sup>419</sup>

As Ramzī mentions, the things really changed at the last centuries. Because the Naqshī masters of the last period observed many disasters and diagnosed a considerable laziness in the *murīds*, even in ordinary *dhikr* applications, they had to change some rituals and started to perform this special *dhikr* at certain times in a week.<sup>420</sup> Here Ramzī criticizes some groups who claimed to belong to the Naqshī order but did not know important points and manners in this path, especially the manners of *khatm-i khwājagān*.<sup>421</sup>

According to Ramzī, these novice followers did not comprehend the key points of the Naqshbandī path, only imitating what they saw, as if they were the first class experts. Also, some Sufi groups in Mawarā al-nahr (today's Uzbekistan), which once had great centers of science and wisdom, thought that *khatm-i khwājagān* was the essence of the Naqshī path. Therefore, they exaggerated this practice, performing *khatm-i khwājagān* two days per week in mosques and *dargāhs*. Furthermore, they employed this special *dhikr* as an instrument to gain material things, stealing what is collected for a religious foundation (*al-waqf*: الوقف) and saying, "Whoever comes and participates in *khatm-i*

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 233-235.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

*khwājagān* will take income of this charity foundation (*al-waqf*).” They claimed that this was the part of the *ṭarīqa*. According to Ramzī, there is no permissibility for this kind of deviance in this path. To take something from the income of a religious foundation with participation in *khatm-i khwājagān* as the excuse is forbidden (*Ḥarām*) by the Ḥanafī School of jurisprudence.<sup>422</sup>

It seems that the *khatm-i khwājagān* practice of some modern Naqshī branches is different from what Ramzī recommended for his day. However, the form and the number of the repeated names and prayers are similar to each other among the sub-branches of the Khālidiya in Turkey.<sup>423</sup>

### 3.4. Dreams: Reflection of the culture and a tool for the Sufi

The study of dreams is one of the most interesting fields in Islamic studies. For many Muslim scholars, the true dream is considered to be a tool for divine contact in human life. In many *ḥadīth*, a good dream, or “the true dream” (*rū’yā ṣāliha*, or *rū’yā ṣādiqa*), is considered a part of the prophetic path.<sup>424</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn ‘Arabī, Ibn Sīrīn and other scholars and Sufis had revealed different explanations for dreams. I do not wish to enter into a long discussion about

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>423</sup> See: Mevlana Halidi Bağdadi, *Risale-i Halidiye ve Adab-ı Zikir Risalesi*, adaptation by Mehmed Zahid Kotku (Istanbul: Seha Neşriyat, 1990), pp. 61-62; İrfan Gündüz, *Gümüşhanevi Ahmed Ziyaiiddin* (Istanbul: Seha Neşriyat, 1984), pp. 274-275. As I know from my father’s practice, there were three different types of *khatm-i khājagān dhikr*: the long (*büyük hatme*), the middle length (*küçük hatme*), and the short length (*kelime-i tevhid hatmesi*), depending on the number of parts recited from the Qur’ān, the names of God, and the sentences of prayer.

<sup>424</sup> Here, I put the sources and discussions about the major strong *ḥadīth* related to the dreams: “A good dream from a righteous person is one of the forty-six parts of prophecy.” See: Ibn Mājah, no. 3893; al-Bukhārī, *Ta’bīr*, no. 6587; Muslim, *Rū’yā*, no. 2263; al-Tirmidhī, *Rū’yā*, 2280; Abū Dāwūd, *Adab*, no. 5019.

dreams in world cultures. Instead, I will focus on Ramzī's accounts, after I give a short but important summary on the problem of dreams in Islamic culture. Generally speaking, dreams in Islamic tradition are divided into true or false signifiers. True ones are considered as worth interpreting, but false ones are not. As Ibn Khaldūn mentions:

The Prophet said, "*There are three kinds of dream visions: a) There are dream visions from God, b) dream visions from the angels, c) and dream visions from Satan.*" All dreams are pictures in the imagination while an individual is asleep. However, if these pictures come down from the rational spirit that perceives (them), they are real dream visions. But if they are derived from the pictures preserved in the power of memory, where the imagination deposits them when the individual is awake, they are just confused dreams.<sup>425</sup>

We observe here the influence of the dream that can be employed for the truthfulness of something or its falsity, the nobleness of someone or his/her inferiority. Because it has an imposing power in daily life, it is beyond the meaning of creativity in art and literature. What if a dream imposes upon the dreamer the commission of harmful acts in society? That is the problem which some Muslim scholars such as Al-Nasaḫī of Central Asia were concerned with. Moreover, they articulated that a dream cannot be evidence for doing or not doing something. It can be useful only for dreamer, not for others, if it is interpreted appropriately according to the rules of the religion and common sense; it cannot be employed as an imposing power over other people. We will enter in this issue again in the end of this section. Generally speaking, some Sufis, Bāḥinī leaders, Gnostic masters (*ʿārif*), and politicians did not care about these kinds of warnings. Instead, they employed dreams for their financial, ideological, or political goals.

<sup>425</sup> See: Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal, edited and abridged by N. J. Dawood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 83 and 368.

Mainstream Muslim scholars believed that interpretation of dreams, as an independent field of expertise, may prevent some possible misunderstandings. As ‘Abd al-ḥayy al-Kattānī (d. 1962) indicates, the classical theory of dream interpretation in Islamic culture is based on certain rules. According to al-Kattānī, every dream has its own peculiar conditions depending upon the dreamer and the symbols seen in the dream. As a major principle, no book can be employed to interpret a dream without detailed knowledge of the dreamer and the signs the dreamer sees.<sup>426</sup> Otherwise, the dream can be interpreted in an arbitrary way that cannot reveal valuable information about the dreamer. For example, the “sea” in a dream can be interpreted as a signifier for a king, sadness, conflict, depending upon the dreamer, as Ibn Khaldūn indicates.<sup>427</sup> On the other hand, the same symbol (sea) can be interpreted as “deep knowledge” if the dreamer is a student or a scholar. The famous texts of interpretations in Islamic culture (Muslim oneiromancy texts) such as the work by Ibn Sīrīn<sup>428</sup> or al-Nābulusī’s (d. 1731) encyclopedic work<sup>429</sup> are valuable collections of dream narratives which offer us extensive information on the

<sup>426</sup> Muhammed Abdülhay el-Kettani, *et-Teratibu’l-İdariyye, Hz. Peygamber’in Yönetimi*, translated into Turkish and annotated by Dr. Ahmet Özel (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 142-143.

<sup>427</sup> Here I refer to another *Muqaddima* edition prepared by ‘Abdullah Muḥammad al-Darwīsh See: ‘Abd al-raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī, *Muqaddima Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. ‘Abdullah Muḥammad al-Darwīsh (Damascus: Maktabat al-Hidāya, 2004), vol. 2, pp. 244-247. This is the 19th section, about the interpretation of dreams (*Fī Ta’bīr al-Ru’yā*).

<sup>428</sup> See: Muḥammad Ibn Sīrīn al-Anṣārī (d. 728) *Muntakhab al-kalām fī tafsīr al-aḥlām* [A Guide for the Interpretation of Dreams] (Cairo–Bulaq, 1284 AH [1868 AD]). Following this first modern edition, different variations and translations have been printed up to today in different countries. However, the original text should be very short. Even though the apocryphal additions on the original text may confuse the minds, the large narrative accumulations in the current editions are extremely important to understand the cultural, intellectual and literary changes in the Islamic civilization. Therefore, this book with its current shape becomes a valuable source for dream interpretation inasmuch as it represents an archeological field with interesting findings in the mindset of Muslim peoples, up today.

<sup>429</sup> ‘Abd al-ghanī ibn Ismā‘īl al-Nābulusī, *Ta’fīr al-anām fī ta’bīr al-manām* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Maymanīya, 1307 AH [1890 AD]); and (Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabīya, 1972).

dream culture in Islamic civilization, but they never give us a sound basis to interpret the real dream of a real person inasmuch as every dream has its own conditions.

It seems that Ramzī does not talk very much about dreams, including symbols which could be interpreted in different ways depending upon the conditions of the dreamer, such as culture, job, social class, religious tendency, and economic situation. Instead, he mentions some narratives in which the dreams are generally imposing a situation, or for him reflecting “an obvious truth”, without need to interpret. Known as *rū'yā ṣādiqa*, these kinds of dreams are considered to be seen by excellent servants of God, such as the Prophet and saints, and can reflect what is going on in real life. Ramzī believes that the sheikhs in Naqshī tradition are the true friends of God, therefore, their dreams are real parts of a conversation between the *murīd* and sheikh. According to Ramzī, the *murīd* can see the sheikh in his dream, asking him of whatever he wants, after which the sheikh can answer, and vice versa. If the dream can include some symbolic pictures, it is interpreted in a *taṣawwufī* way as related to the stations and levels of spiritual maturation. With this approach, Ramzī admits the dream as evidence to do something in activities daily life or the spiritual domain.

### 3.4.1. Dreams to start new projects

When Ramzī was in Bukhara he saw the Prophet Muḥammad in his dream,<sup>430</sup> then changed his life style and began to research the Sufī path (i.e., the Naqshbandīya). However, he does not give us the details about his dream. Generally, the Prophet Muḥammad in the dream is considered to be a signifier to follow good manners in life

<sup>430</sup> Ramzī, *Mu'arrab al-Maktūbāt*, vol. 3, p. 302.

and to incline toward the high-quality good deeds in Islam, or to be happy with abundance.<sup>431</sup> Why does Ramzī mention this special dream? Perhaps, he wants to articulate that his choice of the Sufi order is the best way to arrive at the love of God.

Another interesting decision by Ramzī is how he started to translate the collected letters (*Maktūbāt*) of Sirhindī. The first intention to undertake this huge project just came in his heart, with complicated feelings. However, after a clear positive sign from his sheikh about the translation,<sup>432</sup> he intended to sleep for an *istikhāra* dream in order to take the final decision concerning the translation. More than once, he saw good signs in his *istikhāra* dreams, and then he started to translate the book.<sup>433</sup> He took a similar path to a decision to undertake the translation of *Rashaḥāt* after performing *istikhāra* as the Prophet recommended.<sup>434</sup> It seems that Ramzī takes almost all decisions after an *istikhāra* dream. Otherwise, he would have felt a kind of lack in his intentions, or confusion regarding the project he might start.

### 3.4.2. Dreams to dig up the hidden layers of the language and mind

Here I will deal with another face of dreams that is related to the game played between the spoken language and the human mind. Ramzī's accounts of the life stories of great

<sup>431</sup> See: 'Abd al-ghanī ibn Ismā'īl al-Nābulusī, *Ta'īr al-anām fī ta'bīr al-manām* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Maymanīya, 1307 AH [1890 AD]), vol. 2, pp. 209-210.

<sup>432</sup> Ramzī, *Mu'arrab al-Maktūbāt*, vol. 1, p. 6.

<sup>433</sup> *Istikhāra* means to seek from God that which decision is the best. It is performed to reach a clear decision after looking at both sides of the problem, and relying on God for guidance. There is a special prayer for it. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book 19, *Ḥadīth* no. 45. See: <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/19> (accessed March 20, 2015).

<sup>434</sup> Ramzī, *Tarjamat Rashaḥāt 'Ayn al-Hayāt* (Mecca, 1890), p. 4.

sheikhs give us some details on the dreams between sheikh and *murīd*. One of the interesting dream visions mentioned in the *Dhayl* is what Khwāja Bāqībillāh saw.<sup>435</sup> When Khwāja Bāqībillāh went to Transoxania (*Mā warā al-nahr*), he had a vision that Khwāja Amkanagī/Amkanawī called him impatiently. He went to see him and stayed around three days. Then, Khwāja Amkanagī gave him the mission of deputy, the spiritual caliphate, and said: “Run to India! By your effort, this Sufi path (Naqshbandīya) will be recognized there!” Khwāja Bāqībillāh told his sheikh that he could not complete such a difficult mission. However, Khwāja Amkanagī dictated him to get guidance with *istikhāra*, and then Khwāja Bāqībillāh performed it. In his long dream, he saw a parrot on the branch of a tree. He thought that the parrot is a bird living in India and that if this bird sits on his hand, he would consider this journey as a blessed movement. When this idea flashed in his mind, the parrot flew and perched on his hand. Bāqībillāh placed his saliva into the beak of the bird whereas the bird gave sugar into his mouth. In the morning, Bāqībillāh told the dream to his sheikh. The sheikh said that he should do what *istikhāra* showed. He moved to India and waited in Lahore for a year. The scholars and nobles of the city loved him. Then he went to Dihli where he stayed at the point called the Castle of Fīrūzīya.<sup>436</sup>

Here the parrot (طوطی، بباغاء)، the major sign of the dream, is interpreted as the wisdom and blessing in India. We know that Naqshī followers were often reading famous Iranian Sufi poets such as Ḥāfeẓ of Shīrāz (d. 1389) and others. Furthermore, the *Dīvān of Ḥāfeẓ* has been so famous and respectful text that many people, even today, from

<sup>435</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>436</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, p. 13.

Central Asian towns to the Iranian cities have a tradition of “Fāl-i Ḥāfeẓ” which means that one can employ Ḥāfeẓ’s poem text (*Dīwān-i Ḥāfeẓ*) as an instrument of “divination” to take the best decision for probable projects in the future.<sup>437</sup> Therefore, it was possible for Naqshī followers to interpret a signifier of a dream with another signifier from *Dīwān-i Ḥāfeẓ*. In one of his poems, Ḥāfeẓ mentioned parrot as a signifier to a man of letters, a poet, a man of wisdom:

Shakkar shikan shawand heme tūṭiyān-i Hind شکرشکن شوند همه طوطیان هند  
Zīn qand-i Pārsī ki be Bengāle mī rawad<sup>438</sup> زین قند پارسی که به بنگاله میرود

All Indian parrots will turn to be chewing sugar,  
From this Persian candy which goes to Bengal.

However, the parrot can also be interpreted in different ways, if the dreamer is not living in India or Iran, as a dervish or poet. For example ‘Abd al-ghanī al-Nābulusī of Damascus (d. 1731) mentions that the egg of a parrot can indicate “an honest, beautiful concubine”.<sup>439</sup> Here, the language plays its role with all connotations on the culture in which the dreamer lives.

I observe, the first interpretation was created with the special conditions of the dervish, or wise man, who was waiting good news from India. The parrot with its colorful appearance and saliva was interpreted as wisdom in India. On the other hand, the egg of

<sup>437</sup> According to Omidsalar: “Fāl-e Ḥāfeẓ may be used for one or more persons. In group bibliomancy, the *Dīwān* will be opened at random, and beginning with the ode of the page that one chances upon, each ode will be read in the name of one of the individuals in the group. The ode is the individual’s fāl. Assigning of the odes to individuals depends on the order in which the individuals are seated and is never random. One or three verses from the ode following each person’s fāl are called the *šāhed*, which is read after the recitation of the fāl.” See: Mahmoud Omidsalar, “Divination”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 7, fasc. 4 (1995), pp. 440-443. It is also available at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/divination> (accessed April 18, 2014).

<sup>438</sup> Ḥāfeẓ-e Shīrāzī, *Dīwān*, ed. Qazi Sajjad Husain (Delhi, 1972), p. 172.

<sup>439</sup> ‘Abd al-ghanī ibn Ismā‘īl al-Nābulusī, *Ta’ṭīr al-anām fī ta’bīr al-manām*, vol. 1, p. 55.



the parrot in Syria (al-Nābulusī's land) indicates a beautiful, honest concubine because, the egg (*al-bīḍ*) in Arabic language is connoted by the color white (*al-bayāḍ*), which indicates sincerity, beauty, and faithfulness in that culture. The parrot represents here an exotic beautiful creature coming from a faraway land. Therefore "egg of the parrot" points to an honest concubine coming from exotic lands in the mind of a 17th century Syrian intellectual such as al-Nābulusī. Generally speaking, a Circassian slave girl brought to Syrian slave market of that age might have been the subject of this dream. If we understand the logic of interpreter, i.e., al-Nābulusī, we realize that the major game in dream interpretation is generally played inside the boundaries of language and culture in which the dreamer lives.

In Ramzī's accounts, we find another example about Khwāja Bāqībillāh. Before he died, he saw the great sheikh Khwāja 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār in his dream. Aḥrār gave him a shirt to wear, then went.<sup>440</sup> The "shirt" points out here the death of the sheikh. This signifier is culturally wider than the aforementioned parrot, which was a very peculiar. In many traditional books of interpretation, "putting on a new shirt" has more than one meaning. It may point to good news, a new friend, a new wife or husband, a new job, anew authority, a big gain, death, or great change in the life of the dreamer.<sup>441</sup>

When we look at all aforementioned points we realize another source of dream interpretation in Islamic culture: the books of belief and narratives which shape the common conscience of the society. The shirt is mentioned in the Qur'ān as a sign of good

<sup>440</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, p. 18.

<sup>441</sup> See for the detailed interpretation of the shirt (Qamīṣ): Nābulusī, *Ta'īr al-anām fī ta'bīr al-manām*, vol. 2, pp. 157-158.

news as we find in Sūra Yūsuf (12:93), or the wife and husband as we find in Sūra al-Baqara (2:187), consequently they are put in books of dream interpretation, among other narratives. What this amounts to is a massive army of signifiers run amok into the minds of the people who are waiting the interpretation of their dreams. Even though “oneiromancy texts” are considered “officially ineffective” elements,<sup>442</sup> paradoxically the interpreter would need to check them out and interpret the dreams under the thick cloud of these past narratives. Here the text influences the man, and the man influences the text; then the text gives the meaning, then the meaning creates the new man, even his dreams. Finally the man obeys the text again, until a new text/a new dream is woven. Life (*al-Ḥayāt* or *al-Ḥayy*)<sup>443</sup> produces a dream, and a dream produces a new man.

### 3.4.3. Dreams to fight on behalf of the sheikh

In Ramzī’s accounts, dreams are also employed to impose the superiority of a master, or to point out difficult realities of mysticism through symbols and allegories. For example, Sirhindī, as the renewer of the second millennium, invades the mind of Ramzī and other Naqshī followers. His image is seen in dreams as a representative of sacred knowledge and a guardian of the high station of divine love. In some dreams of his friends, Aḥmad Sirhindī was seen as a primordial thing in the first step of the creation. At the same dream, he was also seen as the last level of perfection.<sup>444</sup> This complex dream means that

<sup>442</sup> See al-Kettani’s aforementioned warnings: el-Kettani, *et-Teratibu’l-Idariyye*, vol. 1, pp. 142-143.

<sup>443</sup> i.e., God. *Al-Ḥayāt* or *al-Ḥayy* (The Life, or The Living thing: الحَيُّ أو الحياة) is one of the beautiful names of God mentioned in the Qur’ān and Sufī classics. The name *Ḥayy* (the Living) with *Qayyūm* (the Everlasting) is also mentioned in Āya al-Kursī (verse of the throne, Al-Baqara 2: 255), which is the most recited verse by a traditional Muslim in daily life against internal and external dangers.

<sup>444</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Tarjamat Aḥwāl al-Imām Rabbānī* (Istanbul: İhlas Vakfı, 2002), p. 13.

Sirhindī's spiritual station is considered as much as Ibn 'Arabī, who had been respected as the greatest saint (*walī*) in intellectual speculative Sufism. These dream narratives must have increased the disputes about the position of Aḥmad Sirhindī among scholars and Sufi groups in India. They might have also created fierce discussions among peoples who would have "counter-dreams" to continue to fight.

In another dream, we see peace and submission in favor of Aḥmad Sirhindī. Ramzī tells us a dream about how the opposing scholar 'Abd al-ḥaqq Dihlawī gave up rejection of Aḥmad Sirhindī and accepted his opinions.<sup>445</sup> In his long dream, 'Abd al-ḥaqq saw the Prophet, who was blaming 'Abd al-ḥaqq for his denial of Sirhindī. As Ramzī writes, 'Abd al-ḥaqq gave up his denial and then became an advocate of Sirhindī.

Dreams can also literally start a war or end fighting. As Ramzī wrote, some *murīds* of Aḥmad Sirhindī wanted to dethrone the Mughal Pādishāh, the Muslim Emperor of Hindustan. However, after a couple of hours, Aḥmad Sirhindī's image was seen in their dreams in which he warned them on the brutal effects of a possible war. Besides, he encouraged them to pray for the favor of the Pādishāh. Here, a Sufi figure gives orders in a dream and his followers obey him in the morning.<sup>446</sup> We observe a war of illuminations and dreams within which some people could literally start to battle each other under the flags of rival Sufi groups and religious sects.

This strange problem was realized first in medieval times and studied through careful analysis. Al-Nasafī (d. 1142), the author of the famous creed text we mentioned before, concluded that the illumination (*al-ilhām*, *al-kashf*) or illuminative dream of

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

someone cannot be evidence to do something and that illumination is not one of the causes of the cognition of the soundness of a thing.<sup>447</sup> Before al-Nasafī, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), the Andalusian scholar, said that a dreamer (other than the Prophet) cannot force people to obey so-called sacred orders he/she receives in the dream and that there is no appropriate way to verify a dream if it is a beneficial thing, a truth, or just a menace, a lie.<sup>448</sup> However, after sectarian wars continuing for hundreds of years around colorful Mahdīan/Messianic dreams, it seems that no one has heeded the advice of al-Nasafī or Ibn Ḥazm, except for some modest common scholars and humble citizens of Dār al-Islām.

### 3.5. Sirhindī: A positive millenarianist from India

Our research focuses on Ramzī, therefore, we will try to understand Sirhindī in the light of translations and interpretations made by Ramzī. Here, the important thing is what Ramzī understood, interpreted, and employed as related to the works and opinions of Sirhindī. However, I will give a short introduction to understand the historical position of Sirhindī in India.

Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624) was one of the most remarkable authors of the late 16th-century Islamic world. After many centuries, his letters on Sufism have influenced almost all Muslim groups in India, Central Asia, Middle East, and Anatolia. He is described as the *Mujaddid Alf Thānī* (the reviver of the second millennium). As Professor

<sup>447</sup> Saʿīd al-dīn al-Taftāzānī, *On the Creed of Najm al-dīn al-Nasafī (A commentary on the Creed of Islam)*, translated with introduction and notes by Earl Edgar Elder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), pp. xxiv, and 27.

<sup>448</sup> Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām* (Cairo: Dār al-ḥadīth, 1404 AH [1984 AD]), vol. 4, p. 407.

Arthur Buehler indicates, his best-known writings *Maktūbāt-i Rabbānī* (“The Collected Letters”) discuss contemplative Naqshī practice and other Sufi concerns. Through these letters, Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī teachings spread throughout the Eastern Islamic world.<sup>449</sup>

The sixteenth century brought about great changes in economy, cultural relations, beliefs, power conflicts, new spiritual movements, and other issues. As Subrahmanyam indicates, during the course of a campaign in Afghanistan in mid-1581, the Mughal Emperor Jalāl al-dīn Muḥammad Akbar counselled the Portuguese Jesuit Antonio Monserrate on issues related to the millennium, the Last Judgement day, and its precursory signs.<sup>450</sup> Antonio said that “the Day of Judgement would be known by certain signs, wars, rebellions, fall of kingdoms and nations, big invasions, devastation and conquest of nation by nation and kingdom by kingdom.”<sup>451</sup> The year 1000 of the Hijra (1591-92) was also a time when some Muslims anxiously awaited signs that the end of the world was close. Subrahmanyam said that:

Millenarianism, like money, allows us to approach a problem of global dimensions, but with quite different local manifestations.<sup>452</sup>

However, as Subrahmanyam mentions, a wide view of the Ottoman Empire, Iran and North Africa demonstrated that the expectations around the year 1000 AH were not totally apocalyptic, or undesirable. Some Muslims tried to find the possibility of reshaping

<sup>449</sup> Arthur F. Buehler, “Aḥmad Sirhindī: A 21st-century update”, *Der Islam*, vol. 86, no. 1 (2009), pp.123-124. See for his life and works: Yohanan Friedmann, *Sheikh Aḥmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image*.

<sup>450</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia”, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3 (July, 1997), pp. 735-762.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 747.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 750.

the world in a positive way through the mediation of a *mujaddid*, or “renewer”.<sup>453</sup> Many renewers such as Aḥmad Sirhindī were likely expected to emerge and correct the irregularity in traditions, social life, economic situation, legal problems, class conflicts, and beliefs of Muslims. A positive millenarianism by a charismatic renewer person could meet the urgent psychological need of huge masses in Muslim countries.

On the other hand, it was a very risky position to be called Maḥdī or Mujaddid, a social, political, and religious gamble with an uncertain end. A Pādishāh or a massive large community could execute the so-called Maḥdī-Mujaddid in front of his followers, as we observed in Anatolia and Iran.<sup>454</sup> The so-called Maḥdī could also cause fierce conflicts among the social classes of a society, as we observed often in Anatolia, Iraq, Syria, Northern Africa, and Iran.<sup>455</sup>

Even today we can see Maḥdīs, pīrs or international “preachers” who lead the people to endless accusations and fractions in the society in the name of divine authority for the End of the Time (*Ākhir al-zamān*) with the help of political power centers or international NGOs. It seems that the Maḥdī problem is still one of the fault lines in Muslim societies that may be employed by interior or exterior political powers. In some points, it is similar to the cult formations in modern western societies, but it is beyond

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 750-751.

<sup>454</sup> In the age of Bayezid the Second (1481-1512), there was an Iranian man called as “the sergeant of the Maḥdī” (*Mehdinin çavuşu*) causing a small chaos in society, who was then immediately executed by the state officials. See for details: Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, “Türk Heterodoksi Tarihinde Zındık, Hâricî, Mülhid, ve Ehl-i Bid’at terimlerine dair bazı düşünceler”, *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi-Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 12, 1981-1982, pp. 507-520.

<sup>455</sup> In the age of Ottoman Sultan Murād the Third (1574-1595), Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā (a Kharijite man) revolted in the name of the deputy of Maḥdī (*Khalifat al-Maḥdī*), then attacked with his 60 thousand followers to the castle and killed Kaya Paşa, the Governor of Tunis. See for details: Nev’îzâde Atâî, *Hadâiku’l-Hakaik*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan, Istanbul: 1989, pp. 379 and 657.

that, with its overwhelming ability to mobilize thousands of people in the Muslim world. With this judgment, I am not defending an orientalist approach to the problem, as though I were an outsider. Instead, I set out the naked reality with which we are still struggling in Muslim societies.

In fact, we live in lands fertile for abundant Mahdī-Messiah production from both Shī'ī and Sunnī groups, whereas some tragicomic cases make the problem more complicated with lots of laughs. In Ottoman times, the situation was generally accompanied with economic or religious crises. The government was so serious that any Mahdī movement associated with a political power was immediately punished without hesitation. But a crazy man not posing any harm to society or the political system could easily walk in the streets and not be killed, such as the foolish Mahdī of Bozcaada (Tenedos Island in the Aegean Sea) in 1694.<sup>456</sup> We also should remember that the official creed system (Māturīdī kernel with Ash'arī outer layer) did not give a chance to legalize or to enhance any Mahdīist movement in the Ottoman system. The subsequent intellectual formation of the Ottoman high élite, with the help of mainstream Sunnī *fiqh* books, and the realist Ibn Khaldūn school of history, must have also prevented them from the accepting the seductive invitation of Mahdīism. However, an economical catastrophe with inflation, an inevitable class struggle, an ongoing war, or a climatic change with the weak harvest of the grain was also able to lead a boom of Mahdīs in Anatolia.<sup>457</sup> Famous

<sup>456</sup> Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekayiât, Tahlil ve Metin* (1066-1116/1656-1704), critical edition by Abdülkadir Özcan, Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu, 1995, pp. 500-501.

<sup>457</sup> For example, Jalālī revolts (called after Bozoklu Jalāl, the Mahdī of Anatolia in the 16th century) were carried out by economical, climatic and political reasons. They were serious political attempts in the Ottoman history. See: İdrīs-i Bitlīsî, *Selim Şah-nâme*, critical edition by Hicabi Kırılancıç, Ankara, 2001, pp. 387-388.

Mahdī figures in Anatolia were generally appearing after unstable economic or political moments<sup>458</sup> whereas the pragmatist Ottoman imperial mind did not have any enthusiasm to appreciate the mechanism of this Mahdī “wannabe” phenomenon, even though the economic factors behind it were well understood. Instead, the Ottomans in their classical age were considering the Sultan to be a naturally selected leader<sup>459</sup> for the eternal state, chosen from among the members of a divinely-chosen family,<sup>460</sup> and a powerful savior, a Zillullāh (shadow of God: ظلّ الله).<sup>461</sup> In fact, in the classical Turkish state philosophy, it is the state which is sacred, not the man who rules it.<sup>462</sup> The ruler would change continuously, as a blessed serviceman, but the state should be eternal. It was a strangely

<sup>458</sup> Almost all Mahdī candidates in Anatolia, such as crazy, smart, powerful, comic or weak Mahdīs were influenced by occultist ideas. Bad economy and delayed justice were among the real reasons for this massive Mahdī production in Anatolia, even though the expectation on the signs of “the end of the time” is an independent factor. See for the fate of some Mahdī figures in Anatolia: Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Babailer İsyanı–Aleviliğin Tarihsel Altyapısı Yahut Anadolu’da İslām-Türk Heterodoksisinin Teşekkülü*, İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1996, pp. 105-113; Ali Coşkun, *Mehdilik Fenomeni, Osmanlı dönemi dini kurtuluş hareketleri üzerine bir din bilimi araştırması*, İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2004, pp. 333-471.

<sup>459</sup> The sultan was naturally selected, because, only the most powerful, the smartest and cunning candidate crown prince (şehzâde, veliahd: ولي العهد) was able to get the throne, after long and bloody battles with his brothers; inasmuch as majorat sytem (ekberiyet: اکبریّت) was not considered fair in the classical Ottoman State mind, until 17th century. It was a struggle similar to the natural selection. See for the details on “the ekberiyet system” which is “succession by the oldest male of the family”: Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 91-92.

<sup>460</sup> Ottomans also employed the old Turkic-Mongol tradition within which the sacred family was considered the source of rulers. Only another sacred family could have the right to rule. Therefore, some historians talked about a possible competition between Āl-i Osman (The House of Osman) and Āl-i Chingiz (The House of Chingiz). See: Feridun M. Emecen, “Osmanlı Hanedanına Alternatif Arayışlar Üzerine Bazı Örnekler ve Mülâhazalar”, *İslām Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 6 (Ankara, 2001), pp. 63-76.

<sup>461</sup> There is no “shadow of God” in the Qur’ān. This old metaphor is coming from the Bible, Psalms, 91:1. “He sits in the shelter of The Highest and is glorified in the shadow of God.” See: <http://biblehub.com/niv/psalms/91-1.htm> (accessed April 21, 2015). There are some fabricated weak narratives, such as “The sultan is shadow of God...” in the collections of Ṭabarānī and Bayhaqī. See for the discussions on this fabricated narrative: Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhīr al-Fattānī (d. 1578), *Tadhkirat al-mawḍū‘āt*, Cairo: al-Ṭibā‘a al-Muniriyya, 1343 AH [1924 AD], p. 182. You will see detailed info on this ḥadīth and its similars in the section of “Bāb al-imām al-‘ādil”, pp. 182-185. See also: Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Shawkānī (d. 1759), *al-Fawā'id al-Majmū'a fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍū'a* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1987), p. 193.

<sup>462</sup> Even the official name of the Ottoman State is “Devlet-i ebed müddet” (‘The Eternal State’).



“official” and also very effective solution for the possible desire for Mahdī, whereas a disaster in the economic or justice system could change the balance between the Sublime Porte (*Bāb-ı ‘Ālī*: Istanbul) and society. However a researcher should be careful pertaining to this issue. The discourse of a historical text may support the current political structure of its time or the revolts of opposing groups, depending on the religious doctrine, social class, and other senses of affiliation of the historian. A terrifying massacre can be described as a “necessary victory” by a palace chronicler (*Vaq‘anuvīs*: وقعه نویس), whereas a brutally organized bloodbath of thousands can be touted as “the uprising of peace-maker dervishes” or a “call to freedom” by extreme sectarian writers.

When Aḥmad Sirhindī started to reveal his opinions on the legal applications, Sufi traditions, and social life of Mughal India, many scholars severely criticized him. However, the earliest and the strongest refutations against Aḥmad Sirhindī were not about his political attitude towards the Mughal State. Instead, almost all major negations, refutations, and denials towards Aḥmad Sirhindī were related exclusively to his religious assumptions, his exaggerated statements, and controversial approaches to the spiritual level of the prophet Muḥammad, the Ka‘ba, and the situation of Ibn ‘Arabī.

Aḥmad Sirhindī’s hardcore book on his extreme opinions is *al-Mabda’ wa’l-Ma‘ād* translated by Ramzī, in which he exposes many problematic issues and big claims, for which he was accused. Here, for instance, the intellect (*al-‘Aql*) becomes the translator of the Divine Soul (*al-Rūḥ*).<sup>463</sup> Ramzī tried to carefully interpret some difficult

<sup>463</sup> Aḥmad Sirhindī, *al-Mabda’ wa’l-Ma‘ād*, translated into Arabic by Ramzī and printed with other books, (Istanbul: İhlas Vakfı, 2002), pp. 141-142.

points of the doctrine of *Ḥaqīqa Aḥmadīya*, the provocative theory of Aḥmad Sirhindī,<sup>464</sup> adding some notes to explain the notions *khātm al-walāya* and *khātm al-nubuwwa* of Ibn ‘Arabī which are still considered to be very delicate issues in the Sufī tradition.<sup>465</sup>

Almost all early refuters of Aḥmad Sirhindī asked how he could dare to compare himself with Ibn ‘Arabī, the great master of divine love and the foremost figure in intellectual speculative Sufism. When we look at the general portrait of Muslims in Mughal India, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century, we realize that Ibn ‘Arabī’s inevitable influence had already covered the mindsets of different social classes and religious groups. Furthermore, they never expected any attack from a person who either would claim his superiority above Ibn ‘Arabī, or would bring a new thesis conflicting with the famous theory of “existential unity” (*tawḥīd wujūdī*) of Ibn ‘Arabī. Therefore, some Sufī leaders became confused with Aḥmad Sirhindī’s claims, and then they severely criticized him. I am not even talking about the critiques of the common scholars (‘*ulamā-i ṣāḥir*), who became first perplexed by Sirhindī’s texts and then split into two groups: the supporters and the opponents.

The refutations against Sirhindī were not limited to his approach to Ibn ‘Arabī or other sophisticated issues of Sufism, but extended also to his discourse about religion and politics. As Muzaffar Alam indicates, some rival Sufi authors such as ‘Abd al-raḥmān Chishtī were defining *taṣawwuf* with different measures from what Sirhindī offers,

<sup>464</sup> Aḥmad Sirhindī, *al-Mabda’*, pp. 168-169.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.

enquiring as to what the approach of a Sufi should be on religion.<sup>466</sup> ‘Abd al-rahmān clearly criticized the law-centered formulation of the Mujaddidī–Naqshbandī way in India. Furthermore, he gave a unique vision of Chishtī spiritual support to the Mughal political order. The dialectical development of the Chishtīya and Naqshbandīya must have contributed to Indian Sufism many colorful discussions around Islamic law, politics, Ibn ‘Arabī, local traditions, and culture.<sup>467</sup>

Among the Meccan scholars of the 17th century there were many famous authors criticizing Aḥmad Sirhindī harshly. As Basheer Nafi indicates, the spreading of the first controversial copies of Sirhindī’s letters in the Ḥijāz had already created extraordinary polemics there. Then, a violent discussion of the teachings of Sirhindī broke out in the late 11th century AH, dividing Meccan scholars into two rival camps. Muḥammad al-Barzanjī (d. 1691), a prominent Kurdish scholar from the famous Barzanjī family, severely attacked Sirhindī. He wrote a number of treatises in order to refute Sirhindī’s method and opinions.<sup>468</sup>

### 3.5.1. Sirhindī: Revisionist of “existential unity” (*tawḥīd-i wujūdī*)

According to Murād Ramzī, many different reasons including the psychological ones, might have led Aḥmad Sirhindī to undertake the mission of spiritual revival. For

<sup>466</sup> Muzaffar Alam, “The debate within: A Sufi critique of religious law, tasawwuf and politics in Mughal India”, *South Asian History and Culture*, vol. 2, no. 2, April 2011, pp. 138-159.

<sup>467</sup> Muzaffar Alam, *ibid.*, 139-140.

<sup>468</sup> Basheer M. Nafi, “Tasawwuf and Reform in Pre-Modern Islamic Culture: in Search of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī”, *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 42, Issue 3, Arabic Literature and Islamic Scholarship in the 17th/18th Century: Topics and Biographies (2002), pp. 307-355. For the related debate, see pp. 324-326.

example, Aḥmad Sirhindī's eldest son Muḥammad Ṣādiq died suddenly from the plague when he was a very young child. This event finally made Aḥmad Sirhindī a sad man very concerned with social issues.<sup>469</sup> Then he started to believe that he would change bad things in the world as a Muslim renovator of the second Millennium. For a Sufi Muslim, this would be a positive millenarianism, even though it was a very bold claim.

Other psychological reasons might also have influenced Aḥmad Sirhindī. Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm, the youngest son of Aḥmad Sirhindī, became in time the most beloved son in the eyes of his father. This child was very smart and had a strong tendency to the deep mystical experience. When he was just around 3-4 years old, he spoke on the meaning of the divine unity (*tawḥīd*) with the style of ecstatic Sufis ( *'alā madhāq al-ṣūfiyya*: على مذاق الصوفية ), saying: "I am the earth, I am the sky! Those trees are the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*)" which pointed out to the "unity of being" in a basic articulation.<sup>470</sup> On the other hand, this event also indicates that Aḥmad Sirhindī must have talked about the complicated issues of *tawḥīd-i wujūdī* ("existential unity") in his home, to his family members, friends and ṭālibs, thus, his youngest child even kept something from those conversations. It seems that the *tawḥīd-i wujūdī* must have been popularized at that time. Murād Ramzī wrote an independent book called *Tarjamat aḥwāl al-Imām Rabbānī* to support Aḥmad Sirhindī, who was attacked, criticized and mentioned as a liar and a falsifier by his opponents. Ramzī thinks that Sirhindī was similar to the saints, a good servant of God in this difficult situation.<sup>471</sup>

<sup>469</sup> Ramzī, *Dhayl*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>471</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Tarjamat aḥwāl al-Imām Rabbānī*, pp. 2-3.

Even though Ramzī speaks very emotionally about Aḥmad Sirhindī, he gives us a methodical approach to evaluate a historical person who had already passed away centuries ago.<sup>472</sup> His key question is: How can we find out a reliable truth about a historical person? His method is interestingly based on the critique of the texts the person wrote, or his opponents and others produced about him, to support or just to describe him. He says:

There is more than one way to understand and evaluate the quality of a person who died so many years ago. Here I summarize the most important ones:

1. If the person had a specific doctrine (*madhhab*), life-style (*sīra*), or a spiritual path (*ṭarīqa*), we must take it into account as one of the key points to understand and evaluate his personal opinions.
2. A book, an article, and documentary line the person left behind also are evidence to understand and evaluate that person.
3. If someone wrote about the person, with a good or bad tone, it is also important to understand and evaluate him, especially if the narrative was based on common sense in a rational tone, without exaggeration.<sup>473</sup>

When we carefully analyze these steps we conclude that Ramzī wants to comprehend first “the inner-world” of the author, by the help of author’s own doctrine and “way of life”. In the next step, he tries to understand the clear statements of the author. Finally, he examines the rumors and impressions of other people about the author. Within this line, the researcher can understand the historical author in a reasonable way, and can easily interpret what the author said.

This path is somehow similar to the Schleiermacher’s (d. 1834) method of textual critique in which the interpreter should concern both the “inner thoughts” of the author,

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<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

and the “language” that the author employed in the text. While the “grammatical interpretation” is dealing with the language of the text, the “technical interpretation” is dealing with the ideas, lifestyle, and goals of the author.<sup>474</sup> However, while Schleiermacher was employing his method to achieve the best understanding of a text, Ramzī is consulting his own method to evaluate and analyze a historical person in a reasonable way. I think that the goals of both Ramzī and Schleiermacher are similar to each other. When an author dies, he/she becomes just a text recorded in history, like a paragraph written in the books that will need to be reinterpreted again after centuries.

Relying on these foundations of textual critique, Ramzī made a great survey on the books and treatises written by Aḥmad Sirhindī and other works written about him. Finally, he concluded that Aḥmad Sirhindī was not against the theory of “existential unity” (*tawḥīd-i wujūdī*) of Ibn ‘Arabī, as alleged by some “novice scholars of that time”, as he said. He believed that Sirhindī was bringing a new creative tone for this theory, not rejecting it.<sup>475</sup> Ramzī explained why Aḥmad Sirhindī was called the Bridge, the Connector (“*Ṣila*”: صلة) and why he supported the notion of “existential unity”, with detailed interpretations in his letters.<sup>476</sup> As Ramzī quoted, Sirhindī clearly articulated his “position as connector” between two groups:

Praise to God who made me the bridge, the connector between two oceans, and a peacemaker (*muṣliḥ*) between two groups.<sup>477</sup>

<sup>474</sup> He says: “Every utterance corresponds to a sequence of thought of the utterer, and must therefore be able to be completely understood via the nature of the utterer, his mood, his aim. The former we call grammatical, the latter technical interpretation.” See: Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, ed. Andrew Bowie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 229.

<sup>475</sup> Ramzī, *Tarjamat Aḥwāl al-Imām Rabbānī*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Ramzī does not see a gap between Sirhindī's doctrine of testimonial unity (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*) and Ibn 'Arabī's existential unity (*tawḥīd-i wujūdī*). Instead, he considers Sirhindī to be the bridge between the essential religious faith of common Muslims, and unusual depth of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine. With that formula, Sirhindī is considered to be the blessed link between the ordinary common Muslims, and extraordinary followers of Ibn 'Arabī. However, this comfortable description gives us two uncomfortable, even, tense results:

1. There should be a great competition, a harsh struggle between two different understandings of Islam in the age of Sirhindī: a) one based on the commonly understandable meaning of the scripture, the Qur'ān, and b) another based on an extremely Gnostic interpretation of the scripture which is supported by Ibn 'Arabī and his followers.

2. According to Sirhindī, there was an emergent need for reconciliation between the two understandings. Otherwise, the unity of the religion, and consequently the unity of Muslims, could fall in peril.

If we take account of Ramzī's approach here, we will realize that Sirhindī must have thought that if he succeeded in creating a reliable reconciliation, he would become a restorer, a remarkable person in the history of Islam. Therefore, he might have counted himself as the "renewer" of the second millennium.

A third strange result would be that his nickname "renovator" or "renewer" (*mujaddid*) was not anything but a reactionary respond to the immense influence of Ibn

‘Arabī, the vibrant red poet (*al-aḥmar*).<sup>478</sup> It seems that Aḥmad Sirhindī went beyond the ordinary religious discourse of that time, even wishing he could say that: “Ibn ‘Arabī was brilliant for his age; he was undoubtedly the pioneer of the former great Sufi tradition. However, my age is starting now. I am the renovator of the next one thousand year!” Indeed, his subsequent statements had been always in this line. According to Ramzī, Aḥmad Sirhindī made a revision, a “necessary creative comment” in the theory of *tawḥīd-i wujūdī*. To support this opinion, Ramzī quoted from other intellectuals without mentioning their names:

Some great scholars said that the strongest reason of the *fitna* (“chaos, confusion”) over Aḥmad Sirhindī was his refutation of the novice interpretation of *tawḥīd-i wujūdī*, and his immense effort for *tawḥīd-i shuhūdī*. Throughout four hundred years (since Ibn ‘Arabī), people have used to listen to *tawḥīd-i wujūdī* in the spiritual conversations. However, the approach of Aḥmad Sirhindī towards this idea was never similar to the attitude of *ẓāhir* scholars (the followers of the commonly understandable meanings of the Qur’ān.) Instead, he accepted Ibn ‘Arabī’s superiority in this path, and his explanations of the *Wujūd* (“Being”) in a peculiar station of spiritual ascension. However, Sirhindī also believed that the final goal of divine journey is not this station. For Sirhindī, the final goal of a true Sufi is beyond that. It is the “station of servanthood to God”. Therefore, he carefully separated between *al-Ḥaqq* (“the Truth, the Really Existing; God”) and *al-Khalq* (“the creature, the universe which is everything existing in our image, in a temporal or shadowy way”), with a sophisticated approach to *tawḥīd-i wujūdī*, without injuring its fundamental structure which is accepted by a great consensus. In fact, Aḥmad Sirhindī was strongly against the novice followers of *Wujūdīya*, who believe God as an immanent in the nature, inasmuch as they could not separate between *al-Ḥaqq* (“the Truth, the Creator”) and *al-Khalq* (“the universe, the Created, the Creature”).<sup>479</sup>

Here we have a clear evaluation of the critical position of Aḥmad Sirhindī.

According to Ramzī, the biggest enmity Aḥmad Sirhindī experienced in his life was

<sup>478</sup> I refer to a famous book written about Ibn Arabī: ‘Abd al-wahhāb ibn Aḥmad al-Sha‘rānī, *al-Kibrīt al-aḥmar fī bayān ‘ulūm al-Shaykh al-Akbar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘ilmīya, 1998).

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.



based on his revisionist attitude on the theory of *tawḥīd-i wujūdī*, not his political attitude towards the state officials, or other concepts. Nor was Sirhindī a refuter of Ibn ‘Arabī, but rather a revisionist of him.

### 3.5.2. Sirhindī: Advocate for his class, not a rebel against the state

Ramzī did not believe that Aḥmad Sirhindī was revolting against the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, the Pādishāh of India, with the suggestion of the necessity of Muslim-Hindu separation. According to Ramzī, Aḥmad’s critical treatises were directed to the new social class of Rāfiḍī (Shī‘ī) scholars and advisers around Jahangir. This new class started to apply an inimical policy against the élite Sunnī scholars, Sufis, and other peoples in the contemporary strata of the Mughal Empire. It was also rumored that the Emperor Humāyun (d. 1557) was very close to the Rāfiḍī–Shia’s in Persia. Tahmasp, the Shāh of Persia, had assisted Humāyun to retake his throne, after Shīr Shāh Surī Farīd Khān, the great Pashtun General (d. 1545) had chased him out of India in 1540. As historical sources indicate, Emperor Humāyun spent part of his exile as a guest of Tahmasp, a prominent Shia ruler, the Shāh of Persia. After he came back to India in 1555, many Persians, including Rāfiḍī–Shias journeyed to the Indian subcontinent and stayed here as their new home.<sup>480</sup> In this context, Ramzī says:

The claim of revolting against the Head of the state (Pādishāh) was never valid for Aḥmad Sirhindī. Instead, we observe that Aḥmad Sirhindī was the first scholar among his peers to recommend obedience to the Head of the state and other

<sup>480</sup> Abraham Eraly, *The Great Mughals*, New Delhi: Penguin, 1997, p. 107. See also another explanation on the attitude of Aḥmad Sirhindī towards Safavī Persia: Hamid Algar, “A brief history of the Naqshbandī order”, ed. M. Gaborieau, Th. Zarcone, A. Popovic, *Naqshbandis: Historical development and present situation of a Muslim mystical order. Proceedings of the Sèvres round table, 2-4 May 1985*, Varia Turcica 18 (Istanbul: Isis, 1990), pp. 29-30.

officials. Furthermore, he warned of bad results of possible attempts at revolt against the current state. We knew also, that the majority of the high officials in the state, the Pādishāh's wife, his prime minister, even the Grand Mufti, all of them were from the followers of Rāfiḍī doctrine. Sirhindī's arrows of refutation were always directed to this new class. Any sane person can easily understand this basic truth, if his letters are studied carefully.<sup>481</sup>

There is a long discussion that might be handled in another survey, but we can give it as a summary here: Employing Aḥmad Sirhindī retrospectively to create imagined roots for a religious, nationalist political structure is not a valid proposition under the current historical method. Aḥmad was a genetically-culturally hybrid man, with a Central Asian–Sufi notion in spirituality, a Sunnī orthodox tendency in religious rituals, Punjabi-Indian roots in daily life culture, Ḥanafī jurisprudence in legal theory, and Persian culture in literacy. Such a multi-faceted man is difficult to employ for peculiar nationalistic-revivalist state projects, even though some modern authors forcibly do it in the favor of newly-emerging political movements, on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.<sup>482</sup>

However, he was an élite man coming from a noble family, afraid of the possible negative changes in the balance of power in the interior structure of the Mughal Empire. Furthermore, Aḥmad's Sufi–Sunnī friends, family members, peer scholars, and other relatives had experienced hard times in the shadow of growing Safavī Empire (Iran), the

<sup>481</sup> Ramzī, *Tarjamat Aḥwāl al-Imām Rabbānī*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>482</sup> See for these kinds of argumentations: Maulānā Abūkalām Āzād, *Tazkira* (Lahore: Maktaba-i Merī Lāibrerī, 1973), pp. 264-268; Maududi, *A Short History of Revivalist Movement in islam*, Lahore, 1972, pp. 76-78; Irfan Habib, "The Political Role of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī and Shah Waliullah", *Inquiry*, no. 5 (1961), pp. 36-50.

Rāfiḍī power of that age. Therefore, Aḥmad was concerned about a possible new formation of that influential Rāfiḍī core team at the center of his home, Mughal India.<sup>483</sup>

The problem of Rāfiḍī–Sunnī separation unfortunately continued to have a bloody heritage and it has been employed as an “apparatus of control” in the borders of three great empires, the Mughals of India, the Safavīs of Persia, and the Ottomans of Anatolia until the early modern era, even though it was not created first by these powers. Still, this problem continues to be one of the most dangerous fault lines in Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and Bahrain. It seems that many large groups in Muslim countries have a tendency of living in the hot bed of history instead of today. As William Faulkner said:

“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”<sup>484</sup>

With the review of what Ramzī talked about the personal history of Aḥmad Sirhindī, we may notice again that even a small detail in the history of Sufism or Islamic spiritualism cannot be investigated without looking at politics and ideology which are like the blood coursing through the veins of humanity. Even at the highest level of spirituality we may see evidence of both. I am not saying that spirituality is nothing or that politics is everything, but I am saying that the problem is more complicated than it appears to be.

### **3.5.3. Sirhindī reloaded: A role model for religious revival (*tajdīd*)**

Ramzī, was not a Qadīmīst, instead, he had a “peculiar type” of Jadīdism. Ramzī, looked at *tajdīd* (‘renewal’, used in this context as ‘revival’) from the perspective of old Sufi

<sup>483</sup> Ramzī, *Tarjamat Aḥwāl al-Imām Rabbānī*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>484</sup> William Faulkner, *Requiem for A Nun* (Random House LLC-Vintage International Edition, 2011), p. 73.

masters. As a Turkish proverb says “Her yiğidin gönlünde bir aslan yatar”<sup>485</sup> which means “Everybody cherishes an ambition,” he sought to support a *tajdīd* project appropriate to his mystical and religious approach. For him, the real *tajdīd* was to be accomplished in the hearts in a revolutionary way, as Ramzī observed in the experiences of Ibn ‘Arabī and Sirhindī.

Ramzī was always speaking in favor of Aḥmad Sirhindī, yet he also liked Ibn ‘Arabī very much. He believed that all great Sufi masters must have suffered pain and estrangement along with severe criticism on the path to the universal Divine Truth. Ramzī believed that Sirhindī’s experience was almost similar to the passion of Ibn ‘Arabī, since both tried to write on Divine Wisdom among the blunt, superficial scholars, and surely both could make some mistakes. Ramzī clearly mentioned that nobody was infallible or protected from errors in life. Everybody could make mistakes within which it was possible to find valuable lessons. Here, Ramzī quoted from the famous book of aphorism *al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’īya* by Ibn ‘Aṭā’ullāh al-Sikandarī:

A sin that leads to humility and need is better than an obedience that bequeaths hubris and arrogance.<sup>486</sup>

Ramzī also found revival (*tajdīd*), prodigy, destruction, creativeness, and jealousy in an ideal authorship. He believes that Aḥmad Sirhindī as a prodigious author and a resolute restorer was greatly envied by his peers. Because he was the renovator of the second millennium, he would write something new and unusual. Ramzī says:

<sup>485</sup> Literally, “In the heart of every brave man, a lion lies down.”

<sup>486</sup> In Arabic: “معصية أورثت ذلاً وافقاراً خير من طاعة أورثت عزاً واستكباراً”. This is the 94<sup>th</sup> wisdom from *the Book of Aphorisms (al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’īya)* by Ibn ‘Aṭā’ullāh al-Sikandarī. In some variations, it is counted as the 96<sup>th</sup> aphorism. See the aforementioned aphorism with a good commentary: Muḥammad Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’īya-Sharḥ wa Taḥlīl*, Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2003, vol. 3, pp. 149-158.

Is it possible to create a revolutionary view without changing something decadent, or without destructing what is old, or without criticizing what is bad? Do you know what *tajdīd* means? It means to change periods, to disturb usual shapes in mind, to prevent what was bad when superstitions had already surrounded the minds of people, especially the imitator, the novice followers of *Wujūdīya* who spread millions of misunderstandings out the earth!<sup>487</sup>

Here we observe an unusual, even a highly emotional tone in Ramzī's literary style. Indeed, Ramzī's *tajdīd* meant a different thing from the classical explanation we see in the Prophetic *ḥadīth* on the renovator of religious values: "Allah will raise for this community at the end of every hundred years the one who will renovate its religion."<sup>488</sup> However, the *tajdīd* discourse of Ramzī is something revolutionary that might have been influenced by the modern, sharp definitions of revival among the early 20th-century Tatar intellectuals.

### 3.6. Conclusion

In the first decade of his Meccan years, Murād Ramzī must have believed that Naqshī ethics with its colorful narratives and hagiography could protect his fellow people in the Volga-Ural region and other Muslims from the corruption of this sinful world. He wrote *Dhayl* and translated Sufi classic with annotations. His accounts on Sufi persons in Mecca include details on the major teachings and problems of Sufism in late 19th-century Hijāz. He explained the peculiar features of his own Aḥmadīya–Maẓharīya branch which was a rival to the powerful Khālīdīya, another branch of Naqshī–Mujaddidī tradition. He did not mention any negative points about this rival group; rather, he appreciated the

<sup>487</sup> Ramzī, *Tarjamat Aḥwāl al-Imām Rabbānī*, p. 19.

<sup>488</sup> The original text is known to be the *ḥadīth* of *tajdīd*: “إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبْعَثُ لِهَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ عَلَى رَأْسِ كُلِّ مِائَةِ سَنَةٍ مَنْ يُجَدِّدُ لَهَا دِينَهَا”  
” See for the details: Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, ḥadīth no. 4291.

works of Khālīd and wrote a long section to defend him. Ramzī's other explanations can be interpreted as a strategically-prepared critique against neo-Sufi groups who might have distorted "the original Naqshī system" he wanted to protect.

When it comes to the Sufi panorama of the late 19th century, Ramzī gives us colorful accounts of Naqshī masters who lived in Hijāz, Istanbul, and Kazan. He is not concerned with the major debates among them. He respects all well-known masters and sheikhs. However, we may conclude that he must have been anxious about new splits in the order, therefore he did not reflect some conflicts around new branches of the Naqshī order. Ramzī wanted to play the role of intercessor-translator between Sirhindī and the Muslim peoples of 19th century. Moreover he did not write any books or booklets on Islamic legal issues (*fiqh*) or prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*), as some of his masters did. Ramzī did not believe that the time was suitable for encyclopedic legal projects. Instead, he believed that the most important mission for a Muslim scholar was to support a powerful spiritual movement in order to be rid of the forthcoming inner problems of the materialistic age and, then, outer problems emerging from western colonialism. Ramzī believed that only a man of a Sufi heart would clear the inner life from worldly sins and clear "home" (homeland) from invaders.

Among the Sufi leaders mentioned in his accounts was Khālīd al-Baghdādī, the innovator of spiritual techniques, and the most influential Naqshī sheikh of the 19th century. Khālīd was a charismatic sheikh, a bold scholar, a real renovator in the *dhikr* techniques, and an imposer of *rābiṭa*, a controversial practice among Sufi orders. It seems that Khālīd wanted to employ *rābiṭa* in order to strengthen the connection between him (the Sufi sheikh) and his followers who were not isolated dreamers in a lonely planet;

instead, they would organize a bloody resistance in Russia against the invaders. Here, *rābiṭa* as a spiritual technique must have played a political, social, and ideological role, for it was a strong connector between the commander and soldier, the sheikh and *murīd*, the charismatic leader and the community members who were severely oppressed under colonial rulers. It seems that *rābiṭa* might have disappeared in the history of Sufism or become less important if Khālīd had not imposed it as a grand sheikh of a world-wide Sufi movement.

Perhaps, the same political concern pushed Ramzī to support *rābiṭa*, even though his rationalization of this technique is extremely odd for a man who already knew the major sources of Islam. He considers *rābiṭa* as an intercessional instrument between high sacred entities and low ones in a hierarchically organized spiritual world, even though this logic is totally unfamiliar to the logic of the Qur’ān, which does not acknowledge any intercessor, any man, or any object between human and God who is closer to the man than his jugular vein.<sup>489</sup> Ramzī’s decorated approach with the terms of *fayḍ* (فيض : flowing), *mufṭiḍ* (مفيض: flower), and *mutawassiṭ* (متوسط: intercessor) also has a remarkable similarity to the logic of old *ṣudūr* (صدر: emanation) theories which appeared first in Islamic history with the treatises of the great philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā under the influence of the Neoplatonist approach to the problem of God’s creation. In fact, any argumentation based on the original emanation theory can be easily employed in opposition to the theory of “creation from nothing” (*ex nihilo*), one of the major religious dogmata in Islamic creed texts. Because the original emanation theory assumes that everything has always existed and has not been “created” from nothing, the religious

<sup>489</sup> See: Sūra Qāf (50:16) in the Qur’ān.

belief of creation has nothing to do with the original emanation theory. Therefore, Ramzī should have understood this difficult point; and, doing his homework carefully, he should make a strong, a smart interpretation to reconcile the emanation theory with the creation belief of Islam. I observe that Ramzī might have realized his weakness here, but he could not break up the logic of the old writers he studied in his youth, such as al-Dawānī, al-Kātibī, and other Muslim emanationist thinkers. As we mentioned before, he did not epistemologically break up his old masters in this peculiar subject, at least, when he prepared the book of *Dhayl Rashahāt ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt* and other Sufi translations in Mecca. His mindset was severely tending to Neoplatonist-style *‘Irfān* without a careful look at *Bayān* or *Burhān*. It means that he could not establish a good balance among these three major conceptual domains of the Muslim mind. Instead, he tended to *‘Irfān* more than he did to the other two domains.

According to Muslim scholars, every vision in a dream has its own peculiar conditions depending on the dreamer and the symbols seen in the dream. It is accepted that no book of interpretation can be employed to interpret a real vision in a dream without detailed knowledge concerning the dreamer and the signs the dreamer saw. However, the books of interpretation with thousands of signifier words can give us enormous data in the corridors of the Muslim mind. Through the accounts of dreams mentioned by Ramzī, we observe again that the language of daily life plays its major role here with all connotative extensions concerning the culture in which the dreamer lives. In addition to the language of daily life, another good source for the interpretation of dreams can be the books of belief which shape the common conscience of the society. Here, the



text influences the man, and the man influences the text with interpretation; then the text produces new meanings, and then the new meanings create the new man.

The dream in his system is employed for the truthfulness or the falsity of something. With this trenchant perspective, his dreams gained an imposing power over the decisions that Ramzī wanted to take. Dreams are also employed to support the superiority of a master, or the inferiority of a rival sect. This problem had been already realized and analyzed carefully by Muslim scholars. Al-Nasafī (d. 1142) of al-Māturīdī school of creed concluded that the illumination (*al-ilhām*) of someone cannot be evidence to do something; and that the illumination is not used as cognition of the soundness of a thing. Also, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) of Zāhirī School of *fiqh* concluded that the dreamer cannot force people to obey so-called sacred orders he received in the dream, and that there is no appropriate way to verify whether a dream is beneficial, true, or false.

Ramzī's favorite master, Aḥmad Sirhindī, was an extraordinary author of the late 16th century Islamic world. As a reviver of the second millennium, he influenced almost all Muslim Sufi groups in Asia, the Middle East, and Anatolia. In fact, Sirhindī was a strange fruit of 16th century India, which had brought about great changes in economy, beliefs, power conflicts, and spiritual movements. As Ramzī indicates, Sirhindī started to reveal his thoughts on legal applications and social life in the Mughal India of his time. The first strong refutations against him came with respect to his controversial approaches to the spiritual level of the prophet Muḥammad, the Ka'ba, and the situation of Ibn 'Arabī, whose deep impact had already shocked the mindsets of different religious groups. They did not expect any person to claim superiority over the great master, or to bring forth new ideas conflicting with the theory of *tawḥīd-i wujūdī* of Ibn 'Arabī.

Therefore, many Sufi leaders severely criticized Sirhindī. Ramzī wrote the book *Tarjamat aḥwāl al-Imām Rabbānī* as *apologia* trying to explain what Sirhindī said and what he meant.

Many different reasons could lead Aḥmad Sirhindī to undertake this mission of spiritual revival. The social situation of Indian Muslims also must have pushed Sirhindī to be a *mujaddid*. After a long survey, Ramzī concluded that Sirhindī was not against the theory of “existential unity” (*tawḥīd-i wujūdī*) of Ibn ‘Arabī. Instead, Sirhindī must have brought a creative aspect to this theory and he was called “the Bridge” inasmuch as he connected the ordinary people to the Gnostic world of Ibn ‘Arabī. Ramzī considers Sirhindī to be a real “connector” between the common understanding of the religion and the unusual depth of Ibn ‘Arabī. This approach is different from what we observe in many modern surveys which consider Sirhindī to be the opposite of Ibn ‘Arabī, or even a political critic of Mughal India. Ramzī believed that Sirhindī consciously recognized a distinction between *al-Ḥaqq* (God) and *al-Khalq* (the Creature, the universe). The greatest trouble Aḥmad Sirhindī experienced was his revisionist approach to the *wujūdī* theory, but not his political attitude to the Mughal State. According to Ramzī, Aḥmad’s political criticism focused on the new social class of Rāfiḍī advisers around Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor. The new class had a hostile policy against the Sunnī scholars and Sufis in the strata of the contemporary Mughal Empire. If we consider Ramzī’s interpretation of Sirhindī to be reasonable, we may conclude that Aḥmad Sirhindī cannot be employed retrospectively for the fictional roots of a religious, nationalist state.

For Ramzī, *tajdīd* (‘revival’) meant what it did for the old Sufi masters. It was supposed to take place in the heart, changing man in a revolutionary way as could be

observed in Ibn ‘Arabī and Sirhindī. However, it could also mean a lot of pain, mistakes, severe criticism, and jealousy from rivals. Ramzī believed that revival in the material world was always possible, applying the techniques of the West or East as Muslims had done in the past. However, revival in the heart was impossible without the method of Sirhindī of India and other spiritual masters. Even though he wanted to make a *tajdīd* or revival with the interpretation and translation of his own masters (Sirhindī and other Naqshī masters), no one among the modern scholars has understood Ramzī in this context. Paradoxically, his “old” path was newer than the path of his reformist rivals. Some of his contemporary reformist authors wanted to revive the ‘Aṣr-i Sa‘ādat (the first 40 years of Islām, 622-661 AD) in their imaginations, even though Ramzī’s dream of the Naqshbandī-Sunnī tradition, as Sirhindī had renovated it in the 16th century, was newer than what his rivals dreamt. In fact, we have different kinds of traditionalist (Qadīmist) authors, even though some of them claimed that they were renovators (Jadīdists). Many claimed newness in discourse, but not in content and mindset. When one group of Muslims considered the first age of the Hegira to be the golden era, with the emphasis on *Bayān* (Salafī reaction), another group referred to the ‘Abbāsīd era, with the emphasis on *Burhān* (modernist reaction), and a third group addressed Sirhindī’s age (16th century) with the emphasis on *‘Irfān* blended with *Bayān*. Many Muslim renovators wished to go back to the innocent childhood or strong adolescent years of Islām. Yet, they were also separated from each other regarding what the innocence is, whether it is enough to glorify the past, or whether it is enough to wake up in the future.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Process of Weaving Text in Murād Ramzī

#### 4.1. Introduction

The corpus of Murād Ramzī's works consists of well over three thousand pages representing his contributions to the various disciplines and linguistic registers he was engaged in, ranging from translations of important Sufi works from Persian into Arabic<sup>490</sup> to religious and political polemical writings in Turkic languages (Kazan Tatar and Istanbul Turkish)<sup>491</sup> to a national history project in Arabic.<sup>492</sup> As one of the most celebrated translators of Sufi texts at the dawn of 20th century, Ramzī's textual praxis deserves critical attention.<sup>493</sup>

Vinay Dharwadker reminds us, following Makaryk, that French literary scholars had discovered that:<sup>494</sup>

the words *texte* and 'text' contain the metaphor of 'textile', allowing us to view text as a woven fabric, and hence as an instance of textuality; a group of texts as

<sup>490</sup> Ramzī's translation of the *Rashaḥāt 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt* consists of about 275 pages, the *Maktūbāt* and its additions consist of about 1500 (673 + 273 + 319 + 229) pages.

<sup>491</sup> His refutations of Mūsā Jārullāh Bigiev in the review *Dīn ve Ma 'īshat* include the largest portion of his entire discussions. See: Muḥammad Murād Mekki, "Mūsā'ga Mekke Polemiti", *Dīn ve Ma 'īshat* (1909), no. 30, pp. 467-469. Each article includes more than 2 large pages in 2 columns, except the last one which was only three columns (1.5 pages), published in 1910, no. 46, pp. 736-737.

<sup>492</sup> The new edition of Ramzī's history book *Talfīq al-akhbār* consists of about 1260 (732 + 528) pages. See: Murād Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār*, ed. by Ibrāhīm Shams al-dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, 2002), 2 vols.

<sup>493</sup> I should point out that Ramzī gave us some clues about his concepts regarding translation, see: Murād Ramzī, *Mu'arrab al-Maktūbāt*, vol. 1, pp. 5-7.

<sup>494</sup> See: Vinay Dharwadker, *Kabir: The Weaver's Songs* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2003), "Translator's Note", p. XI.

an interwoven continuum, and hence an embodiment of intertextuality; and even the world as a continuous text, and hence as a vast fabrication or ideological construct.

He argues that the great Indian mystical poet Kabir (d. 1518) had already employed the concept of “weaving” to characterize the human body as the work of God. In a fashion similar to that of the text and its owner, God becomes the Master Weaver.

We can also find echoes of this concept in Ramzī’s approach to the author and the text, as Ramzī was influenced by the same mystical fountains that inspired authors from India to Morocco, including many figures such as Ibn ‘Arabi from Andalusian Sufism as well as others from the Indian Bhakti tradition. His method of writing history, however, was totally different from the practices he followed in his Sufi texts and translations. Ramzī was not as concerned with creating a genealogy for his Sufi texts as he was for his historical work. Likewise, he fails to offer clear citations for many quotations or to organize the titles as meticulously as he did in his work of history. This dramatic change in his approach to producing texts occurred after he had adopted modern historical methods. Perhaps he took into account the differences in the mentality of readers of his history as opposed to the readers of his mystical treatises and translations.

My analysis of Ramzī’s method of textual weaving is divided into four parts. First, I will briefly touch upon the etymological connotations of the word “text” in Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. While Ramzī was a Turkic/Turkophone author, his major languages of discourse were generally Persian and Arabic. Thus the terminology and concept of the “text” found in these languages played a determinative role in his thinking, especially the contributions made by Ibn ‘Arabī. Ramzī the Sufi had already

acknowledged Ibn ‘Arabī’s greatness and noted that one of his spiritual mentors, Aḥmad Sa‘īd, was a follower of Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>495</sup>

Second, I will analyze in two treatises the stylistic footprints of Ramzī. Here, I will demonstrate how a *dībāja* (‘embellished introduction’) section along with poems he wrote or excerpted from other authors form “an interwoven continuum, and hence an embodiment of intertextuality”.<sup>496</sup> However, the threads of this interwoven text appear discontinuous at the surface and the common meanings between and references to other texts must be uncovered through a close reading. Therefore, I will employ the terms *maḍnūn*, *rābiṭa*, and others to analyze the structure of his Sufi text.

Third, I examine the textual style of *Talfīq al-akhbār* to understand Ramzī’s method of shaping a history text, postponing the study of its ideological content until the following chapter.

Lastly, I will try to explain the method he used for his translations. As a translator, Ramzī offers a general guideline on how to translate Sufi texts from Persian into Arabic. His methodology is a modern extension of the ‘Abbāsīd translation school, as we will discuss in greater detail below.

## 4.2. Text and the language of Sufism: In the wake of Ibn ‘Arabī

I consider the languages of Ramzī as a collection of useful bridges to access his mind. If we understand the structure of the complex connotations there, we may touch upon the “text” and the process of “weaving text” in his mind. First, we will focus on the

<sup>495</sup> Ramzī, *Mu‘arrab al-Maktūbāt*, vol. 3, p. 306. See also: Ramzī, *Dhayl Rashaḥāt ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt*, p. 107.

<sup>496</sup> Dharwadker, *Kabir: The Weaver’s Songs*, pp. XI-XII.

derivatives of the “text” in his culture and languages. After this, we will scan Ibn ‘Arabī for the author’s influence on Ramzī regarding the concept of text, because any intellectual discussion related to post-fourteenth century Sufism without inventorying the effects of Ibn ‘Arabī on later thinkers will not be sufficiently comprehensive for the conceptual framework required by modern studies of Islamic mysticism.

To begin, we find some interesting connotations of the word “text” in Turkish, the language in which Ramzī wrote some mystical and polemical treatises. Even though the term *metin* (متن) is of Arabic origin, it is often used as an equivalent for “text” in Ottoman and modern Turkish as well as in other Turkic languages. Furthermore, we find *metin* with the same meaning in Hindustani<sup>497</sup> and Persian,<sup>498</sup> the source language of Ramzī’s translations into Arabic. On the other hand, *yazı* ‘text’ and *yazma* ‘writing’ in Turkish share the same root as *yazma*, which is the name given to any textile painted by hand or stamped with a carved wood block dipped in dye, such as a scarf, tablecloth, or wrap.<sup>499</sup> For a concrete instance of the use of *yazma*, we can consider an example from northern Anatolian folklore, specifically a song from my birthplace of Tokat:

*Başındaki yazmayı da sarıya mı boyadın?  
Neden sarardın soldun da sevdaya mı uğradın?*

<sup>497</sup> For details regarding *matin* (متن) meaning ‘text’, see: John Shakespear, *Dictionary Hindustani and English-English and Hindustani*, Fourth Edition (London: Pelham Richardson, 1849), p. 2394. For *matan* or *matn* meaning ‘text of a book’, see: Duncan Forbes, *A Dictionary Hindustani and English*, Second Edition (London: Sampson Low-Marston & Company, 1866), p. 666.

<sup>498</sup> “*Matin* (متن): the text of a book; travelling; a man strong in the back; a hard piece of ground...” For details, see: F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1892), p. 1168.

<sup>499</sup> For all the derivatives of the root *yaz-* in Turkish, see: Yaşar Çağbayır, *Ötüken Türkçe Sözlük* (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2007), vol. 5, pp. 5263-5264. Other words such as *yazı* ‘a vast meadow, large enough for agriculture’ may not be from the same root. This work is one of the best dictionaries in Turkish, including about 246,000 entries.

Did you paint the scarf on your head yellow?  
Why did you fade, or did you fall in love?

*Yazma* means ‘scarf, the textile on the head of the beloved girl’,<sup>500</sup> but interestingly it may refer to the *alın yazısı*, literally ‘forehead text’ but metaphorically ‘destiny, fate’. The song tells us the story of an unfortunate young girl whose “fate” or “scarf” (*yazı/yazma* = “the forehead text/the scarf”) turned out to be a sad event when she fell in love with a handsome boy. Because the yellow refers to sadness in Turkish love stories, the scarf is described as being yellow. Here in Islamicate Turkish language we find a connection between the text and textile; we also find a connection between the text and fate in poetry. Ramzī’s mind, as a Muslim Turkic author, would have absorbed these kinds of connotations and recalled them whenever he produced/wove a text.

When we look deeply into Arabic, the language which Ramzī employs most extensively in his books and translations, we observe a vast ocean of connotations for the “text” as well. It can be translated into Arabic with *matn* (متن), *naṣṣ* (نص), or *kitāb* (كتاب). *Matn* means also ‘the "upper part" of anything’, such as the back of a horse, or the board of a vessel.<sup>501</sup> It also means ‘patience and strength’, which is the root of al-Matīn (the Firm One: المتين), one of the names of God. *Naṣṣ* means a ‘passage from the Scripture,

<sup>500</sup> *Yazma* is one of the oldest handicraft arts in Tokat, where it has a history of six centuries. See for “Yazma”: Reyhan Kaya, *Türk yazmacılık sanatı: Tahta kalıpla kumaş baskısı* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 1974); Zeynep Tezel, “Yazmacılık sanatında desenleme teknikleri (kalıp tekniğiyle ağaç baskı uygulama örneği)”, *Gazi Üniversitesi Endüstriyel Sanatlar Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, no. 25 (2009), pp. 27-40. This song is also mentioned in the performances of Mihrican Bahar in Reşadiye-Tokat. The folklorist who collected this song is Yücel Paşmakçı. For the lyrics and notes of songs from Tokat, see: <http://www.turkuler.com/nota/tumyoreler.asp?yoresi=Tokat> (accessed August 27, 2015). The song is listed under: TRT Repertuar No: 01208. This is the number assigned to it by the archives of Turkish State Radio and Television (TRT).

<sup>501</sup> Aḥmad Abū Ḥāfa et al. (ed.), *Mu’jam al-naḥās al-kabīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā’is, 2007), vol. 2, p. 1838.



turbulence, raising, lifting, boiling, provocation, and emergence'.<sup>502</sup> On the other hand, *kitāb* means 'text, writing, book, destiny, and rule'.<sup>503</sup>

We observe that *kitāb* is the most common word for the text and book in the three languages of Ramzī, namely Turkish, Arabic, and Persian.<sup>504</sup> It will be difficult to grasp the meaning of the *kitāb* ('text/writing/book') in the mind of Ramzī if we do not focus on the terminology of the greatest master of Sufi literature, Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240), who was one of Ramzī's favorite authors. Not only Ramzī, but many Sufi authors from India to Morocco have written treatises wandering along the edges of the fertile imaginative lands of Ibn 'Arabī, without whom Sufism would not have been as rich a field in the universal culture of humanity.

Let us dig up the layers of the *kitāb* in the vast ocean of Ibn 'Arabī with the help of *al-Mu'jam al-Ṣūfī*, the terminological dictionary of Ibn 'Arabī prepared by Dr. Su'ād al-Ḥakīm of Lebanon. For Ibn 'Arabī, *kitāb* means 'gathering and merging' (الجمع والضم). Anything that is gathered and merged can be called *kitāb*.<sup>505</sup> In addition to this general concept of "gathering and merging", Ibn 'Arabī referred to the universe as *kitāb* since it is gathered and merged by the Divine Being. It also means 'the order, the destiny, and the universal situation of the things' (الأمر والقضاء والأجل). As Ibn 'Arabī indicates, everything will return to its original source even though it takes a long time. Everything is just one

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 2004-2005.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 1670-1671.

<sup>504</sup> I offer a metaphor to explain the relations among those three terms: If we produce a text in Arabic, as Ramzī "the Sufi author" does, we may imagine that *kitāb* ('text/book') is the universal ocean in which we may play for our destiny, whereas the *matn* is the face, the board of the vessel of meanings within which we give the value to our lives, such as ideology and belief narratives. On the other hand, the *naṣṣ* is the turbulence, the imposing power of the ocean where our vessel of meanings is swimming.

<sup>505</sup> Su'ād al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam al-Ṣūfī* (Beirut: Dandara li al-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr, 1981), pp. 949-950.

breath among the many breaths of God, precisely numbered and carefully calculated<sup>506</sup> as it is in the universal *kitāb*. The divine text (الكتاب الإلهي) means the ‘divine knowledge’ (العلم الإلهي). As he indicates, there is no rule for creator or creature, except for the divine text which is written about them.<sup>507</sup> The divine text here is the sum of all things and possibilities which occur in the universe. Where nothing is ruling or ruled, only the text exists as the endless reflections and emanations of the Divine Being. The text is endless with “open-ended” sentences, inasmuch as the epiphanies (*tajalliyāt*: تجليات) of God, His emanations and creations, are endless. His surprises are endless, therefore his “text” is endless. Moreover, the divine text (الكتاب الإلهي) includes *al-mawjūdāt* (الموجودات), which means ‘everything in this illusionary universe’.<sup>508</sup> Here Ibn ‘Arabī refers to the things in our universe as passive receivers of the creative effects of God’s names. The universal, all-comprehensive text (الكتاب الجامع) means Adam (Man), who gathers in his construction all different realities in the universe. According to Ibn ‘Arabī:

The universe is nothing but the details of the Perfect Man [i.e., Adam]. Adam is the universal text. In fact, Adam is like the breath for the universe. Obviously, while the universe is the body, Adam is the soul.<sup>509</sup>

The text of the Lord is *al-Insān* (‘the Human’: الإنسان) who was especially written by *al-Rabb* (‘the Lord’: الرب), one of the names of God. Whenever or wherever Adam attempts to escape, he cannot escape from asking about God, who wrote him for His own desire. Ibn ‘Arabī said that: “Indeed, the Human, even in his own domain, is nothing but

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 950.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 951.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*

the text of his Lord.”<sup>510</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī gives a short poem about the connection between the Human (the text) and the Lord (the text owner).<sup>511</sup> I translated this poem with guidance of his other books:

You are the text in which everything is written line by line / فأنت كتاب فيك كلّ مسطر  
 If you want to read, erase your every [line] / ألا فامح منك الكلّ ان شئت أن تقرأ  
 There is nothing there, except you and you / وما ثمّ إلا أنت و أنت  
 The world is your outside; the hereafter is inside you / فظاهرك الدنيا وباطنك الاخرى

The great text is the universe whereas the minor text is the Qur’ān with its real meanings. Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that God recites his great text on both human beings and other creatures. Indeed, this text is not only for the Sufis or believers, but for all other creatures as well:

He reads first for you, in order to make you comprehend the meanings, if you are a man of knowledge. God, the Real One existing, reads for you from the Great Text, or the universe, which is the Great Book of God. However, God at times reads the lines from His own essence.<sup>512</sup>

As we will show in the following section, Ramzī the passionate Sufi translator was heavily influenced by Ibn ‘Arabī’s conceptualization of the text which has been absorbed by many famous Sufi poets, authors, and thinkers who have woven their texts/textiles in Hindustan, Anatolia, Iran, Northern Africa, Syria, Central Asia, the East Indies, and the Balkan countries.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 951.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 952.

#### 4.2.1 Text for the love of other texts: Colorful patchworks

Now, I will analyze some parts of texts from the mystical essays and translations of Ramzī. I will also interpret some embellished or ornamented introductions and poems he wrote or excerpted from other authors as “a group of texts as an interwoven continuum”. The question is: How did Ramzī evaluate a Sufi text? How did Ramzī establish a Sufi text? For the first question, we should follow what he quoted from an author without mentioning the author’s name:

A good scholar said that the books and treatises of this *taṣawwuf* community [i.e., Sufis] are either *taṣnīf* (تصنيف) or *ta’līf* (تأليف). *Taṣnīf* means that the person writes with the help of knowledge he has, or with the guide of the divine stations and illuminative sentences he receives [from God]. *Ta’līf* means all collections, and assemblages the author excerpts from other writers’ treatises, with an appropriate new design and order. For centuries, we have not observed an original book, a *taṣnīf*-style work. Only *ta’līf*-style eclectic works have been seen in this field.<sup>513</sup>

According to Ramzī, as the “unknown scholar” confessed, the community of Sufis had witnessed for centuries only *ta’līf* style texts which were obviously combined with patchworks, old similes, allegories, reshaped poems, and reframed anecdotes. Furthermore, they were only considered beneficial as bridges to the real meaning. Producing books in this eclectic style, Ramzī did not shy from collecting poems, sentences, and anecdotes from old and new masters, and, then, assembling them as he saw fit; because, the common ground between “the text owner” and “the text reader” in relation to the Divine Being was the most important thing. Here, the divine love connects the reader with the author, so they do not need to refer to the names of books and authors if it is not necessary.

<sup>513</sup> Ramzī, *Tarjamat Aḥwāl*, p. 16.

The *taṣnīf*-style (“original”) texts also have key concepts created under the guidance of divine illumination. Here, the text becomes just a reflection, intuition, even a “translation” of the meanings flowing from the Divine Being. Because the real active subject is the Divine Being, the text is also regarded as a by-product of the Divine Being. Therefore, Ramzī respects these kinds of illuminative texts more than he respects others. Here, the influence of Ibn ‘Arabī’s approach to the text is clearly observable.<sup>514</sup> The text can be truly original, with the regard to the author’s innovations; but the real owner, the giver of illumination, is the Divine Being. In order to determine who the high-quality author is, we continue to follow Ramzī’s long quotation from the “unknown” scholar:

To be fair, I should say that Aḥmad Sirhindī’s treatises and letters are genuinely *taṣnīf*-style texts, even though I am not a fan among Aḥmad’s *murīds* [‘disciples’]. Whenever I look at a page from Aḥmad’s works, I never find a quotation or excerpt from other authors except for some short references that can be necessary in these kinds of books. All the works of Aḥmad are illuminations revealed to him. Furthermore, they are acceptable texts of a high quality.<sup>515</sup>

This explanation indicates that Ramzī was aware of the importance of illuminative-style authorship in Sufism. He also believed that the major texts and treatises in Sufism had been already created, assembled, or criticized before Aḥmad Sirhindī started to write. Therefore, Sirhindī’s explanations on new spiritual stations and other concepts would be considered to be genuine illuminations shaping the new era of intellectual speculative Sufism. As a master of translation, Ramzī might have wanted to challenge his own capacity by starting to translate Aḥmad’s letters and other works. He must have thought that if he could translate these works he would be blessed with these

<sup>514</sup> See the preceding section for Ibn ‘Arabī’s approach to “the text”.

<sup>515</sup> Ramzī, *Tarjamāt Aḥwāl*, pp. 16-17.

illuminations, moreover, his name would be remembered among the greatest translators of Islamic spiritualism.

With beautiful poems, but without mentioning the names of poets, Ramzī describes Aḥmad Sirhindī's awed experience of the Naqshbandīya. It is a typical appearance of the intertextual love in which the author is not concerned with the names of real poets or authors, just traveling between texts and books in his memory.<sup>516</sup> However, with a presumably high level of Sufi culture and literature, the reader will comprehend what is going on in the text. Otherwise, the text may turn out to be a dry booklet; furthermore, all the poems with implicit meanings and connotations can be lost for ignorant readers. Here, Ramzī quotes a poem from *Yatīma al-Dahr* without mentioning the work and the poet.<sup>517</sup> He introduced it with a small change in the first line (إلى وجهه instead of يا منيتي). As Tha'ālibī indicates, this poem was a popular song in Baghdad:<sup>518</sup>

O, only to your face did I make my pilgrimage, / يا من إلى وجهه جحي ومعتري /  
 Some even did the pilgrimage to the stones and dirt,<sup>519</sup> / إن حج قوم إلى ترب وأحجار /  
 You are the prayer through which I hope for redemption, / أنت الصلاة التي أرجو النجاة /  
 You are delighting my evening as my feast. / وأنت صومي الذي يزكو إفطاري /

<sup>516</sup> Here, we have another mission to complete: Someone should make critical editions of the books of Murād Ramzī along with with scholarly annotations.

<sup>517</sup> I read this poem when I was 15 years old in Istanbul. As a tradition in the classical Arabic education, we regularly memorized thousands of verses from the poets of the classical Arabic literature.

<sup>518</sup> *Yatīma al-Dahr* with its addition *Tatimma* is an amazing anthology by al-Tha'ālibī (d. 1038), who collected different types of verses on topics ranging from softcore pornographic stories to Sufi-style spiritual love. See: Abū Maṣṣūr 'Abd al-malik al-Tha'ālibī, *Tatimmatu yatīmat al-dahr fī maḥāsīn ahl al-'asr*, ed. Mufīd Muḥammad Qumayḥa (Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1983), vol. 5, p. 77.

<sup>519</sup> The stone here refers to *Ḥajar al-Aswad* in the Ka'ba and the dirt refers to the Arabian desert through which Muslim pilgrims pass in their journeys.

As a weaver of the text with different-colored yarns, Ramzī reconstructed many poems with his Sufi patches, even though some of them were prepared originally as lyrical couplets for Andalusian girls. Among Ramzī's reshaped, but unattributed, poems, there are some verses from Andalusian poets.<sup>520</sup> After a long investigation, I found them in *Jadhwat al-muqtabis* of Abū 'Abdullāh al-Ḥumaydī (d. 1095), as quoted from Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (d. 940).<sup>521</sup> Al-Ḥumaydī, an amazing scholar of history and lexicography, had studied the manuscripts of his friends from Andalusia to Baghdad over the course of his long journeys, collecting many poems from Granadan Muslim élite society. Here, I translate the original verses, with a little bit of freedom:

The body is in one city, and the soul in another, / الجسم في بلد و الروح في بلد /  
 How alienated the body, how lonely is the soul, / يا وحشة الروح بل يا غربة الجسد /  
 If your eyes are in tears with mercy, my bleak love, / إن تَبْكِي عَيْنَاكَ لِي يَا مَنْ كَلَفْتُ بِهِ /  
 They will fall into my chest, like two poison arrows. / مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ فَهُمَا سَهْمَانِ فِي كَيْدِي /

Here is what Ramzī changed from the original:

You want to perform the pilgrimage as a corpse, / يا من يروم طواف البيت بالجسد /  
 The body is in one city, and the soul is in another, / الجسم في بلد و الروح في بلد /  
 Getting around the Ka'ba with neither a heart nor sight, / ان الطواف بلا قلب ولا بصر /  
 Will never cure the real illness in the chest. / على الحقيقة لا يشفى من الكمد /

Because the sadness and the happiness of the time are just two faces of the beloved Divine Being, no crying for trouble and no laughter for good news. The Sufi always lives in twilight, experiencing a tension between two poles: the fear of losing the love and the hope of gaining the love (بين الخوف والرجاء). In this context Ramzī describes the troubles of great masters of mystical illuminations, giving us again a poem without

<sup>520</sup> Ramzī, *Tarjamat aḥwāl*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>521</sup> Abū 'Abdullah al-Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwat al-muqtabis fī dhikr wulāt al-Andalus* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣrīya, 1966), p. 102.

mentioning the name of the poet.<sup>522</sup> I realized that this poem is quoted from *al-Mudhish* by Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī of Baghdad (d. 1201):<sup>523</sup>

Bliss of the time, comes with sadness. / سرور الدهر مقرون بحزن  
 Rise up, and be aware of its tricks. / فكن منه على حذر شديد  
 In its right hand is a golden crown. / ففي يمينه تاج من نضار  
 And an iron shackle in the left hand. / وفي يسراه قيد من حديد

Ramzī would have believed that the final goal of a Sufi text is the divine message it gives, even though the whole body of the text could be filled with hidden references, quotations, allegorical statements, unattributed verses, and unnamed excerpts. Here, the message may need reinterpretation in the hands of expert members of the élite Sufi group. Because the meaning of the text and process of evaluation occur in the hearts of those élite readers, Ramzī does not concern himself with the “problem of citation” when he gets involved in the creation of a Sufi text. Because the meaning is revealed in the élite heart for the élite hearts, as an eternal dialog between the text weaver (the author) and the text wearer (the reader), there is no necessity to address everything in the text, no place for personal references in its lines, and no specific time for the Call of the Divine. Because the Divine Illumination may be revealed to the special hearts, the text becomes His text and the reader turns out to be His letters, even though the stories have evoked different colors of sadness or happiness between the lover and Beloved.

<sup>522</sup> Ramzī, *Tarjamat Aḥwāl*, p. 36.

<sup>523</sup> See: Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Mudhish*, ed. Marwān Qabbānī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīya, 1985), p. 499. Ramzī changed the last word of the third verse from *nuḍār* which means ‘pure gold’ to *lujayn* which means ‘silver’.



#### 4.2.2. Text for the élitist Sufi discourse: A case study

Now, in order to see another face of the élitist Sufism, we need to analyze at least one small part from his introduction (*dībāja*: ديباجة) enriched with mystical references and connotations for the principles of his Sufism and its text weaving procedure. Thus, we understand what an élitist Sufi wanted to say in the language of earthly scholars who have enthusiasm for this literature.

Ramzī, the élitist Sufi, establishes his terminology dependent on an *ʿIrfān*-based intellect, relying on a totally different logic from common scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (legal theory) and *falāsifa*, the Muslim philosophers of medieval ages. He obviously broke the commonly-understood meaning of the Scripture when he was interpreting the position of the Prophet Muḥammad, even though he tried to establish a balance between two domains, *Bayān* (Scripture) and *ʿIrfān* (Gnosis). I shall attempt to deconstruct what Ramzī and other supporters of intellectual speculative Sufism have been constructing for centuries in the name of *ʿIrfān* or *Maʿrifa*. I shall also offer two concepts in order to understand what Ramzī wanted to say in his text:

a) I shall employ the notion of *rābiṭa* (رابطة) with a meaning different from what Naqshī Sufīs meant earlier.<sup>524</sup> In fact, it means literally ‘connection, tie, solidarity, cooperation’. Therefore, I purposely use *rābiṭa* in the sense of ‘deep connection’ among the old sentences, the solidarity of the concepts in the high streams of Sufi thought which brings forth a rich network of connotations, metaphors, and hidden names of other texts.

<sup>524</sup> I have already discussed this term in Chapter 3.

For me, it is the real *rābiṭa* in my textual conceptualization of Ramzī's works, even though it has a totally different meaning from how it is used in the Naqshī order.

b) I shall employ also the term of *maḍnūn* (مضنون) in opposition to the term of *ẓāhir* (ظاهر). *Maḍnūn* means 'the hidden notion' shared only among the élite members of a specific group of adherents of a particular philosophy.

As I indicated earlier, some philosophers, Sufis, and scholars such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Suhrawardī, and even Ibn Rushd chose to employ the concept of *maḍnūn* either in order to escape from the criticism of religious zealots and political authorities, or to provide a safe way of communication among the élite members of the intellectual environs they established. However, it eventually became a discriminative weapon in the hands of élitist groups. The long explanation of this term is: *al-maḍnūn 'alā ghayri ahlihī* (المضنون على غير أهله) which means "what is forbidden to those who are not connoisseurs".<sup>525</sup> Interestingly, this phenomenon was not only limited to the extreme thinkers of philosophical societies, but also includes many orthodox writers and Sufis such as Sirhindī, the favorite master of Ramzī. As Yohanan Friedman has indicated previously,<sup>526</sup> the differences and contradictions in the views of Sirhindī might flow from his notion that "esoteric doctrines should be revealed only to those who are adequately prepared and capable of rightly understanding them".<sup>527</sup> We may now begin to comment

<sup>525</sup> See, al-Jābirī's approach to this term: Muhammed Abid el-Cabiri, *Felsefī Mirasimiz ve Biz*, trans. A. Sait Aykut (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayıncılık, 2000), p. 34.

<sup>526</sup> Yohanan Friedmann, "Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindi, An Outline of his Thought and a Study of his Image in the Eyes of Posterity", Ph.D. dissertation (McGill University, 1966), pp. 5-6.

<sup>527</sup> Yohanan Friedmann, "Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindi, An Outline of his Thought and a Study of his Image in the Eyes of Posterity", p. 6.

on some parts from the *dībāja* (“embellished introduction”) section of *The Letters*

(*Maktūbāt*) in order to reveal the veil from the text of Ramzī.<sup>528</sup>

#### 4.2.2.1. The first part and its analysis

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الحمد لله عجزت العقول عن ادراك كنه ذاته \* وتحيرت فهوم الفحول في  
معرفة صفاته \* وخلق نوع الانسان واودع فيه جميع ما في مكوناته \* وشرّفه وكرّمه بخلافته \*  
وفضّله على سائر برياته \* وصيرها سببا لنجاته \* ورفع درجاته \* وسلما لعروجاته \* الى اوج  
القرب \*

1. In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. All praise be to God! The minds have failed to comprehend His essence, even the smart ones were perplexed regarding knowledge of His attributes. He created man and instilled in him all the components of His creations. He honored him as His deputy. He made mankind superior to His other creatures. He made all creations just reasons for his salvation, reasons to raise his degree, reasons like stairs to get close to God.

This is a typical introduction, we may come across similar expressions in many Islamic mystical treatises. It has some references to and excerpts from commonly-studied texts of famous Sufi authors who wrote treatises before Ramzī. He weaves his new text under the shadow of the masterfully-processed old texts. Even though the statement that “minds failed to comprehend His essence” (عجزت العقول عن ادراك كنه ذاته) is one of the famous mottos among many mystical authors, we think that Ramzī quoted it from Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, inasmuch as Dāwūd was the most respected commentator of Ibn ‘Arabī, the greatest master of speculative Sufi texts. Al-Qayṣarī mentions a similar statement, but he adds the realities of God’s essence (حقايقها), saying: “The minds failed to comprehend the

<sup>528</sup> This *dībāja* was written by Ramzī as an explanatory introduction to the translation of *The Letters*. See: Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt* (translated by Murād Ramzī under the title *Mu‘arrab al-Maktūbāt*), vol. 1, pp. 1-11.

realities of His essence.” Al-Qayṣarī promotes himself as the man who can explain the difficult sentences in Ibn ‘Arabī’s work *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*.<sup>529</sup>

This is an important *rābiṭa* connecting the three texts with each other in terms of style and context. As a translator and commentator of Sirhindī, Ramzī might have assumed implicitly a similar role to al-Qayṣarī, who was the commentator of Ibn ‘Arabī. If we did not know the relation between al-Qayṣarī and Ibn ‘Arabī, we could have never known this hidden reference to the role of Ramzī, who indeed wanted to say that he was the genuine heir, even “commentator of the first order” of Sirhindī. Let us read another sentence by Ramzī: “God created man and deposited in him all the components of His creations.” In fact, it is what al-Qayṣarī meant by the title “The universe is the form of the Human Reality” (ان العالم هو صورة الحقيقة الانسانية) in his commentary on Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>530</sup>

Both authors, Ramzī and al-Qayṣarī, indicate what Ibn ‘Arabī meant in his book, that “God designed both human being and the universe in his own form, and both display the traces of the divine attributes.”<sup>531</sup> It is the bold articulation of *maḍnūn*, the hidden statement which is carefully shared among the élite members of intellectual speculative Sufism. Without understanding Ibn ‘Arabī’s key concept of “the Human Truth” or “the Muḥammadan Reality” (الحقيقة المحمدية), it would be difficult to comprehend what Ramzī refers to here.

<sup>529</sup> See the introductory section of al-Qayṣarī’s book: Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī Rumi, *Sharh al-Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-din Ashtiyānī (Tehran: Shirkat-e Intishārāt-e ‘Ilmī ve Farhangī, 1375 AH [1955 AD]), pp. 4-5.

<sup>530</sup> Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī Rumi, *Sharh al-Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, p. 6.

<sup>531</sup> William Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī. Heir to the Prophets* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), pp. 31-32.

As Chittick indicates, Ibn ‘Arabī honors the Prophet Muḥammad as a universal reference point.<sup>532</sup> All the authors we are discussing (Ramzī, al-Qayṣarī, and Ibn ‘Arabī) are coming with the background of the same Islamic tradition, and of course “every tradition privileges its own founder”.<sup>533</sup> For those who prefer a more understandable language, we may mention Chittick’s explanation of this issue:

Muḥammad is the full embodiment of the Logos, which is the Divine Word that gives rise to all creation and all revelation; and Ibn ‘Arabī calls this Logos by several names, including “the Muḥammadan Reality”.<sup>534</sup>

This is the translation, or clear explanation of the *maḍnūn*, the hidden notion that cannot be clearly articulated to the outsiders under the condition of social and religious constraints. Let us go beyond the soft lines of mysticism and analyze the hard lines of politics behind it.

“The human as a central point of the universe” is a very old idea which was articulated in the Muslim world first by the philosophical society of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* (the Faithful Comrades or “Brethren of Purity”, circa 10th-11th centuries AD)<sup>535</sup> and then it spread to other schools of thought, such as the Sufī and Kalāmī systems of Islamic civilization. However, the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* also captured the theory of Democritos (d. 370 BCE) in which . man is the micro-model of the universe, and the universe is the broadest

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>535</sup> Omar A. Farrukh, “Ikhwan al-Safa”, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M.M. Sharif (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), pp. 289-310.

copy of the man. It seems that the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* were the first to consider the human being as the miniature world in Muslim civilization.<sup>536</sup>

However, we observe again that every part in Ramzī's text is just referring to other texts with different ideological goals and colors. Here we should avoid the 19th century Orientalist trap that reduced every original innovation to Greek or western roots without regarding the ideological concepts and innovative interpretations that non-western or Muslim thinkers and scholars had created. The important point is the ideological goal which Muslim thinkers set and how they employed the ancient schemes and concepts in accordance with their new religious and socio-political circumstances.

When we consider the statement "He honored him as His deputy", we may find in the Qur'ān a clear sign for a similar meaning.<sup>537</sup> However, while the Qur'ān indicates the situation and the ethical responsibility of human beings on the Earth, speculative Sufism switched the context and employed these verses in favor of its colorful theories. Ramzī's following statements also refer to another verse from the Qur'ān.<sup>538</sup> Because Ramzī wanted to establish his own Sufi discourse on both the perceivable meanings of the Qur'ān and Ibn 'Arabī-style Gnostic explanations, he carefully refers to both the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* of Ibn 'Arabī and the sole religious scripture in Islam, the Qur'ān. If one argues that Ibn 'Arabī has already established his own doctrine on the basis of Qur'ānic tenets, we can claim that Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation of the scripture is totally different from that

<sup>536</sup> I.R. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwan al-Safa')* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 14-15.

<sup>537</sup> See: "And when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am going to create a deputy on the earth!'" (Sūra al-Baqara, 2:33).

<sup>538</sup> See: "And we have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what we have created, with [definite] preference." (Sūra Isrā, 17:70).

of a common Muslim scholar. I will not enter into bold discussions here, but I would just state that there is a big difference between common exegesis of the Qur'ān and what Ibn 'Arabī offers in his interpretations.

As a follower of Sirhindī-style Sufism, Ramzī breaks up neither the exterior meanings of the scripture, nor the Akbarī interpretation of it. Between the two poles, i.e., the exterior meanings of the scripture and the interior Gnostic interpretation based on the Akbarī tradition, Ramzī comes and goes in his mystical productions, but always with abundant help of the latter, as much as necessary.

#### 4.2.2.2. The second part and its analysis

ولآلي الصلوات وجواهر التسليمات وفرائد التحيات على اشرف مخلوقاته \* واكرم موجوداته  
والمظهر الاتم لظهوراته \* سيدنا ومولانا محمد المراد من خلق الكونين والعلة الغائية لافاضة  
فيوضاته \* وبث بركاته \* و على آله واصحابه الذين حازوا نعمة صحبته \* و على جميع اولياء  
امته الذين بذلوا جهدهم في احياء ملته واتباع سنته واقتفاء سيرته في جميع حالاته \* فاباح الله لهم  
موائد نعمه \* وزين ظواهرهم وبواطنهم بمكارم شيمه \* وملا اسرارهم بفصوص الحكم وجواهر  
الاسرار \* وكحل ابصار بصائرهم بكحل العناية والاستبصار \* واشمهم عوارف المعارف  
ومنحهم قوت القلوب \*

2. The pearl salutes, the jewel greetings, and the solitaire salutations be upon the most honorable of his creatures, the noblest among all existing things. He is the clearest mirror for His [God's] manifestations. He is our master Muḥammad, who is meant for the creation of the both phases [dimensions] of the universe. He is the final cause for the flowing of His lights, and for the spreading of His consecrations. Greetings be upon his family and his allies who had the glory of his friendship. And greetings be upon God-friends of his community (*awliyā*) who spent immense efforts in order to revive his religion, and to follow his road and his life experience, with all aspects he had. Therefore, God provided for them the tables of His abundance, and adorned their interior and exterior sides with His lovely temperament. He put in their inner world the bezels of wisdom and jewel secrets. He put the kohl in their inner eyes with His salvation and guide. He made them smell the *'Irfānī* knowledge and gave them the nourishment of the hearts.

In this long paragraph we have another network in which one can find tens of hidden *rābiṭas* (or connections) among the old Sufi texts. However, we will explain only

the most important ones among them. This part is not one basic unit which suddenly appeared in Ramzî's mind without a deep background of the past. Rather, it is only the tip of the iceberg for the textual heritage of Sufism.

Let us begin with the statement: "He is the clearest mirror for His [God's] manifestations" (المظهر الاتم لظهوراته). It refers to the universal position of the Prophet Muḥammad in the Sufi worldview. Like Ibn 'Arabî, many intellectual Sufis believe that "the highest vision of God is found in the vision of the form of Muḥammad".<sup>539</sup> As Chittick translates the following lines from the *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya* of Ibn 'Arabî:

The most excellent, balanced, and correct of mirrors is Muḥammad's mirror, so God's self-disclosure within it is more perfect than any other self-disclosure that there may be.<sup>540</sup>

Not only Ibn 'Arabî, but almost all great Sufi poets refer to the mirror metaphor for Muḥammad. Here, I will mention two great poets from the same cultural background as Ramzî. Sheikh Ghālib (d. 1798), the greatest light of Ottoman divan poetry, mentioned the mirror metaphor in his divan ('collection of poems'):

أي حضرت هادي سبل فخر رسل / *Ey hazret-i hâdî-i sübül fahr-ı Rusûl*  
آينه إحسان أزل مظهر كل / *Âyîne-i ihsân-ı ezel mazhar-ı küll*

O, the glorious guide of the roads, o the pride of messengers,  
O, the mirror of eternal beauty, the reflection of the whole.<sup>541</sup>

The famous Ottoman poet Süleyman Çelebi (d. 1422) also said:

<sup>539</sup> William Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabî*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25. Chittick refers to, vol. 4, p. 433, line 10, from the following edition in 4 volumes: Ibn 'Arabî, *al-Futuhāt al-makkiyya* (Cairo, 1911).

<sup>541</sup> For a thematic survey on "Ayine" (mirror) in Sheikh Ghalib, see: Zülfi Güler, "Şeyh Galib Divanında Ayna Sembolü/The Symbol of The Mirror in Şeyh Galib's Poems", *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi/Fırat University Journal of Social Science*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2004), pp. 103-121.



*Zatıma mir'at edindim zatını*      ذاته مرأت ایدندم ذاتنی  
*Bile yazdım adın ile adımı*      بيله یازدم ادم ايله ادینی

I have made your essence a mirror for my essence  
 I have written your name together with my name.<sup>542</sup>

This is the mystical approach to the situation of Muḥammad in some Sufi/ *Irfānī* narratives. Here, Muḥammad has been considered to be the ultimate reason for the beginning of the creation of everything in the universe. Ramzī refers again to this notion with another sentence: “He is the final cause to the flowing of His lights” (العلّة الغائیة لافاضة) (فیوضاته). What is the flowing of His lights? Briefly, it is the ongoing process of creation of the universe by One Supreme Being. It means basically: “Muḥammad was the reason why God started to create this universe.” Without understanding such a key point of a Sufi message, one cannot grasp the textual network of Ramzī, who wove his mystical text as a doctrinal mirror of the old texts, annotations, commentaries, and narratives produced again and again throughout the centuries in the middle of the immense ocean of Sufi literature.

Ismail Ankaravī (d. 1631),<sup>543</sup> another Sufi author from the élite Ottoman milieu, articulated the same idea when he penned *Zubdat al-Fuḥūṣ*, a distinguished commentary-translation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s aforementioned enigmatic work *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. In fact, *Zubdat* was an Ottoman Turkish translation of the famous Persian commentary *Sharḥ-i Naqsh-i Fuṣūṣ* by ‘Abd al-raḥmān Jāmī (d. 1492), who wrote this work to explain

<sup>542</sup> Süleyman Çelebi, *Mevlidu’n-Nebiyy* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1311 AH [1893 AD]), p. 17.

<sup>543</sup> For detailed information, see: Erhan Yetik, “Ankaravi, İsmâil Rusûhî”, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 3 (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1991), pp. 211-213.

the major ideas of the *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, which was Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary on his own work *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* in Arabic. Ismail Ankaravī said in his *Zubdat*:

*Pes ol insân-ı kâmil evveldir kasıdda, zirâ icâd-i âlemden ayn-i maksûde ve illet-i gâiye oldur. Pes, illet-i gâiye'nin şânı mertebe-i ilim ve irâdetle mukaddemdir, ve vücudda muahhardır.*

The Ottoman text may be translated as follows:

This Perfect Man (*insân-i kâmil* [i.e., Muḥammad]) is the first in the aim of God, inasmuch as he [the Perfect Man] is the major goal and the final cause for the creation of the universe. The feature of the final cause is to be first in the level of will and knowledge [intention], but it is the last in the level of existence.<sup>544</sup>

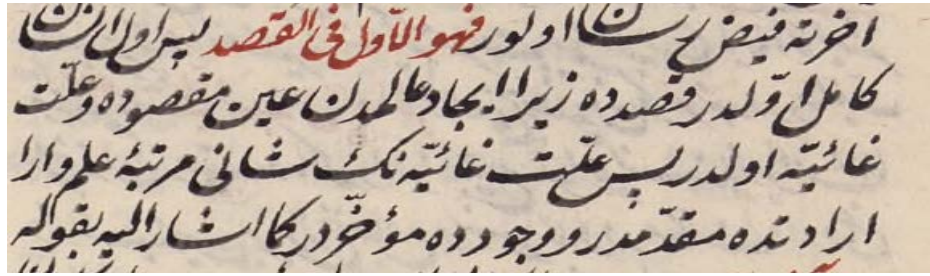


Figure 6. The relevant section from *Zubdat al-Fuḥūṣ fī Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* (Library of the University of Michigan)

If we go deeper, we will observe that Ramzī and other Sufi authors had borrowed the term “final cause” from Aristotelian philosophy, employing it in order to explain a totally different phenomenon in Sufi terminology, with an ideological goal different from that of the ancient Greeks and the first Muslim philosophers. The *falāsifa* (‘Muslim philosophers’) employed this term in a meaning close to the original Aristotelean approach. However, the *‘Irfān*-based Sufi approach totally changed this approach in

<sup>544</sup> I found this beautiful old manuscript in the digital library of the University of Michigan. See: İsmail Ankaravî, *Zubdat al-Fuḥūṣ fī Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, Library of the University of Michigan, manuscript no. 14. Origin: As appears in colophon on, p.161, opening work copied by Derviş Mehmet (Darwīsh Muḥammad (درویش محمد) with transcription completed 11 Shawwāl 1107 [ca. 14 May 1696]. See the permanent link to the work: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015079128636> (accessed January 5, 2015).

terms of context and common meanings. The term “final cause” (*al-‘illa al-ghā’īya*: العلة الغائية) is mentioned in medieval Islamic philosophical texts under the influence of Aristotelian logic. As I remember from al-Ghazālī’s book of logic *Mi‘yār al-‘Ilm fī Fann al-Mantiq* during my classical education, the final cause is the reason why matter exists if it really exists. Aristotle thought that there were four kinds of causes (العلل الأربع): material cause (العلة المادية: ما فيه الوجود), formal cause (العلة الصورية: ما به الوجود), efficient (or moving) cause (العلة الفاعلية: ما منه الوجود), and final cause (لعللة الغائية: ما له الوجود), which is the aim or purpose being served by it.<sup>545</sup> But the Sufi-*‘Irḥānī* revolution gave a totally different meaning for those concepts.

According to Ramzī, Ibn ‘Arabī, Ankaravī, Süleyman Çelebi, and other Sufi authors, Muḥammad is “the final cause” that led God to create the universe. That is the clear explanation of the *maḍnūn*, the carefully-shared doctrine among intellectual Sufis. Even though the principle of “Muḥammadan final cause” has been respected among the élitist Sufi groups of Syria, Northern Africa, Central Asia, India, and Anatolia, it has been sharply criticized by the common *uṣūlī* scholars of the Muslim world. In fact, this approach is also supported by a fabricated *ḥadīth*: “Were it not for you, I would not have created the universe”, which became a popular motto among Sufis. We may see many refutations written by common *uṣūlī* scholars against this approach.<sup>546</sup>

When we try to comprehend what Ramzī employed for his mystical worldview in his long statements, we can find Ibn ‘Arabī, the greatest master of intellectual speculative

<sup>545</sup> Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Mi‘yār al-‘ilm fī fann al-mantiq*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1961), pp. 273-274.

<sup>546</sup> For this sentence labeled as fabricated in *ḥadīth* collections, see: Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Shawkānī (d. 1759), *al-Fawā’id al-Majmū‘a fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍū‘a* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1987), p. 277.

Sufism again in his final lines. Not surprisingly, Ramzī clearly articulated Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ*: “He [God] put the bezels of wisdom (فصوص الحكم) into their inner world.” Here “the Bezels of Wisdom” is the obviously a reference to the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* of Ibn ‘Arabī, who was considered to be God’s first-class friend, whose inner world would comprehend the bezels of divine wisdom. Again, Ramzī did not contradict Ibn ‘Arabī in any paragraph, inasmuch as the latter was the source of his inspiration.

A good reader should be aware that Ramzī always attempts to bridge the extreme statements of intellectual speculative Sufism with commonly accepted orthodox Sufism. Therefore, he cites here a passage: “He made them smell the *‘Irfānī* knowledge...” (واشتمهم عوارف المعارف), referring to the famous classic *‘Awārif al-Ma’ārif* by Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī.<sup>547</sup> He cites also passage from another work of orthodox Sufism: “God gave them the nourishment of the hearts” (ومنحهم قوت القلوب). Here, “The nourishment of the hearts”, refers to the *Qūt al-Qulūb* written by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996). This book is considered among the most respected orthodox Sufi texts, together with the *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-dīn* of al-Ghazālī.<sup>548</sup>

Clearly, Ramzī wanted us to believe that he was really careful about the balance between extreme intellectual speculative Sufism and commonly-accepted orthodox Sufism, or the extreme esoterical exegesis of the Qur’ān and the scriptural meaning of it.

<sup>547</sup> See: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī, and Abd al-Qādir Ba’alawī, *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-dīn ma’a Ta’rif al-Iḥyā’ wa ‘Awārif al-Hāmish* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Maymanīya, 1312 AH [1894 AD]), in 4 volumes.

<sup>548</sup> I know this from my classical Arabic education, since we were reading first *Qūt al-Qulūb*, then *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-dīn*, as if the latter was a commentary on the former.

### 4.2.2.3. The third part and its analysis

فهذه درر مكنونات \* برزت من اصداف عبارات المكتوبات الشريفة \* للامام الرباني \*  
والعارف الرحماني \* نقطة دائرة الارشاد \* واقف الاسرار الالهية \* كاشف دقائق المتشابهات  
القرآنية \* سيدنا ووسيلتنا الى الله القديم الكريم الاحد الابدي الشيخ احمد بن الشيخ عبد الاحد  
السرهندي الشهير \* بمجدد الالف الثاني

3. These (translated sentences) are the veiled pearls emerged from the shells of phrases in the noble *Letters* of Imām Rabbānī, the Gnostic of the Most Gracious, the central point of the guidance circle, the cognizant of the divine secrets, the enunciator of the Qur’ānic secrets of *mutashābihāt*; our master, and our intercessor to God—the Eternal the Generous, the Unique—our mentor Sheikh Aḥmad, son of Sheikh ‘Abd al-aḥad of Sirhind, renowned as the “Renewer of the Second Millennium”.

The “veiled pearls” (درر مكنونات) as a metaphor of the valuable secrets are often meant to be mystical realities that should be given to those who are knowledgeable followers of élite Sufism. Here again we have another reference to the concept of the *maḍnūn*, the certain divine secrets which are only shared among élite members of a specific Sufi group. Ramzī thinks that Sirhindī might not have given an adequate explanation of some high-level concepts in his letters. Therefore, the translator will undertake the role of interpreter-spokesman, even revealer of the text.

We also have a strange long poem called the *Qaṣīda* of the “Veiled Pearl” (در مكنون) which is popular among some modern Turkish Naqshbandīs, attributed apocryphally to Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767), the greatest jurist of Islamic civilization and founder of the Ḥanafī School of *fiqh*. This apocryphal poem includes extreme Gnostic teachings with exaggerated praise to the Prophet Muḥammad.<sup>549</sup> In fact, it has nothing to

<sup>549</sup> The first early variations of this apocryphal poem are to be found in the work by Al-Ibshīhī (d. 1446), see: Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaṭraf*, ed. Muḥid Qumayḥa (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, 1986), vol. 1, pp. 491-493. It later became a poem popular among Sufi groups. This poem is translated into Turkish and commented upon by some Naqshī followers in Turkey. See: Ahmet Ünlü, *Dürr-ü Mekkun Kasidesi* (Istanbul: Arifan Kitabevi, 2010), pp. 5-12.

do with the historical persona of Abū Ḥanīfā. It seems that Ramzī knew this poem and gave a similar name to his translation. In the beginning of that long poem, there is a verse in which the same Gnostic tenet of the Sufī legends is repeated: “O Muḥammad! Were it not for you, no man would not have been created even the universe would not have been created.”<sup>550</sup> (أنت الذي لولاك ما خلق امرؤ كلا و لا خلق الوری لولاك)

To conclude, I have argued that Ramzī as an author of *ʿIrfān*-based ideas in his Meccan years was weaving his own text/textile around the main principles of intellectual speculative Sufism and its mythological basis, but with different types of connotations drawn from varied sources. However, he always wanted to bridge Ibn ʿArabi with the orthodox Sufism that respects Abū Ḥanīfā and other orthodox *fiqh* scholars.

According to Ramzī, his spiritual master and favorite author, Sirhindī, was the enunciator of the Qurʾānic secrets of *mutashābihāt* (المتشابهات). The term *mutashābihāt* is used for equivocal, polysemic verses of the Qurʾān. Many scholars believe that these kinds of verses cannot be interpreted in a satisfying way inasmuch as they are secrets of God or “their definitive meanings can be known only to God”.<sup>551</sup> Other scholars believe that it is possible for those who are connoisseurs of the divine knowledge to understand their meanings.<sup>552</sup>

<sup>550</sup> Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, vol. 1, p. 491.

<sup>551</sup> Anna M. Gade, *The Qurʾān: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 2010), p. 84. See the entire section on “Interpretation and its Limits”, pp. 82-87.

<sup>552</sup> Generally speaking, some Sufī scholars believed the possibility of interpretation of these verses by the selected imāms, *ʿarīfs*, and sheikhs who are supposed to have divine knowledge. See for an older but still good approach to these kinds of verses in the Qurʾān: Jalāl al-dīn ʿAbd al-raḥmān al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Mustafā al-Bughā (Damascus, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 640-641. See also a rationalistic approach to this phenomenon in the Qurʾānic exegesis: Maḥmūd Ibn ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144), *al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq al-Tanzīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1977), vol. 1, pp. 106-107. The problem is old and it is essentially related to the interpretation of *āya* 8 of Sūra Āl ʿImrān.

We observe that these kinds of Qur'ānic verses are also important for understanding the discourse of intellectual speculative Sufism inasmuch as the latter can find a way of legitimation or recognition of the phenomenon of “hidden knowledge”, even though this idea can lead to very complicated results in terms of understandability and clarity of the Qur'ānic message. Ramzī implies that Sirhindī as a high caliber Gnostic expert did interpret *mutashābih* verses inasmuch as he was among the most exalted élite group of the Qur'ān scholars who received directly the knowledge of the Qur'ānic interpretation from God by “divine illumination” (الهام و كشف).

Even though these kinds of exaggerated statements have been sharply criticized by the common *uṣūlī* scholars, many Sufi authors have continued to praise their masters with long poems and sentences, putting them in a position very close to God. Because these exalted men are considered to be “our intercessional tools to God” (وسيلتنا الى الله), as Ramzī stated for his master in the above paragraph, they would be counted as representatives of God. As we mentioned before, this extreme logic of “intercession” was the cause of long disputes between some Sufi-*Bāṭinī* authors on the one side and common *uṣūlī* scholars and rationalist thinkers such as members of the *Mu'tazila* on the other. By the same logic, one can become close to God, one can even become annihilated in Him [God] only with the help of those great masters.

A modern scholar may find here a highly humanistic approach, a close proximity between human beings and God. However, the ideological employment of this concept throughout the history has been really different from what a modern scholar may think. This innocent concept of “God's friend”, “God's intercessor”, or “God's special agent” was often employed to create a sharp barrier between *al-‘āmm* (‘the common people’)

and *al-khāṣṣ* ('the chosen mystical-religious-spiritual élite') who could quickly turn into the political élite. If a man is considered to have a lineage from these chosen élites or from their descendants, he will not have to explain what he means in his statements or what he does to the "inferior people", the public, the ordinary people who are supposed to be "ignorant" (جاهل) of what the élite Sufi knows. Consequently, this élite will be the absolute ruler in their minds as for example a high cleric in the religious class, and in the streets as a powerful figure in the political class. This is one of the typical formulas to create a superior class, a high "caste" in society. In fact, Ramzī must have known the direct influence of this problem (*al-ʿāmm* and *al-khāṣṣ*) on internal political conflicts in the Khanate of Kazan before it fell to the invasion of Ivan the Terrible (1552).<sup>553</sup>

When did the first sign of this tendency appear in the Muslim world? As we mentioned earlier, some philosophical societies such as the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* might need this kind of precautionary discourse in the period of the early revolutionary cultural transformation of Islamic history (the late ʿAbbāsīd era, c. 10th century) in favor of their ideological and philosophical agenda. However, it did not stop at the point of a precautionary discourse. It became finally a weapon in the hands of some élitist religious, mystical, and political groups in order to label some people as "inferior" and others as "superior". This discourse also invented a hierarchical structure within which only élite figures attain the highest point of Divine Being, while others get lost in the mud of Earth.

<sup>553</sup> The remarkable separation between the elite members of the ruling class (*al-khāṣṣ*) and the ordinary people (*al-ʿāmm*) was, according to one widely-held view, one of the most important reasons that led the collapse of Khanate of Kazan. See: Akdes Nimet Kurat, "Kazan Hanlığı", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 12, no. 3-4 (1954), pp. 228-229.



The *quṭb* (قطب), *awṭād* (أوتاد), ‘*ārif* (عارف), *ghawṭh* (غوٹ),<sup>554</sup> and other divine players would arrive at the bosom of God, whereas the ordinary “small” believers who had neither relation (in blood) to the divine players nor the ability for the verbal Olympiads of intellectual speculative Sufism would go nowhere, all they could do was sit down and serve at the doors of these high divine élites.

Interestingly, speculative Sufism with its major supporters in the Sunnī community continued to share the same epistemological fundamentals with high-level Shī‘ī-Bāṭinī theologians. This discourse was also supported by beautiful colorful drawings in medieval Muslim manuscripts indicating how those divine élites were very high and celestial with their mystical positions. See Figure 7 (below) for a magnificent manuscript illustration concerning this phenomenon.<sup>555</sup>

The term of *maḍnūn* might have been developed as a by-product of the same logic which led to the creation of an élite class of religious clerics, a cult of selected divine saints, an aristocratic group of *imāms*, *sayyids* who know the most precious knowledge, whereas the other “common” people know nothing, even though the religion of Islām

<sup>554</sup> See one of the oldest and most genuine critiques for the “*Quṭb*” (Spiritual Pole) and other so-called hierarchy concepts: Ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī, *Muqaddima Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. ‘Abdullah Muḥammad al-Darwīsh (Damascus: Maktabat al-Hidāya, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 534-536. After a long analysis of the problem with its historical roots (its relation to the mythology of the Fatimids), Ibn Khaldūn finally says: “The theory of spiritual poles is not supported by logical reasoning ways. It is a kind of rhetorical figure of speech. That is it.” Interestingly, Ibn Khaldūn would be the favorite author for Ramzī in his history project in the following years.

<sup>555</sup> Bahā al-dīn Ḥaydar al-Āmolī (14th century), *Naṣṣ al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ* in Carullah Section, Millet Library of Manuscripts (Istanbul, Turkey), manuscript no. 1033, folio 35. Description of the drawing: This is a portrait of the divine reflections in three circles. In the central point is the Quṭb through whom the Universe (*al-‘Ālam*) keeps up. From inside to outside, we see in the first circle (*Dā’ira Walāya*) the noble Imāms, descendants of the Prophets and other names. In the second circle (*Dā’ira Nubuwwa*) we see the Prophets, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham. In the third circle (*Dā’ira Asmā*), we see the names of God as instruments to reflect, flow, and gradually create the other things in the universe.

does not recognize officially any superior class for religious clerics, at least, in its basic tenets.

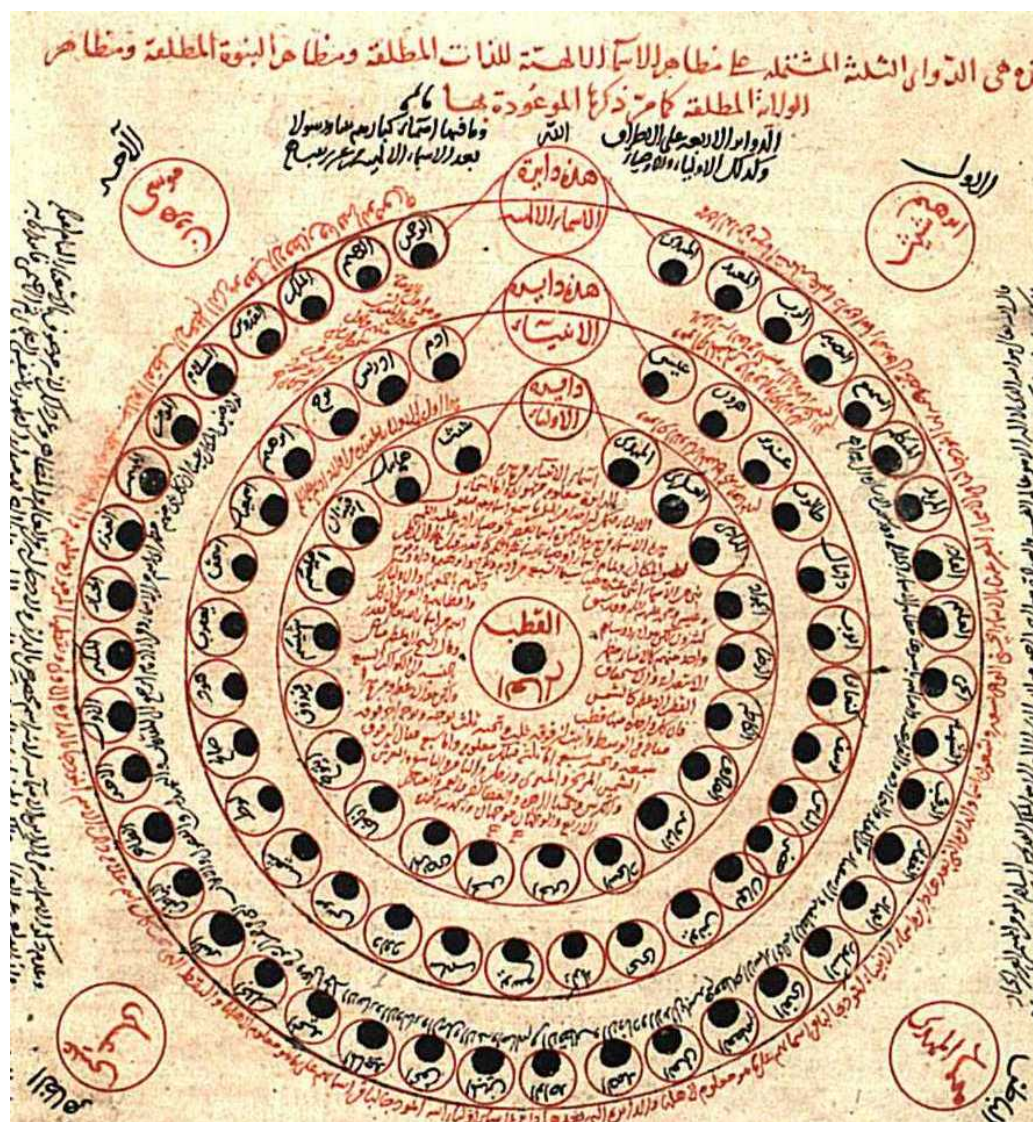


Figure 7. al-Āmolī's imagination for the élitist 'Irfānī discourse in *Naṣṣ al-Nuṣūṣ* (Carullah Section, Millet Library of Manuscripts, Istanbul, Turkey, manuscript no. 1033, folio 35)

Here, my concern is not about the *barzakh* (‘isthmus’: برزخ)-style embellished mystical language<sup>556</sup> that has been the source of inspiration for many authors since the first great intellectual Sufis appeared in the Muslim world. (When I say *barzakh*, I mean the twilight of meanings within which many things serve as a bridge to each other in the colorful world of imagination. Resistant to time, it is the reproductive character of polysemantic narratives, desires, statements, sentences of both the “unofficial” Gnostic texts and “official” Scriptures.<sup>557</sup>) Rather, my concern is the unintended by-product of this literature in its historical development, namely the humiliation of ordinary people, the segregation between *‘awāmm* and *khawāṣṣ*, and finally, the emergence of élitist discrimination in the name of God, at the very field of God’s grace, among the believers of the same God. Here, it is questionable why some élitist Sufi leaders or Islamic clerics have tried to avoid being “normal, common, just” whereas God in whom they believe advises:

And thus we have made you a just, balanced community, a community of the middle way that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. [Sūra al-Baqara, 2:143]

As we observe in many verses, the Qur’ānic Muḥammad was neither the “final cause” nor the son of God, but only a man of flesh, dust and blood. He was a prophet among other prophets, a messenger among other messengers. According to the Qur’ān, there is no human with a *fer-i yezdānī* (فر یزدانی) ‘eternal divine charisma of the king’, as

<sup>556</sup> In order to understand *barzakh* and its connotations in *‘Irfānī* Sufism, see: Su‘ād al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu’jam al-Şūfī*, pp. 191-196.

<sup>557</sup> As an author and translator of Islamic philosophy, following the same tradition in my culture with modern hues, I have also written many titles with the same style in Turkish. See: A. Sait Aykut, “Varlık, Benlik, Hatırlayış ve Unutuş Üzerine”, *Cogito*, no. 50 (Istanbul, 2007), pp. 154-169. This is an essay on existence, ego, remembering, and forgetting under the guidance of Ibn ‘Arabī, al-Suhrawardī, and Heidegger.

in the ancient Persian tradition), or infallibility and irresponsibility before God. In fact, Muḥammad's success and blessing were always related to his realistic approach to the material and social problems of the peoples among whom he lived. The Qur'ān also criticized the approach of the opponents to the human situation of Muḥammad in an interesting way.<sup>558</sup> The dynamic invitation of the Qur'ān (*Bayān*) is always directed to the common people, the lovely or badly-behaved humans of the Earth, not to the so-called celestial élites who may aspire to be a Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*).

The God of the Qur'ān is neither the God of a special élite group, nor the God of the Perfect Man, rather He is the Lord of all peoples<sup>559</sup> and the creator of peoples from one soul,<sup>560</sup> giving the peoples their colors<sup>561</sup> and languages.<sup>562</sup> He is closer to the human than his jugular vein.<sup>563</sup> He forgives people<sup>564</sup> and punishes people.<sup>565</sup> He creates the love between man and woman from among the people,<sup>566</sup> as He sent down rain from the Sky to the Earth.<sup>567</sup> If we count the word “people”, “peoples” (*nās, unās*: ناس ، أناس) in the

<sup>558</sup> See: “Yet they say: ‘What sort of messenger is this man who eats food, and goes about in the market-places? Why has not an angel [visibly] been sent down unto him, to act as a warner together with him?’...” (Sūra Al-Furqan, 25:7) “Yet, verily, thou art bound to die, [O Muḥammad,] and, ناس ، أناس verily, they, too, are bound to die.” (Sūra Zumar, 39:30). ناس ، أناس

<sup>559</sup> See: Sūra al-Nās (114:1-3).

<sup>560</sup> See: Sūra al-Nisā' (4:1).

<sup>561</sup> Sūra al-Rūm (30:22).

<sup>562</sup> Sūra al-Rūm (30:22).

<sup>563</sup> Sūra Qāf (50:15).

<sup>564</sup> Sūra al-Nisā' (4:96).

<sup>565</sup> Sūra al-Baqara (2:7).

<sup>566</sup> Sūra al-Rūm (30:21).

<sup>567</sup> Sūra al-Baqara (2:22).

Qur'ān, we will find it with diverse connotations, repeated more than two hundred and forty (240) times, in almost all Sūras, except some short ones.<sup>568</sup> If we count the word “human” (*al-Insān*: الإنسان) we will find it more than sixty-five (65) times, with different nuances that fluctuate from negative tones to positive ones; but, they have no connotation of the notion of the Perfect Man.<sup>569</sup>

Here, the problem does not pertain directly to leading figures of speculative Sufism such as Ibn ‘Arabī, the great poet, the widely-read author of medieval times who made an *ijtihād*, opening an immense road in front of his readers throughout the ages. However, the critical problem is about the unintended by-products of some notions that can be easily interpreted in order to create an élite class that is high “above” the other human beings. These so-called high-level “celestial” beings, cadres, clerics, Sufis, saints, and *imāms* can arrogantly humiliate ordinary people in the name of Perfect Man and his friends.

By creating very rich literary works over the long centuries, the ‘*Irfān*-based mind has shaped different groups such as élitist, populist, ascetic, and messianic movements among the Muslim peoples. Indeed, it was always possible to create a good balance between ‘*Irfān*, *Bayān*, and *Burhān* if a Muslim intellectual appropriately digested what he had received. However, certain exotic delicacies would have a long-lasting impact on some authors. It seems as though Ramzī intoxicated by this amazing discourse, at least in his Meccan years. Of course, Ramzī was aware of this phenomenon, but he thought that God had already made a rating, a touchstone for human beings, not only with regard to

<sup>568</sup> See: Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu‘jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur’ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya, 1945), pp. 726-729.

<sup>569</sup> See: Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu‘jam*, pp. 93-94.

righteousness, as the common Muslims believe, but also with regard to the *ʿIrfānī* knowledge that man can shoulder. So, the great Sufis and “their heirs” would be superior, but others would be inferior. Ramzī said in his first Sufi work:

The smart man (*al-ʿāqil*) must understand that the grading process for the human race (*nawʿ al-insān*) is not based on ethnic origin, wealth, or health; but on the righteousness (*taqwā*) and the Gnostic knowledge (*maʿrifa*) man can shoulder.<sup>570</sup>

#### 4.3. Text for history: Under the wings of old and new masters

In contrast to his Sufi treatises and introductions, Ramzī cared greatly about the shape, citation, and major goals in his historical work *Talfīq al-akhbār*. This work meticulously addresses and carefully orders the events in his narrative in a professional manner with clear documentation, in a manner comparable to many other modern historical works prepared by early-20th century scholars.<sup>571</sup> It seems that the Ramzī of history was no longer the Ramzī of intellectual speculative Sufism. It appears that he made a clear break with some of his old habits both in terms authorship and in his way of thinking.

A good reader may inhale the aroma of the creators of modern nationalist historiography in his fresh zeal combining nationalism with the style of classical Arabic authors who used to add personal accounts and poems into the text. Ramzī quoted about 17 incomplete verses from the classical Arab poets and more than 250 (short or long)

<sup>570</sup> See: Murād Ramzī, *Tarjamāt Rashaḥāt ʿAyn al-Hayāt*, p. 2 (prefatory section).

<sup>571</sup> For example, Ramzī must have spent an enormous effort just in assembling the works cited in the sections of his *Talfīq al-akhbār*. When we check out the content of the book we see 5 chapters and more than 150 titles in the first volume; and 4 chapters and more than 140 titles in the second volume. If we collect just the lines of all chapters, small sections, and titles it takes about 16 pages. See the contents of the book: Murād Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 228-736, and vol. 2, pp. 519-528.

poems written by Andalusian, North African, or Levantine Arab poets.<sup>572</sup> He created this work with the help of more than 60 historical works, some of which were still in manuscript.<sup>573</sup> Ramzī's method of citation is very sound: he mentioned each of his sources by name and severely criticized some authors, comparing them with other authors when necessary.

His method of text weaving in historical narratives resembles Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) in the vigilant sectioning of the books and the long sentences in the major titles.<sup>574</sup> Of course, Ibn Khaldūn is superior to Ramzī in terms of reasoning and investigative statements, but Ramzī looks like a modest pupil trying to follow his master Ibn Khaldūn step by step. Just for comparison, I would like to cite the title of one section from the book by Ramzī and compare it with the title of a section from the book of Ibn Khaldūn, Here is a title from *Talfīq al-akhbār*, the historical work of Ramzī:

المقدمة في بيان أصل الترك ومنشئهم وكيفية انتشارهم وبعض مجرياتهم مع جيرانهم من سائر  
الأقوام والأمم الآسيوية والأوروبية قبل الإسلام على سبيل الإجمال حسب إطلاعي القاصر

Introduction to the statement of the root and the origins of the Turks, their spread (to the world), their adventures with neighbors from other Asian and European nations and communities before Islam, in a short way, based on my humble research.<sup>575</sup>

<sup>572</sup> See: Murād Ramzī, "Fihris al-Qawāfī", *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 502-515.

<sup>573</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908), vol. 1, pp. 12-15.

<sup>574</sup> For Ibn Khaldūn, see: M. Talbi, "Ibn Khaldūn", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), p. 825. Ibn Khaldūn was among the most popular historians and thinkers among the Ottoman high cultural milieu in the 16th century, when no one yet understood the value and the approach of this great thinker in the world. We have a strong Khaldūnian school which started around the 17th century and continued to the 20th century. See: Z. Fahri Fındıkoğlu, "Türkiye'de İbn Haldunizm", in *Fuad Köprülü Armağanı* (Istanbul, 1953), pp. 153-63. Kemalpaşazade (d. 1536), Hezarfen Hüseyin (d. 1691), Müneccimbaşı Ahmed Dede (d. 1702), Kâtip Çelebi (d. 1657), Mustafa Naimâ Efendi (d. 1716), and Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (d. 1895) were among the famous Ottoman historians from the Khaldūnian school.

<sup>575</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 36.

Now, I take a title from Ibn Khaldūn's book, the *Muqaddima*:

الكتاب الأول في طبيعة العمران في الخليقة وما يعرض فيها من البدو والحضر والتغلب والكسب  
والمعاش والصنائع والعلوم ونحوها وما لذلك من العلل والأسباب

The first book on the nature of urbanization in creation; and what is going on in it, in terms of nomadic and settled life; and overcoming, gaining and living; and the crafts, sciences, and similar things; and the causes and reasons influencing (urbanization).<sup>576</sup>

I observe here a similarity in the style of titling between Ibn Khaldūn and Ramzī, especially in the adjectives, subclauses, and short explanations in one long sentence that serves as the title for a major chapter in the book. Ramzī might have been influenced by the form and shape of Khaldūnian prose through two ways: First, by reading the *Muqaddima* when he decided to write a historical work, and then by reading the works of Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, who was a representative of the Khaldūnian School in the late Ottoman age. Furthermore, Ramzī clearly mentioned Ahmed Cevdet's name in a short biography in the footnotes of his book.<sup>577</sup> We also have some reference to the Khaldūnian philosophy of history in Ramzī's work.<sup>578</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned features, Ramzī craftily enriches the text with some satiric events and personal accounts. As a man of letter with stylish accounts, Ramzī does not abstain from sharing personal details or gossip about scholars from the Volga-Ural region. For example, 'Ubaydullāh Efendi was a great scholar, but one day he

<sup>576</sup> 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī, *Muqaddima Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. 'Abdullah Muḥammad al-Darwīsh (Damascus: Maktabat al-Hidāya, 2004), vol. 1, p. 125.

<sup>577</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 102-103.

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 120.



“passed gas” (literally “farted”) when he was giving a lecture, after which he was removed from his position as professor in a madrasa!<sup>579</sup> The unique scholar ‘Abd al-raḥmān Utizimānī was giving very eccentric answers on some religious subjects, with Ramzī characterizing him as a “crazy man”.<sup>580</sup> Another guy named ‘Abbās ‘Abd al-rashīd had many obsessions and phobias. He could not pass over any bridge in a horse-drawn wagon, he was too afraid that he would fall and die under the bridge. He lived in an isolated house with his pigeons, for which reason he never opened the door to any cat or other small pets. He was also afraid of wearing a skullcap, in case of his head might be injured under severe pressure!<sup>581</sup> Two sons of the scholar Fakhr al-dīn Egerjī were constantly brawling with each other, except when they found some juicy gossip about another scholar.<sup>582</sup> These kinds of accounts remind me of the Jahizian tradition of satirical narrative established by al-Jāḥiẓ (Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr al-Baṣrī, d. 869), the greatest master of prose in the classical age of Arabic literature.<sup>583</sup>

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 378-379.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 360-361.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 379.

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 380.

<sup>583</sup> As a true humanist author and renaissance man, Jāḥiẓ wrote about almost everything from the biology of animals to the social and political problems of the ‘Abbāsīd era, and from pornographic jokes to a wide range of topics in Islamic civilisation such as race, literature, gender, slavery, and early theories of evolution. See: Ch. Pellat, “al-Djāḥiẓ”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1965), pp. 385-387. For a Turkish translation of some treatises by Jāḥiẓ with annotations, see: al-Jāḥiẓ, trans. A. Sait Aykut, “Cimri ve çöp arasındaki güçlü ilişki üzerine” [On the miser and trash from *al-Bukhala* by al-Jāḥiẓ], *Cogito*, no. 43 (Istanbul, 2005), pp. 22-28.

#### 4.3.1. The influence of Marjānī on Murād Ramzī

Ramzī must have been influenced by the style of Marjānī in terms of both the classical notion of beauty and a modern approach to categories. As I mentioned earlier, Marjānī was canonical literary and scholarly figure for Ramzī.<sup>584</sup> As Murād Ramzī described in his work, Marjānī harshly criticized Qadīmīst scholars, with his critique aimed at their traditional textual conventions.<sup>585</sup> He recommended reforms to traditional textual conventions, ones that would remove any words, passages or sections not expressly devoted to the conveying of meaning, thus rendering texts more concise and efficient. The obsolete aspects of texts according to Marjānī included: useless, confusing, or lengthy titles, the late medieval tradition of loquacious introductions (*dībāja*: ديباجه) aimed only at self-promotion or praise of others, and long commentaries (*al-sharḥ*: الشرح) on or long annotations (*al-ḥāshiya*: الحاشية) of old books. For Marjānī, the way readers interact with texts also needed to be reformed. Books were to be a self-contained technology for the transmission of meaning. For this reason, texts should be read from the first page to the last page. Finally, books ought to be up to date, turning what was once an asset (i.e., faith in the infallibility of tradition) and the guiding principal of Islamic canonization into a liability.

Following Marjānī, Murād Ramzī must have realized essential changes in content, style, and formation in the art of modern authorship, especially in his usage of Arabic. As I observe personally from my long experience with medieval Arabic books, the selection of issues, content, and introductions are totally different from modern ones. Furthermore,

<sup>584</sup> See Chapter 2 of this dissertation, or see for Ramzī's own words: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908), vol. 2, pp. 479-480; (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 403-407.

<sup>585</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908), pp. 479-480.

if the reader does not have familiarity with such old Arabic books he/she can never grasp the most intriguing points; as a result, the book may appear to be a meaningless, dull brick in his/her perception. A modern understanding of categorization and obvious content may not be found in many old Arabic books, except in some thrilling examples of the *ḥikāya* and *ādāb* genres, such as “The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūta” (*Riḥla Ibn Baṭṭūta*),<sup>586</sup> “The 1001 Arabian Nights” (*Alf Layla wa Layla*),<sup>587</sup> and “The Accounts of Ibn Munqidh” (*Kitāb al-I’tibār*)<sup>588</sup> which are easily readable without any difficulty as though they were written in modern times. Especially “The Accounts of Ibn Munqidh” is an astonishing example, indicating that autobiography was not a cultural creation unique to the modern western civilization, as some western researchers have claimed.

Even though Marjānī was a product of a medieval-style madrasa education, he realized the ongoing change in the literary atmosphere of early modern times and warned his disciples about the outmoded styles and forms. Marjānī’s criticism on “the art of authorship” would be very influential on Ramzī’s late writings, as we observe in *Talfīq al-akhbār*, which was very clear in terms of content, sectional formation, and an introduction to every chapter. Thus, we may assume that Ramzī must have received his

<sup>586</sup> The book was translated more than one time. However the most scholarly detailed translation to English was made by H.A.R. Gibb and C.F. Beckingham. For good study in English of Ibn Baṭṭūta’s travels see: Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>587</sup> The “1001 Arabian Nights” was also translated more than one time. However, the most detailed and an uncensored translation was made (1885) by Sir Richard Burton, who spent years to complete this magnificent work in 10 volumes (plus 6 volumes of commentary).

<sup>588</sup> This is the autobiography of Ibn Munqidh, an Arab diplomat and a nobleman of the 12th century Syria. This extremely tasteful work represents the material culture of the Islamic society in this era. The book was translated by Philip Hitti into English. See: Usamah ibn Munqidh, *Memoirs of Usamah ibn Munqidh (Kitāb al-I’tibār)*, trans. Philip K. Hitti (New York: Columbia University, 2000). See also: Usame Ibn Munkiz, *Ibn Munkiz Haçlılara Karşı-Kitabü’l-I’tibar*, trans. Salahattin Hacıoglu, ed. A. Sait Aykut (Istanbul: Bordo-Siyah Yayınları, 2000).

first lessons about the modern notion of authorship from Marjānī. Then, he assimilated this manner in his late works, refutations to his rivals and sections of praise in his booklets. Marjānī's criticism must have influenced Ramzī as a decisive factor concerning what was obscure and boring, or clear, readable, and useful. Consciously, or spontaneously, Marjānī drew a line between good and bad, starting to determine the canon of the style in modern authorship among the Volga-Ural intellectuals who wrote Arabic and Turkic together, like Riḍā al-dīn Fakhr al-dīn, Mūsā Jārullāh, and Murād Ramzī.

However, Marjānī's influence on Ramzī had its limits. There are many instances in which the latter could not avoid using strange similes, complicated metaphors with rich backgrounds, and difficult word plays that had been severely criticized by Marjānī himself as an infertile, dry, and meaningless tradition.<sup>589</sup> Indeed, this heavily-decorated style was also fashionable in Levantine Arabic poetry in the age of the Mamluk Empire under the label of *taṣannu'* and *tazakhruf* (التصنع و التزخرف), as it was called by the literary critics.<sup>590</sup> A similar tendency was already observed in Safavīd and Ottoman Divan poetry under the name of *sebk-i hindī* (سبك هندی).<sup>591</sup> In fact, this tendency was a reflection of the complex relations covering the social and cultural life of the élite political class in

<sup>589</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 403-404.

<sup>590</sup> See for the Arabic literature in this era, in the terms of *taṣannu'* and *tazakhruf*: Dr. 'Umar Mūsā Bāshā, *al-Adab fī Bilād al-Shām- 'Uṣūr al-Zankiyyīn wa al-Ayyūbiyyīn wa al-Mamālīk* (Damascus: Al-Maktaba al-'Abbāsiyya, 1972), vol., pp. 777-790.

<sup>591</sup> See: İsmail Babacan, "Sebk-i hindî şiirinde teşbîh ve İstiâre tercihindeki", *Turkish Studies. International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, vol. 5/1 (Winter 2010), pp. 756-773. As Babacan indicates, the poets of the Sebk-i Hindi were interested in metaphor and similitude from the literary arts. They did not drop rules of traditional rhetoric by using more metaphor and similitude; instead, they tended to a more complicated system of metaphor and similitude to catch profound meaning and other special aspects.

society. It was not infertile and dry, but a sophisticated byproduct of the rich culture formed in the imperial ages of the Muslim peoples under the broad influence of Persianate-Indian poets and scholars.<sup>592</sup>

#### 4.4. Text for translation: Old method with good editing

As we mentioned before, Murād Ramzī wrote a *dībāja*, a classical preface decorated with literary arts totaling 9 pages, when he began translating the *Maktūbāt*.<sup>593</sup> Showing that he truly commanded Arabic language and literature beyond any doubt, he explained his method of translation in a summary and tried to establish a sound text which would be beneficial, as well attractive, for all kinds of Sufis, academics, and anyone else who wanted to learn Sirhindī's way of Sufism. Therefore, his translation method includes an editorial face with his short and long annotations.

According to Murād Ramzī, there are two methods of translation for classical books of Sufism. The first is to translate the sentences from the source language “word by word” into the target language (رعاية جانب الالفاظ).<sup>594</sup> The second is to translate the meanings, with concentration on the concepts in a meticulous way (رعاية جانب المعانى). For him, the second method makes the work beautiful and beneficial. Ramzī, believed that only this method makes the work beautiful, even the finest, *ajwad* (أجود).<sup>595</sup>

<sup>592</sup> See for the development of Sebk-i Hindi in the Safavīd Empire: Zabihollah Safa, *Tārikh-e Adabiyyāt dar Irān* [A History of Iranian Literature] (Tehran: Entishārāt-e Ferdows, 2001), vol. 5, part 1, pp. 522-525.

<sup>593</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Mu‘arrab al-Maktūbāt*, vol. 1, pp. 1-10.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

We may conclude that Murād Ramzī's concept of translation is similar to the method of ancient Greeks, who distinguished between the metaphrase (literal translation) and paraphrase (the restatement of the meaning of a text or passage using other words.)<sup>596</sup> The distinction between the literal word-for-word and sense-for-sense of free translation goes back to Cicero in the 1st century BCE and St. Jerome in the 4th century CE, whose work forms the basis of key writings on translation.<sup>597</sup>

In fact, Murād Ramzī attended to the literal meanings of the words as much as possible. On the other hand, he believed that a translation could include some unavoidable changes in its long journey. Ramzī mentions three unavoidable changes.<sup>598</sup> The first is the problem of revealing the *muḍmar* (إظهار المضمّر), or "hidden meaning".<sup>599</sup> The *muḍmar* generally indicates what is not revealed but stayed as an intention. At this point, the translator may put his/her creative interpretations in the work. The second unavoidable loss caused by translation consists of the *mujmal* (تفسير المجمل), or "the difficult concept".<sup>600</sup> The *mujmal* indicates a complicated concept similar to "the kernel of a fruit" including very rich meanings in terms of connotations and backgrounds. However, it is perishable when one tries to translate it to another language. At this point, the translator can demonstrate his expertise in the subject of the book. The final problem

<sup>596</sup> See the editor's introduction in Olive Classe, *Encyclopedia of literary translation into English* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000), vol. 1, p. vii.

<sup>597</sup> Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies, Theories and Applications* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 19-20.

<sup>598</sup> Murād Ramzī, *Mu'arrab al-Maktūbāt*, vol. 1, pp. 6-7.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*

relates to aspects of grammar, such as the replacing of plurals with the singular, and vice versa (تبدیل الجمع بالمفرد او عكسه), or replacing the third person with the second person and vice versa (تغيير الغيبة الى الخطاب والتكلم و عكسه).<sup>601</sup> The grammatical terms Ramzī mentioned here indicate the change that unavoidably occurs in the structural elements of the source text in order to reflect its true meaning at the target language.<sup>602</sup> In this point, translator can demonstrate his superior ability in the syntax and morpheme of the source and target languages.

Murād Ramzī thought that the difference between two languages (Persian and Arabic) was obvious and that finding an appropriate articulation of the complex concepts was very difficult. Therefore, it was impossible to avoid these kinds of changes. Otherwise, the whole text would become victim of the translator; moreover, no one would want to read the book which was translated in order to be read.<sup>603</sup>

It seems that Ramzī did not believe in the sameness of the translated text to the original text of the source language. However, he thought that the first method (i.e., literal translation) would be appreciable only for peculiar religious books, in order to avoid doubts, distortion, and fraudulent alteration.<sup>604</sup> Ramzī might have intended to translate some religious texts such as the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* collections. Yet, we do not

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

have any sound documentation of his likely attempt at translation of religious texts, even though Ahmet Temir mentioned a Qur'ān translation by Ramzī.<sup>605</sup>

#### **4.4.1. The method of translation in the Arabic cosmopolis: From Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (d. 873) to Murād Ramzī (d. 1935)**

We should focus on possible inspirational sources for Ramzī's method. A modern scholar can be surprised by Ramzī's short, clear, and practical statements pertaining to the translation process. However, one can ask about the originality of his approach. We know that Ramzī neither read Cicero's works nor early modern European translation theories from the original sources.<sup>606</sup> Also, he did not write anything about them. Then we should ask: Who were the authors inspiring his approach to translation? Now, I will try to fix the intellectual lineage of his approach to translation, from modern times to the 'Abbāsīd age; from the moment nearest to Ramzī to the distant times of classical Arabic literature.

When we investigate the authors coeval with Ramzī, we realize that Sulaymān al-Bustānī (1856-1925), the Lebanese Christian translator of the Greek epic poem *Iliad* into Arabic (1904), wrote about the practical methods of the first Arab translators:

...If we go back to the early translators, we will see a large group who wanted trustworthy results with honesty and accuracy, even though they had disparity in the performance of proficiency. They followed two different ways of arabisation, as Bahā' al-dīn Muḥammad al-ʿĀmilī mentioned in *Kashkūl*, quoting from al-Ṣafadī.<sup>607</sup>

<sup>605</sup> Ahmet Temir, "Doğumunun 130. ve Ölümünün 50. yılı dolayısıyla Kazanlı Tarihçi Mehmet Remzi, 1854-1934", *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten*, vol. 50, no. 197 (1986), pp. 495-505.

<sup>606</sup> As we observe in his short biography and other works, Ramzī had never claimed that he knew a European language, including Greek, Latin or French. He was only an expert in Persian, Arabic, and Turkic languages.

<sup>607</sup> Sulaymān al-Bustānī, *Ilyādhāt Hūmīrūs-La Iliada en ʿarab de Suleiman al-Bustānī* (Cairo 1904), pp. 78-79. This is a huge project of around 1270 pages. The introduction (190, pp.) is a beautiful account of



Even though al-Bustānī mentioned here two different methods of translation, it is not easy to claim that Ramzī had read al-Bustānī, inasmuch as Ramzī's introduction was printed 6 years previously in Mecca (1898). However, al-Bustānī was a follower of *al-Muqṭaṭaf*, a famous review published since 1875 under the editorship of Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf and Fāris al-Nimr, the two prominent thinkers of Lebanese Christian origin of the late-19th century Arabic *Nahḍa* movement. As a media prodigy and a leading expert in European culture, Ṣarrūf published many articles including the problems of Arabic literature, arabisation of modern science terms,<sup>608</sup> and theories of evolution.<sup>609</sup> It is possible to think that some Arabic authors and translators around *al-Muqṭaṭaf* might have influenced Ramzī before he translated *Maktūbāt* from Persian to Arabic. However, we do not have any clear evidence of any possible connection between Ramzī and the *al-Muqṭaṭaf* milieu. Now, we should check out the account of Bahā' al-dīn Muḥammad al-ʿĀmilī in *Kashkūl* (1547-1621):

As al-Ṣafadī stated, the translation was done by two different methods:

1. Yuḥannā Ibn al-Biṭrīq, Ibn al-Nā'ima al-Ḥumṣī and others put every single Greek word with a certain meaning. Then, they translated this Greek word with a single word from Arabic.<sup>610</sup> This method was poor.

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history, literature, and translation problems in Arabic. The translation of al-Bustānī is strangely magnificent. A kind of Miltonian style can surprise the reader, even though it is not a perfect translation. It has heavily decorated verses and difficult statements.

<sup>608</sup> See: Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf and Fāris al-Nimr, "Uslūbunā fī al-Ta'rib", *al-Muqṭaṭaf*, vol. 33, no. 7 (July, 1908), pp. 559-565.

<sup>609</sup> Nadia Farag, "The Lewis Affair and the Fortunes of al-Muqṭaṭaf", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (January, 1972), pp. 73-83.

<sup>610</sup> I translated the sentence of *Kashkūl* as a summary. Another translator did it in a long but more accurate way: "They seek an equivalent term in Arabic and write it down. Then they take the next word and do the same, and so on until the end of what they have to translate." Basil Hatim, B. and Ian Mason, *Discourse and the Translator* (London & New York: Longman, 1990), p. 5.

2. The second method in arabisation was followed by Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq, al-Jawharī and others. They tried to understand the full sentence in (the source) language (Greek), and then to express it in another language (Arabic), without regarding its compatibility or incompatibility in the first language. This way was the finest (الأجود) and did not cause books of Ḥunayn b. Ishāq to be corrected again.<sup>611</sup>

Enriched with entertaining sections of literature, math, personal anecdotes, and poem, *Kashkūl* was a well-known Sufi treatise among the Shī‘ī and Sunnī authors of Iran, Egypt, Iraq, and Anatolia.<sup>612</sup> As a Sufi translator, Ramzī must have been influenced by this book, and then, he must have employed the account of al-‘Āmilī for his approach to translation when he wrote his introduction of *Maktūbāt*.

However, we need to find the original account of al-Ṣafadī Khalīl ibn Aybak (1297-1363), who talked about the two different ways of translation. Al-Ṣafadī, son of Aybak (a Turkic commander of the Mamluk Empire) was not an author popular among Sufi intellectuals, but a great expert in bibliography, history, erotic literature, marginal groups, *ḥadīth*, and *fiqh*, with a strangely bold tendency to the Salafī way of Ibn Taymīya, whose anti-Ibn ‘Arabī fatwas are still very effective tools in the hands of modern Arab Salafīs. Al-Ṣafadī’s books have been always essential manuals for research in the aforementioned fields.<sup>613</sup> He mentioned the two ways of translation in his famous

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<sup>611</sup> Bahā al-dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Kashkūl*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Namīrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, 1998), vol. 1, pp. 294.

<sup>612</sup> See for *Kashkūl* and its author: E. Kohlberg, “Bahā’-al-dīn ‘Āmelī”, *Encyclopædia Iranica* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1989), vol. 3, fasc. 4, pp. 429-430.

<sup>613</sup> As Rosenthal writes: “Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī was philologist, literary critic, biographer, and all-round humanist. His abilities as a stylist and calligrapher opened up opportunities in government service. His numerous works provide an enormous amount of varied information. They are uniformly instructive and consistently entertaining. Moreover, they are characterised by sound scholarly method and,

commentary *al-Ghayth al-Musjam* <sup>614</sup> when he entered into a discussion on the arabisation of Greek sciences. Rosenthal also quoted al-Şafadī's views on translation, <sup>615</sup> but I found another text and translate the whole paragraph below (see Figures 8 and 9): <sup>616</sup>

The translators have two methods in transmission:

**1.** One of them is that of Yuḥannā Ibn al-Biṭrīq, Ibn al-Nā'ima al-Ḥumşī and others. The translator perceives each individual Greek word with its meaning, and brings an Arabic word equivalent to the Greek one, and then, he fixes (the correspondent). He turns to the next word and walks in the same way, until he transmits into Arabic the entire work he wants to translate. This method is clumsy, for two reasons: First, there are no specific words in Arabic language to correspond to every Greek word. For that reason, many Greek words remained intact (untranslated) through this method of arabisation. Second, some syntactical composition features, and subject-object relations (*al-nisab al-isnādīya*) in the one language do not always match exactly to the similar situations in the other. Moreover, various errors may occur by the use of metaphors (*isti'māl al-majāzāt*) which are frequently (employed) in every language.

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to all appearances, even a good measure of originality." See: F. Rosenthal, "al-Şafadī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 759-760.

<sup>614</sup> This is a long entertaining annotation on the *Lāmīyat al-'Ajam* by al-Ṭughrā'ī Abī Ismā'īl al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (1061-1121).

<sup>615</sup> Franz Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, translated from German by Emile and Jenny Marmorstein (London: Routledge, 1975), pp. 17-18. His translation of the passage: "The translators use two methods of translation. One of them is that of Yuḥannā Ibn al-Biṭrīq, Ibn al-Nā'ima al-Ḥumşī and others. According to this method, the translator studies each individual Greek word and its meaning, chooses an Arabic word of corresponding meaning and uses it. Then he turns to the next word and proceeds in the same manner until in the end he has rendered into Arabic the text he wishes to translate. This method is bad for two reasons. First, it is impossible to find Arabic expressions corresponding to all Greek words and, therefore, through this method many Greek words remain untranslated. Second, certain syntactical combinations in the one language do not always necessarily correspond to similar combinations in the other; besides, the use of metaphors, which are frequent in every language, causes additional mistakes. The second method is that of Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, al-Jawharī and others. Here the translator considers a whole sentence, ascertains its full meaning and then expresses it in Arabic with a sentence identical in meaning, without concern for the correspondence of individual words. This method is superior, and hence there is no need to improve the works of Ḥunayn b. Ishāq. The exception is those dealing with the mathematical sciences, which he had not mastered, in contrast with works on medicine, logic, natural science and metaphysics whose Arabic translations require no corrections at all."

<sup>616</sup> I found this detailed record in a very well saved manuscript dated 1151 AH [1739 AD] in the Library of Manuscripts in Konya, Turkey. See: Ibn Aybak al-Şafadī, *Sharḥ Lāmīyat al-'Ajam*, Konya Bölge Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, no. 3722, pp. 83-84. See also a newly published version of the book: Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Şafadī, *al-Ghayth al-Musjam fī Sharḥ Lāmīyat al-'Ajam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1975), p. 79.

2. The second method of arabisation is the way of Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (d. 873), al-Jawharī and others. The translator analyzes the sentence and comprehends its full meaning, and then he expresses it in the other language, with a compatible sentence, without regard to the exact equivalence “word by word”. This method has the highest quality (in translation). Therefore, the works of Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq did not need to correction, except the books on mathematical sciences. He was not an expert in math, in contrast to the books on medicine, logic, and metaphysics. Whatever he arabised [i.e., translated] in these fields requires no correction at all.

Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq was working as an editorial head of an expert group including his son Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn (d. 910), his nephew Ḥubaysh ibn Ḥasan el-A‘ṣam, and ‘Isā ibn Yaḥyā. They were looking for the old fruits of neighboring civilizations, decided to select the books worth translating, and then started the process of translation utilizing the comparison of different manuscripts.<sup>617</sup> Therefore, Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq was not only a translator, but also a first-class editor of scientific publications for that age. As we mentioned earlier, Ramzī also worked as an editor and translator of both the *Maktūbāt* and *al-Mabda‘ wa al-Ma‘ād* written by Sirhindī.

Unsurprisingly, Ramzī was not alone among the Turkic authors who knew or practiced the traditional way of translation in the “Arabic Cosmopolis”. When we investigate the Ottoman translators of the classical age, we may observe the same approach in some authors who produced their works under the great influence of the “Arabic Cosmopolis”, even though the techniques and contents changed, depending on the age and needs of the society in which they lived. Professor Cemal Demircioğlu

<sup>617</sup> Eyyüp Tanrıverdi, “Arap Kültüründe Çeviri Çalışmaları ve Huneyn b. İshak Ekolu”, *Divan Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, vol. 12, no. 23 (2007), pp. 122-123.

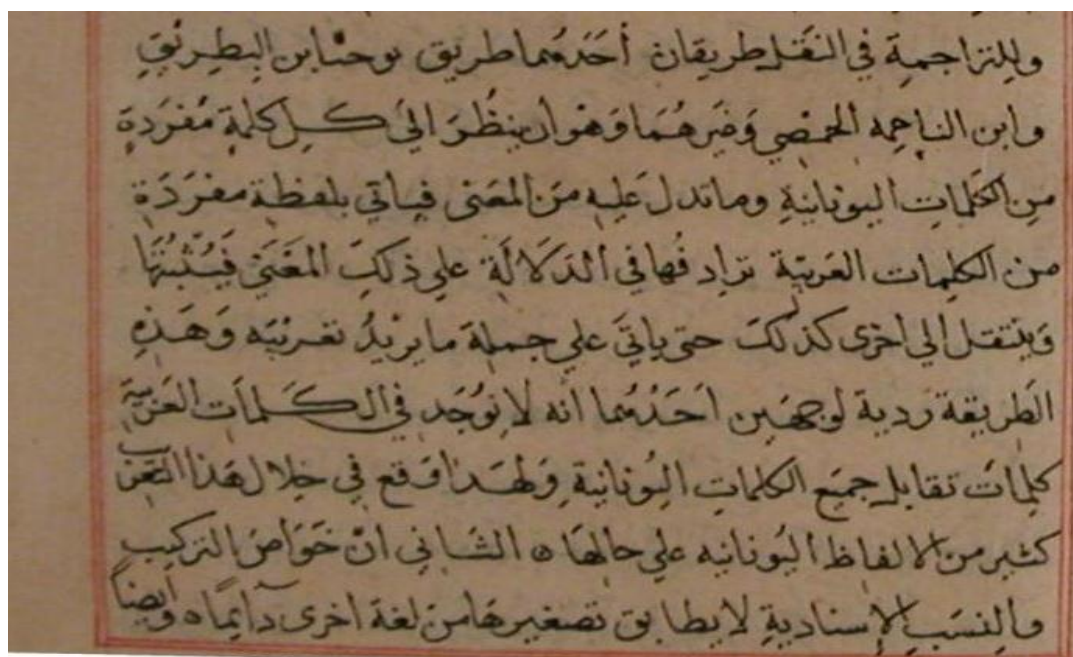


Figure 8. First part from Ibn Aybak al-Şafadī's *Sharḥ Lāmīyat al-ʿAjam* (Library of Manuscripts in Konya, Turkey no: 3722, pp. 83-84.)

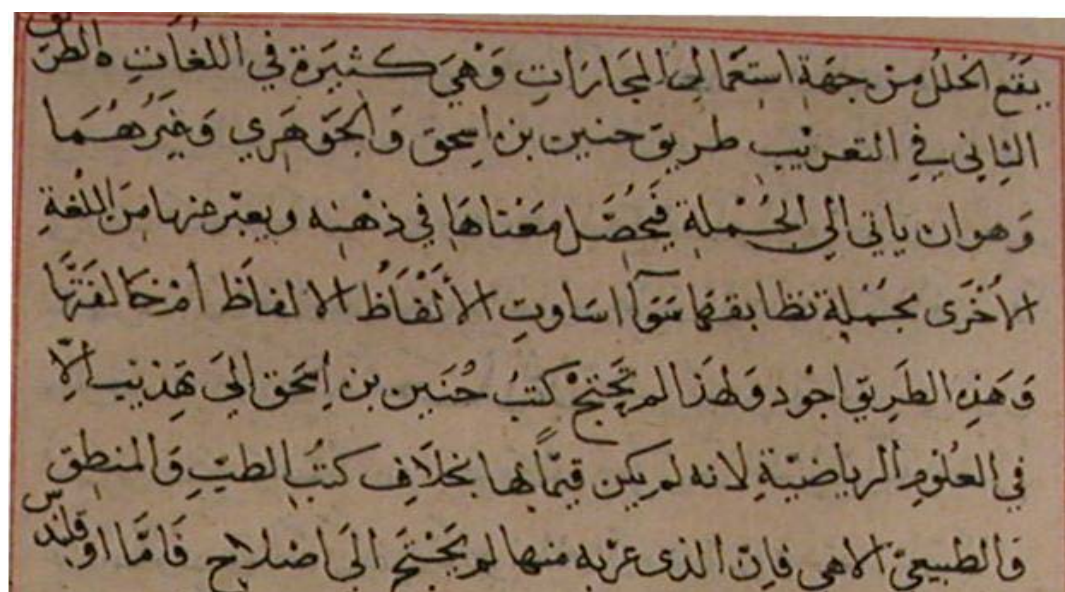


Figure 9. Second part from Ibn Aybak al-Şafadī's *Sharḥ Lāmīyat al-ʿAjam* (Library of Manuscripts in Konya, Turkey, no: 3722, pp. 83-84.)

clearly showed us some Ottoman methods of translation.<sup>618</sup> As Demircioğlu indicates, the 17th century Ottoman poet Nergīsī (of Bosnia) put a remarkable statement in the same way at the introduction section of his famous work *İksir-i Saadet*:<sup>619</sup>

*Sühan-fehman-ı ma'na-aşnaya vazıh u hüveydadur ki mutlaka terceme iki kısım olup bir kısmı elfaz-ı mütercemeyi bi'aynihi terkibi ile ta'birdür. Amma bu tarz üzere terceme kalilü'l-müfad olduğından gayri şahid-i şirin-cemal şive-i letafet ve hatt u hal-i fasahat ü belagatdan binasib olur. Ve kısm-ı sani me'al-i kelamı ahzidüp mazmun-ı sühan-ı musannefü'l-aslı kalib-i hüsn-i edaya ifrag için münasib-i makam ba'z-ı elfaz u ibarat ve terakib ü isti'arat ile perdaht-ı zinet virüp murad-ı musannifi suret-i hub u tarz-ı mergubda tahkik u tasvirdür.*<sup>620</sup>

I offer a summary translation of this old decorated statement:

For those who know the meanings of the words, it is clear that there are absolutely two different types of translation: The first is to translate the words as they are exactly in the same meaning in the text (of the source language). However, this type of translation has fewer benefits. Besides, it does not appear as beautiful, clear, and understandable. Therefore, it remains far from enjoyable. The second type of translation focuses on the meaning of the words and sentences, emphasizing the real intention of the author, and finally decorating it with extra phrases, metaphors, and pictorial depictions, in order to articulate the design of the author in a pleasant way.

It seems that Ramzī and other editor-translators laboring within the boundaries of the “Arabic Cosmopolis” were following this traditional concept of translation in the vernacularization process. Even though they were coming from different ethno-cultural origins, such as Turkish, Arab, Persian, Muslim, and Christian, they created their works in the same “problématique of translation” whose roots go back to the age of the ‘Abbāsīd Renaissance. However, the ‘Abbāsīd era of translation with its rich variations in

<sup>618</sup> Professor Cemal Demircioğlu, “El-Cahiz’dan Manastirli Mehmet Rifat’a: Arap Çeviri Kuramcıları İle Osmanlı Mütercimleri Arasındaki Bağlantılar,” *Turkish Studies. International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Volume 8/13 (Fall, 2013), pp. 739-759.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 752-753.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 752. See also the original source that Demircioğlu quoted from: Nergisi, *Hamse-i Nergisi* (Istanbul: Tatyos Divitçiyen Matbaası, 1869), p. 7.

method and practice still requires further research, as we may find some similarities between the ‘Abbāsīd style of arabisation and modern principles of translation studies. Especially at the beginning of the age of the ‘Abbāsīd Renaissance (9th century), the starting point of the “Arabic cosmopolis”, we find solid statements on translation theory in the works of al-Jāhīz (d. 869), the great author of Baghdad. Myriam Salama-Carr indicates that al-Jāhīz had already articulated some of the well-known principles in today’s translation studies.<sup>621</sup>

#### 4.5. Conclusion

Ramzī’s method of Sufi text weaving was different from what he tracked in the historiography project. He did not care about mentioning sources in his Sufi texts, in stark contrast to the care with which he cited sources in his historical work. Furthermore, he did not give clear citations for many quotations used in his Sufi texts, and he did not organize the titles in the meticulous manner deployed in his historical work. For Ramzī, the most important thing for mystical works was the illuminative character of the text. The more illuminative character he finds in the text, the more he gets involved in it. He created obvious patchworks and collages in *Tarjamat aḥwāl al-Imām al-Rabbānī* and *Dhayl* without mentioning the address, but only to insure the illuminative character displayed in those statements.

It is difficult to grasp the meaning of the “text” in the mind of Ramzī without understanding some terminology of Ibn ‘Arabī. For Ramzī, the qualified high-level

<sup>621</sup> See Professor Myriam’s contribution to the history of Arab translation studies: Myriam Salama-Carr, “Translation as seen by Al-Jahiz and by Hunayn Ibn Ishaq—observer versus practitioner”, *Across the Mediterranean Frontiers: Trade, Politics and Religion 650-1450*, ed. D. A. Agius and I. Netton (Brussels: Brepols, 1997), pp. 385-393.

*ʿIrfānī* text becomes a reflection, an intuition, even a “translation” of the divine meanings that are flowing from the Divine Being. Because the real active subject is considered to be the Divine Being, this kind of text is also regarded as a byproduct of the Divine Being. Therefore, Ramzī respects these illuminative texts more than he respects others. As a weaver of the text with different colored yarns, Ramzī reconstructed many poems with his Sufi patches, even though some of them were recited originally as lyrical couplets for different goals.

Ramzī the Sufi established his terminology for a Sufi text by relying upon an *ʿIrfān*-based intellect. At times, he obviously broke the commonly-understandable meaning of the Scripture (the Qurʾān) when he was interpreting the position of the Prophet Muḥammad, even though he tried to establish a balance between two domains, *Bayān* and *ʿIrfān*. As a follower of Sirhindī-style Sufism, Ramzī breaks up neither the exterior meanings of the scripture (the skin), nor the Akbarī interpretation of it (the bone). However, he reflected in his Sufi text a severe élitism inherited from the historical texts of speculative Sufism. Ramzī appeared to be intoxicated by this amazing literature, at least in his Meccan years.

On the other hand, the method he followed in writing his historical work was totally different from what he followed for Sufi texts and translations. He established his terminology for the text of history by relying upon an *Burhān*-based intellect. As he changed his ideas about social problems and new missions, he also dramatically changed his approach to the procedure for producing text. He might have thought that his readers for the historical work would be different from those who would read his mystical treatises and translations. With respect to the historical work *Talfīq al-akhbār*, he was



referring extensively to the widely-respected historical sources he found in the rich libraries of the “East”, as if he wrote this work for an élite group of intellectuals who would come from different classes in the society. The reason why he made a striking differentiation between Sufi text and historical works was not only his reconstruction of the social reality pertaining to the society in which he lived, but also his subsequent break with some old habits and beliefs which were operative when he was writing his mystical books. He must have been changed in terms of political ideology and the method of writing.

The Ramzī of historiography was no longer the Ramzī of speculative Sufism. A reader can sense the influence of modern nationalist historiography in his nationalist zeal mixed with the style of classical Arab authors. His method of text weaving for the historical narratives resembles Ibn Khaldūn. Besides the aforementioned features, Ramzī enriches the text with satirical events and personal accounts. Marjānī, as a follower of the golden age of Arabic prose (‘Abbāsīd Era) and the Arabic *Nahḍa* authors of the 19th century<sup>622</sup> might have influenced Ramzī with respect to style and shape, with a tendency to clarity and classicism.<sup>623</sup>

<sup>622</sup> I observe that Marjānī was influenced by *Nahḍa* authors such as Fāris al-Shidyāq (d. 1887), who was one of the most interesting figures of the *Nahḍa* movement in the 19th century. Even the name of Marjānī’s book *al-Barq al-Wamīd ‘alā al-Baghīd al-Musammā bi al-Naqīd* (البرق الوميض على البغيض المسمى بالنقيض) has a great similarity in style and shape to the name of the book *al-Sāq ‘alā al-Sāq fīmā huwa al-Fāryāq* (الساق على الساق فيما هو الفاريق) by Fāris al-Shidyāq, even though the contents of the both books are different from each other. See for al-Nahḍa: N. Tomiche, “Nahḍah”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 900-903.

<sup>623</sup> Marjānī’s Arabic style is also deserving of research, with his tendency to clarity with classicism representing an intriguing point. On the one hand, he was tending to write all the creed (*al-‘aqīda*) and legal (*fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*) treatises with clear sentences, far removed from the complex speculations of older Kalām books. On the other hand, he was excerpting difficult but beguiling sentences from Arabic classics which should be considered to be as hard as the late Kalām books that he criticised! See the introductory section and the last sections of *al-Barq al-Wamīd* for his beautiful poetic collections with the perfume of old Arabic classics: Shihāb al-dīn Marjānī, *al-Barq al-Wamīd ‘alā al-Baghīd al-Musammā bi*

The “Ramzī of Sufi works” was creating his text under influence of great Sufi masters soaring with the wings of *ʿIrfān* whereas the “Ramzī of historical works” lived in a romantic dream, breathing the victorious air of the olden times, but knowing that his homeland had come under the invasion of Russian culture. Only a romantic and passionate author could attempt to write such an epic history text which was expected to contribute to the creation of a new nation whose people were culturally estranged from its natural habitus, physically diminished from a massive territory of millions of square miles of land in Asia to a small number of cities scattered around the Volga-Ural region. Thus, this text should be emotional and romantic, even though it would promise a realism with the help of Ibn Khaldūn, Ahmed Cevdet, and other great authors.

According to Murād Ramzī there were two methods of translation: a) translating the sentences from the source language “word by word”, and b) translating the meanings by concentrating on the concepts in a meticulous way. Ramzī chose the second method. Indeed, Ramzī was applying a well-known method of translation which has been followed since the ‘Abbāsīd age as a canon of translation in “Arabic cosmopolis”. The inventor of this method was Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (d. 873) and his colleagues. Just as Ḥunayn had worked as a first-class editor of scientific publications of that age, Ramzī also worked as an editor for many texts written by Sirhindī. The translators of this tradition were also good editors. This approach was widely known, applied, or expressed by various authors and translators from diverse groups and beliefs, such as Sulaymān al-Bustānī (d. 1925), the Ottoman poet Nergīsī (17th century), Bahā al-‘Āmilī (d.1621),

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*al-Naqīd* (Kazan, 1305 AH [1888 AD]), pp. 1-4 and 110-130. See also his clarity in the articulation of creed problems in the first sections of *Nāẓūrat al-ḥaqq*: Shihāb al-dīn Marjānī, *Nāẓūrat al-ḥaqq* (Kazan: Matbaa-i Khizana, 1287 AH [1870 AD]), pp. 2-15.

Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Şafadī (d. 1363), and others. Despite the fact that these authors of “Arabic cosmopolis” were coming from different ethno-cultural origins, such as Turkish, Arab, Persian, Muslim, and Christian, they created their works in the same “problématique of translation” whose roots go back to the age of the ‘Abbāsīd Renaissance of the 9th century.

## CHAPTER 5

### A Pressing Need for History:

#### The Rise of *Burhān* in the Name of the Nation

##### 5.1. A Change in Ramzī's Worldview: From Member of a Sufi Order (Naqshī) to Historian of the Nation (Turks)

Ramzī's tendency toward nationalism seems to have begun in the last decades of the 19th century and continued uninterrupted thorough the first decades of the 20th century, as we see from his books and articles.<sup>624</sup> It was an epoch of great turmoil and jarring modifications in the vast geography in which Ramzī lived, wrote, and traveled.<sup>625</sup> There are a great deal of studies concerned with how the world was remade through war,<sup>626</sup> fierce intellectual conflict,<sup>627</sup> and struggles amongst competing ideologies and political

<sup>624</sup> Ramzī started to collect documents and notes for his national history project around 1892, as he clearly mentioned in his book. It means that his mind had been planted with the seeds of new approaches (likely first with the classical *tajdīd* ideas inherited from Mujaddidiya tradition) during the period in which he was writing Sufi books, i.e., before 1892. After 15 years of work he finished the history book on November 4, 1907. See the details of the starting and finishing times of his history book: *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, p. 457. His process of change continued in the first decades of 20th century as well, as we can see when we follow his titles in *Te 'āruf-i Muslimīn* about the freedom of speech and publication, his critique of the Ottoman educational system, and the Japanese offer for new Muslim teachers. See: Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, "İslamiyette Hürriyet-i Kelam ve Serbesti-i Matbuatın Meşruiyeti", *Te 'āruf-i Muslimīn*, vol. 1, no. 5 (2 Cemaziyelahir 1328/27 Mayıs 1326 [June 9, 1910]), pp. 78-80; "Asya-Gı-Kay Cemiyeti Riyaseti Tarafından Gönderilen Mektub Münasebetiyle" [sent from Mecca], vol. 1, no. 23 (22 Zilkade 328/11 Teşrinisani 326 [24 November 1910]), pp. 365-367. In the second decade of the 20th century, Ramzī was writing poetry on the broader meaning of freedom, see: Murād Ramzī, *Qaside-i Hürriyet* (Orenburg, 1917).

<sup>625</sup> See the tragic changes and struggles in the Ottoman Empire, the major geography of Ramzī's travels at the end of 19th century: M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 6-42.

<sup>626</sup> All these wars influenced Ramzī, thus, he could not go home when the Ottoman Empire and Russia entered into war. See the details of this period: Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, pp. 150-203.

<sup>627</sup> When I say discussions, I mean the critiques and responses in major intellectual periodicals such as the pan-Islamist, anti-colonialist *Te 'āruf-i Muslimīn* (Istanbul, 1910-1911), *Şirāt-i Mustaqīm* (Istanbul, 1908-1925), the traditionalist *Dīn ve Ma 'īshat* (Kazan, 1906-1918), the pan-Turkist *Türk Derneği* (Istanbul,

movements such as Islamic revivalism,<sup>628</sup> nationalism,<sup>629</sup> and modernism.<sup>630</sup> Therefore, I will refrain from repeating what other scholars have mentioned before and not include here a special introduction for this era. Instead, I will focus on the *Burhān*-based (Reason-based) change in Ramzī's mind. This change was supported, enriched, and enlarged by the reluctant help of the other two domains, *ʿIrfān* (Gnosis) and *Bayān* (Scripture) in favor of a new *Burhān*-based idea, i.e., nationalism. He was neither the old Ramzī who wrote Sufi treatises with a traditional dignified tone, nor he was very respecting of the old masters of Islamic disciplines. For example, he severely criticized

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1911-1912), *Türk Yurdu* (Istanbul, the first period of 1911-1918), *Genç Kalemler* (Selanik: Thessaloniki, 1910-1912), and the modernist-westernizing *İctihād* (Istanbul, 1904-1932).

<sup>628</sup> By Islamic revivalism, I mean a broader meaning of the Islamist intellectual movement at the late 19th century. Generally scholars consider with regard to this topic the figures of Muḥammad ʿAbduḥ (1849-1905) and Rashīd Riḍāʾ (1865-1935). However, other names should also be considered, such as the Tatar thinker Mūsā Jārullāh (1875-1949), the Ottoman thinker İzmirli İsmail Hakkı (1869-1946), and the Ottoman intellectual and national poet Mehmed Akif (1873-1936). The most comprehensive anthology about Ottoman-Turkish Islamism was penned by my Turkish adviser, Professor İsmail Kara, in three volumes consisting of more than 1980 (616+672+702) pages. See: İsmail Kara, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2012).

<sup>629</sup> By nationalism, I mean the discourse of newly-emerged nationalist movements among the intellectuals of Kazan (Russia), Istanbul, and Syria (Ottoman Empire) such as Yusuf Akçura, Ziya Gökalp and Muṣṭafā Sāṭiʾ al-Ḥuṣrī Bey. See for Turkish nationalism: David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876-1908* (London 1977). See also for Arab nationalism around Syria and its remarkable figure Satiʾ al-Husri: William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Satiʾ al-Husri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971). Muṣṭafā Sāṭiʾ al-Ḥuṣrī Bey was a very successful educator in Istanbul. He spoke Turkish as though it was his native language. After WWI he stayed in Arab lands and developed his education-based Arab nationalism. He was heavily influenced by the Turkist nationalist Ziya Gökalp, who was a Kurd from Diyarbakir (Turkey). Muṣṭafā Sati Bey and Ziya Gökalp are good examples of the complexity of the phenomenon of nationalism in the last years of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>630</sup> By modernism I mean a broader scale of modernist thinkers centered around Istanbul, Syria, and Kazan. There were Muʿtazilī-style modernists with a tendency toward Islamic rationalism and liberalism like Prince Sabahaddin (1879-1948), modernists with a nationalist tendency like Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935), modernists with an extreme westernizing tendency like Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932), and modernists mixed with many other things like Jamāl al-dīn al-Afgānī (1838-1897), who was a revolutionary, activist, regional nationalist, pan-Islamist, and even a Freemason.

‘Umar al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1286), the famous Sunnī Qur’ān commentator, about the interpretation of the Wall of *Dhu’l-Qarnayn*:

When it comes to the opinions of al-Bayḍāwī, who was an expert in many branches of knowledge, the strangest thing for this person is his claim that the Wall of *Dhu’l-Qarnayn* (سَدُّ ذِي الْقَرْنَيْنِ) was built in Armenia, and that *Dhu’l-Qarnayn* was the same person known to be Alexander of Macedonia. How could it be possible? Alexander was indeed a pagan Greek! If the position of an expert was so, what do you think of the situation of ignorant imitators (*muqallid*) who obtusely accept anything claimed by famous scholars such as al-Bayḍāwī?<sup>631</sup>

Ramzī employed the term “imitator” (*muqallid*: مقلد) with a derogatory meaning. In fact, *muqallid* was a good word in the tongues of traditionalist scholars, as it suggests imitating, walking, following in the footsteps of the old masters of *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, Qur’ānic exegesis, and Sufism. The new Ramzī directed his refutations towards the extreme traditionalist authors around Kazan, criticizing also the situation of madrasa scholars in Bukhara.<sup>632</sup> Ramzī believed that they were lost in unnecessary efforts, spending more than 40 or 50 years without any practical knowledge of *fiqh* or history. They had also lost the knowledge of the Prophetic tradition (*‘ilm al-ḥadīth*) that once upon a time had been flourishing there.<sup>633</sup> Finally, Ramzī recommends that they go to modern schools and study the sciences useful for this world and hereafter, if they really gave up the study of classical religious disciplines. This choice would be better for them, instead of spending lots of years on useless old demagoguery.<sup>634</sup> As we observe here, Ramzī is sharing the same discourse as Marjānī and other Jadīdist scholars. At the dawn of 20th century, fired

<sup>631</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akḥbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 124-125.

<sup>632</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akḥbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 326.

<sup>633</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>634</sup> *Ibid.*

**Turbulent times as reflected in Ramzī's mind:  
*Burhān* as the new leading domain for change**

Throughout the 19th century, a disruption, disconnection, or tense relations among the three domains (*Bayān*—*ʿIrfān*—*Burhān*) of the Muslim mind were observable. The strong effect of western colonialism, an increase in new-scripturalism (followers of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb), new-*ʿIrfān* (Amīr ʿAbd al-qādir al-Jazāʾirī), a sharp polarization between the scripture-based groups and *ʿIrfān*-based communities (Ahl-i *ḥadīth* versus Ahl-i *taṣawwuf*), an unstable economy, and the collapse of old political systems in the Islamic world were observable, too. The results were reluctantly- (or shockingly-) created political ideologies in the name of reason and new order in society, namely nationalism.

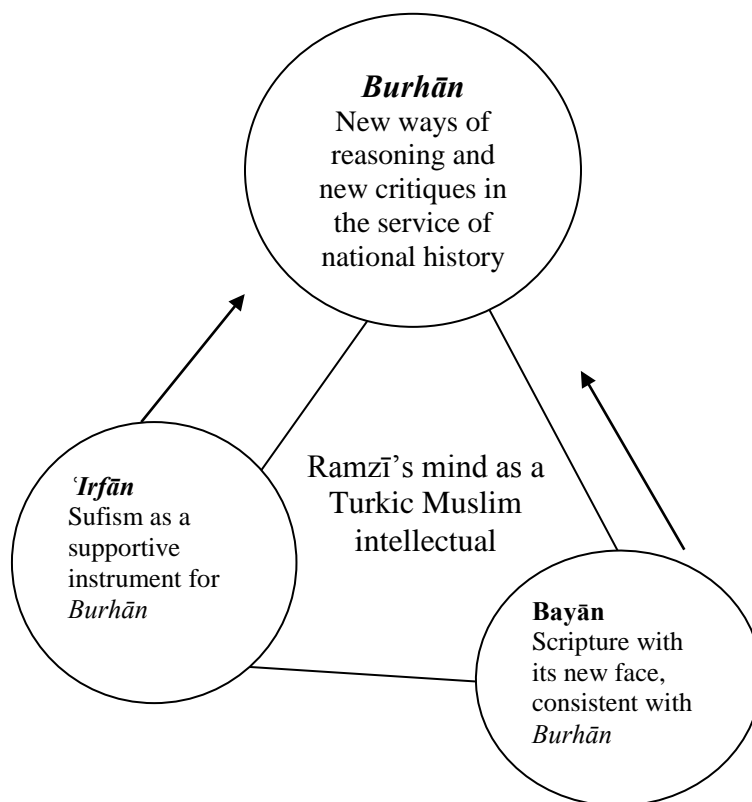


Figure 10. Turbulent times as reflected in Ramzī's mind

up with the intellectual and political crisis around his community and homeland (the Volga-Ural region), Ramzī must have felt the necessity of embracing a peculiar nationalist discourse mixed with Islamic principles for which he employed his “cultural and social capital”,<sup>635</sup> his erudition in Islamic studies,<sup>636</sup> and his close relations with the Jadīdist sheikh Zaynullāh Rasūlī<sup>637</sup> and other scholars.

By *Burhān*-based change I mean the transformation in his style of argumentation and the major new interests he adopted for his new project. In his new phase, his favorite authors became Ibn Khaldūn,<sup>638</sup> Kâtip Çelebi,<sup>639</sup> William Draper,<sup>640</sup> Ahmed Cevdet

<sup>635</sup> See for the concepts of cultural and social capital, see: Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1992), pp. 98-99 and 118-119.

<sup>636</sup> The erudition of Ramzī in Islamic disciplines is indisputable, even though he sometimes misused it, as I explained in the section on *rābiʿa* (see Chapter 3). Now he employs his cultural capital in favor of a project of national history, as we explain in the next paragraphs. See also for Ramzī’s expertise in Islamic disciplines his short autobiography: Murād Ramzī, *Muʿarrab al-Maktūbāt*, vol. 3, pp. 188-190.

<sup>637</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, Zaynullāh Rasūlī (1833-1917) was an enormously influential Sufi sheikh around İdel-Ural. Ramzī was influenced by him, then he employed his relationship with him as social capital in order to publish his historical work *Talfīq al-akhbār*. See: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908), vol. 2, pp. 491-499.

<sup>638</sup> He mentioned Ibn Khaldūn on many pages as an avid reader of the *Muqaddima*. He employed Khaldūnian logic in many points. Compare the theory of the ruling class in both: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 70-71; and Ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī (d.1406), *Muqaddima Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. ‘Abdullah Muḥammad al-Darwīsh (Damascus: Maktabat al-Hidāya, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 371-372. Ramzī also employed Khaldūnian imitation theory for oppressed peoples, which is “the defeated mimics the defeater [i.e., victor]” (تقليد المغلوب الغالب) See: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, p. 454; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima* (Damascus, 2004), vol. 1, p. 283.

<sup>639</sup> Ramzī mentioned Kâtip Çelebi (1609-1657), the realist author, encyclopedist scholar, and one of the most remarkable followers of Ibn Khaldūn in Ottoman élite circles. See Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 149-150.

<sup>640</sup> In order to criticize western critiques towards the Muslim World and to compare both civilizations in medieval times, Ramzī quoted long sentences from William Draper (1811-1882), the American scientist, philosopher, and author of *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*. See Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 50-51.



Paşa,<sup>641</sup> Necip Âsim,<sup>642</sup> and ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm.<sup>643</sup> He also gave priority to the method of rational reasoning (*al-muḥākama al-’aqlīya*: المحاكمة العقلية)<sup>644</sup> and the Qur’ānic social law of change (*ḥattā yughayyirū mā bi-anfusihim*: حتى يغيروا ما بانفسهم)<sup>645</sup> in his peculiar discourse of history and nationalism. He tried to construct a “realism with balance” for thinking the situation of the Muslim Turkic peoples in the Russian Empire.<sup>646</sup> He also employed modern nationalistic concepts like “homeland fever” or the “zeal for the homeland” (*al-ḥamīya al-waṭanīya*: الحمية الوطنية),<sup>647</sup> “nationalist alliance”

<sup>641</sup> He quoted long sections from Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (1822-1895), the Ottoman thinker, statesman and historian. See how Ramzī analyzed the result of the Siege of Kazan and offered some explanation with the help of Ahmed Cevdet Paşa: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 102-103.

<sup>642</sup> Necip Âsim (1861-1935) was one of the leading educators and historians with Turkist tendency in the late Ottoman era. His book *Türk Tarihi* (“History of the Turks”) was a prolegomenon to the history of the Turks under the influence of the French author Leon Cahun (1841-1900). Cahun wrote the famous book *Introduction à l’histoire de l’Asie: Turcs et Mongols des origines à 1405* (Paris, 1896) that inspired many Ottoman and Tatar authors to write “an independent history of the Turks”. Ramzī was influenced by Cahun indirectly when he quoted from Necip Âsim’s *Türk Tarihi*. See: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 140-141.

<sup>643</sup> ‘Abd al-rashīd (1857-1944), the famous Tatar traveler, pan-Islamist political thinker must be one of the inspirational figures (along with Zaynullāh) for Ramzī in his history project. ‘Abd al-rashīd wrote the work *Aftonomiya* to discuss possible options for autonomy for the Muslims living in the Russian Empire. Ramzī quoted and analyzed many ideas from ‘Abd al-rashīd. See: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 197-198. For the opinions of ‘Abd al-rashīd on the autonomy of Muslims in Russia, see: ‘Abd al-rashīd, *Aftonomiya yā ki İdāre-i Muhtâriye* (St. Petersburg, 1907).

<sup>644</sup> Quoting from Ibn Khaldūn or other realist authors, Ramzī repeated many rationalistic concepts such as “reason”, “method of reasoning”, “appropriateness to reality”, etc. See: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, 120-121.

<sup>645</sup> See: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, p. 73. The Qur’ānic verse employed by Ramzī is that “Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves”. (Sūra al-Ra’d, 13:11). Some modern Arab-Muslim authors are still employing this *āya* with a similar discourse, such as Jawdat Sa’id (b. 1931) of the “non-violence school” from Syria. See his book dedicated to this issue: Jawdat Sa’id, *Ḥattā yughayyirū mā bi-anfusihim* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu’āṣir, 1993).

<sup>646</sup> See, Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, p. 103. Ramzī says here: “It is true that bravery is not enough. We need also wisdom, strategy, and good decisions. Right now, just wake up and observe how Western colonialist empires such as Britain and Holland do what they do in the world.”

<sup>647</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 22.

(*ittiḥād al-qawmīya*: إتحاد القومية),<sup>648</sup> and others that were appropriate for his new position. During the process of writing history his move towards the adoption of rationalist-nationalist thought continued without a stop. It became more observable in the last sections of the second volume in which Ramzī was frequently employing other terms and slogans such as “one flag of unity” (رأية واحدة: *ra’ya wāhida*),<sup>649</sup> “the consciousness of independence” (*idrāk al-istiqlāl*: إدراك الإستقلال),<sup>650</sup> the high “level of freedom” (*martaba al-ḥurrīya*: مرتبة الحرية),<sup>651</sup> and “captivity under foreigners” (*maḥkūmiya al-ajānib*: محكومة الأجانب) for the colonized and oppressed peoples of Tsarist Russia.<sup>652</sup> As we mentioned before, it took him 15 years to get this history project during which he must have his approach to nationalism must have developed and matured.<sup>653</sup>

Obviously, he employed his former capitals of *ʿIrfān* and *Bayān* in the service of the new *Burhān* which was a bit different from what it was in the medieval period. He employed scripture (*Bayān*) for his new project, mentioning some *ḥadīth* narratives<sup>654</sup> and Qur’ānic verses with new interpretation in order to legitimate his new

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 103.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 149.

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 149-150.

<sup>652</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 149-150 and 156-158.

<sup>653</sup> He started his project in 1892 and finished it after 15 years in 1907. See: *Talḥīq al-akḥbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, p. 457.

<sup>654</sup> See his use of *ḥadīth* narratives, especially for his discourse on the Turks: Ramzī, *Talḥīq al-akḥbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 39, 42, 70, 182-183, and 232. Some of these narrative are classified as “fabricated” by *ḥadīth* experts.

egalitarianism.<sup>655</sup> He also employed his knowledge of the history of Sufism (*ʿIrfān*) and the genealogy of Islamic scholars in support of his nationalistic project, mentioning many Tatar-Bashkort Sufi and scholars.<sup>656</sup>

The old *Burhān* was created, influenced, and matured slowly, decade by decade, age by age under the unique experience of of Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 777) and his revolutionary solutions based on *Ra'y*,<sup>657</sup> the Baghdad Muʿtazilī school (8th-10th centuries), the mathematician ʿAbd al-ḥamīd ibn Turk (d. 830), the philosopher of the Arabs Yaʿqūb al-Kindī (d. 873), the second master Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950), the great polymath Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), and other names. Indeed, there was no one Golden Age, instead, there was an ongoing development with rising periods, sudden ruptures, restorations, and collapses. However, the new *Burhān* of the 19th century just happened so very fast. Mixed with the trace of the “good” Middle Ages,<sup>658</sup> the new *Burhān* was formed under the imposing power of western culture and military might. It was a shocking experience, an agony or trauma, a pain still

<sup>655</sup> See how he referred to the Qurʾānic verses for his discourse on the ruling class in the Muslim *Umma* and Islamic egalitarianism: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akḥbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 70 and 73. He referred to the Sūra al-Baqara (2:124), Sūra al-ʿAnbiyāʾ (21:105), Sūra Muḥammad (47:38), and Sūra al-Ḥujurāt. (49:13).

<sup>656</sup> Ramzī prepared a special long section about the Muslim Turkic scholars around the Volga-Ural region. This section includes more than 190 Turkic scholars. Some of them were experts in history, Qurʾānic studies, *ḥadīth*, or Sufism. See: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akḥbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 334-415.

<sup>657</sup> I think the real founder of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*: أصول الفقه) with practical-realist applications in Islamic civilization was Abū Ḥanīfa and his students, even though the great scholar al-Shāfiʿī first diagnosed this discipline and penned the book *Risāla* in which he explained the major principles of *fiqh*. See for the discussions on Abū Ḥanīfa: Shibl Nuʿmani, *Imām Abu Hanifa: Life and Work*, trans. M. Hadi Hussain (Pakistan: Darul-Ishaat, 2000), pp. 156-157.

<sup>658</sup> Generally speaking, there is no bad feeling or shame among Muslim historians towards the medieval period. “The dark medieval period” is a term invented in European discourse. Perhaps it was valid in specific periods rather for some Europeans.

pulsating in the brains of Muslims, not a luxury in the *Bayt al-ḥikma* of old Baghdad, as we observe it in the ‘Abbāsid age.

### 5.1.1. New approach to the Qur’ān after breaking up some parts of *‘Irfān*

Ramzī’s approach to the Qur’ān, the Scripture of Islam, also changed with regard to interpretation in this new phase. Before this period, he was employing the Scripture extensively for his *‘Irfān*-based speculative Sufism, as we explained in the earlier sections devoted to his Sufi discourse. However, the Ramzī of *Talfīq al-akhbār* somehow followed a somewhat different approach toward the interpretation of the Qur’ān. He criticized some scholars who tried to explain the Qur’ān under the light of new sciences and modern knowledge (الفنون الجديدة و المعارف العصرية) without review of other trustworthy forms of exegesis.<sup>659</sup> It means that Ramzī was criticizing in this point many famous authoritative Sunnī Qur’ān commentators such as Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), who followed the way of the “movement of scientific interpretation”. Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī was clearly defending of what he did:

Some ignorant people may come and say: “Surely, when you make an interpretation on God’s book, you give lots of paragraphs, with the knowledge of astronomy and stars. This is something unusual for this discipline!” This poor man can be answered, as follows: “If you had contemplated the Book of God very well, you would know that what you said was wrong.”...<sup>660</sup>

According to Ramzī, a large group of scholars including Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī did not understand the major issue in the Qur’ānic message, inasmuch as the Qur’ān was not

<sup>659</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 353-354.

<sup>660</sup> Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥf al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1997), vol. 5, pp. 255-256.

sent for new discoveries or sciences. Moreover, they made methodological mistakes, such as those who interpreted the Qur'ān solely with the help of old data from *Isrā'iliyāt* (the narrative heritage of Jewish and Christian traditions in Arabia) and other sources like Greek philosophy and astronomy.<sup>661</sup>

The Ramzī of *Talḥīq al-akhbār* believed that the Qur'ān is:

like a sea in which there is no end to amazing things, new interpretations. However, a reader should try first to understand for what reasons the Qur'ān was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad.<sup>662</sup>

If one makes a point in interpretation of the Qur'ān with the help of new science and modern knowledge, it does not mean that he/she is a perfect interpreter of the Qur'ān, inasmuch as this is not the major goal of the Qur'ān.<sup>663</sup> That approach is totally different from the path of many traditional scholars who employed the ancient Greek sciences and astronomy and some new Qur'ān interpreters who employ the modern technological discoveries in order to authenticate what was said in the Qur'ān.

At this particular point, Murād Ramzī is interestingly similar to the Andalusian scholar Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388) and his followers in modern times. Al-Shāṭibī believed that the Arabs before the Qur'ān had some knowledge about traditional medicine, folklore, local oral history, but, they had never known the details of Greek sciences and the astronomical traditions of other cultures. Therefore, the linguistic content and materials of the Qur'ān should be understood by their (i.e., the Arabs') well-known experiences and traditions. Whoever transgresses or does not consider these

<sup>661</sup> Ramzī, *Talḥīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, p. 353.

<sup>662</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 353-354.

material-linguistic limits cannot offer an appropriate interpretation of the Qur'ān, neither its ethical-social message nor for its content. He said in *al-Muwāfaqāt*, the book on the methodology of Islamic legal theory which he wrote:

A lot of people followed extreme ways in their approach to the Qur'ān, and they put interpretations beyond the limits (الحدّ). They pour all knowledge of ancient scholars and subsequent experts into Qur'ān commentary, such as natural sciences, mathematical teachings, and occultist sciences (علم الحروف: *ilm al-ḥurūf*). However, this is not a correct method, as we explained before.<sup>664</sup>

The Andalusian scholar Al-Shāṭibī thought that the Islamic canon was revealed to an unlettered nation. Therefore a scholar should not render this canon to exaggerations, complications, or Greek sciences, old or new. If one does that, the message cannot be interpreted, understood, or analyzed in its original stance. Al-Shāṭibī defends that the *maqāsid* (المقاصد), the social and practical goals of the Islamic canon, are very important to understand the soul of the Qur'ānic message and other Islamic sources.<sup>665</sup> Through such an approach Ramzī greatly resembles al-Shāṭibī, but his opinions are different from the latter in other subjects.

It would be appropriate to ask how Ramzī arrived at to this point. I think his change in this peculiar field must have started with his familiarization with this approach around both the world of Kazan and the Arabic world.<sup>666</sup> There must have been a dialectical

<sup>664</sup> See: Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī uṣūl al-Sharī'a*, ed. Abdullah Draz, Beirut (Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1996), vol. 2, pp. 61-62.

<sup>665</sup> See: Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī uṣūl al-Sharī'a*, vol. 1, p. 26; and Wael B. Hallaq, "On inductive corroboration, probability and certainty in Sunnī jurisprudence", *Islamic Law and Jurisprudence* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1990), pp. 3-31.

<sup>666</sup> 'Abdullah Draz, in his introduction to *Al-Muwāfaqāt* said that "we often listened the advice of the late Shaykh (Muḥammad 'Abduh d. 1905) to the students of 'ilm (Islamic disciplines) to obtain this book." See: Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī uṣūl al-Sharī'a* ed. Abdullah Draz, vol. 1, p. 10:

كثيراً ما سمعنا وصية المرحوم (الشيخ محمد عبده) لطلاب العلم بتناول الكتاب،

dissemination of ideas between Ramzī and his new interlocutors, the new Jadīdist authors of Kazan. The two sides must have been influenced by each other when they developed their discourse on Islam, Tatar cultural life, and westernization. Ramzī's famous opponent Mūsā Jārullāh Bigiyev (1875-1945), a leading Tatar Jadīdist intellectual, was following the discourse of al-Shāṭibī on the major goals of the Qur'ān. Finally, Ramzī also published the first volume of al-Shāṭibī's book in 1909 in Kazan with a Turkish preface.<sup>667</sup>

### 5.1.2. From the homeland of souls to the homeland of citizens

What is the meaning of homeland for new Ramzī? How did he react to Russian propaganda about the citizenship of Tatars in Russia? This is a crucial point for understanding both the “new notion of homeland” in Ramzī's mind and the difference between Ramzī and İsmail Bey Gasprinsky (Gaspıralı), the leading figure of the Jadīdist movement. Gasprinsky, a very well known author and highly respected by Ramzī,<sup>668</sup> was proposing a reconciliation between the Muslim Turkic peoples and the Russian Empire, offering the notion of “Russian Islam” (*russkoe musul'manstvo*), but at the same time continuing to build an educational policy that unite all the Muslim Turkic peoples of Russia, under a commonly-understandable language, common ideas, and common

<sup>667</sup> See: Al-Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt* (Kazan, 1327 AH [1909 AD]), with a preface by Mūsā Jārullāh.

<sup>668</sup> Even though they were not in the same branch of Jadīdism, Ramzī respected İsmail Bey and mentioned his efforts to spread a common Muslim Turkic culture around Russia, giving detailed records on how İsmail Bey faced many problems when he wanted to publish an encyclopedic dictionary, and how he finally succeeded it. See: Ramzī, *Talḥīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 281-283.

projects (*Dilde, fikirde, işte birlik*).<sup>669</sup> Speaking in Bourdieuan boundaries, Gasprinsky was following a method of resistance structured by the Russian imperial policy and various local-cultural commercial conditions, but also structuring the identity and modernization theories of new generations from Muslim Turkic intellectuals.<sup>670</sup> It appears that Ramzī did not believe that the Russian Empire with its current conditions (around 1900-1910) could be a real homeland for the Tatars and other Muslims. In the second volume of his history project, he defines the ideal homeland, responding to Ismail Bey and others, but also exposing the major conceptual change in the “notion of homeland” in his mind:

I have talked about their unfair acts, pertaining to religious and cultural freedoms. Now, I will talk shortly about their negative attitudes related to issues of daily life, ongoing worldly problems. The Russian officials applied heavy taxes on the Muslims, they captured properties from Muslim landlords, they forcibly took the young children of Muslims for military service during which they made them eat pork, just for psychological torture! They sent them on long wars against their Muslim brothers in Crimea and other battlefields. They have never exempted religious Muslim men from military service! Indeed, the Russian officials purposely sent the Muslims, Tatars, and other non-Russians to be killed, in the name of something they have never believed! After all these humiliating tortures, they claim that the Tatars and other Muslims are equal citizens of the Russian Empire!<sup>671</sup>

<sup>669</sup> See: Alan W. Fisher, “A Model Leader for Asia, Ismail Gaspirali”, *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*, ed. Edward A. Allworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 29-47. When we evaluate Gasprinsky we should carefully analyze his ideas. He wanted to make Muslims closer to the Russian State and the Russian people, therefore, he was harshly criticized. However, he was advising Muslim intellectuals of Russia to benefit from the common achievements obtained in the empire. They should have externalized their Muslim Turkic identity without shame. That is the precise point over which some people severely rejected him whereas others accepted him passionately.

<sup>670</sup> Edward Lazzerini, “Local Accommodation and Resistance to Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century Crimea”, *Russia’s Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, ed. by Daniel R Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 169-187, especially pp. 174-175.

<sup>671</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, p. 264.



As a nobleman from the Bikçura clan<sup>672</sup> and a dignified Muslim scholar, Ramzī neither accepted the superiority of the Russian officials, nor he did inhale the bitter perfume of oppression under the Russian colonialist discourse regarding history. Indeed, Ramzī employed some concepts and slogans blended with ethnic connotations in his book. However, he wanted to clarify his discourse in the last sections of the second volume, as though he had studied Ernest Renan's (1823-92) definition of the "civic" nation which stood in contrast to the "ethnic" nation of German thinkers such as Fichte. Now, we may look at the resemblance between Ramzī's last manifesto for "equal citizens of the homeland" and Renan's consensus-daily plebiscite. Renan writes:

A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future.... if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life.<sup>673</sup>

Then, we follow what Ramzī has to say:

This territory can be homeland for the Tatars and non-Russians if all the people living here have the same rights, share everything (*mushtarikatan bayna al-kull*: مشتركة بين الكل) equally (*alā al-sawīyyati*: على السوية), such as its benefits, wealth, opportunities, and justice, without discrimination among the individuals (*bayna fardin*: بين فرد), ethnic groups (*jinsin*: جنس), and classes (*şinfin*: صنف). Can we say that the Muslims in Russia really have these rights equally together with the Russians? No one can say that! This people who have obvious problems and fears do not have any real homeland! By saying homeland, we do not mean only a place where a man is born, his fathers are buried, and where finally he would be buried, as animals live and are buried in the same place. This is not a real homeland! When we say the homeland, we denote the real homeland (*al-waṭan*

<sup>672</sup> Ramzī always employs a rhetoric of the confident author, even the arrogant fighter against the Russians. His ancestors were a noble family called the Sons of Bikchura Khan (Bikçura Han). The great father Bikçura was the ruler of Muslim Bulghar state (as a part of the Golden Horde), see: Ramzī, *Talṭiq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 339-340. See for the Bikçura clan: Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and "Bulghar" Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 79-89 and 135.

<sup>673</sup> Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?", Geoff Eley, and Ronald Grigor Suny, *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 52-54.

*al-ḥaqīqī*: الوطن الحقيقي) where all sons of this territory (*kāffatu abnāihī*: كافة أبنائه) would have the same rights, no matter what they belong to different ethnic roots (*al-ajnās*: الأجناس), social classes (*al-aṣnāf*: الأصناف), or religions (*al-adyān*: الأديان). Their rights must be reserved by law in the courts. In this kind of real homeland, no one can feel of discrimination. Instead, everyone is a supporter of each other (*mu'āḍid wa mu'āwin*: معاضد و معاون), joining hands (*ākhiḍh bi-yadihī*: أخذ بيده) with the intention of helping when they need to, forming a consensus on common benefits, gathering at the same dining table, eating equally the fruits and dishes as they share the struggles and problems equally.<sup>674</sup>

The second remarkable feature of this long paragraph is that Ramzī must have “broken up” some parts of the structure of his old *ʿIrfān*-based mind within which the concept of the “real homeland” (*al-waṭan al-ḥaqīqī, al-aṣlī*) was only signifying the realm of souls (*ʿālam al-arwāḥ*: عالم الأرواح), not the homeland of citizens.<sup>675</sup> This is a striking departure from the old Ramzī, whose mind was formed under heavy effect of *ʿIrfān*, as we explained before. According to the élitist Sufi-*ʿIrfānī* philosophy, our world is not secure. It is like a dungeon where we live with agony and sadness of separation from God. Because we were separated from God, we are now “unsecured”, experiencing a sense of nostalgia, a sense of “homesickness” here. According to this metaphorical narrative, when we turn back to “the realm of souls” we will be joyful again. The most beautiful description of this dichotomy was offered by al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191), the great *al-ishrāqī* thinker. In his famous text *Qiṣṣat al-ghurba al-gharbīya* “The Story of the Occidental Exile”, he described this agony and homesickness as a long dark night in the

<sup>674</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 264-265.

<sup>675</sup> See how this sharp dichotomy was conceptualized again and again, even in Ramzī’s very translation of his master’s *Maktūbāt* (with the title *Mu’arrab al-Maktūbāt*): Sirhindi, *Maktūbāt*, translated by Murād Ramzī, vol. 1, pp. 130 and 236. We should remember that the Naqshbandīya has the principle of *Safar dar waṭan* (سفر در وطن), meaning literally “traveling in the homeland”, as an introspection or the practice of scrutinizing one’s inner self.

west.<sup>676</sup> The metaphor of the “real homeland” has been one of the most frequently-employed themes in the classical works of Sufi literature. Sirhindī also mentioned this metaphor in his *Maktūbāt*, translated by Ramzī into Arabic as follows:

In whatever the Body finds flavor, of course, there is a pain for the Soul. In whatever the Soul finds pain, of course, there is a flavor for the Soul. The Soul and the Body (*al-Rūḥ wa al-Jism*) are opponents to each other. ... and the Soul could neither get rid of this relation, nor she could go back to her original, real homeland (*ilā waṭānihā al-aṣlī*)...<sup>677</sup>

( وكل شيء فيه لذة للجسم فيه ألم للروح وكل شيء فيه ألم للجسم فيه التذاد للروح فالروح والجسم ضدان ، لم تتخلص الروح من هذا التعلق ولم ترجع الى وطنها الأصلي )

The interesting point comes in the next lines in which Ramzī hoped for a society of equal rights in the west, naming America and other western countries, with a disclaimer:

In a real homeland, everyone has the full rights of “citizenship”, i.e., *al-waṭānī* (الوطني),<sup>678</sup> *hamsharī* (همشري),<sup>679</sup> *hamwilāyāt* (همولايات),<sup>680</sup> *zīmīlāk* (زيملاك),<sup>681</sup> whatever you say in your language, even though they may have different ethnicities and religions. Believe me, these positive features have never existed in Russia. Only by the strong law preserving rights, freedoms, justice, equality, and fairness can a territory be a real homeland; but not by inequality, humiliation, torture, unfair implementations, and trespassing on basic human rights. Perhaps, the lands of America, Japan, and original European countries can be considered a

<sup>676</sup> His prose is similar to an epic poem: “Darkness above darkness; when we uncovered our hands, we could not see them. We just filled with homesick, and ached for the homeland.” ( ظلمات بعضها فوق بعض فنتحنن ) ( و نشأت الى الوطن ) See for the text of *Qissat al-Ghurba*: Yahyā ibn Ḥabash al-Suhrawardī, *Majmū‘a-i Muṣannafāt-i Shaykh-i Ishrāq Suhrawardī*, ed. Henry Corbin (Tehran: Instiṭū Īrān va Firānsah, 1331 AH [1952 AD]), vol. 2, pp. 272-292. See also my translation: Sühreverdi, “Batıda Yalnızlığın Hikâyesi”, trans. A. Sait Aykut, *Cogito*, no. 38 (Istanbul, 2004), pp. 21-28.

<sup>677</sup> Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, trans. Ramzī, vol. 1, p. 130.

<sup>678</sup> From Arabic وطني which means ‘citizen’. Today this word is not used; instead the current word for ‘citizen’ is: مواطن .

<sup>679</sup> From Ottoman Turkish همشري which means ‘countryman, fellow’. It is still used.

<sup>680</sup> From Persian هم ولايتي which means ‘provincial, countryman’. It is still used.

<sup>681</sup> From Russian *zemlyak* which means ‘compatriot, countryman’. It is still used.

“real homeland” with the condition of an equally-seated dining table, strong laws, seriously-preserved rights, and freedom. When it comes to our situation, my friend, we are also seated around a dining table. However, we look askance on some beasts who watch us from behind, vindictively, even grudgingly. The beasts behind us have hammers! Whenever a poor man wants to take a dish from the table, they hit the head of that poor man, without explanation, just shouting: “Do not eat this dish!” It is our real situation, a group of miserable ones under a committee of ruthless bandits (*jam ‘iyyat al-ashqiya*: جمعية الأشرقياء)!<sup>682</sup>

The security of his homeland, the specific territory of his people became more important in Ramzī’s mind. Now he analyzes the war, struggles, and possible solutions concerning his homeland. As we indicated before, Ramzī was extensively employing the modern terms of a nationalist ideology, mixing them with classical Islamic notions. When he was talking about the Russian invasion on the Kama river, he said that:

Many peoples in Kazan, such as Mishers and others, escaped to the land of the Bashkorts. They finally formed a large population of Muslim Turks. At that time, had they organized a large serious revolt under a commander and “a flag of unity” in order to defend their homeland, of course, they would have successfully halted the Tsarist army around the Urals and they would have gained their independence.<sup>683</sup>

According to Ramzī, a successful operation for the salvation of the lost homeland would start first in the minds, dependent on four conditions: a) the consciousness of independence (إدراك درجة الإستقلال), b) the love of freedom, c) the consciousness of humiliation that they tasted when they were prisoners of foreigners, and d) a consensus on one decision (اجتماع على رأى واحد) with the help of a great commander who would conduct them without mercy, but with the best political wisdom and caution (أحسن سياسة و )

<sup>682</sup> Ramzī, *Talfiq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 265.

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 149-150.

(أحسن تدبير).<sup>684</sup> Ramzī was really upset about their failure, thinking that they could not have a consensus and a strong alliance. Ramzī mentioned that they organized many small revolts against Russian massacres over the last 200 years, comparing it to an inextinguishable fire. However, these raids just remained as local and particular. Therefore they were not based on “state of art” (على الأصول المرعية) military methods or widespread “socially organized” (بalehنة الاجتماعية) techniques of rising up.<sup>685</sup>

Of course, for Ramzī, “military with wisdom” was the most important factor to get back the lost homeland. After this analysis, Ramzī gave details of small acts of rising up against the Russian Empire with an expectation of new revolts in the next decades. He wrote: “The real reason for why they continuously organized revolts was the brutality of Russian officials and the provocative-destructive companies of Russian Christian Orthodox missionaries.”<sup>686</sup> He was counting “the lost homeland” as a multifaceted problem including dimensions of security, culture, and religious freedoms. The other point he extensively repeated was the problem of ongoing disputes. According to Ramzī, the Tatars, Bashkorts and other Turkic groups in the Volga-Ural region have a tendency to have disputes without fruitful results. He mentioned that the Bashkorts and Mishers along with other groups organized locally many successful revolts against Russia, but the Russian officials finally succeeded in generating unnecessary divisions among the

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 149.

<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 150.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 154.

Bashkorts, Mishers, and Tatars, even though they have common goods and traditions to share in that vast geography.<sup>687</sup>

We may ask about Ramzī's approach towards Empress Catherine II, also known as Catherine the Great (Tsaritsa Yekaterina Alekseevna, d. 1796), who had a special interest in European culture all around Russia and allowed greater religious freedom for the Tatars and Bashkorts. According to Ramzī, after Ivan the Terrible's long-lasting destructive deeds (1547-1584) and 210 years of Russian persecution, the most rehabilitative period was the regime of Catherine the Great. He wrote:

All Muslim peoples of the Russian Empire were relaxed through the freedoms she granted. Therefore, you cannot hear any complaints about her, only appreciation, love, and gratitude toward her (التعظيم والمحبة).<sup>688</sup>

However, Ramzī thought that she did not do what she did just for the love of non-Russians and their advancement; rather, her political goals somehow directed her to grant these freedoms. They appreciated her deed as an act of justice, mercy, and wisdom, even though her goals were different.<sup>689</sup> Ramzī observed that there had not been any significant revolts among the Bashkorts, Kazan Tatars, and other peoples of the Volga-Ural region after Catherine the Great.<sup>690</sup> According to Ramzī, she might have been constrained by high-level Russian officials and fanatic Orthodox Christian missionaries who kept people from coming to her court and articulating the problems they had. Therefore, she could not go beyond what they wanted, and she could not give full official

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 156-158

<sup>688</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 158.

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>690</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 158-159.

permission to the “forcibly-Christianized” peoples (المُكْرَهين) (i.e., the Krashens) to “become Muslim again”. He said:

These poor but resolute people finally came back and converted to Islam with their hearts; but they had never been accepted officially as Muslims, as their neighbors were.<sup>691</sup>

An avid supporter of the Ottoman Empire as the last independent political body of the Muslim populations, Ramzī also tried to analyze the reasons why Catherine the Great was so good to the Tatars, Bashkorts and other Muslim peoples, concluding that:

Catherine II was to start a military campaign against the Muslim Ottoman state around the Crimea Peninsula. The Tatars and other Caucasian Muslims had indeed strong intention to help the Ottomans. Therefore, Catherine wanted to make the Muslim subjects happy and peaceful with the Russian government, so it could prepare a large army against the Ottomans without a remarkable problem in her backyard!<sup>692</sup>

The new Ramzī saw multifaceted problems in his homeland through the lens of a particular and unusual national consciousness. He examined not only the weaknesses in the former rebellions, but also the cultural and religious obstacles the sons of his homeland faced. It appears that his last but strongest concern was for the destructive acts of the Christian Russian missionaries.

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 174.

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 179-181.

### 5.1.3. Inspiring masters for the new discourse: Ibn Khaldūn, William Draper, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, Necip Âsım, and ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm

The engine of the discourse was “realism”, no matter what it was constructed for or whether it was believed as a historical reality. Ramzī was making a romantic survey for a “realistic” history for the Turks and Tatars. His favorite slogan was “coherence with reality—appropriateness to the real world” (المطابقة بالواقع),<sup>693</sup> with the help of old and new masters such as Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), Kâtip Çelebi (d. 1657), William Draper (d. 1882), Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (d. 1895), Necip Âsım (d. 1935), and ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm (1944).

Following Ibn Khaldūn,<sup>694</sup> he wanted to emphasize a realist and rational approach to history and to belong to the Khaldūnian School of history which had had a great impact on Ottoman historians after 1650, until the end of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>695</sup> Kâtip Çelebi (d. 1657), the encyclopedist author of the same school, was also one of the favorite sources of Ramzī.<sup>696</sup> We are not sure if Ramzī was as successful as Ibn Khaldūn or Kâtip Çelebi; but his firm intention to be coherent with reality and his effort concerning the trio of “reason, result, and comparison” are remarkable. As an avid follower of Ibn Khaldūn, he proudly said that he had read all the volumes of Ibn Khaldūn’s historical work;<sup>697</sup> what is more, he realized that there were many wrong

<sup>693</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 120.

<sup>694</sup> See: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 120-121, 401-402, 411-413 and vol. 2, p. 454.

<sup>695</sup> For Ibn Khaldūn, see: M. Talbi, “Ibn Khaldūn”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), p. 825. See for Khaldūnian School in Ottomans: Z. Fahri Fındıkoğlu, “Türkiye’de İbn Haldunizm”, *Fuad Köprülü Armağanı* (Istanbul, 1953), pp. 153-63.

<sup>696</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 149-150.

<sup>697</sup> Ibn Khaldūn wrote his original history book in 7 volumes. He named the first volume *al-Muqaddima* which has been one of the most famous text in the world for its survey of history, politics, economy, theology, and Arab ethnology. The entire work as published by Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī is in 14 volumes



spellings of Turkic and Mongolic names in that work. He offered corrections in his own work *Talfīq al-akhbār* after he had made comparative researches among the late medieval authors of historical works such as Badr al-dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 1453), Ibn Faḍlullāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 1384), Ibn Qaymaz al-Dhahabī (d. 1348), and al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418).<sup>698</sup> To evaluate the labors Ramzī put forth in his project, we should look at al-Qalqashandī's huge work *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā*, which is a colorful record of administrative writings of the Turkic Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt (1250-1517) comprising more than 14 volumes (about 6000 pages).<sup>699</sup> From my experience with Ibn Baṭṭūta, I really understand what kind of difficulties Ramzī might have faced in working with these sources. He said that the publishers of the history of Ibn Khaldūn did not concern themselves with foreign names which were not familiar to late-19th century Arab authors.<sup>700</sup> As an avid reader of medieval Arabic, Persian, and Turkic historical works, Ramzī was checking in more than six huge encyclopedic works just to clarify the correct spelling of a given historical name. According to Ramzī, Ibn Khaldūn quoted many sentences from al-Qalqashandī.<sup>701</sup> Then Ramzī found something wrong, a kind of incoherency in Ibn Khaldūn's narratives on the conflicts between Berke Khan (d. 1266) on the one hand, and Qubilay Khan (d. 1294) and Hulagū Khan (d. 1265) on the other. Investigating the truth, Ramzī offered a different

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(more than 7000 pages): Ibn Khaldūn, *Mawsūʿat al-ʿAllāma Ibn Khaldūn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1999).

<sup>698</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 401-402.

<sup>699</sup> See for al-Qalqashandī and his huge work *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā*: C. E. Bosworth, "Kalkaṣhandī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 509-511.

<sup>700</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 402.

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 411.

explanation about these conflicts.<sup>702</sup> He also compared *Rawḍa al-ṣafā* of Mīr-Khvānd (d. 1498) and the *Tārīkh* of Ibn Wāṣil (d. 1298), within which he also found many obvious mistakes.<sup>703</sup> Ramzī must have prepared the medieval period section of his *Talfīq al-akhbār* with a painstaking effort no conscientious scholar can deny.

It appears that Ramzī was influenced by Ibn Khaldūn not only in his writing style, raw historical records, and narratives, but also in the interpretation of the social-psychological phenomena of Central Asian nomad peoples. When he describes the procedure of “imitation” among the Kazakh tribes, he refers to Ibn Khaldūn again:

Because of the social rule “the defeated mimics the defeater [i.e., victor] for everything, inasmuch as the defeated sees perfection in the defeater” (تقليد المغلوب (الغالب)), these tribal chiefs of Kazakh people imitated the Russian officials in every feature which they observed.<sup>704</sup>

Indeed, this social rule was explained first by Ibn Khaldūn, as following:

٢٨٣ ————— مقدمة ابن خلدون  
١-٢-٢٣- الفصل الثالث والعشرون  
في أن المغلوب مولعٌ أبداً بالافتداء بالغالب في شعاره،  
وزيّه، ونحلته، وسائر أحواله وعوائده

The defeated, of course, has a strong desire (المولع) to imitate the defeater in his characteristics, his dress, his profession, other situations and customs the defeater has.<sup>705</sup>

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 411-412.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 412-413.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 454.

<sup>705</sup> See: Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. Darwīsh, 2004, vol. 1, p. 283.

Here Ibn Khaldūn gives a long explanation decorated with the social-psychological bases of the imitation or process of assimilation over time. If we carefully research it, we may find some precious points on the dialect of subaltern man and the ruler lord. It seems that Ramzī was not a “late medieval scholar” who knew nothing about the relation between the ruler and the ruled nations.

Ramzī also counted some signs of decadency among the Tatars, in a sense similar to the “concept of degeneration” of Ibn Khaldūn. He advised that “moderation in behavior” (*tawassuṭ*: تَوَسُّط) is the best. He makes an explanation for the relation between the wealth and degeneration, still under the theoretical influence of Ibn Khaldūn,<sup>706</sup> who might have taken the principle of moderation from the Qur’ān,<sup>707</sup> Ibn Fātik,<sup>708</sup> or Aristotle,<sup>709</sup> who might have taken it from Democritus.<sup>710</sup> Ramzī says:

<sup>706</sup> See for the notion of moderateness: Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, Darwīsh edition, vol. 1, pp. 363:

وَالْحَمْدُ هُوَ التَّوَسُّطُ كَمَا فِي الْكَرَمِ

See, for the notion of healthiness in the city and its fatal relation to the extravagance and total collapse: *Muqaddima*, vol. 1, pp. 274-275:

وَعَلَى قَدَرِ تَرْفِهِمْ وَنِعْمَتِهِمْ يَكُونُ إِشْرَافُهُمْ عَلَى الْفَنَاءِ

<sup>707</sup> See Sūra al-Furqān (25:67), “And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate.”

<sup>708</sup> Ibn Fātik (11th century) was the most famous collector of old narratives about Hellenistic age philosophers. See the notion of moderation in his book: Ibn Fātik, *Mukhtār al-ḥikam wa maḥāsīn al-kalim*, édition-critique by ‘Abd al-raḥmān Badawī (Beirut, 1980), pp. 178-184.

<sup>709</sup> Moderation (*tawassuṭ*: تَوَسُّط) is similar to the doctrine of “mesotes” (μεσότης) i.e., moderation in the Aristotelian philosophy of felicity. See what the Master Aristotle said in the second book of his *The Nicomachean Ethics*: “Too much and too little exercise alike destroy strength. The man who shuns and fears everything and never makes a stand, becomes a coward; while the man who fears nothing at all, but will face anything, becomes foolhardy. Thus temperance and courage are destroyed both by excess and defect, but preserved by moderation.” Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, translated and annotated by F. H. Peters, 14th edition (Oxford, London: Kegan Paul, 1893), pp. 37-38.

<sup>710</sup> Gregory Vlastos, “Ethics and physics in Democritus”, D.J. Furley and R.E. Allen (eds.), *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, Volume 2: *Eleatics and Pluralists* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 386-394. But, we should be careful inasmuch as many sayings and quotations were attributed to

Tatar people of towns follow the path of moderation and frugality, whereas the rich Tatar of large cities just start to walk in the path of extravagance and arrogance, especially the young generation. Therefore, you see that many rich young Tatars spend money without responsibility from the wealth of their fathers, who gained their capital with great efforts. The best, the most auspicious act is always the moderate one (*al-mutawassit*: المتوسّط) in every instance.<sup>711</sup>

Ramzī enthusiastically studied Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, another follower of Ibn Khaldūn. Ramzī made many explanation with the help of that wise Ottoman Paşa. The situation of Kazan after the Russian invasion, the problem of disconnection among the Muslim Turkic Empires, especially the position of Iran between Ottoman Empire and the Central Asian khanates were discussed in *Talfīq al-akhbār* under the influence of Ahmet Cevdet Paşa.<sup>712</sup> Ramzī found the wise saga of history in Ahmed Cevdet Paşa's politically-refined mind; furthermore, he quoted the term "The Great Tatar Land" from Ahmet Cevdet Paşa's book.<sup>713</sup> However, Ahmed Cevdet had borrowed this term from European authors as an old definition for the central and northern sections of Asia where the Turkic nomad peoples had once lived.

After the Khaldūnian school's irresistible charm we see William Draper as another author favored by Ramzī. Draper's critical explanations on Catholic Europe in the past was a great opportunity for Ramzī when he tried to explain how the medieval Muslims had reasonable solutions for the coexistence of major religions and how the

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Democritus, who might have not said anything about it at all. He was a great philosopher with his tendency to felicity and realism.

<sup>711</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 330-331.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 102-103.

<sup>713</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 103.

medieval Europeans had to live in “awful” cities with enormous health problems.<sup>714</sup>

Ramzî made extended comparisons between Islamic and western cities in the late medieval ages, also employing the book of Ibn ‘Arabshāh (d. 1405).<sup>715</sup> As we will mention in the next section, Ramzî was also partially engaging Draper’s thesis concerning the emergence of religion among human beings, blending it with his own thesis of the probability of prophets being sent to the ancient Turks.<sup>716</sup>

Now, we should talk about Necip Âsım<sup>717</sup> as the most important nationalist author leading Ramzî to develop a special discourse for the ancient Turks, their lifestyles, beliefs, and the greatness of the ancient Turkic nomadic empires. Without Necip Âsım’s book *Türk Tarihi (History of the Turks)*,<sup>718</sup> which has extended explanations and hypotheses, it is impossible to understand the logic of pre-Islamic Turkic history in Ramzî’s work.

When Ramzî wanted to “author” a special history for the Turks and Tatars, he needed to find something fresh and reasonable in the market in order to explain the “dark” period of the history of the Turks. However, he could not find a suitable work for his desire, except the works of Necip Âsım and Nikolay Karamzin (d. 1826), the famous

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 50-51.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 51.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 57 and 58-59.

<sup>717</sup> Necip Âsım (d. 1935), Turkish nationalist scholar, historian, turkologist, and former deputy in Turkish Parliament. See: Abdullah Uçman, “Necip Âsım Yazıksız”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 32 (Ankara: TDV, 2006), pp. 493-494. See also for a different evaluation: Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf, and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 61 and 63.

<sup>718</sup> Necip Âsım wrote this book under influence of Leon Cahun, as we will discuss. He published his book in Istanbul 1316 AH [1899 AD] at “Daru’t-Tibaatu’l-Amire”, the official publishing house of the Ottoman government.

Russian historian.<sup>719</sup> Relying on Karamzin, Ramzī offers accounts about the Sarmatians, Scythians, Huns, and other nomadic peoples. However, Ramzī also severely criticized him, since the latter had preferred always telling the story in favor of “his Slav brothers”, as Ramzī described.<sup>720</sup> Therefore, he could not give him full credit for the “dark ages” of the ancient Turks. The strange thing is that Necip Âsım was also influenced by Léon Cahun (d. 1900), whose book *Introduction à l’histoire de l’Asie: Turcs et Mongols des origines à 1405*<sup>721</sup> was a great sensation for the Young Turks living in Paris.<sup>722</sup> They reflected this enthusiasm to their compatriots around the Ottoman Empire, including Necip Âsım in Istanbul.

I observe that the weakest historical narratives in Ramzī’s book unfortunately are those parts excerpted from Necip Âsım, who was an educator, a leading figure of Turkish nationalism, but not a reliable historian. As they say in Turkish, *Aşk insanı kör eder* (‘Love makes you blind’), Necip Âsım fell in love with Cahun’s book, then, he became a “blind lover”, but not an investigator scholar. The blindness of Necip Âsım was somehow transmitted to Ramzī, especially in the first sections of his book. Thankfully Ramzī was taking his inspirations and knowledge from more than one source, so, he criticized Necip

<sup>719</sup> For Ramzī’s use and criticism of Karamzin in his work, see: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 179 and 228.

<sup>720</sup> See: Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 179.

<sup>721</sup> For his life and works, see: Zadoc Kahn, “Cahun, David Léon”, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer, Cyruse Adler, et al. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1912), vol. 3, pp. 492-493.

<sup>722</sup> Dr Nazım, a leading figure among the Young Turks “had been deeply influenced by Léon Cahun’s essay entitled *Introduction à l’Histoire de l’Asie: Turcs et Mongols à 1405*, which focuses on the racial characteristics of Turanians.” See the note of Hanioglu: M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution. The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 489.

Âsim, as much as he needed.<sup>723</sup> I also observe that the real success of Ramzî's book as a historical survey can be observed in the middle sections which were about the late medieval ages and, of course, in the last sections including the biographies of Tatar, Bashkort, and Kazakh leaders, scholars, and the last events Ramzî witnessed.

The last influential author in Murad Ramzî's intellectual change was 'Abd al-rashîd Ibrâhîm (1857-1944), the famous Tatar traveler and pan-Islamic political thinker.<sup>724</sup> Ramzî must have taken many ideas pertaining to the Muslim Tatar unity in Russia from 'Abd al-rashîd, who wrote his work *Aftonomiya* to discuss possible options for autonomy for the Muslims living in the Russian Empire.<sup>725</sup> Ramzî also analyzed many thoughts of 'Abd al-rashîd in *Talfîq al-akhbâr*.<sup>726</sup> Might we go even further and suggest that Ramzî might have written his historical work inspired by 'Abd al-rashîd's publications advocating Muslim Turkic unity in Russia? Had the ideas of 'Abd al-rashîd become a reality, Ramzî could have been the first official historiographer of that imagined Muslim Turkic Autonomy,

This question has validity, even though it has a very speculative and challenging tone. In the introductory section, Ramzî clearly confessed that he started to write his book under the incitement of some "brothers" (تحريض بعض الأخوان) and the inducement of

<sup>723</sup> Ramzî, *Talfîq al-akhbâr* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 126-127.

<sup>724</sup> See: Nadir Özbek, "Abdürreşid İbrahim 1857-1944", M.A. thesis (Boğaziçi University, 1994); and "İkinci Meşrutiyet İstanbul'unda Tatar İslamcıları: Teârûf-i Müslimîn Dergisi", *Muteferrika*, no. 21 (Summer 2002), pp. 45-67.

<sup>725</sup> 'Abd al-rashîd, *Aftonomiya yâ ki İdâre-i Muhtâriye* (Petersburg, 1907).

<sup>726</sup> Ramzî, *Talfîq al-akhbâr* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 197-198.

“noble men” (ترغيب بعض الأعيان).<sup>727</sup> Furthermore, it was true that Ramzī was honestly interested in different autonomy projects inside of Russia, even asking about the possibility of a Siberian Autonomous Government project that was offered by Nikolay Yadrintsev (d.1894), as we read from the memoirs of Zeki Velidi Togan (d. 1970), the famous Bashkort historian, politician, and military leader:

I had set myself the aim of attending Russian teachers’ school (*uchitel’skaia shkola*) to compare the historical information I had learned from Islamic sources against the information provided in the Russian sources. This idea was inculcated in me especially by Murad Remzi. I had mentioned that he had my father and maternal uncle read certain portions of his book [*Talfīq al-akhbār*] while it was being printed during those years. He wished that I would learn Russian history, especially the history of Solovev which he was unable to utilize. He had especially liked the works of Yadrintsev.<sup>728</sup>

‘Abd al-rashīd was also the chief editor of *Te’āruf-i Muslimīn* (1910-1911), the well-known review opposed to the western colonial powers. Ramzī sent this periodical his articles on freedom of speech and publication in Islam<sup>729</sup> and on the declaration of the Japanese Ajia-Gikai Daito (“The Great East”) society.<sup>730</sup> According to Ramzī, the periodical *Te’āruf-i Muslimīn* was “a breath of fresh air supported by Muslim Turkic authors from Russia” and, of course, “they would know more about what was going on in Russia and the Central Asia than those who lived in Istanbul”.<sup>731</sup> Ramzī clearly stated

<sup>727</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 26-27.

<sup>728</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan, *Memoirs*, p. 38.

<sup>729</sup> See: Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, “İslamiyette Hürriyet-i Kelam ve Serbesti-i Matbuatın Meşruiyeti”, *Te’āruf-i Muslimīn*, vol. 1, no. 5 (June 9, 1910), pp. 78-80; and vol. 1, no. 6 (June 28, 1910), pp. 90-92.

<sup>730</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, “Asya Gi-Kay Cemiyeti Riyaseti tarafından gönderilen mektup münasebetiyle”, *Te’āruf-i Muslimīn*, vol. 1, no. 23 (November 24, 1910), pp. 365-368.

<sup>731</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, “İslamiyette Hürriyet-i Kelam ve Serbesti-i Matbuatın Meşruiyeti” [sent from Mecca], *Te’āruf-i Muslimīn*, vol. 1, no. 6 (16 Cemaziyelahir 328/15 Haziran 326 [June 28, 1910]), pp. 90-92.



that he would be honored by membership of the board in this periodical, inasmuch as his (i.e., Ramzī's) major goal was "service to the Muslim peoples around the world."<sup>732</sup>

As a close friend of Ramzī's, 'Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm held a small international meeting in Ramzī's house in Mecca in 1909 including the participation of Ferid Efendi, a member of the CUP (*The Committee of Union and Progress: İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) and an official adviser for the Ottoman Gendarmerie in Hejaz.<sup>733</sup> In this meeting, Ramzī hosted a group of Muslim élite scholars from Japan, Malay, India, China, and Tebriz (Persia) as well as some political figures from Istanbul.<sup>734</sup> Consequently, Ibrāhīm must have influenced Ramzī indirectly on the importance of "publication" that is considered to be one of the most effective tools for the development of nationalism, as Anderson indicates in his famous book *Imagined Communities*.<sup>735</sup> In *Te'āruf*, Ramzī described himself as an unhappy author with the government of "the Former Era" (*Devr-i Sābık* in Ottoman Turkish from the French *Ancien Régime*), the era of 'Abd al-ḥamīd II, the last powerful Sultan of Ottoman Empire:

The Former Era was somehow preventing the spread of truth, especially the truth of Islam as it is. By the establishing of the constitutional government (*meşrutiyet*)

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<sup>732</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>733</sup> Abdurreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, ed. Ertuğrul Özalp (Istanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 2012), vol. 2, pp. 490-492.

<sup>734</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>735</sup> According to Anderson the emergence of modern nationalism is related to many reasons within which is the printing press capitalism. He says: "Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways." See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 36.

which is the preferred method by Islam, we have found a broader sphere for the freedom of speech.<sup>736</sup>

Was Ramzī really unhappy with the government of the “former era” when he had already published his mystical treatises and translations such as *Maktubāt* and *Dhayl-i Rashahāt*? We do not know if he was really unhappy with the Former Era, but by now (circa 1910) he had become more radicalized in his approach towards nationalism, the future of the Muslim peoples, and the constitutional government under the Committee of Union and Progress. Ramzī wrote in *Te‘āruf*:

A constitutional government is indeed the best ruling method that would be appreciated, even, mandated by the Islamic legal system. Only through this (form of) government are many useful newspapers and critical books published in every corner of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>737</sup>

According to the new Ramzī, these good activities were a natural result of the constitution. With the help of this unique atmosphere, “individuals, members of the nation” (*efrād-i millet*: أفراد مِلَّت) would have the freedom to criticize what is wrong in the government in the name of “progress” (تَرْقِي), “development” (تَعَالِي), and “reform” (إِصْلَاح). If a citizen of this nation does not fulfill this critical obligation, it means that he/she likely betrays his/her own conscience, country, nation, and government.<sup>738</sup>

Because the rulers (*ulū al-amr*: أُلُو الْأَمْرِ) are not free of sin, they should be criticized in

<sup>736</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, “İslamiyette Hürriyet-i Kelam ve Serbesti-i Matbuatın Meşruiyeti” [sent from Mecca], *Te‘āruf-i Muslimīn*, vol. 1, no. 6 (16 Cemaziyelahir 1328/15 Haziran 1326 [June 28, 1910]), pp. 90-92.

<sup>737</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, “İslamiyette Hürriyet-i Kelam ve Serbesti-i Matbuatın Meşruiyeti”, *Te‘āruf-i Muslimīn*, vol. 1, no. 5 (2 Cemaziyelahir 1328/27 Mayıs 1326 [June 9, 1910]), pp. 78-80.

<sup>738</sup> *Ibid.*

the event of an obvious mistake.<sup>739</sup> Ramzī emphasized again the power of the printed media:

In the 20th century, when all Muslim peoples suffer agonizing fractures, the most beneficial method for critique is the pen rather than other instruments. Our ancestors said: “the pen is one of two tongues” (*al-qalam aḥad al-lisānayn*: أَلْقَلَمُ أَحَدُ اللِّسَانَيْنِ). However, I am saying that the pen is the most useful, and comprehensive instrument. A man, with his speech, can only warn those who are around him. But an author in the capital city with the help of his/her pen (create) publications which can spread beautiful thoughts all over the country, even to the furthest point where the Muslims live like China.<sup>740</sup>

‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm must have influenced Ramzī not only in the fields of constitutionalism, the Young Turks, and the importance of printed media, but also in the notions of nationalism and the proper response to western culture and alternative modernities. As Komatsu Hisao indicates, ‘Abd al-rashīd was formulating the idea of “taking the technological and political developments of the West, with keeping the religious and ethical values of the East” when he was invited to Japan.<sup>741</sup> The same idea was repeated by Ramzī in *Talfīq al-akhbār* more than once for different problems.<sup>742</sup> He was also not in favor of the westernization of woman.<sup>743</sup> He gave her the mission of protection of traditional and ethical values in the home (the “inner domain”). According to Chatterjee, this kind of formulation would create an alternative path for modernity

<sup>739</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>740</sup> Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, “İslamiyette Hürriyet-i Kelam ve Serbesti-i Matbuatın Meşrutiyeti”, pp. 90-92, especially p. 90.

<sup>741</sup> Komatsu Hisao, “Muslim Intellectuals and Japan: A Pan-Islamist mediator, Abdurreshid Ibrahim”, *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, transformation, communication*, ed. Stéphane A. Dudoignon, Komatsu Hisao and Kosugi Yasushi (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 276.

<sup>742</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 304.

<sup>743</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 310.

among the intellectuals of colonized peoples. The separation of the cultural domain into the “material” and the “spiritual” might lead a colonized people to adopt western techniques for material life without removing their core inner resistance, as Chatterjee says:

Anti-colonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains—the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the ‘outside’, of the economy and statecraft, of science and technology. ....The spiritual, on the other hand, is an ‘inner’ domain bearing the ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity. The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual culture. This formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anti-colonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa.<sup>744</sup>

## **5.2. The critiques that seasoned the idea of history in Ramzī**

Before he prepared his project, Ramzī’s mind must have been involved in some critiques and evaluations that led him to write a detailed historical work about the Turks and Tatars, for example the social amnesia of Kazan Tatars, the negative self-perception of their younger generations, the shortcomings of the former authors who wrote about the history of the Turks and Tatars, the methodological deficiencies in Ottoman historiography, the biased approaches of Persian, Russian, and Arab authors towards the Turks, the stereotype of Tatars in the earlier historical literature, the problems of totally westernized secular nationalist historiography, and the Eurocentric supremacist discourse, including the current definition of “civilization”.

<sup>744</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 6.

### 5.2.1 The social amnesia of the Turkic peoples

Referring to the importance of instruction in history, Ramzī criticized the social amnesia of Tatars, the danger of Russophilia among the younger generations who already believed in the uniqueness of the Russians as a nation ruling over Asia. He also realized that there were no satisfactory sources concerning Volga-Ural (*İdel-Ural*) Muslim communities.

Most of them think that they have been under the rule of the humiliating “Russian Yoke” (تحت أسارة الروس) since the day they were created, and that they have to obey the Russians, either as an original situation (*aṣāleten*: أصالة) or as a religious duty (*farḍan*: فرضاً) until death will come, even though the Russians can dictate what the glorious Islamic law (*sharīʿa*) does not permit. They also believe that they have never had great khans and kings from their own race, the Tatars.<sup>745</sup>

Ramzī thought that the biggest failure of the Muslim communities in the Volga-Ural region was their ignorance of their ethnic origins and the cultures to which they belonged. Since they did not know the glory of the past, they could not be proud of it; they are totally “alienated” from their own culture and have just become puppets in the hands of Russia. He says:

Believe me, the worst thing is that they know nothing about their origins (*al-aṣl*: الأصل), tribal relatives (*al-nasab*: النسب), and the ethnos (*al-jins*: الجنس) to which they belonged.<sup>746</sup>

According to Ramzī, the glory of the past, the gallantry of ancestors from earlier times, and the stories of the earlier generations about wars, science, art, and architecture are the most important elements for identification as members of the Muslim Turkic

<sup>745</sup> Ramzī, *Talḥīq al-akḥbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 23.

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.*

nation. Therefore he is complaining about the Volga-Ural Turkic peoples' ignorance concerning their ancestors:

In sum, I have never seen such a nation which has totally lost its memory, including the most important events, common success and catastrophes, and left alone all glory of the earlier ancestors, even though many great kings, khans, and scholars emerged from among its members.<sup>747</sup>

Ramzī complains the negative self-perception of younger generations who attempt to write about the history of their fathers, but with feelings of shame and diffidence. His complain was interestingly similar to what Necip Âsım had articulated earlier. First we listen to Ramzī:

Therefore, you see many young authors from the sons of Turkic peoples, attempting to write about the ancient Turks, their historical features and lives, with shameful sayings, quotations, and anecdotes such as “bloodthirsty men” (*suffāk*: سَفَاك), “beast, animals” (*wuhūsh*: وحوش), “ignorant men” (*juhāl*: جهال), “incomprehension” (*qillat al-idrāk*: قلة الإدراك), and “lack of acumen” (*adam al-dirāya*: عدم الدراية), following those biased historiographers. These novice authors are similar to kids who hear a swear word from bad neighbors, then shout it to the face of their own parents!<sup>748</sup>

Then we compare the statement of Ramzī to the paragraph of Necip Âsım:

This book (*Türk Tarihi*) will reject the slanders of those who are unjustly called “historians” and are not ashamed by distorting this great nation, with the slogan of “Foolish, dull Turks!” (*atrāk-i bī idrāk*: أتراك بی إدراك). This work will prove our national greatness, through the (documents in) their books.<sup>749</sup>

On the same page and those which follow, Necip Âsım complained severely that Ottoman authors, especially the élite historians of the palace, did not mention the name

<sup>747</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 24.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 34.

<sup>749</sup> Necip Âsım, *Türk Tarihi* (Istanbul: Daru't-Tibaa al-Âmire, 1316 AH [1898-9 AD]), p. h (p. 5 in the Abjad system of the Arabic alphabet).

“Turk” with respect and honor. Instead, they employed the name “Turk” with a derogatory meaning for the “rude men” in the towns, or the men who know nothing about manners, beauty, and literature. Ramzī must have been influenced by the major nationalist elements and the complaints mentioned in Necip Âsım’s work *Türk Tarihi*, even though he (Ramzī) criticized him in different sections of his own book.

### 5.2.2. The imperfection of Turkic historiography

Ramzī criticized Necip Âsım (d. 1935) as we mentioned above, but with great appreciation in many points, such as the problem of the King of Haytals (*Khāqān-i Hayṭal*: خاقان هیطل) and elsewhere.<sup>750</sup> It means that Ramzī was not a blind follower of the Turkish nationalist Necip Âsım, even though the first parts of *Talfīq al-akhbār* were written under the heavy influence of Necip Âsım’s *History of the Turks* (*Türk Tarihi*) which was indeed a loose translation of Léon Cahun’s book *Introduction à l’histoire de l’Asie: Turcs et Mongols des origines à 1405*, with extensive annotations and explanations, as we mentioned previously. Ramzī wanted some other researchers to shed light on Necip Âsım’s work with a careful analysis of the former’s original quotations which refer to other French and Chinese sources.<sup>751</sup>

Cahun’s book was one of the most influential works for the passion of nationalism among Turkish intellectuals. As with his earlier novel *La Bannière bleue* (1877), one can argue that Cahun’s book was a provocative work written in order to motivate a wave of pro-Turkic sentiment in the hearts of young Turkish intellectuals

<sup>750</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 126-127.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 140-141.

around Paris and Istanbul. Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), the ideologue of modern Turkish nationalism, said that:

When I came to Istanbul in 1312 (1896), the first book I bought was the history by Léon Cahun. This book was likely written to encourage [the younger generations] to (embrace) the idea of Pan-Turkism.<sup>752</sup>

Another major influence on Ramzī was Shihāb al-dīn Marjānī Marjānī (d. 1889). Ramzī criticized him in many pages, but also he realized that Marjānī was the only author emphasizing the importance of the history of Kazan and the Tatar people before himself. Ramzī judged Marjānī unfit for this mission of history because Marjānī had no extensive knowledge about many important details, sources, and arguments, despite the fact that he had good intentions and made remarkable observations:

I was musing over my history project when I was told that Shihāb al-dīn Marjānī, the great scholar of this age, had written a history of Kazan and Bulghar called *Mustafād al-akhbār* (مستفاد الأخبار).<sup>753</sup> Suddenly, I felt elation over this good news. When they printed the first volume of the book covering past events until the Russian invasion of Kazan, I picked up it and read every point in its paragraphs. However, I realized that this book is not enough for this purpose, since Marjānī skipped many important details in the works of older historians, and moreover he did not mention even ten percent (10 %) of what the older works had recorded! Nevertheless, his work should be appreciated inasmuch as there was nobody who had written about the history (of Kazan and Bulghar) before him. Indeed, Marjānī must be appreciated, for he is the first, the pioneer scholar in this area.<sup>754</sup>

Ramzī also criticized the imperial-universal-sacred historiography of Ottoman authors, even though we may expect Ramzī to follow this discourse of “universal sacred

<sup>752</sup> The Turkish text is here: “312’de İstanbul’a geldiğim zaman ilk aldığım kitap Leon Cahun’ün tarihi olmuştu. Bu kitap âdeta Pantürkizm mefkûresini teşvik etmek üzere yazılmış gibidir.” See: Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları* (Istanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 1968), pp. 12-13.

<sup>753</sup> See: Shihāb al-dīn Marjānī, *Mustafād al-akhbār fî târîkh Qazân wa Bulghār* (Kazan: Dombrovski Tab’hanasi, 1897), 2 vols.

<sup>754</sup> Ramzī, *Talfîq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 24-25.



history” inherited from older Muslim historians. Some Ottoman historians wrote historical works starting with Adam and connected the genealogy of the Turks to the Prophet Abraham’s slave girl in order to give a spiritual blessing to their ancestors. This was the Oğuz Turks, the major tribal organization that established great empires in the Central Asia, Iran, Syria, Egypt, Anatolia and Balkans. Indeed, Ramzī also made another type of universal history, connecting the Turks to Japheth son of Noah, but it is not the same thing that the Ottoman authors followed in their historiographical tradition.

As Professor Taner Timur indicates, the concept of history among Ottoman authors was formed as a “universal-sacred chain going beyond the Ottoman Empire”.<sup>755</sup> This view was attributed to the Judeo-Christian understanding of sacred history, starting with the Creation and Adam (*Hilkat ve Âdem*). They also considered the Ottoman Empire to be “the Eternal State” (*Devlet-i Ebed Müddet*: دولت ابد مدت) and the Ottoman Sultan to be “the Ruler of the World” (Padişah-ı Âlem: پادشاه عالم). Therefore, they imagined a universal history for human beings starting with Adam, then introducing other narratives of old prophets, peoples, states, kingdoms from Egypt, India, Rome, Persian and Arab traditions, as much as they could collect, finally adding the Ottomans to this universal concept. However, in the 19th century, by their defeat in the face of the western powers, this concept was replaced by “the History of Muslims”. Gradually, the second notion also lost its meaning. In the early decades of the 20th century they began to mention “the History of the Turks” when the faces turned to the Central Asia<sup>756</sup> with the help of Tatar nationalist authors.

<sup>755</sup> Taner Timur, “Batı İdeolojisi, Irkçılık ve Ulusal Kimlik Sorunumuz”, *Yapıt*, vol. 5 (1984), pp. 23-27.

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*

In fact, by bringing out similar stories in the first chapter, Ramzī did not criticize the core of “the universal history discourse starting with Adam”. Instead, he tried to correct some key points in order to form an appropriate view in favor of the Turks and Ottomans. According to Ramzī, the Ottomans have not had to make up this fake genealogy game. Instead, they must have been proud of their real ancestors, the Oğuz Turks, who ruled the central parts of the Old World for more than 500 years.<sup>757</sup> Ramzī did not care for any fake religious attachment, even though many classical Muslim historians generally have a tendency to these kinds of unfounded compliments:

Some Ottomans tried to introduce the Turks, as descendants of Qantura, the so-called slave girl of the Prophet Abraham, in order to connect the genealogy of the Ottomans to the Prophet Abraham via an unknown slave girl. Why on earth did they do that? What a miserable way to demonstrate an unreal glory! If the genealogy of Abraham has provided a superiority, it would be helpful first for the Jews, who are still tasting the agony of humiliation. The respect is only for the good deeds of man, not for the unknown fathers or fake ancestors! Besides, the Ottoman Turks have so many real great deeds and achievements that they do not need to belong to an unknown slave girl to gain a fake superiority! The last point in this issue is the principles mentioned in those Qur’ānic verses: “O mankind, indeed, We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.” [Sūra Ḥujurāt, 49:13] “So when the Horn is blown, no relationship will there be among them that Day, nor will they ask about one another.” [Sūra Mu’minūn, 23:101]<sup>758</sup>

### 5.2.3. The unfair description of the Turks by the Persians

Ramzī criticized Moḥammad Mirkhond (d. 1498) and other Persian authors for their unfair characterizations of the Turks. He also criticized some Ḥanafī scholars for their

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<sup>757</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 41.

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 41-42.

tendency to repeat the exaggeration of the Persians while turning a blind eye to the achievements of the Oğuz Turks and the (ancient) Turkic kings and emperors.<sup>759</sup>

Elsewhere he described Mirkhond as one of those who “sucked up” to the Persians.<sup>760</sup>

When we carefully analyze Ramzī, we observe that his discourse was generally based on a critique of the mythological characters and events in classical Persian historiography. He described the leading authorities of Persian history as “narrow-minded”, superstitious, empty-headed individuals who admitted many fallacies without observing what was going on in the real world.<sup>761</sup> It means that the new Ramzī was criticizing the position of the old Ramzī, the speculative Sufī author of Naqshī hagiography. As we know, the majority of Naqshī hagiography was produced in the Persian language, based on the same Persian-style decorative arts and literary exaggerations which Ramzī was now criticizing in his historical work. The leading experts of Naqshbandī history such as Hamid Algar also mention that this order was based heavily on Persian texts and narratives.<sup>762</sup>

Ramzī criticized the famous *ḥadīth* expert ‘Alī al-Qārī al-Harawī (d. 1605) for the latter’s tendency to distort narratives about the Turks, even though ‘Alī al-Qārī was among the most respected Ḥanafī-Sunnī scholars. However, we should know that Alī al-Qārī was also famous for his great hostility to Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>763</sup> I am not sure if Ramzī

<sup>759</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 126.

<sup>760</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 141.

<sup>761</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 143.

<sup>762</sup> Hamid Algar, “A brief history of the Naqshbandī order”, p. 14.

<sup>763</sup> See for his severe critiques on Ibn ‘Arabī see: Nūr al-dīn ‘Alī al-Qārī, *al-Raddu ‘alā al-Qā’ilīn bi waḥdat al-wujūd*, ed. ‘Alī ‘Abdullah (Damascus: Dār al-ma’mūn, 1995), pp. 101-102.

became angry at ‘Alī al-Qārī, only because of the latter’s pro-Persian stance or because of his hostility towards Ibn ‘Arabī. It seems that Ramzī already crossed the red line of traditional Sunnī authors who would say nothing about the “old great, pious scholars” (*salaf-i ṣāliḥīn*). When he criticized some Persian authors, he repeated the discourse of the “realist approach of the ancient Turks” and the “unrealistic approach of the ancient Persians”:

Even though our ancestors, the ancient Turks were practical, smart, and brave in the art of war; they fought only with sons of men, not with other types of surreal creatures which we can find in the books of ancient Greeks and Persians, as we read in the *Shāhnāma* [*The Book of Kings*] of Ferdowsī (d. 1020). Ferdowsī was paid one golden dinar for each line of this famous epic narrative in which demons, surreal giant creatures, lions, and dragons fought with each other, in an eternal mode! Of course, we Turks have also some strange narratives, such as the stories of Oğuz Khan and the Ergenekon Valley, where the ancient Turks or Mongols were supposed to have stayed more than four hundreds years without meeting any other humans. Yet, these accounts are nothing to compare with the lunatic, wacky, exaggerated fairy tales of Ferdowsī the Persian!<sup>764</sup>

#### **5.2.4. The unfair description of the Tatars by the Russians and Arabs**

Ramzī criticized both the Russian authors and some Arab medievalist historians, inasmuch as they have led the Tatars to escape from being called “Tatar”. He emphasized the negative effects of two discourses: a) the official Russian discourse on Tatar history, and b) medieval Muslim Arab historians’ discourse regarding Tatar vandalism. He tries to explain the reasons for these negative attitudes.

It seems that Ramzī was already aware of the power of discourse and its psychological effect upon the consciousness of oppressed peoples. The Kazan Tatars and its neighboring communities of Turkic origin must have felt so guilty that some of them

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<sup>764</sup> Ramzī, *Talḥīq al-akḥbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 33.

changed their traditional names from “Tatar” to “Nogay”, something which has nothing to do with the original Kazan Tatars. He said:

Because they have observed the humiliating attitudes of Russians towards the name Tatar, and, they have read that old Muslim historians did mention this name (*Tatar*) only with curses, cruelty, damage, and ambush, they denied the reality of belonging to the Great Tatar ancestors. Moreover, they claimed that they were descendants of the Nogay tribes, following the naming tradition of the peoples of Transoxania (*Mā warā al-nahr*). But they did not realize that their ancestors had frightened the entire world when the Russians were slaves under those great forefathers. They do not comprehend that the Russian aggressiveness regarding the concept “Tatar” is based on their (i.e., the Russians’) historical experience under Tatar rule.<sup>765</sup>

Ramzī emphasized also the sociological fact that the gap between the Russians and the Tatars was not based solely on the difference in ethnic roots, but on cultural and religious origins as well. The Russian historians could not see the Tatars as they were, and they did not write about them objectively, inasmuch as religious “fanaticism” had already made them blind. Therefore, only a new historiography considering religious-cultural differences would make the core of struggle around the Volga-Ural region (*Īdel-Ural*) clear and understandable. He said:

Moreover, “Tatar” is the synonym of “Muslim” among the Russians and vice versa: “Russian” is considered a synonym of “Christian” among the people of Kazan.<sup>766</sup>

Ramzī criticized “the stereotype of the Tatar and Turk” in the discourse of Arab authors who considered the Ottomans as the contemporary heirs of the “uncivilized” Mongols of Chingiz Khan, who destroyed the last remnant of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate in

<sup>765</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 23.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 23-24.

the middle of the 13th century (1258). It seems that Ramzī's tendency toward Turkism was also formed as a reaction to the nationalist Arab authors of his age.

I wish these Arabs could be satisfied and relaxed by criticizing of Mongols and so-called Tatars mentioned in their old books. However, through ignorance of the science of ethnography and genealogy, they went beyond it! They did not realize that the Mongols and the so-called Tatars in the last 'Abbāsīd age were not the Turks we are talking about now. In fact, those Mongols and so-called Tatars were enemies of both the Muslim Turks and the Arabs. Still, these (modern nationalist Arab authors) are saying: "Oh, since the primitive, stupid Turks started to rule over the country, everything has collapsed."<sup>767</sup>

We observe that the nationalist Arab authors had already published their declarations in the newspapers and booklets in Arabic before Ramzī wrote his book. As Hanioglu mentions, the Syrian nationalist intellectuals of the late 19th century had already painted a picture of "Arab superiority over the Turks in administration and culture". They repeat the outmoded statement that the Turks lacked "language, poetry, science, and tradition".<sup>768</sup> Ramzī must have been very disturbed by these kinds of insulting statements.

### **5.2.5. The humiliating discourse by colonialist authors**

Ramzī criticized also completely westernized Tatar authors and the colonialist discourse regarding the history of the Tatars. The clear anti-colonialist attitude of Ramzī separates him from other Tatar intellectuals. He criticizes both the discourse of the "enemy" and the behavior of those Turkic intellectuals who were "following the path and attitude of the enemy" in historiography:

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 34-35.

<sup>768</sup> Hanioglu, *A Brief History Of The Late Ottoman Empire*, p. 143.

Of course, the enemy does not pass over any fault or weak point of the rival whenever he observes it. It is indeed his duty and that is valid also in historical issues. However, shame on those (Tatars) who obtained the most humiliating descriptions from the tongues of the enemy, and then accepted them blindly without investigation of the sources, or questioning the reasons for that discourse! The man of knowledge and wisdom cannot accept or deny anything in these stories, but (should rather) inquire first about the problems, (only) then he can say something good or bad in the light of reason (*al-‘aql*: العقل), conscience-common sense (*al-wujdan*: الوجدان), and deep contemplation (*al-fikr*: الفكر).<sup>769</sup>

Ramzī clearly criticized the supremacist discourse of European authors on the “Eastern peoples” including the Turks. Not apologetically but in a very clear way, he denounced their statements.<sup>770</sup> He was aware of the power of dominant discourse among both colonialist authors and colonized intellectuals with a mutilated consciousness. In his bold attacks he employed the book of Draper, quoting some sentences about Europe in the medieval period and comparing them with what Ibn ‘Arabshāh mentioned in his book about the Turks living in prosperity in the late Middle Ages.<sup>771</sup>

Ramzī does not believe in the accuracy of the definition of “civilization” current among western authors. According to Ramzī, western authors make up some definitions within which other peoples and religio-ethnic groups are just marginalized or purposely excluded from the boundaries of the positive effects of the notion of “civilization” (*al-madanīya*: المدنية). For Ramzī, this dominant discourse was also another obstacle to know the reality of the self, the real cultural, political, and traditional heritage of the Turkic peoples living in Russia. Not apologetically but radically he denies what western

<sup>769</sup> *Talfīḡ al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 45

<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 50-51.

<sup>771</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 51.

authors have said about “Eastern” peoples. He tries to utilize a different approach toward civilization, based on his own culture, experience, and traditions.<sup>772</sup>

Ramzī believed that the culture and civilization of a nation (*millat*: مِلَّت) or state (*dawla*: دَوْلَة) could be traceable if the evidence and documents were well collected previously. If the documents and traces were not collected sufficiently, the researcher could still make an inference with the help of the general remnants of the state and the territories which this group of people had created; consequently, their remnants may indicate roughly their wealth, richness, and development in the past.<sup>773</sup> In this way, Ramzī developed his own discourse, thinking that the forthcoming studies on the history of the Turkic groups living in China, India, Iran, Anatolia, Arabia, Eastern Europe, and Africa would lead to positive results, such as the fact that Turkic groups had already created wonderful things, adapted the highest fruits of their contemporary civilizations, and made great contributions to the universal civilization.<sup>774</sup> Ramzī kept an emotional tone when he said:

Only a hateful, biased writer can say that “the Turks in particular, or the Eastern nations (in general) are primitive, ignorant of the knowledge of techniques for practical life”. Only a man of fanatical obsession of his uniqueness can claim ignorance and primitiveness among the Turks or other Eastern nations. Anyone who has a minimum level of rational comparison and ability of comprehension can clearly understand, even acknowledge, the practical-political genius of the Turkic nations, their administrative experience, and cultural achievements in faraway lands in the world for hundreds of years.<sup>775</sup>

<sup>772</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 61.

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 61-62.

<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 61-63.

<sup>775</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 61.



Ramzi did not believe that the success of the Turks was just by chance. He asked:

How on earth did they have these chances again and again in Central Asia, Iran, Northern India, West India, Anatolia, Syria, Iraq, Levant, Egypt, North Africa, the Balkan countries, and in Eastern Europe throughout the long centuries?<sup>776</sup>

However, the problem of record, evidence, and documents, especially for the ancient Turks, must have left Ramzī with hard questions. Trying to respond to them, he connected the problem to “the notion of the civilization” and “the practicality of ancient Turkic peoples”.<sup>777</sup> He finally declared that the ancient Turkic peoples, as the ancient Bedouin Arabs, did not belong to any scriptural or mathematical tradition; therefore, their knowledge and manners could not be collected and categorized, unlike the cultural traditions of the ancient Greeks and Persians.<sup>778</sup>

Yet, Ramzī seem as though he was unsatisfied with his own response. He advanced another explanation, the theory of “high-level oral tradition”. He proposed that the ancient Turkic peoples continued to raise their traditional knowledge and manners with oral techniques. They were transmitting “the practical solutions of life, the beliefs and stories from one generation to another’, as we observe among the Arabs in the beginning of Islamic history.<sup>779</sup> Just because of the mere fact that their lifestyles, beliefs, and manners were different from what the Europeans called “civilization”, they cannot be labeled ignorant, primitive, savage, and far removed from universal-divine wisdom.<sup>780</sup>

<sup>776</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>777</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>778</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>780</sup> *Ibid.*

Besides, the Turks of ancient times employed “a practical calendar” within which they categorized the years according to the names of animals, they even marked some stars in the sky, establishing correlations between these stars and climatic events.<sup>781</sup> As an avid traveler among the Turkic tribes (including the Kazakhs), Ramzī realized the bias of Europeans. He observed that some Turkic groups in the remote steppes of Kazakhstan and elsewhere “were still using the practical traditional knowledge of their fathers to make the world meaningful”.<sup>782</sup> According to Ramzī, their humanity, their manners and ethics in social relations, had a high quality, even though they were described as “savage” (*al-waḥshī*: الوحشى) and “uncivilized” (*al-tabarbur*: التبربر) tribes by the Rusians.<sup>783</sup> If these steppe peoples are sharing what they have; believing in honor, faithfulness and brotherhood; then, why are they described as “savage”? Ramzī answered to this question:

They [i.e., western and Russian writers] have never tried to understand the original worldview of those nomadic Turks, and they have never accepted their lifestyle as they (i.e., the Turks) view it. Besides, these writers were fanatically obsessed with the “mission of western-style civilization”. Their notion of civilization is different from what we, “the others”, expect from good knowledge, generosity, high manners, and useful behavior.<sup>784</sup> ...The meaning of civilization for those writers who describe the Kazakh tribes as savages should be based on the love of money, property, a passion for profane things, and acquisition of benefits without justice and generosity. That is the Qārūn-style wealth and civilization near the Pharaoh, who did not care if the people suffered from hunger. It seems that the final destination for the son of western civilization will be suicide (*intihār*: إنتحار) because of accumulated debts and the collapse in social-human relations.<sup>785</sup>

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<sup>781</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 61-62.

<sup>782</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 62.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>784</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*

According to Ramzī, another reason why European writers called the nomadic Turks and other Eastern peoples “savage and primitive” (*wahshī*: وحشى , *hamajī*: همجى) might be the universal principle of “relativity in values and manners”.<sup>786</sup> He said that:

We should mention here a universal rule (*qā'ida kullīya*: قاعدة كلية) that the ethics, costumes, and life principles of a nation, or an ethnic or social group can be described as bad and useless by another group, even though these principles were good, practical, and beneficial for the first one.<sup>787</sup>

Ramzī thought that European authors were so arrogant and worthy of skepticism because they accused the Eastern peoples generally, and the Turks in particular, of ignorance, even though they surely must have know that Saladin (d. 1193) and other great Eastern rulers opened the roads to commercial and cultural activities without any hesitation, even in times of war and conflict.<sup>788</sup>

### 5.3. On the law of history: The will of society, the hero, and strategy

Who are actively creating history and who are disqualified? According to Ramzī, history is made by strategically-thinking<sup>789</sup> and industrious heroic leaders<sup>790</sup> who manage their

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<sup>786</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>787</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>788</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 227-228, note 1.

<sup>789</sup> For the process of thinking strategically see: *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 103.

<sup>790</sup> Regarding heroes and the necessity of heroic behavior in leaders see: *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 35-36.

nations under the social law of change which Almighty God has placed in societies,<sup>791</sup> a period of time during which many positive things can occur.<sup>792</sup> History can be written by expert scholars, intellectuals, and thinkers who may be in attendance at the side of makers of history, or perhaps struggling against them. According to Ramzī, the Turks were active makers of the history, but they did not write it very well. Instead, other authors of non-Turkic origin wrote something about them in a way which was very biased against Turks.<sup>793</sup> More than one time, Ramzī emphasized the necessity of “a leader with a cadre” who would prepare the nation to be independent, strong, and self-sufficient. His thoughts on the leader and his cadre are somehow similar to the Carlyle-style heroism of the Young Turks. However, he has also own experiences and specific ideas about leadership.

### 5.3.1. The necessity of “Will” in the time of possibilities

Ramzī mentioned the law of social change when he explained how the Arabs lost their leading position among the Muslim peoples. According to Ramzī, any change in society no matter how positive or negative, emerges first with the will (*al-irāda* الإرادة) of human beings and their actions (*al-ʿamal* العمل) towards justice or injustice in society, and in nature. Then, God takes over the task and continues the change towards the bad or the good in order to replace corrupted people or a corrupted generation. In the same way, a

<sup>791</sup> For additional details see: *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 73-74.

<sup>792</sup> For the meaning of time see: *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 304.

<sup>793</sup> For example Ramzī generally complained about what Russian and Persian historians wrote about the Turks. See: *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 179 and 228. Elsewhere Ramzī criticized some “chauvinist” Persian historians—as he called them—inasmuch as they wrote many inauthentic claims, turning a blind eye to the achievements of the Turks (Ođuz Turks) or Turkic kings and emperors. See: *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 126, 141, and 143.

blessing or a good opportunity for a people will disappear if those people change in a negative way.<sup>794</sup> Ramzī said:

We appeal to the Turks for understanding the situation of the Arabs carefully! If the Turks are not concerned with justice in everything, or deviate from justice, they will have lost what they had before, (just) as our Arab brothers had experienced earlier. The Turks should comprehend the meaning of the following Qur'ānic verse as the major rule (الأصل الأساس) for change in society: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."<sup>795</sup>

When he explains how a group of diligent people make history, he emphasized the importance of commitment, reason, knowledge, and technology. Ramzī points out in great detail the bad situation in which Muslim peoples found themselves at the time he was writing this book. For example, the following paragraph is a clear critique of some Sufi groups and passive Muslim intellectuals of his age:

They are very busy with what is empty and meaningless (*mā lā ya'nī*: ما لا يعنى) in this world. They only care about superstitions and demagoguery, as if these unnecessary things are the good features to be ethically perfect!<sup>796</sup> ...Choosing the way of no-speak, no-critique, sitting in corners without an effort for freedom, and an immense ignorance of the solutions...are not the way that reason and religion would admit! First, we should find a cure for the disease of recklessness. The enemy never dominated us only with the solid power of the military, but with the power of commitment, reason, knowledge, and technology! Indeed, we have the ability to prepare ourselves against them. Let us wake up and understand the ways in which we can retake the homeland from the hands of enemy. Please be honest! The problem will never be solved by sitting around, murmuring, and reading some newspapers. Only continuing our research, commitment, and struggle will make us free!<sup>797</sup>

<sup>794</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 73-74.

<sup>795</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 74. Here Ramzī is citing a verse from Sūra al-Ra'd (13:11).

<sup>796</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 163-164 (footnotes of Ramzī).

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*

Ramzī's notion of "time" does not have a linear path progressing in just one direction. Instead, his "time" has many surprising elements, including positive changes for those nations and groups who are disappointed now, and negative changes for the hegemonic structures and ruling classes who are comfortable now. As a member of an unhappy and oppressed community, he might want to create his own hope for the future, so he would bring out a theory of time with a positive view in order to open the door of possibility, a light from the window to the hearts of his readers. This is another factor influencing subjugated societies in the long period, with its zigzagging corners, raptures, and surprising results. Theoretically, it can create optimistic feelings towards the future, making revolutionary steps achievable, at least in the mind:

Time cannot continue (لا يدوم) in the same direction (على واحدة من جهة), of progress and development (ترقى), or impairment, degradation, and breakdown (تنزل). It is continually changing. Sometimes one group of people can make progress while another group can experience a degradation or an enormous fall, as is witnessed nowadays. God knows, the bad things and bad times can lead to the making of good things and to reaching good times. A problem may also cause a solution to other, bigger problems.<sup>798</sup>

Where did Ramzī obtain this idea? We have two different likely sources inspiring Ramzī with regard to this concept. The first is the classical notion of the time in the Qur'ān, which helps the individual to think that everything in society and state will change periodically. The possibility of change in the balance of power is one of the major dynamical social phenomena mentioned extensively in the Qur'ān. Life or time is just a long struggle, man should realize and actively contribute to it with prayer for God:

If a wound should touch you—there has already touched the opposing people a wound similar to it. And these days of varying conditions, We alternate among the people. [Sūra Āl 'Imrān, 3:140]

<sup>798</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 304

The second source is Herder's romantic philosophy of history in which time does not have a linear progressive path. Ramzī might have taken this idea from the young intellectuals around Istanbul and Kazan. According to Herder:

The spirit of change is the kernel of history, and whoever does not make it his main focus, sees human beings as trees, and consumes in history a dish of husks without a kernel, in order to ruin his stomach. The greatest historians have therefore reached their peak by taking note of this change over the course of time. People who, ignorant about history, know only their own age believe that the current taste is the only one...<sup>799</sup>

As Michael N. Forster indicates, Herder, with his view of time and history, contradicts Enlightenment authors such as Voltaire and Hume. Herder emphasized that there were radical mental differences between historical periods, and that people's concepts, beliefs, attitudes, might be differentiated from one period to another.<sup>800</sup>

However, we observe that change for Herder is a normal result of the change in fashion, physical conditions, and costumes that humans—one by one—start and finish, like a kid who was born, then became a young, then turned out to be an adult with different tastes, experiences, and manners. On the other hand, in the Qur'ān change as a social rule has an imposing character going beyond the will of one person. The Qur'ān considers the engine of change to reside in the willpower of society, but under the observation of God: “Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people, until they change what is in themselves.” (Sūra al-Ra‘d, 13:11) But once a society starts to change in a negative

<sup>799</sup> Johann Gottfried Von Herder, *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 254-255.

<sup>800</sup> Michael N. Forster, “Introduction”, *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, p. xxv.

direction, nothing can stop it until a new wave of change, a new group of people will come.

### 5.3.2. The necessity for the “Hero” to change the course of history

When it comes to heroism, we observe that Ramzī articulates in detail the importance of “the leader and the cadre” in history, with the humiliation of ordinary people. I observe that Ramzī’s approach to heroism can be interpreted by four different phenomena:

- a) a Carlyle-style 19th-century heroism as we observe in the Young Turks, who influenced Ramzī via ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm<sup>801</sup> and other figures from Istanbul.
- b) a typical “class reaction” of the élite Ramzī as a dignified scholar and a noble man from the Bikçura clan, as he would give his family tree in his book,<sup>802</sup>
- c) a Sufi-style elitism transmitted from his former speculative élitist discourse that we explained elaborately before,<sup>803</sup>
- d) an extension or reflection of traditional historiography which generally emphasized the ruler of the state, the ruling house (family members), and its close allies.<sup>804</sup>

<sup>801</sup> With the initiative of Ibrāhīm, Ramzī met with Ferid Efendi, a member of the Committee of Union and Progress in 1909 in a small house meeting. See: Abdurresīd İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, ed. Özalp, vol. 2, pp. 490-492.

<sup>802</sup> See for Ramzī’s ancestors and his nobility: Ramzī, *Talḥīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 339-340.

<sup>803</sup> See Chapter 4 in this dissertation concerning élitist Sufi discourse.

<sup>804</sup> The traditional court historians/chroniclers (وقعه نویسندگان) had to glorify the ruler, the ruler’s house (خاندان), and the élite persons around the palace. Many books, such as the biography of Timur (*Zafarnama*) by Yazdī, are concentrated on the ruler and the cadre around him.



I observe all these factors might have influenced his approach to heroism in different ways. According to Ramzī, the leader with a small active group or “clique” can make history, changing the fate of a nation. Without such qualified leaders, a nation can collapse in its historical life. In any case, the historiographer of the future will talk about this small active group and its leader who would shape its history. Ramzī says:

For the craftsmen writing history, it is necessary to put forward the good qualities of a leader, or the members of the leading group, who were the main reason for the emergence of a nation, or the establishment of a state, in order to show what they did before and how they can be followed by others in the future. It is also necessary to uncover the bad qualities of a person or group who became the major obstacle in front of a nation, leading to the collapse of that nation, in order to warn sane readers against the same bad features they may find around them.<sup>805</sup>

As a natural result of “hero worship”, Ramzī continuously humiliates ordinary people (*awāmm*: عوام) as ignorant (*jāhil*: جاهل), dull, and blunt.<sup>806</sup> I am not sure if it was his general position toward the people on the streets, or if he was sending here some hidden, subtle messages (i.e., his arrows of satire) to his colleagues and contemporary authors who denied Ramzī’s superiority in language and culture, such as the Tatar poet Abdullah Tukay<sup>807</sup> or the great scholar Mūsā Jārullāh Bigiyev against whom Ramzī wrote refutations.<sup>808</sup>

Ramzī pointed out his noble lineage in his book. Mentioning a famous noble scholar called ‘Abd al-raḥmān ibn Toy Muḥammad of Bik-chūrā, Ramzī laid out his

<sup>805</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 35.

<sup>806</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 124.

<sup>807</sup> See for Tuqay’s satire on Ramzī: D. Garifullin, “Morat Remzi—Bikchura Khan Onıgı”, *Gasırlar avazı—Ekho vekov*, no. 1/2 (2001), pp. 223-227.

<sup>808</sup> See: See: Muḥammad Murād Mekki, “Mūsā’ga Mekke Polemiti”, *Dīn ve Ma’īshat* (1909), no. 30, pp. 467-469.

family tree. His ancestors were a noble family called the “Sons of Bik-chūrā Khan”, who was the ruler of the Muslim Bulghar state which was a part of the Golden Horde when Tamerlane (Timur) went there and killed him around the end of the 14th century.<sup>809</sup> However, the members of the Bik-chūrā clan continued to rule a vast area between the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea. Ramzī records his family tree as following: Murādullāh (Murād Ramzī), son of Bahādur Shāh ‘Abdullāh, son of ‘Ādil Shāh, son of Ishāq, son of Tuñālbāy, son of Yani Urus, son of Mirzāqūl, son of Baghlāy, son of Mirdāsh, son of Mamaj, son of Marqa, son of ‘Abdullāh Bek, son of Bikchūrā (Bikçura) Khan.<sup>810</sup>

In my view, Ramzī wanted to say that he would be a member of a selected cadre around a charismatic leader who would start a long term resistance movement. This would not be just a cultural movement related to the traditional values of family, religion, folklore, or ethics, but also a political one related to the rights of citizens, freedom, and autonomy.

Ramzī revealed his innermost thoughts when he talked about the oppressed peoples of Russia. He made more than once a “wake up call” to start an appropriate resistance. When we carefully read some parts of his book, we clearly understand why this book was censored by the Russian regime:

Today’s Tatars and other Turkic tribes under Russian rule are living in bad conditions. This insulting bondage had such an immense negative impact that they even forgot to call for their fundamental rights, such as human (*al-basharī*: البشري), civil (*al-madanī*: المدني) civic (*al-waṭanī*: الوطني), and personal (*al-shakhṣī*: الشخصي) ones. If they do not wake up as soon as possible, they will have never the

<sup>809</sup> Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and “Bulghar” Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 79-89 and 135.

<sup>810</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 339-340. Ramzī’s Arabic usage carries some elements of Arabic-Ottoman intellectuals of the late Ottoman era. They employed the term *millat* in the place of *qawm* ‘nation’. However, if he wanted to emphasize specifically ethnic roots, he used *qawm*.

same rights and conditions as the other modern nations of today, such as the freedom of religion, national unity (*al-ittihād al-millīya*: الإتحاد الملية), and national independence.<sup>811</sup>

As a member of this expected cadre, Ramzī's passion would be hot and his vision looked like it covered all captive Muslim peoples under Russian rule. With the leader and cadre we see another two notions that Ramzī emphasized extensively: pure religious zeal and a great love for homeland. He wanted them to unite and establish a “modern state structure” without being ashamed of having warlike ancestors, the old Tatars. He says:

The people of Dagestan, the people of Crimea, the people of Kazan, the people of Turkistan, the people of Transoxania (*Mā warā al-nahr*: ما وراء النهر) [approximately modern-day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and southwestern Kazakhstan] and the people of Khorezm! If all these peoples start a mutiny at the same time, with a robust alliance, throwing back all separatist ideas, under one leader, they will, of course, get back their religious and national rights! In order to struggle for this great goal, they need to have pure religious zeal and a great love for the home (i.e., homeland)! I wish I could see a brave man, a hero who has never forgotten his fathers, raising the flag and shouting among the crowds: “I will request my right, and I will take it by weapons and grenades!” Then millions of lions would follow him!<sup>812</sup>

### 5.3.3. The necessity of “strategy” in crucial moments

When it comes to foresight, strategy, and wisdom in process of making history, Ramzī repeated the importance of these features whenever he talked about the fate of nations. For example, he emphasized these principles again when he warned the Muslim Turkic peoples of the possibility of greater loss in the future. According to him, bravery, aggressiveness, or savage violence are not a solution when rational ways of resistance are not followed, with a strategically-thinking mind:

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 260-261.

<sup>812</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 261.

I do admit the accuracy of this statement: Just because of the fact that the Turkic peoples (الأقوام التركيّة) have a phenomenal bravery, we do not consider them to have enough precaution, strategy, and consideration of results (نظرة الى عواقب (الأمور). It is true that the bravery is not enough. We also need wisdom, strategy, foresight, and good decisions. Wake up and observe how the Western colonialist empires, the British and the Dutch, do what they do in the world!<sup>813</sup>

After a theoretical oratory about strategy and wisdom, Ramzī presented his idea and gave many examples of how the course of history could change at the right time with the right decisions of smart and successful leaders, or how it could not. In this context, he analyzed with sadness the results of the Siege of Kazan (1552), with the help of the explanation of the Ottoman historian Ahmed Cevdet Paşa:

When Kazan fell into the hands of Ivan the Terrible (1552), there were two great Muslim rulers who could help the Muslims of Kazan. The first was Sultan Suleyman of the Ottoman Empire, who unfortunately was confused by the demagoguery of his ministers who talked about the weakness of the Russians, or the possible power struggle between the Crimean Khanate and Khanate of Kazan, in the case of Ottoman aid to the Khanate of Kazan. Therefore, Suleyman could not understand the importance of the Siege of Kazan. The other Muslim ruler was Muḥammadyār Khan from the Shaybānī Uzbeks. He either could not realize seriously what was going on around Kazan, or he was not concerned with this great loss.<sup>814</sup>

Ramzī interestingly emphasized the strategic importance of nationalist unity, even (anachronistically) for that age. According to Ramzī, nobody considered—at that time—the positive result of a possible “nationalist alliance” (اتّحاد القوميّة) among all the Muslim Turkic peoples against “the dangers” around them, i.e. the rising new Russian power.<sup>815</sup>

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 103.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 102-103.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 102.

Ramzī thought that the lack of a strategy, and the psychology of relaxation with small tactical steps, meant that the end of Muslim Turkic rule in Asia was inevitable. He said:

Finally, the Russians slowly grew and defeated all the Turkic groups around them, when the latter (i.e., the Turkic groups) played a game of ambush and attack, just to get short-term achievements. It was not a good situation!<sup>816</sup>

Ramzī's discourse on strategy, causality, and precautions was full of new notions and approaches that reformist scholars, the Jadīdist authors, could easily employ. According to Ramzī, the Russians imagined that they would have an easy victory against Japan (i.e., during the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese war) with just the prayers of the Orthodox clerics and saints. Therefore, they came to the battlefield with "pictures of saints and big crosses", then, they suffered a very humiliating defeat.<sup>817</sup> Ramzī observed that the Japanese government was preparing for this war with the help of new technology, strategic coordination (*al-tansīqāt*: التنسيقات), and new media, not just with religious zeal or fanaticism (*ta 'aṣṣub*: التعصب).<sup>818</sup> According to Ramzī, the Japanese officials made the people wake up with the help of smart announcements, appropriate knowledge, and new military equipment. They did not play with "religious fanaticism" or other inappropriate ways for a serious war in which only good tactics, strategy, technology, and commitment would be decisive factors.<sup>819</sup>

<sup>816</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 102.

<sup>817</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 288-289.

<sup>818</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>819</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 5.4. On the practice and theory of history

The Ramzī of *Talfīq al-akhbār* tried to develop a practice, a technique for the process of writing history. In fact, he was not a professional historian, but rather a writer and translator. He was applying the evaluation of historical persons to the evaluation of historical texts, as we observe in the case of Sirhindī.<sup>820</sup> If we go deeper, we will see a similar method in Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq's translations, which were not very different from the modern methods of producing critical editions. Ḥunayn was collecting "as many Greek manuscripts as possible" and assembling them in order to get "a sound textual basis" for his translations.<sup>821</sup>

Ramzī divided his book into two parts. The first part is not a modern-style historical work based on different documents, accounts, and material evidence that would be collected and interpreted with the help of various social sciences, like economy and sociology, as we see in the French "Annales School".<sup>822</sup> It is also not a historical work supported with meticulously organized documents, archive record, as we see in the German school of history,<sup>823</sup> even though Ramzī somehow "wished" it could be that,

<sup>820</sup> See the section on Sirhindī where I compared Ramzī's technique to the textual critique of Schleiermacher. See also his own text: Ramzī, *Tarjamat Aḥwāl al-Imām Rabbānī*, pp. 3-5.

<sup>821</sup> G. Strohmaier, "Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq Al-'Ibādī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), pp. 579-581, especially the first paragraph of the second column on p. 579.

<sup>822</sup> For a good survey on the Annales School see: Michael Harsgor, "Total History: The Annales School", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Jan., 1978), pp. 1-13. One of the most famous historians from this school was Fernand Braudel, author of *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen l'époque de Philippe II* in 1949. See for a work of his translated into Turkish: Fernand Braudel, *Akdeniz İnsanlar ve Miras (La méditerranée: Les hommes et l'héritage)*, trans. Aykut Derman (Istanbul: Metis Yayıncılık, 1991).

<sup>823</sup> I mean here the school of history that was formed by the influential ideas of the German historian Leopold von Ranke (d. 1886). Starting with Auguste Comte (d. 1857), the notion of "certainty" in the social sciences brought the change in the perception of history. Moving with this positivist understanding of science, Ranke saw the history as clear and openly transferred definite thing. Even though Ranke's

even though he knew that it was impossible. However, this part is a great work based on a reading of different texts from late medieval works, comparing these texts with each other, and, finally, reestablishing the most reasonable narrative in a proper way, with a final interpretation. We will explain this point.

The second part is different. It still has many texts, sentences, and statements quoted from other books. However, with the help personal accounts,<sup>824</sup> documents, and texts translated from Russian and Tatar newspapers concerning the latest events<sup>825</sup> which he collected and organized, Ramzī creates an indispensable “working history” for any researcher of Tatar, Bashkort, and Kazakh culture and Sufism around the Volga-Ural region and Kazakh steppes<sup>826</sup> in the late 19th century-early 20th centuries.

Ramzī, in *Talfīq al-akhbār*, especially in the first part: a) wanted to comprehend “the inner side” of historical events recorded in the old texts relying upon its own textual integrity, b) then he tried to understand the rumors and impressions recorded in other texts about the same event, c) finally, he gave his own personal interpretation to reconstruct the event. In another word, his practical effort was based on three steps:

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method stayed influential in practice, his empiricism is regarded as outmoded and was criticized by Braudel and his colleagues. See: Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), pp. 5-6.

<sup>824</sup> For example he talked about a letter that some scholars from Kazan sent to Mecca in order to solve the problem pertaining to the pilgrimage. Ramzī mediated for this letter. Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 246-247.

<sup>825</sup> See for the documents and letters between Nikolay Il’minski and Konstantin Petrovich Pobyedonostsyev: *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 226-231.

<sup>826</sup> For example, his accounts on Kenesari, Siddiq Töre Khan, etc. with some beautiful Turkic poems are very important. See: *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 450-460.

- 1.) Mention first the recorded event, written anecdotes, stories told, rumored news, and attributed features, no matter whether it was sound or weak.
- 2.) Compare carefully the different or contradictory versions.
- 3.) Finally make an evaluation, reconciliation, or reconstruction, using the special words *qultu*, *aqūlu* or *al-ḥāṣil* (قلت، الحاصل، أقول) which means “Finally, as a result, I am saying, thinking, concluding that...”<sup>827</sup>

After a painstakingly long experience reading his book (1300 pages), I concluded that the final evaluations of Ramzī for any event turned out to be the first roughly-constructed parts of his history. At the end of the day, he was employing these small particulars in order to construct the final version of his discourse, the metanarrative by which he articulated his unique logic for history.

The introduction of the book indicates that history was a “mission impossible” for Ramzī. Therefore, he tried only to find reasonable solutions and practical fruits. As we will explain, history was an impossible mission in terms of both the material engaged in the construction and the active mind constructing it. I offer a metaphor for Ramzī’s notion of history: It was similar to the construction of a home with loosely accumulated solid old bricks. However, as the family needs a home, the nation also needs a history that would be written, or constructed, for it, no matter whether it is weak or strong. I am adding the word of “weak” here inasmuch as Ramzī himself never believed in exact certainty in history. Therefore, he tried to construct his discourse based on the values of reasonability and practicality. With this unique view, he is to be differentiated from many

<sup>827</sup> Ramzī employed these three steps in almost all contested problematic issues in history. See as an example: *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 87-88 concerning Avar—Tu-kyu [Türk] relations, and pp. 91-92 concerning Afrasiyab and Faraydun, etc.



old scholars, “scientific historians”, and “document worshippers” who approach history as an exact science comparable to math or physics.<sup>828</sup> He was conscious of what he did; so, he knew that he was “constructing” a history. In this sense, his notion of history was close to what Edward Hallett Carr articulated in his famous essay “What is History?”:

The historian and the facts of history are necessary to one another. The historian without his facts is rootless and futile; the facts without their historian are dead and meaningless. My first answer therefore to the question “What is history?” is that it is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.<sup>829</sup>

Ramzī thought that history first needs *naql* (نقل). *Naql* means the ‘thing transmitted from the past’, such as a written event, a narrated legend, a story recorded in books or in documents which were transmitted from the age, time, or period in which the historical event occurred. Even though it might carry some weakness, mistakes, or corruption, the possibility of mistakes or misunderstandings cannot lead to a total inferiority in the notion of history. These narrated, recorded and transmitted things are still very important to construct a history. Ramzī says:

Indeed, the true foundation of the discipline of history (علم التاريخ) is the thing transmitted (النقل) from the past. In the first step, there is no way to speculation of the mind, except some situations in which two transmitted variations, or narratives-at least-may confront to each other. For these kinds of situations, I try to find a reasonable reconciliation as much as I can. However, because I do not have enough devices, documents or evidence, please do not criticize me if I miss, neglect, or do not mention something that you capture or realize in other sources.<sup>830</sup> ...As the scholars and men of letters may observe, the discipline of history is still counted among the speculative disciplines within which accuracy,

<sup>828</sup> Of course, after Heisenberg’s critiques and Thomas Kuhn’s contributions (i.e., *The structure of scientific revolutions*) there is no need-even-to talk about the discourse of “solid unchangeable science”.

<sup>829</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, ed. R. W. Davies, *What is History?*, Second Edition (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985), p. 30.

<sup>830</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, p. 27.

truth, or certainty are really rare. Furthermore, it is said that the truth may totally be lost in some situations. For example, think about the news about a current event, the event of “Now”. Despite the fact that they have no doubt on the major frame of that event, they cannot cover everything in the event which is occurring with details, since the transmitters, recorders, or reporters (المحرّر ، الضابط) are still some narrators whose witnesses cannot comprehend the whole truth, the exact certainty in the event. If the current event of “Now” is infected with these kinds of problems of uncertainty, what about events from the past? Of course, there might be many problematic issues, such as misunderstanding, misleading, and mispronunciation in the process of transmission of a line, or a problem in translation for the record related to the past event over a thousand years. However, the possibility of changes, mistakes, or misunderstandings cannot cause an impairment or inferiority in the notion of history.<sup>831</sup>

In any case, the historian should seek a coherence in the events in a realistic way. It means the historian must follow the principles of objectivity, honesty, realism, and rationalism as much as he/she can. Before, he talked about the weakness of the record, the narrated thing, and its inevitable results on the constructed history. Now he is talking about the personal weakness of the historian, his mind, his approach to a certain group or doctrine that would make him/her blind. That is another point making history a “mission impossible” again:

Of course, the art of history should be based also—as much as possible—on the record of what happened as it happened, with the evidence provided in hand, and the scale of reason in its place, without bias toward one ethnic group or hostility to another, to the extent possible.<sup>832</sup>

Ramzī gives a long “discourse”, literally a long discourse about reality, verifiability, correctness, coherence, and comparison as the major causes to make a history project successful, reasonable, and believable. He put forth different variations

<sup>831</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 31.

<sup>832</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 35.

pertaining to the history of the Bashkort and Magyar (i.e., Hungarian) ethnic groups just to show how a historian can reach “a reasonable” truth concerning an event, or to correct the wrong spelling of a historical name, and, finally, how he reconstructed the event at a new level.

When it comes to critique of old sources, Ramzī argued that many events in history would not be verifiable with regard to the details. However, he never claimed that history was only a big lie. Instead, he tried to establish a “realism” or “a discourse of realism” beyond what many ordinary medieval historians could offer. With this logic, he criticized some Ottoman, Arab, Persian, and Russian historians. He exposed many faults and problems of verifiability in the narratives of Ottoman historians, accusing them of possibly being influenced by Arab legends or hearsay, even though he has a great sympathy to the Ottoman Empire, which was the last protector of Muslim peoples.<sup>833</sup> He utilized many Arab historians in his book, but he also severely criticized some classical Arab authors, emphasizing the method of Ibn Khaldūn in history with a stress on the “rational inference that is appropriate to the event which is occurring” (المحاكمة العقلية) (المطابقة بنفس الامر).<sup>834</sup>

Ramzī also severely criticized some Persian authors, accusing them of exaggeration in their narratives related to the greatness of Persia,<sup>835</sup> even though he loved the Persian language and culture and used it extensively. Furthermore, he translated books from Persian language and considered many ancient Persian kings to be just and

<sup>833</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 41-42.

<sup>834</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 120.

<sup>835</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 118.

generous, such as Nūshiravān. He also denied many narratives about the invasion campaigns of the ancient Arab kings of Ḥimyar and Tubbaʿ against Persia, Khazaria (around the Caspian Sea), Samarqand, and Tibet.<sup>836</sup> According to Ramzī, these widespread, exaggerated irrational narratives were transmitted to subsequent historians with the help of famous Arab authors such as Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) and ʿAlī Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī (d. 956) with a lack of evidence.<sup>837</sup> Even though he quoted many sentences from Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233), he also criticized him in many ways.<sup>838</sup>

When it comes to making comparisons, we should admit that he made fruitful analyses among the different historical texts or historical narratives in order to create a reliable version. He tried to get a reasonable result among the various narratives of wars between the ancient Turkic armies and the ancient Persian Empire, Fīrūz Shāh and the Haiṭals, as he said. He compared different texts from old Arabic and Persian books and made immense effort to shed light on the origins of the names *Heftālit* (هفتالت) and *Hayṭal* (هيطل).<sup>839</sup> Also he tried to illuminate the origins of local geographical names in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan.<sup>840</sup> He compared Abū al-Faraj of Malatya (Gregory Abū al-Faraj, also known as Bar Hebraeus, d. 1286) to historians who were his contemporaries

<sup>836</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 119-120.

<sup>837</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 120.

<sup>838</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 120-126.

<sup>839</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 112-119.

<sup>840</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 122-123.

and criticized him in a careful manner.<sup>841</sup> Ramzī was also involved in a discussion about different versions of the etymology of the names *Bashqort* (i.e. the Bashkorts) and *Magyar* (i.e., Hungarians).<sup>842</sup> He concluded that Mīsher (ميشر), Majar (مجر), Machar (مجر), Bāshghurt (باشغرت), Bashqurd (باشقرد), Maj'ghard (مجغر), and Bashgard (باشگرد) in the Arab geographic works of the classical age were indicative of the single ethnic origin of a Turkic tribal confederation expanding from Volga Bulgaria to Hungary of today.<sup>843</sup>

Finally, Ramzī clearly mentioned, in a modest tone, that he would expect the future generations of his nation to undertake the mission of history with even more detailed and more expert works. He thought that the impossible mission would become possible in the hands of new generations who would study in western-style universities:

... As a lone author, I do not expect my work to be perfect, but I think it is a good beginning for the next generations who will write a solid and more reasonable historical works about the Turks. We hope that a new generation of Turkic-Tatar scholars will study in the European schools through the help of wealthy persons from our nation (*min qawminā*: من قومنا), and I hope they will pen more qualified works.<sup>844</sup>

#### 5.4.1. A history for the Turks

Under the influence of the famous book *Shajara-i Turk* (شجرهء ترك) by Abū al-Ghāzī Bahādur Khan (d. 1663), Ramzī accepts the term “Turk” (ترك، الأتراك) as a common ancestral name for all the Turkic (and even for some turkified Mongolic) tribes, peoples,

<sup>841</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 355-356.

<sup>842</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 240.

<sup>843</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 240-241.

<sup>844</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 146.

and groups in Asia.<sup>845</sup> Tatar (تتار) is another important term which he employed broadly for the large Turkic tribal unions which were formed during or after the invasions under Chingiz Khan (d. 1227) around their territories of central, northern, and western Asia.<sup>846</sup> He also mentioned properly almost all well-known Turkic tribal, local, and ethnic groups with their specific names, such as Bashkort, Mishar, Kazan Tatar, Kazakh, Uzbek under the larger umbrella of “Turk”. We do not offer any final judgement concerning how he was oriented in his choice of the names of “Turks” and “Tatars” and how he developed a “naming principle” here; but we may infer that his mind was shaped under pressure of two different factors:

- 1) the tradition of naming among the classical Arabic and Persian authors and the subsequent contributions of some classical Turkic authors such as Abū al-Ghāzī Bahādur Khan, and
- 2) the logic of the newly-developed field of Turkology in the late decades of the 19th century.

I do not mention here Marjānī’s role in advocating the name “Tatar”, inasmuch as Ramzī’s construction of the nation was more complex and developed. It is also different from what Marjānī said, even though Ramzī might have been influenced by him. Nor do I enter into a discussion of other topics such as Bulgharism and Marrism in the Volga-Ural

<sup>845</sup> Ramzī acknowledged “Turk” as the correct term for the ancestral ethnic name for all Turkic tribes and groups. Therefore, he started his long inquiry with the first title of “on the origin of the Turks”. See: *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 31-32, 36-38, and 44-52.

<sup>846</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 228-229 and 347-349. He clearly called the first campaign of Chingisid unified army on the Yuri Khan b. Köñçek Khan, the Kıpçak Prince, around 1224 as “the emergence of the Tatar in the north west”. Even though he mentioned an ancient tribe called Tatar around Mongolia, his general usage of Tatar is for the large tribal organizations inherited from the age of Chingiz Khan.

region, inasmuch as it was handled elaborately by Uyama Tomohiko.<sup>847</sup> Shortly speaking, Ramzī gave a high priority to the notion of “the Turk.” For Ramzī, the “Turk” is strategically essential for the security and applicability of his history, whereas other names only reflect some historical changes or local colors and branches. “Turk”, as an umbrella term, was also very important against the Russian imperial thesis. Now, let us analyze these two factors.

As Ramzī clearly explained, the name “Turk” (ترك) was used extensively, generalized, and spread by classical Arabic and Persian writers for the immense immigration of commanders, rulers, warlords, and slave soldiers from Central Asia to the Middle East.<sup>848</sup> The Arabs slowly realized the difference between Turks and Mongols, but the distinction continued to remain unclear with regard to the term “Tatar”.<sup>849</sup> Ramzī must have been influenced by classical Islamic sources when he generalized the name “Turk”, even though he criticized some “unwanted details” in those old sources.

When it comes to the influence of late 19th century Turkology on Ramzī’s “naming principle”, we can say that he must have been aware of some developments in the academic field of Turkology at the end of the 19th century. For example, he knew personally Arminius Vámbéry (d. 1913), the Hungarian Turkologist, and gave him as a

<sup>847</sup> Uyama Tomohiko, “From ‘Bulgharism’ through ‘Marrism’ to Nationalist Myths: Discourses on the Tatar, the Chuvash and the Bashkir Ethnogenesis”, *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, vol. 19 (2002), pp. 163-190, especially pp. 164-166.

<sup>848</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 34-35.

<sup>849</sup> As we will talk in the section on “the critiques that led Ramzī to write history”, Ramzī said: “I wish these Arabs could be satisfied and relaxed only with the blaming Mongols and so-called Tatars mentioned in the old books. However, through ignorance of the science of ethnography and genealogy, they went beyond that.” See: *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 35.

gift a personally-signed copy of his book *Talfīq al-akhbār*.<sup>850</sup> Now we may venture into speculation: Ramzī might have become influenced by a certain tendency in late 19th-century Turkology towards “politics” rather than towards Turkology as a “science”<sup>851</sup> in order to develop a strong counterattack against Russian historiography or against any discourse operating to remove the common name of the Turks from Turkic-speaking groups such as the Kazan Tatars, Bashkorts, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Turkmen, and others in the Russian Empire. Ramzī might have reasoned along this line: If the Russian imperial discourse would succeed in the theory of totally dividing up the Turkic peoples with the aid of official education and scholarly “teachings” (the engine of “canon”), it would be easier for them to pacify the Turkic structures at the limits of geographic boundaries with the revival of old internal, local disputes. Therefore, Ramzī strategically prepared his counter discourse, pushing the name of “Turk” to include many different groups with names of subdivisions, collecting them all under one umbrella.

I think Ramzī’s severe critique of Il’minsky’s alphabet project was based on the same concern. He called Il’minsky “the most dangerous enemy” of the Muslim Turkic peoples and “the Pharaoh of this people”, inasmuch as the latter would successfully neutralize the Islamic heritage of the Turkic Muslims with the help of his alphabet project, and cunningly create great separations among the ethnically-related groups.<sup>852</sup>

<sup>850</sup> Il’ya Zaytsev, “Murad Ramzi i Arminiy Vamberi”, *Gasırlar Avazı-Ekho Vekov*, no. 3/4 (2001).

<sup>851</sup> Some researchers think that the Turkology, as a sub-branch of Oriental studies, has played a significant political role in the invention of Turkish nationalism. See: Taner Timur, *Osmanlı Kimliği*, 4th edition (Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 2000), pp. 140-173. It is a remarkable analysis. However, I would argue that any social science was developed under the influence of politics or social and/or religious factors. Taner Timur’s doubt is reasonable, but nothing is pristine or pure among the social sciences.

<sup>852</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 226-231.



Il'minsky's alphabet policy continued its life in the time of Lenin and Stalin, with the only difference being the fact that the Russian Orthodox faith was now replaced with Socialism.<sup>853</sup>

For the process of term adoption or invention in Ramzī's mind, I offer the metaphor of “a new baby with old pants”, inasmuch as he starts to express his new feelings concerning nationalism with the help of old words and terms excerpted from the classical books of Islamic culture. For example, he started to employ *al-waṭan* (الوطن)<sup>854</sup> ‘homeland’ and other old terms infused with new meanings such as “national territory” and “country”. As a result, these words were uprooted from the old epistemological base, the former religious or Sufi base and were then relocated to the new epistemological base. This is the slow process of an epistemological break, as we explained earlier.

Generally speaking, the notion of “nation” in Ramzī's new discourse is represented with romantic egalitarian pastoralism<sup>855</sup> blended with his unique realism<sup>856</sup> and a sharp ecological view that he repeatedly emphasized, especially when he was talking about the beautiful natural resources of his homeland.<sup>857</sup>

The nationalism of Ramzī is decorated with idyllic descriptions of the nomadic Turkic peoples living in the Central Asian and Siberian steppes. Ramzī compared this pristine atmosphere to the modern, complex structure of European cities in order to show

<sup>853</sup> Isabelle Kreindler, “A Neglected Source of Lenin's Nationality Policy”, *Slavic Review*, vol. 36, no. 1 (March, 1977), pp. 86-100.

<sup>854</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 22.

<sup>855</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 22-25.

<sup>856</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 103.

<sup>857</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 21-22.

how the “spiritual” and “environmental” conditions (honesty and healthiness) of the Turkic nomads were superior to the standards of the Europeans, who lived in “filthy”, “dark”, and “crowded” cities.<sup>858</sup> Perhaps, he received some inspiration from İsmail Gasprinsky when he made these comparisons.<sup>859</sup> Ramzī presents the nomadic lives of the Kazakhs and Kirghiz tribes as an ideal style of freemen in the ideal free land of the green steppes.<sup>860</sup> This is little bit similar to the romantic nationalism of Herder. Ramzī might be influenced by Herder via the Young Turks or nationalist Tatar intellectuals:

Because the human is keen to learn everything about his/her country (i.e., fatherland) with a fervent desire to know the documents and news about the sons of his/her own race (*abnā'i jinsihī*: أبناء جنسه) as a patriotic zeal and a humanistic virtue, even as a basic instinct, I have had a great enthusiasm for reading the history of Kazan, Bulghar, and other northern Turkic regions, since I understood the difference between the north and south, the valuable and worthless, the complete and deficient, the star and crescent.<sup>861</sup>

He explained love for “the nation” and “the sons of the same race” through various statements established on both premodern and modern-style argumentations. Ramzī’s love for the fatherland and its history can remind us of some paragraphs in Herder when he described the love of fatherland as a notion connected to the home:

Our first fatherland, therefore, is the father’s house, a father’s field. It is in this small society that the first and foremost friends of the fatherland live, the land of our early youth lives, Let the soil or climate be what it may: the soul yearns to

<sup>858</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 45-46.

<sup>859</sup> See: İsmâ’il Gasprinski, *Ceride-i Tercüman Muḥarriri Bağcesarâyılı, Avrupa Medeniyetine Bir Nazar-ı Muvazene* [A Balanced Appraisal of European Civilization] (Kostantiniye [Istanbul]: Matbaa-yı Ebüzziya, 1302 AH [1885 AD]), pp. 1, 11-12, and 18-19.

<sup>860</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 46-47.

<sup>861</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 22-23.

return there...<sup>862</sup> Physically, we praise the location of a place whose healthy air is good for our body and spirits; morally, we consider ourselves to be happy in a state where under a lawful freedom and security we do not make ourselves blush, where we do not waste our efforts, where we and those dear to us are not abandoned but are free to do all our duties as worthy, active sons of the fatherland who are recognized and rewarded in the eyes of the mother.<sup>863</sup>

Despite the fact that Ramzī's description of the fatherland with its beauty and honesty can remind us of Herder, the latter mentioned the love of homeland in the context of the old Greeks and Romans. As a counterpoint to western-style life, Ramzī's image of the homeland would not be consistent with that of European cities, neither historically nor in the modern sense. Furthermore, Ramzī's homeland had to be superior to the modern cities of Europe:

Whoever is badly influenced by dirt and disease in large cities such as Petersburg, Paris, and Berlin, and has never found a cure in the hands of the modern doctors, will just run to these green steppes in order to breathe fresh air. They will stay here, drinking the mare's milk and *qimizz* (قمز), the major nutritional elements for nomads, in order to sustain a full, healthy life.<sup>864</sup>

It is also remarkable that Ramzī "the nationalist historian" does not seem overly concerned by the discussion of *qımız* from which he should have abstained, inasmuch as *qımız* can make the drinker *mestâne* 'intoxicated', something about which some religious scholars warned.

<sup>862</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Another philosophy of history and selected political writings*, edited and trans. Ioannis D. Evrigenis and Daniel Pellerin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), p. 110.

<sup>863</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>864</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 22-23. *Kımız* (or "Kumiss" in English) is a fermented beverage produced from mare's milk. In the late 19th century *kımız* became very famous among European health magazines. We see some funny explanations about it: "Scientific research has fully confirmed the favorable influence of this beverage on their health, chemical analysis has given the explanation of this influence." See: A. Meyers, *A Treatise on Koumiss or Milk Champagne* (San Francisco: Spaulding & Barto, Steam Book and Job Printers, 1877)v, p. 2.

Ramzî must have also been involved in the general tendency of late 19th century romantic nationalist Turkic and Turkish authors who promoted egalitarianism, pure pastoral life, and natural education under the influence of western thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (d. 1778), the author of *Émile*.<sup>865</sup> However, we should ask who might have been the bridge, the transmitter of these ideas to Ramzî. Who emphasized the justice, equality, and value of labor among the Tatars? In this regard, it appears that İsmail Gasprinsky, the leading author of Jadīdist discourse, might have influenced Ramzî.

First, we read Ramzî's words:

You should know that a Turkic nomad does not have the indecency or cheapness that an ordinary European man has. A European is slowly engaged in (forms of) bad behavior, with his immense love of money, gold, soft dress, inferior passions, and sins. On the other hand, a nomadic Turkic man, woman, boy or girl, can be confined to meat, milk, and animal fur, fishing in lakes, and drinking from pristine streams. They bond together with other nomadic neighbors against the harsh circumstances of nature that make them happy, strong, and honest! Whoever can compare these two lifestyles will not hesitate to decide that the nomadic Turks are happier and more satisfied than the European urban snobs! We know also that one man's success and wealth in a European city may cost one thousand poor men their sweat and blood. However, the members of Turkic nomadic groups have almost equal shares of the requirements for life, even though some of them are rich in terms of animals and pasturage. Besides, the rich nomads always tend to share their meals by preparing annual and seasonal feasts for poorer nomads. They may feel ashamed if they cannot help the poor.<sup>866</sup>

Then we read İsmail Gasprinsky, who analyzed the problems of 19th century western civilization in his famous booklet *A Balanced Appraisal of European*

<sup>865</sup> Rousseau describes a system of education for "the natural man" to survive in "corrupt society". He employs "Émile" to show how a natural kid should be cultivated. Rousseau was a well-known thinker among the late Ottoman authors. *Émile* was translated by Ziya Pasha (Abdul Hamid Ziyaeddin, d. 1880), a leading member of the reformist group known as the "Young Ottomans". See: Ebüzziya Tevfik, *Numune-i edebiyat-ı Osmaniye* (Kostantiniyye [Istanbul]: Matbaa-i Ebuzziya, 1890), pp. 282-285. As Hanioglu writes: "The Young Ottomans attempted to reconcile Islamic concepts of government with the ideas of Montesquieu, Danton, Rousseau." See: Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, p. 104.

<sup>866</sup> Ramzî, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 45-47.

*Civilization*, discussing topics such as inequality, the poor working conditions of laborers, and the dirty and unhealthy living conditions of the poor in European cities. I offer below a summarized version of his statements:

I do not deny their schools of the arts and universities, with philosophers, poets, and great scholars. However, I articulate that ten thousand workers live in very bad conditions, without basic human rights under the control of one rich man. That is why I do not accept this lifestyle. Let us go to Paris or London in a virtual journey and see what happens there. A beautiful building in London under the ownership of one rich man... We go down and see who live in the basement... All the rooms are filled with miserable men: the walls are wet, inside the rooms are so filthy and stinky that your nose cannot inhale anything there! There is no fresh air, no light! Because of the noises coming from outside, your ear cannot work here! Because of the rudeness you hear and the shit you see there, your conscience (i.e., common sense) revolts against you! The family of “the Upper Floor” has a property equivalent to one big village, a fortune of 5-10 million rubles, whereas the 200-300 men of “the Basement” have no pillow on which to lay their head, no quilt with which to cover themselves, no glass of water to drink! That is the biggest problem in Europe, and, perhaps, in the world. It will be the cause of major social unrest and revolutions and socialism in the future!<sup>867</sup>

When it comes to history as a project for social engineering of a new society, Ramzî consciously emphasizes the influence of history on the beliefs, attitudes, and culture of young men. He explains the central role of historians and politicians who would be social engineers of the new society, with “correction of views in the community and coordination of the orders given by the state”. Of course, historians should be storytellers who boost pride in the exhausted hearts of younger generations, remembering victorious times from the past:

The discipline of history is so important that the past can be enlightened only with the help of it. Only through it can nations’ deeds be compared and deeply comprehended. Only through it can the tyranny or justice of the ruling class of a state be understood. Only through it can wisdom or foolishness in politics be realized. Only through it can the sleeper wake up and relieve the sleepwalker.

<sup>867</sup> See: İsmâ’il Gasprinski, *Avrupa Medeniyetine Bir Nazar-ı Muvazene*, pp. 1, 11-12, and 18-19.

Only through it can the views of the community or the nation be corrected. Only through it can order in the state be coordinated, even knowledge about politics. Only through it can the beauty of justice and the ugliness of brutalism be realized among the members of humanity. Only through an enthusiasm for history can a high level of consciousness towards the past be achieved. Only through it can a sad man be relieved from his burdens. Only through it can a pioneer in science and politics be known. Only through it, can the fierceness of warriors and the courage of brave men be measurable.<sup>868</sup>

Ramzī thought that the people of the Volga-Ural region did not comprehend adequately the importance of the discipline of history. He believed that the magnitude of this discipline was related to its incredible power of creation of an identity and a national consciousness. According to Ramzī, people should know history very well and they should have “a historical consciousness”, otherwise, they would not be counted among the ranks of free countries in the world:

I know that the people of this land do not comprehend the importance of history; moreover, they consider history to be hearsay stories or idle chatter from daily life without respect for it! They, even, do not understand why the Qur’ān includes stories and anecdotes: “And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge.” [‘Ankabūt, 29: 43] This unawareness led them to the deepest form of slavery and voluntary bondage which only braying animals can have in this age. I am talking about a new era within which every people will be identified with its own respected freedoms, personally, ethnically, religiously, and nationally respected freedoms, without attack or assault from the rulers.<sup>869</sup>

According to Ramzī, the existence of the Turks in history should be learned and admitted as an obvious reality. Ramzī believes that if one is to write a history of the Turks, it must include all the ancestors of the Turkic tribes, peoples, confederations and all political structures the Turks ever had. He does not separate the history of Turkic

<sup>868</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 22.

<sup>869</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 26.

peoples of the Volga-Ural region from the general history of all the Turkic peoples, as if they were a natural extension of the original Turkic root. Ramzī thought that the ancient Turks of Central Asia created a great history, but they could not write a monumental work, a flowing narrative of their history. Consequently, they could not influence in their favor the historiographical traditions around them. Instead, the intellectuals of neighboring peoples created a dominant discourse which was very negative about the Turks in the past. For Ramzī, it was clear that a history with a fair interpretation of past events was one of the most important instruments to indoctrinate younger generations who would know the past very well and would be proud of their ancestors:

It is obvious that since our ancestors, i.e., the ancient Turks, could not leave history books explaining their adventures and social relations, we have been forced to accept the details of historical events which the opposing powers have written. The opponents were covering the ancient Turks on all four sides. Besides, they lived in a “state of war” with them, i.e., the Chinese, the ancient Persians, the Byzantines and, finally the Russians. It is an obvious truth that the enemy cannot write an objective history, even a fair story about you; even though the mission of the high-quality historian is to record what happened as it happened, without any change or deformation, consideration of hostility to one side, or bias toward a certain ethnic origin. Of course, this principle is generally mentioned in the introductory sections of history books. But, in reality, it is not applied to the details of an event in the middle of the same book! That bias may become so frenzied and frenetic that it may spread to all the details about a certain event. Then the historian tries to polish the trash of his/her own ethnic group as if it were gold and portray the gold of his/her enemy as though it were trash!<sup>870</sup>

As a passionate researcher Ramzī faced many difficulties when he tried to record the events of his own age. He employed some new books, newspapers, periodicals, and Russian and Turkish correspondence in order to explain what was going on around the Volga-Ural region in the first decade of 20th century. He employed news of the

<sup>870</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 33-34.

missionary activities of the Russian Orthodox Church, fresh anecdotes related to Gasprinsky's efforts to establish a common Muslim Turkic identity in Russia, and his own close personal relations with high-profile leaders such as Zaynullāh Rasūlī (d. 1917). As we mentioned before, a remarkable figure in Ramzī's accounts of modern times was 'Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm. His newspaper *Ülfet* was counted by Ramzī as an important instrument to explain Muslim Tatar cultural resistance against Orthodox missionary activities.<sup>871</sup>

Ramzī also talks about the psychological problems of the process of writing history. It seems that Ramzī must have been exposed to severe criticism by authors, officials, and poets who were his contemporaries, as we mentioned previously:

...When it comes to the obstacles in my project, I should mention that I spent very sad days with homesickness, without accessibility to the field (of history) in terms of materials. Furthermore, some stupid morons, even ignorant men of naught, assaulted me severely with their sharp tongues.<sup>872</sup>

#### **5.4.2. Reconciliation of Islam and Turkism**

Ramzī studied Draper not only to criticize the Europeans of the Middle Ages, but also for specific ideas about the emergence of religion among humans and the likelihood of local prophets who might have been sent to the ancient Turks. According to Ramzī, records on the religious life of the ancient Turks were extremely rare. The ancient Turks had respected Iron and the Sky, they worshipped the Great Sky and perhaps some stars, but, they generally did not worship idols and statues.<sup>873</sup> Employing William Draper's ideas,

<sup>871</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 281-283.

<sup>872</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 26.

<sup>873</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 57-58.



Ramzī thought that the worship of idols or one single entity would be totally dependent on where humans lived and how the environment shaped them. Whoever lived among valleys, mountains, and hills, such as the Ionians, the Bedouin Arabs, and Assyrians must have had a tendency to worship multiple objects such as idols. On the other hand, whoever lived in the plains or steppes devoid of mountains and other sharp shapes, as did the Turks and some Indians (i.e. Native Americans), must have had a tendency to worship a single entity.<sup>874</sup> Ramzī analyzed how the Turks embraced Islam and finally inferred that the Turks must have started to accept Islam voluntarily in large groups such as tens of thousands of families because they had an innate tendency toward the unity of God. For this reason Islam was very appropriate for them.<sup>875</sup>

Ramzī thought that there must have been a local prophet that was sent to them just for their peculiar conditions, but they might have forgotten him over time. His proof is the Qur’ānic verse: “And there was no nation but that there had passed within it a warner.” (Sūra Fāṭir, 35:24)<sup>876</sup> Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i Jānān (d. 1781) said that “God Almighty might have sent some prophets to the peoples of Hindustan”, then “He must also have sent other prophets to the Turks”, said Ramzī.<sup>877</sup>

Ramzī offers a long explanation about how the Turkic peoples started to embrace Islam and why they had not accepted it in an earlier period, in the age of the Turkic

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<sup>874</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 58.

<sup>875</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 59.

<sup>876</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 59.

<sup>877</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 60. See also: Yohanan Friedmann, “Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 95 (1975), pp. 214-221.

Khazar Empire (650-1048).<sup>878</sup> Of course, this account also indicates how he understood the notion of *da'wā* ('methods of invitation to Islam'). He observed that the Turkic peoples did not accept Islam with the arrival of the first Arab warriors in the Caspian Sea region who there more than 162 years (i.e., the Arab-Khazar wars), and then went back to Arabia without any remarkable achievement. As Ramzī explained:

At the conclusion of these long campaigns nothing had been achieved! So many people were killed on both sides, the Arabs and Khazar Turks. Besides, the damage on the Arab side was greater, they obviously lost more than the Turks lost.<sup>879</sup>

According to Ramzī, only well-prepared committees, expert scholars and honest wise men could actualize a successful Islamic missionary effort there. In the end, it was the subsequent efforts of traders around Khorezm and the Caspian Sea region, Sufis in Central Asia, *faqīhs* around Bukhara, and the 'Abbāsīd embassy to the Volga Bulgarian Kingdom (present-day Tatarstan) which would provide great impact on the Islamization of the Turkic peoples.<sup>880</sup>

After his argument in support of the good manners, principles, and lifestyle of the ancient nomadic Turkic groups, Ramzī started to treat the process of the cultural adaptation of the Turks among other Muslims and ethnic groups. He counts scientists, historians, philosophers such as Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī ibn Uzluḡ ibn Turkhān (d. 950), who was known as "the second teacher" after Aristotle; philologists; Sufis and poets such as Hoca Ahmed Yesevi (d. 1166) in Central Asian Turkic literature; and Amir

<sup>878</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 188.

<sup>879</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 188-189.

<sup>880</sup> *Ibid.*

Khosraw al-Dihlawī (d. 1325) in Indian Farisi-Hindawi literature.<sup>881</sup> He seemed very confident when he mentioned the many names of Turkic intellectuals in the Muslim states because of the abundant number of great Turkic authors and experts in three continents of the world, Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Yet, his agile presentation includes some names whose ethnicity is still disputed between Persians and Turks.<sup>882</sup>

This sharp and crucial attempt also indicates that he must have felt a kind of betrayal on the sphere of the fair representation of the Turkic peoples in history, even among his modern Muslim Arab brothers.<sup>883</sup> At the end of the 19th century, many Arab authors, either because of religious or nationalist leanings, declared the mismanagement of the Turkic rulers in Arabic countries, claiming a “Turkish barbarism” in the Arab world.<sup>884</sup> Ramzī felt that he would face two important problems, if he wanted to establish a theoretical basis to defend the Turkic rulers in the Islamic world:

- 1) The first problem was related to the statements in the ancient creed books including the theoretical superiority of the members of Arabic Quraysh tribe as noble rulers in the Muslim community.
- 2) The second problem was concerning the justice and the power of Turkic rulers in history, namely whether they were really just and powerful enough to rule over the Muslim peoples and territories or not.

<sup>881</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 65-67 and 72.

<sup>882</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 67-68.

<sup>883</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>884</sup> Concerning these kind of negative perceptions against the Ottoman Turks see: C. Ernest Dawn, “The Origins of Arab Nationalism”, in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muḥammad Muslih, and Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 9-11. See also: Hanioglu, *A Brief History Of The Late Ottoman Empire*, pp. 142-143.

In order to respond to both questions, Ramzī employed here the logic of the great historian Ibn Khaldūn, without mentioning his name. Ibn Khaldūn did not accept the absolute superiority of the Quraysh tribe as the “ruling class” over the Muslim peoples. He gave some realistic examples, saying that the aim of the Prophet was to emphasize the responsibility and power (virtue) of the ruling class, if the Prophet really said: “The rulers are from Quraysh.”<sup>885</sup>

According to Ibn Khaldūn, because the Quraysh had the most powerful and agreeable tribal tie (*al-‘Asabīya*: العصبية) of that time, the Prophet recommended them for the administration of the state. However, the Prophet had never recommended anybody, “any exact name”, after him as a ruler. The logical result of this explanation was that whenever the Arab Quraysh had this “tie of power and responsibility” (*al-‘Asabīya*), they had the position of ruling class. However, when they lost this tie of power and responsibility, they naturally lost the position of ruling class.<sup>886</sup> Following Ibn Khaldūn, Ramzī says:

When God decided, with his wisdom, that the sovereignty would have gone from the hands of the Arab Quraysh tribe, who was once upon time fitting to be the ruling class, His omnipotent glory necessitated the order of the world and the protection of Islam, provided by the hands of Turks, until Judgment Day. The Quraysh lost this mission inasmuch as they lost the natural necessities of a ruler, as the Prophet says: “This (i.e., the sovereignty) is in the hands of the Quraysh inasmuch as they behave virtuously.” Also, a verse from the Qur’ān says: “When Abraham was tried by his Lord with commands and he fulfilled them, Allah said, ‘Indeed, I will make you a leader for the people!’ Abraham said, ‘And of my descendants?’ Allah said, ‘My covenant does not include the wrongdoers!’” [Baqara, 2:124]<sup>887</sup>

<sup>885</sup> Ibn Khaldūn *Muqaddima* ed. Darwīsh (Damascus: Maktabat al-Hidāya, 2004), vol. 1, p. 371.

<sup>886</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 371-372.

<sup>887</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 70-71.

However, after reading these long paragraphs of appraisal of the Turks, some readers might conclude that Ramzī was a pure ethnic nationalist. Therefore, he immediately tried to reject these suggestions, declaring that he was neither a *Shu'ūbī* (شعوبی), who would prefer the sovereignty of non-Arabs over Arabs,<sup>888</sup> nor a claimer of the superiority of the Turks over the Arabs.<sup>889</sup> Then he stresses these verses from the Qur'ān:

Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing. [Nisā', 4:58]

He also mentioned the famous Prophetic *ḥadīth*:

Listen attentively, no Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab and no non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; neither has any red person superiority over a black person, nor has a black person any superiority over a red one. The only superiority is due to Godliness.<sup>890</sup>

<sup>888</sup> See my article on the *Shu'ūbī* and its meaning as a protesting social class: A. Sait Aykut, "Kan: İsmi Cisminden Ağır" [Blood: The name is heavier than its weight] *Cogito*, no. 37 (Istanbul, 2003), pp. 162-180. Generally speaking, the major *Shu'ūbī* writers claimed that non-Arab Muslims were clever, more civilized, and more developed than the Arab Muslims. It is a typical reaction tinged with emotion against the unfair Umayyad actions. In fact, the Prophet had put an immense effort to eliminate the primitive racism of Bedouin Arabs and he partially succeeded. However, after the Prophet was gone, we observe some racist and discriminatory actions (especially in Umayyad times) which were the real reason for the emergence of the *Shu'ūbī* movement in literature and politics. Smart *Shu'ūbī* authors seemed to forget that many philosophers, law doctors, poets, and researchers were of Arabic origin. It was a mistake against another mistake. Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869) discussed this group with a critical tone: 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-al-tabyīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1968), vol. 1, p. 383; and vol. 3, pp. 29-31.

<sup>889</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 71.

<sup>890</sup> *Ibid.* See for the last *ḥadīth*: Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Abī Bakr Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1994), vol. 8, p. 84.

### 5.4.3. Reconciliation of the Turks and Tatars

Ramzī did not concentrate only on the crucial points of Arabo-Turkic relations, he also offered a different interpretation for the famous conflict between Chingiz Khan and the Khorezmshāh ‘Alā al-dīn (d. 1231), asserting the honesty of Chingiz Khan and his betrayal by ‘Alā al-dīn in the “Otrar Tragedy”. He thought that Khorezmshāh was the first to break the current peace agreement, after which Chingiz became very angry and finally attacked the Khorezmshāh.<sup>891</sup>

It was clear that Ramzī must have considered Chingiz and his sons to be the real founders of Asian Turkic unity. Consequently, the “Empire of the Golden Horde” was an obvious basis for him to argue for a common ground among Muslim Turkic peoples of the Russian Empire. He employed the chain of Chingiz Khan => Berke Khan => Uzbek Khan for the great goal of his history, the unity of all Muslim Turkic peoples.<sup>892</sup> Chingiz Khan, as a historical symbol, also represented the unity of all Turkic peoples and ethnic groups in the discourse of Yusuf Akçura (d. 1935), the famous Pan-Turkist nationalist of Tatar origin who later rose to prominence in the Republic of Turkey as well.<sup>893</sup>

Ramzī thought that Chingiz was serious about the security of roads, cities, commerce and merchandise, and justice among the peoples he ruled.<sup>894</sup> This opinion was strange for a typical Muslim scholar. No need to refer to any specific book, almost all Muslim historians, scholars, and authors of the Ottoman Empire, especially those who

<sup>891</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 353.

<sup>892</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 365 and 368.

<sup>893</sup> Yusuf Akçura, “Cengiz Han”, *Türk Yurdu*, vol. I, no. 11 (1328 [1912], pp. 326-330.

<sup>894</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 353-354.

lived close to the Arab lands, considered Chingiz Khan to be as evil as the devil. The few major exceptions were historians such as ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Atā Malik Juvaynī (1226–1283) and Rashīd al-dīn Faḍl Allāh (1247–1318), who were both official historians at the Ilkhānid court. Ramzī’s strong bias toward a unified national history and his vast erudition about various historical sources must have made convinced him to articulate this positive discourse. After Ramzī, we observe the same tendency in Zeki Velidi Togan (d. 1970), who has a very positive view of Chingiz Khan.<sup>895</sup>

Ramzī was emotionally attached to the vast territory known as the Empire of the Golden Horde.<sup>896</sup> He gave a detailed list of the various names and definitions for its territory, including the “Kipchak steppe” (*Desht-i Qipchāq*: دشت قیپچاق), then the “ulus of Jochi” (*Juchi Ulusi*: جوچی آلوسی), then the “country of Berke Khan” (*mamlakat Barka Khān*: مملکت برکه خان), then later the “country of Uzbek Khan” (*mamlakat Uzbek Khān*: مملکت اوزبک خان), or “northern country” (*mamlakat Shimālīya*: مملکت شمالیة), and finally, the Golden Horde (*Altun Ordu*: آلتون اوردو). Perhaps, this Muslim Turkic empire was occupying in that territory which Ramzī considered the realistic area for a possible Northern Turkic unity. Again and again he was talking about the same structure, quoting from historian Ibn ‘Arabshāh and Nuwayrī.<sup>897</sup> It seems that Ramzī denied the official Russian historiography and did not forget the Russian invasion, even after 400 hundred

<sup>895</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan Chingiz Khan to have many positive aspects. See: Zeki Velidi Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1981), pp. 69-71.

<sup>896</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 378-379.

<sup>897</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 379-380.

years. That is the reason why Ramzī was considered to be extremely arrogant and disrespectful in the eyes of the patrons of Russian espionage.<sup>898</sup>

Ramzī also defended Berke Khan, the grandson of Chingiz, against the negative characterizations in the historiography.<sup>899</sup> He explains how Berke Khan became a good Muslim and why he was important for the Turkic-Tatar Muslims around the Volga-Ural region, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the Kazakh steppes. He also gives some facts about Berke's "decision to go to war" against Hulagu (d. 1265), another grandson of Chingiz.<sup>900</sup>

Ramzī's focus on Berke continues more than 10 pages, comparing many accounts with each other to clarify important details. He treated issues such as the problem of 'Izz al-dīn Keykavus (d. 1280), the Seljuk Sultan of Anatolia. He also examined the peace agreement among the Byzantine, Mamluk, and Golden Horde empires with the help of different sources like Ibn al-Furāt, al-Dhahabī, Ibn Kathīr, and Baybars al-Dawādār al-Manšūrī.<sup>901</sup> Ramzī made a distinction between good Mongols/Tatars on the one hand and useless Mongols/Tatars on the other hand in order to convince Muslim Turkic readers of the honesty of Muslim Tatars with the help of historical accounts in the medieval Arabic sources.<sup>902</sup>

<sup>898</sup> Il'ya Zaytsev, "Murad Ramzi i Arminiy Vamberi", *Gasırlar Avazı-Ekho Vekov*, no. 3/4 (2001).

<sup>899</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 420-425.

<sup>900</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 425.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 428-439.

<sup>902</sup> See for the details: *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 414-420.



Another inner issue of the Turkic national history is the problem of Emir Timur (d. 1405), inasmuch as he crushed two great political structures of Turkic origin, the Ottomans and the Golden Horde. After the Battle of Ankara (1402), the Ottomans experienced an interregnum (1402-1413), after which the empire experienced a rebirth and a second rise to power. However, Timur's fight with Toqtamish (d. 1406) resulted in the inevitable collapse of the Golden Horde, which was the major power on the vast territory of Northern and Central Asia against the newly-rising power of Muscovite Russia.

Ramzī severely criticized Timur, believing that Toqtamish Khan was indeed a strong and smart leader and that he would have ruled all vast area inherited from Jochi Khan (d. 1227) with his wisdom and experience, if Timur had not started a ferocious war against him. According to Ramzī it was one of the biggest strategic mistakes in the history of the Turks.<sup>903</sup> Ramzī seemed to be very sad when describing the details of this event, the inevitable defeat of the brave Toqtamish before the smart Timur.<sup>904</sup> He thought that the most crucial mistake among the brothers, or the members of a community, in any time and in any place, is severe disagreement over politics or breaking the existing unity under effect of capricious egocentric decisions or obsessions.<sup>905</sup> Pertaining to the last events in the Golden Horde, Ramzī often quoted from 'Umdet al-Akhhbār of 'Abd al-Ghaffār of Crimea, who was one of the great historians of the Crimean Khanate.<sup>906</sup>

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 591.

<sup>904</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 591-592.

<sup>905</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 592.

<sup>906</sup> According to Uli Schamiloglu: "It is only with the help of the *Umdet ul-ahbar* that it is possible to understand that these later states continued certain earlier Çingisid traditions, the most outstanding of which

#### 5.4.4. The Inhabitants of Kazan and the Kazakhs: The final target of his history

Knowing the political situation in Russia in the last decades of the 19th century, Ramzī drew a parallel between the plight of the Jews and the Muslim Tatars. He must have wanted to provoke the younger Turkic generations with the modern taste of romantic nationalism and the agony of humiliation, as he had emphasized earlier.<sup>907</sup> He might also have wanted to criticize some Turkic tribal groups who fully accepted military service as voluntarily citizens of the Russian Empire:

I am summarizing the situation. Those who believe that the Tatars, Muslims, and non-Russians in military service were protecting the homeland and the common interests of all citizens are just imbecilic morons, as we explained before. They are only similar to the persecuted Jews under the Egyptian Pharaoh. If you believe that the Jews had a homeland under the Pharaoh's torture, you will of course believe that the Tatars and Muslims in Russia had a homeland under these unbearable conditions.<sup>908</sup>

Ramzī was aware of the importance of the Turks of the Volga-Ural region, as he targeted them in his discourse on history. As we mentioned before, he easily adopted the history of the the Golden Horde, the most powerful Muslim Turko-Mongol empire in Eurasia, as “a common narrative of great ancestors” which would inspire the peoples of the Volga-Ural (*İdel-Ural*) region (i.e., Tatars and Bashkorts), the Kazakhs, and other

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was the Çingisid system of state organization.” See: Uli Schamiloglu, “The Umdet ul-ahbar and the Turkic Narrative Sources for the Golden Horde and the Later Golden Horde”, *Central Asian Monuments*, ed. H. B. Paksoy (Istanbul: Isis 1992), p. 73; and Derya Derin, “Abdulgaffar Kırımı'nin Umdetü'l-Ahbâr'ına Göre Kırım Tarihi”, M.A. thesis (Ankara University, 2003), pp.16-18.

<sup>907</sup> See his long narrative on the idea of homeland and freedoms which I partially translated earlier this chapter: Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 264-265.

<sup>908</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 266.

northern Turkic groups.<sup>909</sup> Ramzī strategically chose the name “Tatar” as the common name of the Muslim Turkic peoples around the Volga-Ural region who had become familiar with the arts, diplomacy, education, and literature and who lived around large cities like Kazan. For him, being called “Tatar” is just an honor. Other names such as “Nogay” are not suitable for Ramzī’s great project. He also humiliated those who preferred the tribal name “Nogay” instead of “Tatar”:

If some people prefer the name “Nogay” to being called a Tatar, it is just as if they wish to escape from the historical heritage of being a Tatar, it is nothing but a kind of Jewish behavior. The Jews escaped from being named with a common title to (being named with) small subheadings. Besides, the Nogay is a Tatar branch known generally for its aggressiveness, anarchy, and stubbornness. Be careful!<sup>910</sup>

Ramzī emphasized the importance of Kazakh tribes in the future and the struggle against the ongoing process of Christianization. He believed that the Kazakhs are the real descendants of the ancient Turkic-Tatar ethnic groups.<sup>911</sup> Ramzī loved the Kazakhs very much, talked about their purity in race (“Turkicness”), and their honesty and sincerity in behavior.<sup>912</sup> Ramzī said that all the tribes called Kazakh were Muslims and that there were no non-Muslims among them.<sup>913</sup> He also indicated that the Russian Orthodox missionary organizations had made a massive propaganda campaign based upon the

<sup>909</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 24.

<sup>910</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 23-24.

<sup>911</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 262-263.

<sup>912</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 265.

<sup>913</sup> *Ibid.*

supposed “non-Muslimness” of the Kazakh tribes.<sup>914</sup> According to Ramzī, Almaty, Tuqmaq, and other Kazakh cities were the real cradle and the oldest sources of all Turks (مهد الأتراك و منبعهم). Therefore, these cities are extremely important for possible movements for freedom arising among the Turkic groups in the future.<sup>915</sup>

In his history Ramzī heavily emphasized the centrality of Kazan and its significant position as “a place of mourning and remembrance” for the common consciousness of the Tatar people. Ramzī gives a very detailed account of how Russian troops invaded Kazan and how the people of Kazan tried to defend their city in 1552.<sup>916</sup> He talked about the treachery of some Tatar *beks* who loved the money of the Russians. He also talked about the honesty of the Cheremis (the people of Mari-El, a Finno-Ugric people also living in the Volga-Ural region) who attacked, ambushed, and killed many Russian troops, even though they were neither Muslim nor Tatar.<sup>917</sup> They helped the inhabitants of Kazan just to remain faithful to their earlier agreements as well as for the sake of long years of friendship with the Tatars, even though they would disappear after the bad behavior of some rulers of Kazan.

Ramzī said that the people of Kazan continued to fight for their city as great warriors. More than 12,000 Muslim Tatars fell as martyrs in these long battles around Kazan.<sup>918</sup> Here, his literary style suddenly changes and becomes laced with deeply

<sup>914</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 265-266.

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 138.

<sup>916</sup> See the long accounts: *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 50-95.

<sup>917</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 60.

<sup>918</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 88.

emotional statements concerning the situation of the brave inhabitants of Kazan. He mentioned martyrs, courageous men, women, and the struggle of Kul Şerif (Qūl Sharīf, in Tatar Kol Şārif, d. 1552), the head religious figure in Kazan and his students who fought until the last drop of blood in their veins.<sup>919</sup> Ramzī's description is very fresh and extremely detailed about the brutal attacks of the Russians. Ramzī wrote with such great emotion, it was as though his grandfathers had died in the Siege of Kazan (1552). His paragraphs were filled with blood, tear, smoke, gunpowder, ambush, lethal explosions under the Kazan fortress, collapsed walls, death approaching step by step, wet air, long periods of rain, cold air, anger, hunger, and loss, not just in the bodies but in the hearts as well.

According to Ramzī, the loss of Kazan created a long-lasting trauma in the social consciousness of all the Muslim and non-Muslim peoples of Kazan. Therefore, Ramzī compared the loss of Kazan to the loss of Andalusia, whose people had different origins such as Muslims and non-Muslim Jews and Gypsies. Ramzī also compared the brutality of the Catholic Spaniard army to the brutality of the army of Ivan, the Russian Tsar in 1552 by citing the "Farewell to Andalusia", the famous poem of Andalusian poet Abū al-Baqā al-Rundī.<sup>920</sup>

After finishing the major sections of his book, Ramzī also gives us a portrait of the modern Tatars of the early 20th century. It seemed that the Tatars had already adapted to the new Russia in terms of commercial opportunities and cultural revival. They became among the pioneers in the new territories conquered by the Russian Empire. They

<sup>919</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 92-95.

<sup>920</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 100-101.

were also renovating their mosques and religious schools with great zeal.<sup>921</sup> Ramzī also changed his attitudes, viewing positively those Russians who were now interested in the culture of the Tatars and their Islamic religion.

According to Ramzī, the Tatars were divided into two groups: The people living in large cities and the people living in towns. The people living in big cities are either traders or manufacturers. The smart Tatar traders went to many places, cities, towns, territories that the Russian Empire had arrived at or invaded, such as Manchuria and Vladivostok in the Far East and the Arctic Ocean in the north.<sup>922</sup> Ramzī thought that the Tatars were generally honest and extremely hard-working people, inasmuch as they had established mosques in Moscow, Irkutsk, and Arkhangelsk and they would be establishing a great mosque in St. Petersburg.<sup>923</sup> According to Ramzī, the Tatars respected their religious authorities without any investigation of them. It was also a well-known phenomenon among the other Turkic peoples:<sup>924</sup>

The Tatars are really smart (*ahl al-dhakāwa*: أهل الذكوة), capable (*ahl al-qābilīya*: أهل القابلية), competent (*ahl al-ṣalāhīya*: أهل الصلاحية) people, and they have great propensity (*al-isti'dād*: الاستعداد) for anything to which they are attracted. Therefore, you will see them very well-adapted to any nation/group/community into which they are integrated. You will see them as if they are already incorporated as part of those groups, in their languages, costumes (*al-ādāt*: العادات), literatures (*al-ādāb*: الآداب) as soon as possible. Despite this ability to adapt, you will observe that they are generally reliable, honest (*ahl al-amāna wa al-ṣadāqa*: أهل الأمانة و الصداقة), and good believers. Therefore, you see many ethnic groups with a great appreciation of the Tatars, especially who are living around

<sup>921</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 328.

<sup>922</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 328-329, 330.

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 329. As Ramzī indicates here, it was to open in 1913 as the largest mosque in Europe outside Turkey.

<sup>924</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 329.

them. The Russians can also behave in a very friendly manner toward the Tatars, if the Russian Orthodox missionaries do not confuse their minds.<sup>925</sup>

According to Ramzī, the Tatars belonged to the Ḥanafī *madhhab* as traditional Sunnīs and they were “firmly” following their religion. Therefore, the Russians exiled some of them to Siberia. The signs of the Wahhābī movement were observed only slightly among them.<sup>926</sup> Ramzī also talked about the competence and jealousy among the *imāms* of mosques belonging to the Tatar people.<sup>927</sup> It appears that Ramzī must have experienced problems with some Tatar *imāms*. Perhaps he wanted to be an *imām* in a mosque, but they would not give him permission, for which reason he became quite upset. According to Ramzī, the Tatars are extremely bound to their costumes and traditions, even though some of these costumes were strange and had nothing to do with the religion:

For example, they have a very interesting practice for the naming of a newborn child. They put the child on the ground, then stand up and recite the call to prayer (*adhān*) on his right side and then on his left side. During this ceremony, the child is always on the surface of the earth!<sup>928</sup> ...If one says to them, “The true practice is to recite *adhān* in the ears of the new-born child, not to put child on the ground!” they will never mind! God convey us to the true way!<sup>929</sup>

However, if we scrutinize Ramzī’s account here, we can realize that he just started to expose a new kind of revivalism, not similar to the Wahhābī style, but in the

<sup>925</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 330-331.

<sup>926</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 331.

<sup>927</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 331-332.

<sup>928</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 331.

<sup>929</sup> *Ibid.*

form of Ḥanafī revivalism. It is an important sign of the ongoing change in Ramzī himself. He was still changing, even at the end of his book.

Ramzī also gives us general information about the size of the population of the Tatars and other Muslims in Russia. It was about fourteen million (13,906,980) as published on March 25th, 1905, and he corrected the exact number in the last pages of the Orenburg edition.<sup>930</sup> Before the final section about the heritage of Jochi Khan (the Khanates of Kazan, Crimea, the Uzbeks, Bukhara, Khorezm, the Kazakh steppe, etc.), Ramzī started to count the biographies of Muslim scholars (172 scholars) around Kazan and the Volga-Ural region, referring to Marjānī's *Mustafād al-akhbār* and Riḍā al-dīn Fakhr al-dīn's *Āthār*.<sup>931</sup>

## **5.5. Contemporary discussions: Il'minsky, Jadīdism, and hopes for the future**

### **5.5.1. Il'minsky "the Pharaoh" and the problem of Christianization**

Ramzī criticized the Russian Empire for the problems arising around religious and civil freedoms, comparing Tsarist Russia's strict adherence to the Edict (*farmān*) of Muḥammad Uzbek Khān (d. 1341), who was protecting the rights of the Orthodox Russians at the 14th century.<sup>932</sup> Ramzī emphasized both the problem of Christianization as a great threat and the destructive acts of Il'minsky (d. 1891), the archenemy of the Islamic literary culture in Russia. Ramzī gives some statistical data concerning

<sup>930</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Orenburg, 1908), vol. 2, p. 539.

<sup>931</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, p. 335.

<sup>932</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 516-517.



Christianization (the process of converting Muslims and others to the Russian Orthodox Faith) and the population census of Muslims and pagans in Russia.<sup>933</sup> Ramzī also translates some titles of ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm concerning Russian Orthodox missionary activities around the Volga-Ural region and propaganda brochures against Islam.<sup>934</sup> It appears that Ramzī’s second archenemy was Konstantin Petrovich Pobyedonostsyev (d. 1907). Ramzī called Il’minsky “the Pharaoh of this people” (فرعون هذه الأمة) and Pobyedonostsyev as the “Abū Jahl of this people” (أبو جهل هذه الأمة).<sup>935</sup> I think if Ramzī were given enough knowledge and power, he would have wanted to be the Moses of his people in order to liberate them from the hands of Il’minsky. Ramzī mentioned long correspondence with Russian officials about missionary activities.<sup>936</sup> According to Ramzī, two important problems were agitating him:

a) the fanatical Russian Orthodox missionaries’ attempt to apply strict regulations on all Muslims and non-orthodox Christians, such as “Molokans”, the Old Believers, and other “heretical” Christians.<sup>937</sup>

b) Il’minsky’s proposal that the Russian alphabet be used not only by the forcibly-Christianized Tatars (Krashens) but by all non-Russian ethnicities, including the Muslim Turkic groups.<sup>938</sup> For Ramzī, Il’minsky’s attempt to impose the Russian alphabet

<sup>933</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 167-171.

<sup>934</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 197.

<sup>935</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 225.

<sup>936</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 226-231.

<sup>937</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>938</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 327-328.

threatened to become the most dangerous tool for separating all Muslim and Turkic communities from each other in the Russian Empire. Ramzī thought that Il'minsky and other Russian officials provoked the Muslim peoples in Kazan by opening between two mosques a Christian seminary for those who had been converted forcibly (*al-mukrahīn*: المكرهين) to the Russian Orthodox Faith.<sup>939</sup> It was a clear humiliation, a psychological torture, like adding insult to open injury (literally, “spilling salt in the wound”: رشح الملح في الجراحة).<sup>940</sup> These kinds of measures must have created incredible hatred in the heart of Ramzī and other Muslim scholars against the Russian officials. Ramzī also discussed other similar negative acts by the Russian government “under the (influence of the) Russian Orthodox Church”. He was so astonished that he thought that the real ruler might have been the Russian Church, not the Russian government.

Ramzī was surprised also that Russian officials expected love and sympathy from Tatar children when they came to Tatar towns and schools.<sup>941</sup> According to Ramzī, Tatar children were afraid of the Russian inspectors and they more or less tried to run away from them, since Russians were generally trying to come close to the children and hang Orthodox Christian crosses around their necks. Tatar children considered this behavior as an insult, humiliation, and torture, therefore they tried to run away. According to Ramzī, the Russian inspectors wished that the Tatars could be like dogs and that, whenever the Russians hit and beat them, the Tatars just should obey them; only this kind of Tatar was wanted, no other! However, the Tatar kids never did what the inspectors wished;

<sup>939</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 248.

<sup>940</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>941</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 284-285.

therefore, the Russian missionaries and inspectors naturally hated the Tatars and their children.<sup>942</sup>

According to Ramzī, these negative attitudes created a real separation, “an impassable barrier” between the Tatar community and the Russian officials; yet, it also supported their social codes of identity and culture. Otherwise, if the Russians were merciful, kind, and sympathetic to the Tatars, they (the Tatars) would be sympathetic toward the Russian stylelife, and, finally, they would disappear culturally and ethnically in the middle of the Russian Empire.<sup>943</sup> Giving these kinds of examples, Ramzī seems to be very interested in the dialectical relations among:

Persecution and oppression => reaction from the Tatars => identity formation →  
more radicalized identity => counterreaction, and oppression by the state →  
second level for identity formation in Tatars.

He gives us another long story about the tense relation between Catholic Ireland and the British Empire. Quoting some sentences from Napoleon Bonaparte and European history, Ramzī said that:

When the British realized this social phenomenon, they just immediately freed the people of Catholic Ireland and gave them some rights of citizenship. After that, the Irish people just become more supportive and more friendly towards the British.<sup>944</sup>

<sup>942</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>943</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>944</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 285.

He was very angry over the most recent acts implemented by the Russian government relating to the officials who sealed many mosques. He also gives very detailed information on the forcibly-Christianized local tribes.<sup>945</sup>

Ramzī seemed very hopeful because of the Japanese victory against Russia (8 February 1904-5 September 1905). In many pages, he was appreciating the Japanese people for the new technology and military successes which they had achieved. He hoped that both the Japanese success outside of Russia and the revolutionary movements inside Russia would bring good news, especially for the territory of Siberia.<sup>946</sup>

“The sympathy to Japan” among the Muslim peoples was a new fashion in the late 19th century. Japan represented an alternative model not just for how a non-western people might develop sufficiently without the help of western colonialist powers, but for the preservation of their identity and culture as well.<sup>947</sup> We observe the highest level of sympathy towards Japan, “a great expectation” in the works of Ramzī’s close friend, ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrahīm, the Tatar traveler. As a skilled author and cultural intermediary, ‘Abd al-rashīd penned a large survey and travel on the Japanese politics, culture, and military success (around 360 pages in length).<sup>948</sup>

<sup>945</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 138-139.

<sup>946</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 138.

<sup>947</sup> We have much research and surveys about “sympathy to Japan” among the Muslims of the late 19th century and the early 20th century. Furthermore this love/expectation was not limited to Muslims; it was observed also among other Asian peoples. See a long survey about this phenomenon in the context of anti-westernism: Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia, Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 71-92 and 161-190.

<sup>948</sup> ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrahīm wrote the book *Alem-i İslam ve Japonya’da İslamiyet* [The Muslim World and Islam in Japan] which is about 1270 pages (630 + 650) in two volumes in the edition of Ertuğrul Özalp. The sections on the Japan are in the first volume. See: Abdurresid Ibrahim, *Alem-i İslam ve Japonya’da İslamiyet*, ed. Özalp, vol. 1, pp. 275-653.

### 5.5.2. An alternative path between Jadīd and Qadīm

Ramzī said:

After listening to Zaynullāh Rasūlī in 1316 AH [1899 AD] and with long research on the “New Method” (*uṣūl-i jadīd*), I changed my mind and began to support the Jadīdist approach.<sup>949</sup>

Ramzī criticized some traditional scholars and tried to make a balanced evaluation of Jadīdism. Ramzī mentioned some problems pertaining to Tatar teachers, *imams*, and the education system that was newly organized in Kazan by order of the Russian government. He supported new scholars and teachers from the “Jadīd” generations who learned the Russian language and solved bureaucratic issues in an easy way. According to Ramzī, the practical solutions provided by the Jadīds did not make Il’minsky very happy.<sup>950</sup>

Ramzī thought that the new scholars should not have needed to go to Bukhara. New developments, ships, trains, and other technologies (i.e., printing houses) offered new opportunities to the students of Islamic disciplines.<sup>951</sup> Especially Istanbul, Cairo, Mecca, and Medina became much closer than they had been in the past. Besides, Bukhara had become only an old ruined place where nothing had quality, it was just a waste of time to be there.<sup>952</sup> He also gave a historical periodicization for the development of

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<sup>949</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 307

<sup>950</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 247.

<sup>951</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 292-293.

<sup>952</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 292-298.

Islamic disciplines in Bukhara, Samarqand, and Kashgar, talking about three different periods, finally, finishing his long narrative with the statement: “Now, there is nothing to gain from Bukhara!”<sup>953</sup> Ramzī appreciated Gasprinsky, the leading figure of the Jadīd movement, and defended him against the Qadīmist movement for more than 3 pages.<sup>954</sup>

However, Ramzī was still a traditionalist in the notion of classical *fiqh* and religious creed. Therefore, he criticized some extreme reformist Jadīdist authors. He thought that some new authors made many people hate the *uṣūl-i jadīd* movement.<sup>955</sup> According to Ramzī, the atmosphere of freedom following the Revolution of 1905 must have made many things easier for the Tatars and Muslims, but it also must have opened the road to other wrong things, such as ultra-reformist newspapers that turned out weapons harmful to the cultural and religious development of Muslim peoples in Russia.<sup>956</sup> As an experienced scholar, he thought that the young authors had assimilated and disseminated Russian-style thought, life, and even belief. Moreover, they were calling themselves followers of the Jadīd movement. However, for Ramzī, they had nothing to do with the appropriate and useful Jadīdism of Gasprinsky, who was a smart, careful teacher. He thought that they had become the lost sons of the Muslim Tatar

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<sup>953</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 297.

<sup>954</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 305-307.

<sup>955</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 307-308.

<sup>956</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 308.

nation, with their openly bad attitudes opposed to Islamic tradition and Muslim Tatar ethics.<sup>957</sup>

Ramzī also severely criticized Qāsim Emīn (Amīn) Bek of Egypt (d. 1908), the famous reformist author of Turkish origin, who wrote about the new woman and her situation in the Muslim community in his two controversial books *Tahrīr al-Mar'a* and *al-Mar'a al-Jadīda*.<sup>958</sup> However, Ramzī also interestingly appreciated another reformist author from Egypt, Farīd Wajdī (d. 1954), who wrote a long response to Qāsim Emīn Bek under the title *al-Mar'a al-Muslima*.<sup>959</sup> It appears that Ramzī was not supporting new ideas around the traditional position of women. He was afraid of total assimilation by new generations of the Russian/western-style life and ethics. Woman was like an inner source to sustain a long-life resistance movement against Russian cultural hegemony. It appears that every type of revivalist, traditionalist, revolutionary, nationalist, or leftist author has given many different missions to women, yet, she has never been asked if she would accept or refuse these missions.

The Ramzī of *Talfīq al-akhbār* cannot be considered a Qadīmist, but rather a careful follower of Jadīdism who was afraid of sweeping innovations in lifestyle and thorough westernization. He was neither an extreme Jadīdist nor a Qadīmist. He may be considered a moderate Jadīdist supporting reform in education, technology in daily life, and new freedoms related to religious and civil life.

<sup>957</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 308-309.

<sup>958</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 310. Leila Aḥmad indicates, that Qāsim Emīn was heavily influenced by the western judgments on the East and Islam. See: Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam, Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1992, pp. 145-159.

<sup>959</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 310-311.

### 5.5.3. Hope for the future: The Russians may also change

Ramzī somehow changed his critical attitude against the Russian government under the new conditions following the Revolution of 1905. He hoped for a better position for Tatars at the end of the historical events about which he had been writing for a decade. According to Ramzī, the Russian government had started to change. Inspectors were no longer disturbing Muslim clerics; many Muslims were now easily performing their prayers, even on boats and ships, under the protection of the new law.<sup>960</sup> He was very happy that new state officials and rich Russian nobles living among Tatars and Muslims appeared to feel guilty over what their fathers had done before to Tatars:<sup>961</sup>

Before, we mentioned about the (bad) attitude of Russian officials towards mosques. However, the Russians are naturally attracted to the spiritual atmosphere of the mosques. If you look at an ordinary Russian near a mosque, you will observe that this man throws his cigarette when he listens to the call to prayer (*adhān*), just to respect the *adhān*. Sometimes a Russian will stop and try to listen to the *adhān*. It is not an exaggeration, even though it is rare. Every mosque has a beautiful library and madrasa around it. Even in small towns, you see the mosque together with a library and madrasa.<sup>962</sup>

Ramzī indicated that Tatars were in better position in the past few years (1905-1908) with respect to the economy and cultural life in comparison with previous centuries.<sup>963</sup>

It seems that Ramzī's major interest was always the religion and its effects on society. He witnessed joyfully that some smart Russian authors, traders and nobles started to appreciate the cultural roots of Islam and Tatars, some of them even converted to

<sup>960</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 290-291.

<sup>961</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>962</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 330.

<sup>963</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 328-329.



Islam.<sup>964</sup> He also followed other inner discussions of the Russian Orthodox Church. He said that:

The noble Nikolay Tolstoy's son Leo [the famous novelist Tolstoy] put forward a new approach to Christianity. He severely criticized the old Orthodox faith. He wrote brochures, titles, and research about his approach to the new Christian faith. Then, the old Orthodox clerics became mad at him and they excommunicated him, then anathematized him on February 2, 1901.<sup>965</sup>

Ramzī observed that the Russian clerics' announcement did not do nothing but increase the number of followers of Leo Tolstoy. He just became more famous and his articles and books were even translated into the Arabic.<sup>966</sup>

## **5.6. Conclusion: A man in the middle of his own path**

Ramzī's intellectual change towards *Burhān* ("Reason") started in the last decades of the 19th century, when his favorite authors became Ibn Khaldūn, William Draper, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, Necip Âsım, and 'Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm. He gave priority to the way of rational reasoning and tried to construct a realism with balance pertaining to the situation of the Muslim Turkic peoples of the Russian Empire. He employed modern nationalistic concepts like love of the homeland and national alliances, etc.

The Ramzī of *Talfīq al-akhbār* tried to develop a practice and technique for the process of writing history. He was partially adapting his old method of evaluation of historical persons to the evaluation of historical texts. Ramzī saw history as a project of

<sup>964</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>965</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>966</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 291.

social engineering for a new society. He consciously emphasizes the influence of history on the beliefs, attitudes, and culture of young men. The nation in Ramzī's new discourse is represented with a romantic egalitarian pastoralism blended with his unique realism. Ramzī did not concentrate only on the crucial points of Arabo-Turkic relations, rather he also contributed to inner discussions among Turkic intellectuals and historians.

Ramzī was aware of the importance of the Turks of the Volga-Ural region as he targeted them in his historical discourse. He easily adopted the history of the Golden Horde, the most powerful Muslim Turko-Mongol empire in Eurasia, as a common narrative of the great ancestors who would inspire for the peoples of the Volga-Ural region (*İdel-Ural*) area, the Kazakhs and other northern Turkic groups. For Ramzī, Il'minsky's attempt at imposing the Russian alphabet was the most dangerous obstacle separating all Turkic and Muslim communities from each other in the Russian Empire.

The Ramzī of *Talfīq al-akhbār* never believed or imposed a pure ethnic nationalism. Throughout his long discourse, the necessity of Islam as a strong cultural cement and eternal belief is clearly observable. Even though he loved his nation very much and joyfully defended science, new technology, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press, he did not become a fully secularist westernized nationalist. When we observe his critical position among his contemporary Tatar and Ottoman intellectuals, we can realize that he was neither a fully secularist westernized nationalist like Yusuf Akçura (d. 1935, Istanbul),<sup>967</sup> nor a follower of Islamic universalism as we see in the case of the

<sup>967</sup> Yusuf Akçura of Tatar origin was one of the most diligent and influential thinkers of Turkist-Turanist movement in the late Ottoman and the early Turkish Republican era. His best work, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* ("Three Policies"), was just an article of around 33 pages published in 1904, but its major idea had an

Ottoman professor Babanzade Ahmed Naim (d. 1934), who was extensively criticizing nationalist authors, no matter whether they claimed Turkish, Arabic, Persian, or Kurdish superiority.<sup>968</sup>

The peculiar position of the Volga-Ural region under Russian rule might have led Ramzī and other Tatar-Bashkort authors to be aware of national issues, with a remarkable local cultural tone. He must also have been influenced by the Islamic revivalist movements of that age, as he participated in the house meetings in Mecca of ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm, the famous Tatar Pan-Islamist traveler.<sup>969</sup> With his unordinary position and elaborately-refined decisions, he did not become a westernized Jadīdist, even though he was an avid supporter of Jadīdism in the sphere of education and new technology, as we observe in his “careful” support for İsmail Gasprinsky.<sup>970</sup> Nor did he take the side of typical Qadīmist (traditionalist) scholars, since we observe his severe critiques towards them.<sup>971</sup>

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enormous impact. See the publication of this work including an introduction by Enver Ziya Karal: Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1976). The introductory section has valuable information about Yusuf Akçura’s intellectual development. It is funny that, like Ramzī, he was also influenced by Necip Âsım (pp. 3-4)!

<sup>968</sup> As a high profile Islamist thinker among the late Ottoman intellectuals, Babanzâde Ahmed Naim (who was of Kurdish origin) put forward a deep critique of nationalism. See for his short but very strong treatise about this issue: Babanzâde Ahmed Naim, *İslâmda Da’va-yi Kavmiyet* (İstanbul, 1332 AH [1916 AH]). This was originally an article first published in 1914. See: Ahmed Naim, “İslam’da Dava-yi Kavmiyet: Takib ve Tenkid Mecmuası Sahibi Nüzhet Sabit Beyefendi’ye”, *Sebilü’r-Reşad* (10 Nisan 1330 [April, 23, 1914]), vol. 12, no. 293, pp. 114-128.

<sup>969</sup> See: Abdurreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, ed. Özalp, vol. 2, pp. 490-492.

<sup>970</sup> Ramzī, *Talfiq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 281-283.

<sup>971</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 326.

Of course, he elevated *Burhān* (“Reason”) as a leading domain in his new intellectual approach, but, he also continued to be a traditionalist author in his approach to the ethical functions of Sufism and the basic scriptural tenets of the Islamic religion as the guardians of the inner world, without which nothing would be achievable, as he wrote.<sup>972</sup>

We may question also how he reconstructed his mind upon the new foundation *Burhān* to advocate nationalism and to what extent he was successful in his new construction. The answer will be a mixed one. Construction of this new mind with the help of new notions, old historical narratives, modern publications, and reluctant use of religious references (*Bayān*)<sup>973</sup> might not bring a very satisfying result, even though it was a great step for a comprehensive history project for the Turks-Tatars. However, we should realize that the rise of reason (*Burhān*), has been always synchronized with the complex reactions and dramatic results, as we observe in the ‘Abbāsīd age of Islamic civilization, or during the Renaissance in western civilization. Speaking on the eastern side of the civilizations, the flag of reason was not fluttering smoothly in a comfortable way every time. It became, at least one time, a tool of torture and isolation, as we observe in the case of *miḥna* (المحنة), when the rationalist Mu‘tazilī élites turned out to be first class members of the inquisition at the ‘Abbāsīd court, under the rationalist ruler

<sup>972</sup> See Ramzī’s concern on the future of Islamic faith among Tatars and his grievance on the loss of Islamic identity in the Volga-Ural region: *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 25-26.

<sup>973</sup> I mean his use of some fabricated *ḥadīth* narratives. As an eminent Muslim scholar, he should have a doubt on those narratives which were about the Turks, and do not use them in his discourse. See: Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 39 and 42.

al-Ma'mūn (d. 833).<sup>974</sup> Similar examples of élitist rationalism can be found easily in the West, with different names and geographies, like Jacobinism etc. I observe that whenever a balance between 'Irfān,<sup>975</sup> *Burhān*,<sup>976</sup> and *Bayān*<sup>977</sup> was provided with the help of appropriate social, financial and psychological conditions, many things went well in the intellectual life of Islamic civilization, and vice versa. I also observed that *Burhān* ("Reason") as only domain to work with, is not enough for a sustainable balance. At this point, my interpretation of the intellectual history of Islamic civilization is separated from the path of Moroccan thinker al-Jābirī (d. 2010), who wanted to give a final victory in favor of *Burhān*, against the wild, excessive acts of 'Irfān, as I explained the details in the first sections of my thesis.

Ramzī could not eliminate the chronic élitism he inherited from his old friends when he was flying with the wings of 'Irfān-based imagined universes.<sup>978</sup> He created a history which supposed to be inspiring for the people, the sons of the Turks and Tatars; but he did not respect the ordinary man who would be a citizen of his nation. In contradiction to his final goal in *Talḥīq al-akhbār*, he continued to be an élitist author in his discourse of history, mentioning "the ignorance and apathy" of ordinary street men

<sup>974</sup> 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Ma'mūn supported the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān (خلق القرآن) which might have opened different ways of interpretation of the Qur'ān. However, this support turned into an inquisition (*miḥna*) embraced and executed by Mu'tazilī scholars such as Aḥmad ibn Abi Du'ad and others. After 15 years of torturing the "other" scholars, it ended in 848. See for a detailed analysis of this issue: John A. Nawas, "A Reexamination of Three Current Explanations for al-Ma'mūn's Introduction of the *Miḥna*", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 26, no. 4 (November, 1994), pp. 615-629.

<sup>975</sup> That is, Gnosis, the mystic intuition, the original sound of inner world, illumination, speculative Sufism.

<sup>976</sup> That is, Reason, the rational way of thinking.

<sup>977</sup> That is, Scripture, the commonly understandable parts of the sacred texts.

<sup>978</sup> See for the section on élitist discourse of Ramzī in my thesis. See also Murād Ramzī's translation of Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt: Mu'arrab al-Maktūbāt*, vol. 1, pp. 1-11.

(*al-‘awāmm*: العوام),<sup>979</sup> emphasizing instead the importance of great political leaders and heroes such as Chingiz Khan.<sup>980</sup> Perhaps he read or analyzed some books and newspapers published under influence of Carlyle-style heroic élitism that was a popular movement among the new Ottoman intelligentsia, especially the Young Turks who had a strong affinity for ideas such as “reverence for great men”.<sup>981</sup>

For him, the romantic nationalism blended with Islam espoused by the élite scholars and noble leaders looked like a reasonable solution to the problem facing the Muslim Turkic peoples of Russia. He must have thought that the loss for identity, culture, and the religious heritage of the Muslim Turkic peoples would be more destructive if this unique nationalism could not help them to awaken.

He also thought that the problems of Tatars and Muslims in that age of crisis cannot be solved with one-sided opinions.<sup>982</sup> It was not a good decision to separate problems as purely worldly or as totally religious.<sup>983</sup> The Tatars and other Muslims should develop new techniques for their needs in daily life, cities, streets, and houses. However, they also should continue to cultivate great experts for their spiritual needs, religious disciplines (العلوم الدينية), and ethical values.<sup>984</sup> He clearly articulated this idea:

<sup>979</sup> Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār* (Beirut, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 124-125.

<sup>980</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 149.

<sup>981</sup> See for an analysis of Young Turks and their interest in heroism and Thomas Carlyle: Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution. The Young Turks, 1902-1908*, pp. 309-310.

<sup>982</sup> Ramzī, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 304.

<sup>983</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>984</sup> *Ibid.*

without understanding the indivisibility of these two dimensions, Tatars and other Muslims would never solve the major problems they faced.

Finally, we observe that he was afraid of the inevitable results of the Russian conquest of this vast territory once ruled by the Muslim peoples which later became a part of the Russian Empire; in his mind its fate would be similar to the fate of Andalusia.<sup>985</sup> Perhaps, all 1300 pages of *Talfīq al-akhbār* were penned as a long commentary on its decorated introduction in which he described the situation of the Tatars and Muslims in Russia, with a literary style similar to the *Maqāmāt* tradition in classical Arabic prose, enriched with rhymes and metaphors:<sup>986</sup>

I saw the tragedy of my beloved lands,  
And was afraid of coming turmoil, like sands,  
And fire in the home with bloody red flames,  
Streets were burning just in weeks and days.  
O, my country, you became a ghost garden, like Andalusia,  
Without flowers, lovers and lost in the hands of Russia.

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I saw a future, a “non-Muslim land” was coming,  
Then, I decided to collect everything,  
Sentences, documents, and stories,  
That I found in yellow books of old libraries.  
In order to awaken the people of bode,  
Who are sleeping in an eternal mode,  
I shall plant in the bosoms, a religious passion, and the seeds of love for homeland  
One day, they shall crave for freedom,  
And shall rid of cowardice  
Rising up, from the shame of thralldom,  
Following the path of forefathers.

<sup>985</sup> As noted above, Ramzī compared the loss of Kazan (1552) to the loss of Andalusia, see: *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 100-101.

<sup>986</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 25-26.

## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusion

Like many scholars of the 19th century Muslim world, the first decade of Murād Ramzī's intellectual development was shaped by a classical madrasa education. Sharing a common canon of texts on the Arabic language and Islamic disciplines until the early 20th century, the institution of the madrasa and its graduates formed an "Arabic cosmopolis" based upon the Arabic language as an instrument of communication and a common curriculum produced in classical Arabic. We observe long discussions among Muslim intellectuals of the 19th century on the nature and development of the madrasa system. Their perception that "the madrasa declined only after its subsequent lack of science, philosophy, and technology" seems very weak, even though it was claimed by pre-modern authors alike. In fact, the goal of a madrasa education had never been to support science, philosophy, or technology. It was established to protect the creed, the religious identity (inner world), and, somehow, the ideology on which the political system was based. The real problem with the madrasa system appeared first in the face of the multifaceted challenges leading to weakness in the mindset of madrasa followers in the 19th century. It was the inevitable result of defeats in the realms of the economy, politics, and the military. These frustrations forcefully altered the Muslim worldview. To be rid of this outdated "haunted house", many Jadīdist and reformist authors attempted a full overhaul of the institution, including its function as guardian of Islamic spiritual life. Unlike many Jadīdists, Ramzī tried to retain the madrasa's role in spirituality as



necessary in maintaining Muslim identity. However, to respond to the hegemonic discourse of the Russian Empire in culture and history, he preferred flexibility in shaping national ideology and politics.

Ramzī's formative years included the study of many texts from illuminationist (*ishrāqī*) Avicennism, such as al-Dawānī, Mubārakshāh Bukhārī and al-Kātibī, which led Ramzī to favor a "mystical intuition" (*ilhām* and *kashf*) as an independent source of truth over the analysis of evidence, even though he had the chance to study more balanced creed and theological texts in his traditional curriculum. That inclination contributed to a weakness in his writing of history. Many Jadīdist intellectuals criticized Ramzī and mocked him. However, it seems that, in the end, Ramzī scored a victory with his translation of Sufī classics, many of which were printed in editions of over one hundred copies and became indispensable sources for the protection of Sufī Muslim identity in the vast area from Istanbul to the East Indies (today's Indonesia). The new conditions and spiritual needs that developed among his people after his death necessitated the publishing of his Sufī books over his nationalist history project. Even though his mind was formed first by *ʿIrḡān*-based books and ideas, it seems that the Sufī works could not be enough for him in his later years.

Whenever Murād Ramzī talked about his network in Kazan and other Islamic cultural centers of the Volga-Ural region, he generally appreciated the works and projects of Jadīdist scholars, especially their passion for new methods in education. Although he criticized some ultra-jadidists who were extremists with respect to religious disciplines, he generally defended great Jadīdist figures such as Qursāwī, Marjānī, and Gasprinsky. Murād Ramzī admired Marjānī with reservations regarding some of his ideas and

approaches pertaining to Naqshī Sufism. However, Marjānī influenced Ramzī heavily in the art of authorship, which was reflected in Ramzī's great historical work *Talfīq al-akhbār*.

Ramzī respected the conservative views of many scholars going to and coming from Egypt and Hijāz pertaining to woman and other controversial issues related to the spiritual culture. In this context, Ramzī loved Sheikh Zaynullāh in his homeland. Zaynullāh intelligently turned a small town into a great cultural center where the Muslim people would experience a strong awareness of Islamic identity, even though the Tsarist Russian authorities organized different type of operations to separate Muslim ethnic groups from their religious and cultural heritage. With the “theory of practice”, Zaynullāh generated possible solutions with limited instruments in a battlefield where his rivals seemed to have more dominant instruments. However, Zaynullāh succeeded in achieving his goal with his unique methods and appropriate cultural capital.

The Ramzī of Sheikh Zawāwī's *dargāh* in Mecca experienced a multiethnic, transnational brotherhood within which he realized the power of connection and the triumph of a translator. In his Meccan years, Murād Ramzī must have believed that Naqshī ethics with its colorful narratives would protect his fellow people in the Volga-Ural region and other Muslims from the corruption of this sinful world.

Ramzī's spiritual advice and explanations can be interpreted as a strategically-prepared critique against the neo-Sufi groups who might distort “the original Naqshī system” he wanted to protect. He deliberately showed critical details of sheikhhood in his path. According to Ramzī, all stations and levels in this mystical path should be achieved under the guidance of a perfect master. Otherwise, the *ṭālib* (seeker of divine Truth)

cannot be satisfied with what is given as teachings. The first principle to be a *ṭālib* is a strong intention to reach to the divine truth, then inference and observation to find a good master, then, repentance (*tawba*) and limited seclusion as a method of purification from inner darkness. On the other hand, the master is supposed to be an extended shadow for the followers. If something goes wrong, the master should ask first, “What is wrong with me?”

Even though Ramzī does not care about the possible results here, a critical question does evidently arise: With this approach, the followers of the Sufi path are theoretically annihilated in the persona of the sheikh, the real existent in the Sufi circle. Then, the Sufi sheikh may turn out “the shadow of God” as a representative of the invisible world. Finally, this strange analogy can be easily transmitted to political terminology and employed in the service of “divine states” in the world, or in the service of Mahdī-based movements. Should we blame the kinds of principles of Sufism articulated here by Ramzī? A strict secularism also can create bad results in another way, as we observe in many totalitarian leaders in modern history. The good is in the balance for everything.

Ramzī gives us another basic rule for spiritual depth. A clear tendency to the *Malāmatī* way is important in the Naqshī ethics. It means no showing off in front of people, unlike the modern Naqshī “showbiz” in today’s spiritual marketing sector. According to Ramzī, any act of arrogance hidden with the cover of modesty is also condemned in the original path. Unfortunately, not only *himmet* but also other concepts such as tolerance and peacefulness are now employed to get money and to manipulate

social and political energy under the cover of “moderate Islamic movements” with the help of strategic think tanks established by certain states.

Ramzī appreciated Khālīd al-Baghdādī very much. Khālīd was the imposer of *rābiṭa*, a controversial practice among Sufi orders. It seems that Khālīd wanted to employ *rābiṭa* in order to strengthen the connection between the Sufi sheikh and his followers. Here, *rābiṭa* as a spiritual technique must have played a political, social, and ideological role, for it was a strong connector between the commander and the soldier, the sheikh and *murīd*, the charismatic leader and the members of a community who were severely oppressed under colonialist rulers. Perhaps the same political concern pushed Ramzī to support *rābiṭa*, even though his rationalization of this technique is extremely odd for a man who already knew the major sources of this religion, i.e., Islam. In fact, it is almost impossible to find something supportive for “Naqshī-style *rābiṭa*” in the Qur’ān or in another authentic source of this religion. Here, he is obviously transgressing some theoretical rules of *Bayān* (Scripture) in favor of *‘Irfān* (Gnosticism, Sufism) under heavy pressure of the peculiar social conditions of his community. Ramzī might have realized his weakness here and made a more plausible interpretation, but he could not leave the logic of the authors he had studied in his youth such as al-Dawānī, Kātibī, and other Muslim emanationist thinkers. Actually, he did not break up epistemologically his old masters in this peculiar subject, at least, when he prepared the book on the Naqshbandī Sufi path and its last sheikhs (*Dhayl*) and other Sufi translations in Mecca. His mindset was severely tending to Neoplatonist-style *‘Irfān* without a careful look at *Bayān* or *Burhān*. It means that he could not establish a good balance among these three major

conceptual domains of the Muslim mind. Instead, he tended to *ʿIrfān* more than he did to other two domains.

Ramzī's approach to the dream is an indivisible part of his systematic approach to Naqshī-style Sufism. The dream in his system is only employed for the truthfulness of something or its falsity. Ramzī considered his major dreams in the category of *rū'yā ṣādiqa* in his peculiar logic, even though *rū'yā ṣādiqa* is generally considered to be like a diamond which is rarely seen except by the prophets and a very few men of divine love. With this sharp view, his dreams gained an imposing power over the decisions that Ramzī wanted to take. Through accounts of dream mentioned by Ramzī, I observe also that the language of daily life plays its major role with all connotative extensions on the culture in which the dreamer lives. In addition to the language of daily life, another good source of the interpretation of dreams can be the books of belief which shape the common conscience of the society. Here the text influences the man, and the man influences the text with interpretation; then the text reproduces new meanings, then the new meanings create the new man, even the dreams may dress new meanings at the end of this circle.

Ramzī's favorite master Aḥmad Sirhindī was an extraordinary author of the late 16th century Islamic world. As Ramzī indicates, Sirhindī started to reveal his thoughts on legal applications, beliefs, and social life in contemporary Mughal India. The first strong refutations against him came in his controversial approaches to the spiritual level of the prophet Muḥammad, the Ka'ba, and the situation of Ibn 'Arabī. "How could he dare to compare himself with Ibn 'Arabī, the master of the divine love?", asked some Muslim writers of Mughal India. Ibn 'Arabī's deep impact had already shocked the mindsets of

different religious groups. They did not expect any person claiming superiority above the greatest master. Many different reasons could lead Aḥmad Sirhindī to undertake this mission of spiritual revival. For example, his eldest son Muḥammad died suddenly from the plague when he was a very young kid; then Sirhindī became very sad and extremely concerned with other social issues. In addition to these kinds of psychological factors, the social situation of Indian Muslims also pushed Sirhindī to be a Mujaddid.

After a long survey, Ramzī concluded that Sirhindī was not against the theory of “existential unity” (*Tawḥīd Wujūdī*) of Ibn ‘Arabī. Instead, Sirhindī must have brought a new creative tone for this theory and was called “the Bridge” inasmuch as he connected the ordinary people to the amazing Gnostic world of Ibn ‘Arabī. Ramzī considers Sirhindī as a real “connector” between the common understanding of the religion and unusual depth of Ibn ‘Arabī. Here, Sirhindī becomes the blessed link between the ordinary common people and the extraordinary followers of Ibn ‘Arabī. This approach is a little bit different from what we observe in many modern surveys which consider Sirhindī to be a clear opposite to Ibn ‘Arabī, or a political critic in Mughal India. In fact, the biggest trouble Aḥmad Sirhindī experienced was his revisionist attitude on the *wujūdī* theory, not his political attitude to the Mughal state. According to Ramzī, Aḥmad’s political criticism focused on the new social class of Rāfiḍī advisers around Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor. This new class had a hostile policy against the Sunnī scholars and Sufis in the current strata of Mughal Empire. If we consider Ramzī’s interpretation of Sirhindī to be reasonable, we may conclude that Sirhindī cannot be employed retrospectively for fictional roots of a religious nationalist state.

For Ramzī, *tajdīd* (‘revival’) meant what it did for the old Sufi masters. It was supposed to happen in the hearts, changing the man in a revolutionary way as is observed in Ibn ‘Arabī and Sirhindī. According to Ramzī, Sirhindī was a phenomenal writer and a stubborn restorer. Ramzī believed that the 19th century also brought a mass of social and ethical problems for Muslim communities in the world. Only under the guardianship of the great masters such as Sirhindī could Muslim peoples find a walkable path to the solution. He believed that revival in the material world was always possible with the techniques produced in the West, East, or North, as Muslim did in the past. However, the revival in the hearts was impossible without the method of Sirhindī of India and other great spiritual masters.

Ramzī thought that the need for revival in the religion could be met with this old and tested way. Other approaches to the religion (modernist, revolutionist, and historicist) would harm the sacred structure of the religion (i.e., Islam) and turn out to be a toy in the hands of novice scholars. Paradoxically, his “old” path was newer than the path of his reformist rivals. Some of his contemporary Muslim reformist authors wanted to revive the *‘Asr-i Sa ‘ādat* (the first 40 years of Islam, 622-661) in their imaginations, even though Ramzī’s dream of the Naqshbandī Sunnī tradition, as renovated by Sirhindī (16th century), was newer and more applicable than what his rivals dreamt.

Ramzī’s method of Sufi text (*kitāb*)-weaving was different from what he followed in writing his history. For example, Ramzī did not care about mentioning sources in his Sufi texts, whereas he was very serious about this in his historical work. Furthermore, he did not give clear references for many quotations in his Sufi texts and did not organize the titles, which he did meticulously in his historical work. For Ramzī, the most

important thing in mystical works was the illuminative character of the text. The more illuminative character he finds in the text, the more he gets involved in it. He put obvious patchworks and collages in *Tarjamat Aḥwāl al-Imām al-Rabbānī* and *Dhayl* without mentioning the reference just to provide the illuminative character in those statements.

It is difficult to grasp the meaning of the “text” in the mind of Ramzī without understanding some terminology of Ibn ‘Arabī. For Ramzī, the qualified high level ‘*Irfānī*’ text becomes a reflection, intuition, even a “translation” of the divine meanings flowing from the Divine Being. Because the real active subject is considered the Divine Being, this kind of text is also regarded as a byproduct of the Divine Being. Therefore, Ramzī respects these illuminative texts more than he respects others. As a weaver of the text with different colored yarns, Ramzī reconstructed many poems with his Sufi patches, even though some of them were recited originally as lyrical couplets for different purposes.

Ramzī the Sufi established his terminology for a Sufi text depending upon his ‘*Irfān*’-based intellect. He obviously broke the commonly-understandable meaning of the Scripture when he was interpreting the position of the Prophet Muḥammad, even though he tried to establish a balance between two systems (*Bayān* and ‘*Irfān*’). As a follower of Sirhindī-style Sufism, Ramzī breaks up neither the exterior meanings of the scripture (“the skin”), nor the Akbarī interpretation of it (“the bone”). However, he obviously reflected in his Sufi text his élitism inherited from speculative Sufism.

On the other hand, his method of writing history was totally different from the form he used for Sufi texts and translations. He established a particular *Burhān*-based terminology for the text of a work of history. Perhaps his motivation was that the



perceived expectations of the readers of a historical work diverged from those who would read his mystical treatises and translations. The history *Talfīq al-akhbār* thoroughly references the widely-respected historical sources found in the rich libraries of the East, as if he wrote this work for diverse social groups coming from different classes in society. The reason of why he made a striking differentiation between the Sufi text and history was not only his reconstruction of the reality pertaining to the society in which he lived, but also his subsequent break with the old habits and beliefs which were essential to the writing of mystical books.

Thus we see a dramatic shift in terms of both political ideology and the method of writing. The Ramzī of history was no longer the Ramzī of speculative Sufism. A reader can see in his nationalistic zeal a reflection of modern national historians mixed with the old classical Arabic authors. His method of text weaving in historical narratives resembles that of Ibn Khaldūn. Besides the aforementioned features, Ramzī enriches the text with some satiric events and personal accounts. Marjānī might have influenced Ramzī in the style and shape of modern authorship, but the tendency toward classicism remained.

While the works of Ramzī the Sufi were created under the influence of the great Sufi masters flying in the wings of *ʿIrfān*, the Ramzī of history lived in a romantic dream, breathing the victorious air of olden times, but knowing that his homeland was under assault by Russian culture. Only a romantic nationalist could attempt to write a history text that could be expected to contribute to the creation of a new nation, whose people were culturally estranged from its natural habitus and materially diminished from their

original home of millions of square miles in Asia to one or two cities scattered around the Volga-Ural region

According to Murād Ramzī there were two methods of translation of classical books of Sufism. One is to translate the sentences from the source language “word by word”. The other is to translate the meanings by concentrating on the concepts in a meticulous way. Ramzī chose the second method. Indeed, Ramzī was applying a well-known method of translation that has been followed since the ‘Abbāsīd age, as a canon of translation in the “Arabic cosmopolis”. The inventor of this method was Ḥunayn b. Ishāq (d. 873) and his colleagues. This method was widely known, applied, or expressed by various authors and translators from different ethnic groups and beliefs, such as Sulaymān al-Bustānī (d. 1925), Ottoman poet Nergīsī (17th century), Bahā al-‘Āmilī (d.1621), Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d. 1363), and others. Despite the fact that these authors of the “Arabic cosmopolis” were coming from different ethno-cultural origins (Turkish, Arab, Persian, Muslim, and Christian), they created their works in the same “problématique of translation” whose roots go back to the age of the ‘Abbāsīd Renaissance.

Ramzī’s intellectual evolution towards *Burhān* (“Reason”) began in the last decades of the 19th century, when Ibn Khaldūn, William Draper, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, Necip Âsım, and ‘Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm became his favorite authors. He gave priority to rational analysis and tried to construct a realism that counteracted the plight of the Muslim Turkic peoples in the Russian Empire.

The Ramzī of *Talfīq al-akhbār* tried to develop a practice and technique for the process of writing history. He adapted parts of his old method of evaluation for historical

persons to the evaluation of historical texts. Ramzī saw history as a project for engineering a new society. He consciously emphasized the influence of history on the beliefs, attitudes, and culture of young men. The nation in Ramzī's new discourse is represented with romantic egalitarian pastoralism blended with his unique realism. Ramzī did not concentrate only on the crucial points of Arabo-Turkic relations, but also contributed to the inner discussions among the Turkic intellectuals and historians. Ramzī was aware of the importance of the Turks of the Volga-Ural region, as he targeted them in his historical discourse. He easily adopted the history of the Golden Horde, the most powerful Muslim Turko-Mongol state in Eurasia, as a common narrative of the great ancestors who would inspire the peoples of Volga-Ural (*İdel-Ural*) region, the Kazakhs, and other northern Turkic groups. For Ramzī, Il'minsky's attempt to promote the Russian alphabet was the most dangerous obstacle separating all Turkic and Muslim communities from each other in the Russian Empire.

The Ramzī of *Talfīq al-akhbār*, never believed or imposed a pure ethnic nationalism. Throughout his long discourse, the necessity of Islam as a strong cultural cement and eternal belief is clearly observable. Even though he loved his nation dearly, and joyfully defended science, new technology, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press, he did not become a fully westernized secular nationalist. Also, he must have noticed the emergence of Islamic revivalist movements in that age, as he participated in the house meetings in Mecca of 'Abd al-rashīd Ibrāhīm, the famous Tatar Pan-Islamist traveler.

With his unordinary position and elaborately-refined decisions, he did not become a westernized Jadīdist, even though he was an avid supporter of Jadīdism in education

and technological matters, as we observe in his “carefully” worded support for İsmail Gasprinsky. Nor did he join the ranks of traditionalist (Qadīmist) scholars, as evidenced by his severe critiques of their conservatism. Of course, he elevated *Burhān* (“Reason”) as a leading domain in his new intellectual life. Nevertheless, he continued to be a traditionalist author in his approach to ethics, insisting on the primacy of Sufism and the basic scriptural tenets of Islamic religion as the guardians of inner-world without which nothing would be achievable.

Unfortunately, Ramzī could not eliminate his chronic élitism. He created a historiography that was supposed to inspire the people, the sons of the Turks-Tatars. But he did not respect the ordinary folk who were to make up the citizenry of his nation. Perhaps, he came under the sway of the books and newspapers published under influence of Carlyle-style heroic élitism that was a popular movement among new Ottoman intelligentsia, especially the Young Turks.

For him, a romantic nationalism blended with Islam, publicized by the élite scholars and noble leaders, was the only reasonable solution to the problems faced by the Muslim Turkic peoples of Russia. He must have thought that the loss of the identity, culture, and religious heritage of the Turkic Muslims would be total if this unique nationalism could not stir them to action. He also thought that the problems of the Tatars and Muslims facing the crisis of modernity could not be solved with one-sided approaches. The Tatars and other Muslims were encouraged to develop new technologies to meet the needs of their daily-life in their environment. However, they also should continue to cultivate experts in religious disciplines, ethics and values to meet the needs of their spirit. That is typical approach of many nationalist authors of Asia and Africa;

with the ongoing dialectic of inner domain/outer domain; public/private world; spiritual /material culture, in which woman represents the inner world of the home, while the man, the outer world of politics and the public sphere.

The last years of his life are still unknown in detail. However, the names of some works attributed to him, and other small anecdotes indicate that Ramzī could have changed his focus from Sufism ( *ʿIrfān*) and national history (*Burhān*) to Arabic and Qurʾānic studies (*Bayān*). While we do not know the exact points of his last intellectual adventure, we can be certain that he continued to be concerned that the effects of Russian rule over this vast area might be incurable. Perhaps, all 1300 pages of *Talfīq al-akhbār* were penned as just a long commentary on its decorated introduction in which he described the situation of the Tatars-Muslims in Russia as a second occurrence of the syndrome of Andalusia.

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