

Sufi reformist diffusion and the rise of Arabism in late Ottoman Syria

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At the turn of the twentieth century the urban centers of Syria became an important source for both the national ideology of Arabism¹ and the religious tendency of the Salafiyya.² The two trends were closely related from the outset, sharing an aversion to the increasingly centralized and autocratic Ottoman government, on the one hand, and a critical attitude toward traditional forms of religion, on the other. Their pioneers were religious reformists such as Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī of Damascus,³ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī of Aleppo,⁴ Rashīd Riḍā of Tripoli,⁵ and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Zahrāwī of Homs,⁶ who by stressing the Arab provenance of the forefathers (*al-salaf*) laid the Islamic foundations for a separate Arab identity within the empire. Not averse to Western innovation

¹ Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism*, Beirut 1966; C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism*, Urbana 1973; Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus 1860-1920*, Cambridge 1983.

² David Dean Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria*, New York 1990; Antonino Pellitteri, *Il Riformismo Musulmano in Siria (1870-1920)*, Naples 1987.

³ Commins, *Islamic Reform* 89-95; Joseph H. Escovitz, " 'He was the Muḥammad 'Abduh of Syria'. A Study of Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī and his influence," *IJMES* 18 (1986), 293-310; Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Bānī, *Tanwīr al-baṣā'ir bi-sīrat al-shaykh Ṭāhir*, Damascus 1920; Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī, *Kunūz al-ajdād*, Damascus 1984, 5-16.

⁴ Khaldun S. Husry, *Three Reformers: A Study in Modern Arab Political Thought*, Beirut 1966, 55-112; 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, *'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī*, Cairo 1959; Sāmī al-Dahhān, *'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī*, Cairo 1980; Jamīl Bārūt, *Ḥarakat al-tanwīr al-'arabiyya fī 'l-qarn al-tāsi'* 'ashar, Damascus 1994, 107-147.

⁵ Albert H. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, Cambridge 1983, 299-306; Eliezer Tauber, "Rashid Rida as Pan Arabist before World War I," *The Muslim World* 79 (1989), 102-112; Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Manār wa'l-Azhar*, Cairo 1352/1933; Shakīb Arslān, *Rashīd Riḍā aw ikhā' arba'in sana*, Cairo 1937.

⁶ Ahmed Tarabein, "Abd al-Hamid Zahrawi: The Career and Thought of an Arab Nationalist," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muammad Muslih, and Reeve S. Simon, New York 1991, 97-119; Jawdat al-Rikābī and Sulṭān Jamīl, *al-Irth al-fikrī lil-muṣliḥ al-ijtimā'i*, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Zahrāwī, Damascus 1963.

as such, the reformists were ready to embrace the ideal of the nation as a means of mobilizing the people against the oppressive regime. The parallel appropriation of Western-type rationalism allowed them to distance themselves from the proponents of latter-day Muslim tradition who chose to profess unbounded loyalty to the government. The most vital component of this tradition in late Ottoman Syria, and indeed in the entire Muslim world of the pre-modern era, was Sufism.

Yet to understand the religious nature and political function of latter-day Sufism, one must go beyond the viewpoint of its modern detractors. Far from being a monolithic phenomenon, Sufism produced within itself a reformist strand, which had two main characteristics. One, a strict adherence to the precepts of the *sharī'a*, kept Sufi reformism within the confines of orthodox Islam. The other, active involvement in political and social affairs, determined its evolution within the broader historical context. Thus in periods of political stability and social prosperity, generally conceived as deriving from following the *sharī'a*, the reformist tendency could be less pronounced. But in times of crisis it was mostly Sufi reformist movements which, as leaders of the civil society, took it upon themselves to adapt the *sharī'a* to the needs of the time and guide the rulers along the straight path.⁷ Such orthodox orientation and sociopolitical activism was increasingly discernible among the various Sufi reformist movements working in the Syrian lands from the late eighteenth century, in response to the perceptible decline in the authority of the Ottoman central government. Most prominent among them were the Khalwatiyya and Naqshbandiyya orders, along with the theosophical school of the Akbariyya, the school of al-Shaykh al-Akbar, Muḥyī 'l-Dīn ibn 'Arabī.

The activities of the Khalwatiyya and the Naqshbandiyya, as well as the formulations of the Akbariyya, therefore, precipitated, and were a reflection of, the course of Ottoman modernization in general, and its impact on the Syrian provinces in particular, during this final century and a half of their existence. Though far from linear, modernization was determined by the combination of two major processes: reassertion of the state's central authority, which began to take shape in the early nineteenth century, and European economic and cultural penetration gaining momentum from the mid-century onwards.⁸ It was as a result of this double challenge that new identities were formulated in Syria within the ideological trends of the Salafiyya and of Arabism at the turn of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, despite its aversion to the alleged submissiveness and irrationalism of contemporary Islam, in its attentiveness to the afflictions of the time, and in its *sharī'a*-based endeavor to remedy them the Salafiyya remained indebted to the Sufi reformist movements that had preceded it. Focusing on the three major cities of

⁷ See my *Taste of Modernity: Sufism, Salafiyya, and Arabism in Late Ottoman Damascus*, Leiden 2001, 1-2.

⁸ For general surveys on the late Ottoman history see Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London, 1961; Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, Montreal 1964; Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols., Cambridge 1977, vol. II.

Damascus, Aleppo, and Tripoli, this chapter endeavors to examine whether the geographical patterns of diffusion of these movements also had an influence on the rise of Arabism.

Our point of departure in the investigation of the Sufi reformist movements of late Ottoman Syria is the 1780s, when a group of Khalwatī *shaykhs* established themselves in the major cities of the country. This new drive was part of a revival movement within the Khalwatiyya order inaugurated half a century earlier under the leadership of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī (1687-1749) and Yūsuf b. Sālim al-Ḥifnī (d. 1767).⁹ Bakrī was a native of Damascus who after receiving authorization as a spiritual guide in that order traveled widely to spread it in the Syrian provinces. His major success, however, was in Egypt, where he was invited to settle in 1737 by Ḥifnī, his erstwhile disciple and the actual organizer of his branch in the Khalwatiyya. Ḥifnī's efforts enabled Bakrī to swiftly acquire a large following to his peculiar path, a combination of exclusive affiliation to the *ṭarīqa*, which increased the fidelity of his disciples, with an intensive form of *dhikr*, which enhanced its popularity. Both were ultimately derived from the teaching of Ibn ʿArabī and were fortified by Bakrī's emphasis on strict adherence to the *sharʿa*. The immense success of the Khalwatiyya-Bakriyya at that time in Egypt reflected the deteriorating situation of the country in the wake of the Great Insurrection of 1711, which marked the upsurge of Mamluk power at the expense of the Ottoman central government.¹⁰ For almost a century, until Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha subjected all Sufi orders to state control,¹¹ the Khalwatī *shaykhs*, who also dominated al-Azhar, presented themselves as spokesmen of the oppressed population before its rulers.

The Khalwatiyya-Bakriyya spread to the Syrian cities after similar circumstances came to prevail in them following the collapse of the Ottoman-sponsored ʿAẓm rule in al-Shām,¹² and the parallel intensification of the factional struggle between the Janissaries and the *ashrāf* in Aleppo.¹³ The wide diffusion of the order was facilitated by a long tradition of studying at al-Azhar, by trade, and by family connections. In Tripoli, where links with Egypt were particularly tight, it was ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Rāfiʿī (d. 1815) who headed the new trend. "Hoisting the banner of *ʿilm*", as the epithet he bequeathed to his descendants indicates, Rāfiʿī hailed from a prominent Sufi Rifāʿī family in the

⁹ On the Khalwatiyya in general see B.G. Martin, "A Short History of the Khalwati Order of Dervishes," in *Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie, Berkeley 1966, 275-305; J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford 1971, 74-78. On the Bakriyya see also Gideon Weigert and Nehemia Levtzion, "Renewal and Reform of the Khalwatiyya in Egypt (Eighteenth Century)," paper presented to the 24th Annual Meeting of MESA, San Antonio 1990.

¹⁰ Peter M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516-1922*, London 1966, 85-101.

¹¹ Frederick de Jong, *Turuk and Turuk-linked Institutions in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: A Historical Study in Organizational Dimensions of Islamic Mysticism*, Leiden 1978, 7-23.

¹² Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Stuttgart 1985, 31-38.

¹³ Herbert L. Bodman Jr., *Political Factions in Aleppo 1760-1826*, Chapel Hill 1963.

city. Acquiring his high education at al-Azhar, “he took the path from” – i.e. he was initiated by – Maḥmūd al-Kurdī, the foremost *khalīfa* of Ḥifnī in Cairo. Rāfiʿī returned to Tripoli following his *shaykh*’s death in 1781, where he taught in the Manṣūrī central mosque and guided disciples on the path. Concomitantly Rāfiʿī became engaged in the caravan trade of the city and, loyal to the Bakrī political tradition, he also gained influence with local governors.¹⁴ The Rāfiʿīs remained a leading reformist family in Tripoli to the end of the Ottoman Empire and beyond.

In Aleppo, which also kept significant links with Egypt, the Khalwatiyya was propagated by another deputy of Maḥmūd al-Kurdī, Ibrāhīm al-Hilālī (1742-1822). A scion of a Sufi Qādirī family from a nearby village rather than from the city itself, Hilālī studied at al-Azhar for 19 years before returning to settle in Aleppo in 1783. Here his vast knowledge was soon recognized, and he became head of the family lodge in the southern Jallūm quarter, where he combined religious teaching with spiritual guidance. Rather stereotypically Hilālī is depicted in the biographical dictionaries as avoiding the company of rulers, who nonetheless sought his advice.¹⁵ On the other hand, his name is mentioned among the *‘ulamā’* who in 1819 led a local insurrection against an oppressive governor.¹⁶ Though less prominent than the Rāfiʿīs in Tripoli, the Hilālī *zāwiya* remained a leading reformist center in Aleppo into the twentieth century.¹⁷

As a major center of learning in its own right, Damascus was less amenable than Tripoli or Aleppo to influences from Egypt. Here the Khalwatī message was propagated mainly by an outsider, ʿUmar al-Yāfi (1759-1817), and ultimately failed to strike deep roots. A native of Jaffa, Yāfi took the path in Gaza from Kamāl al-Dīn, Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī’s son. He first arrived in Damascus in 1784, two years after his *shaykh*’s death, but then left to spread the order in other parts of Syria and in the Hejaz, possibly because of opposition he encountered from the local *‘ulamā’*. Yāfi, who proved himself a prolific writer in Sufi matters and a gifted poet, later returned to Damascus to establish a

¹⁴ ‘Abdallāh Nawfal, *Tarājim ‘ulamā’ wa-udabā’ Ṭarābulus al-fayḥā*, Tripoli 1982, 40-44; Muḥammad Rashīd al-Rāfiʿī, *Tarjamat ḥayāt al-maghfūr lahu... al-shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Rāfiʿī al-Fārūqī al-Hanaḥī shaykh al-sāda al-ḥanaḥiyya wa-muftī al-diyār al-miṣriyya*, Cairo 1323/1906, 5-11, 22; Samīḥ Wajīh al-Zayn, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus qadīman wa-ḥadīthan*, Beirut 1969, 496.

¹⁵ Muḥammad Rāghib al-Ṭabbākh, *Flām al-nubalā’ bi-tārīkh Ḥalab al-shahbā’*, 2nd ed., 7 vols., Damascus 1408/1988, VII, 221-226; Kāmil al-Ghazzī, *Nahr al-dhahab fī tārīkh Ḥalab*, 2nd ed., 3 vols., Aleppo 1412/1991, II, 56-57.

¹⁶ Būlus Arūṭīn, *Aḥamm ḥawādith Ḥalab fī ʾl-niṣf al-awwal min al-qarn al-tāsiʿ ‘ashar*, Cairo n.d., 40.

¹⁷ It is depicted as still very active and the most popular order in Aleppo in the 1920s by Ghazzī, *Nahr al-dhahab*, I, 155, II, 57. See also the biographical notes on Ibrāhīm al-Hilālī, the leader of the family from 1871 to 1919, in Ṭabbākh, *Flām al-nubalā’*, VII, 548-550; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām – qāmūs tarājim li-ashhar al-rijāl waʾl-nisā’ min al-ʿArab waʾl-mustaʾribīn waʾl-mustashriqīn*, 10 vols., 2nd ed., Cairo 1954-1959, VIII, 129; as well as the biographies of the sons of the Ṭabbākh and Ḥajjār families who were strongly connected with the *zāwiya* in Ṭabbākh, *Flām al-nubalā’*, VII, 316-318, 398-401, 434, 545-548, and Zakī Muḥammad Mujāhid, *al-Aʿlām al-sharqiyya fī ʾl-miʾa al-rābiʿ ‘ashar al-hijriyya*, 4 vols., Cairo 1368-1369/1949-1950, III, 108-109.

circle of disciples in the Umayyad mosque. He too is depicted as influential among the rulers, though he tended to address the central government rather than its local representatives.¹⁸ Yet despite the unified source of inspiration, the activity of the Khalwatiyya-Bakriyya in late eighteenth-century geographical Syria remained highly fragmentary. Unable to transcend the administrative divisions, the *shaykhs* of the order concentrated their efforts each in his own city, rather than joining hands in a countrywide movement of reform.

The continuing degeneration in the condition of law and order in the Syrian provinces after the turn of the century, which culminated in a series of local uprisings against the governors around the 1820s,¹⁹ brought about a parallel strengthening in the Sufi reformist tendency. Consequently, in the following period of Ottoman restoration the reformists were eager to lend their support to the government in its effort to reimpose its authority, first in the center by Sultan Maḥmūd II and then, in the wake of the evacuation of the Egyptian army, in Syria itself under Sultan Abdülmecid.²⁰ In Tripoli and Aleppo the intensified reformist activity was led by a new generation of men of religion within the tradition of the Khalwatiyya-Bakriyya. They took inspiration from the preeminent *shaykh* of the order in Egypt in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Aḥmad al-Ṣāwī (1761-1825). Ṣāwī, like his predecessors, combined spiritual guidance with a teaching position at al-Azhar. Living the last part of his life under the rule of Muḥammad 'Alī, he sought to adapt the Khalwatī political tradition to the new realities of a strong central government. Accordingly, he acted discreetly, showing fidelity to the Pasha himself while seeking to protect the population against the oppression of those holding positions of command in his state.²¹

The most active center of the Khalwatiyya in geographical Syria in the second quarter of the nineteenth century was still Tripoli. Here two prominent deputies of Aḥmad al-Ṣāwī closely cooperated: Maḥmūd al-Rāfi'ī (d. 1848), son of 'Abd al-Qādir, and Muḥammad al-Jisr (1792-1845), who hailed from another local notable family with Rifā'ī affiliations. Though trained as '*ulamā*', both were ecstatic in their path, gaining the epithets *Abū 'l-Anwār* and *Abū 'l-Aḥwāl*, the possessors of mystical lights and states, respectively. After returning from Egypt around 1825, Rāfi'ī and Jisr spread the *ṭarīqa* along the Syrian coast, in 'Akkār and in the holy places in Palestine, acquiring a vast

¹⁸ Muḥammad Muṭī' al-Ḥāfiẓ and Nizār Abāza, '*Ulamā' Dimashq wa-a'yānuhā fī 'l-qarn al-thālith 'ashar al-hijrī*', 2 vols., Damascus 1991, I, 254-258.

¹⁹ Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics*, 40-43; Zayn, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 240-247; Ṭabbākh, *I'lām al-nubalā'*, III, 308-318.

²⁰ On Syria under Sultan Abdülmecid see especially Moshe Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine, 1840-1861*, Oxford 1968.

²¹ On Aḥmad al-Ṣāwī see Gilbert Delanoue, *Moralists et politiques musulmans dans l'Égypte du XIXème siècle (1798-1882)*, 2 vols., Cairo 1982, I, 188-246.

number of disciples in many cities, especially Jaffa, Beirut, and Sidon.²² Their work was complemented by that of Muḥammad Rashīd al-Mīqātī (1783-1865), who acquired numerous disciples in Tripoli itself. Mīqātī, as his name indicates, belonged to a family that had held the post of timing (*tawqīt*) in the central mosque. Unlike his colleagues, he set out to Egypt at a relatively late age specifically to receive Ṣāwī's guidance. This led him to another master, under whom Mīqātī completed the path in 1822.²³ As the mostly anecdotal biographies of these three major Khalwatī *shaykhs* of Tripoli imply, they maintained good relations with the Ottoman governors of the city, both before the Egyptian occupation and after evacuation. On the other hand, coming from well-to-do families, they were able to shun official posts and pensions and thus keep their independence. They were unable to exert any influence on Ibrāhīm Pasha and, after being implicated in a revolt against him in 1834, Rāfi'ī and Jisr fled their city. Only the more circumspect Mīqātī was allowed to stay behind. A quarter of a century later, during the civil strife of 1860, the aging Mīqātī again showed his prudence in checking the mob from attacking Christians.²⁴

Less fortunate than Tripoli, Aleppo was largely devastated in the first quarter of the nineteenth century both by its prolonged factional strife and by natural calamities. The local deputy of Aḥmad al-Ṣāwī in the Khalwatiyya, Aḥmad al-Tirmānīnī (1793-1876), was therefore obliged to concentrate in his work on reviving religious learning rather than on spreading the order. Tirmānīnī, like Ibrāhīm al-Hilālī in the previous generation, hailed from a religious family in the Aleppine countryside. His elder brother, Muḥammad (1784-1834), studied at al-Azhar and then settled in Aleppo, where he dedicated himself to teaching in the Umayyad mosque and to delivering legal opinions (*iftā'*) in the local Shāfi'ī school.²⁵ Aḥmad, who returned to Aleppo in 1827 and succeeded his brother in his religious functions under the harsh Egyptian regime, differed from him mainly in his strong ascetic disposition. He particularly avoided the company of governors and officials, though, as so often in the biographical compilations, they are said to have approached him for blessing. Earning his livelihood, like the Hilālīs, from trade, he moreover kept his freedom to use the popular lessons he gave in the Umayyad mosque to reprimand those in authority for oppressing the population, as well as the 'ulamā', the merchants, and the poor for their negligence, fraud, and idleness.²⁶

²² Husayn al-Jisr, *Nuzhat al-fikr fī manāqib al-shaykh Muḥammad al-Jisr*, Beirut 1888; Muḥammad Aḥmad Darnīqa, *al-Ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyya wa-mashā'ikhuhā fī Ṭarābulus*, Tripoli 1984, 243-245, 264-267; Nawfal, *Tarājim 'ulamā'*, 44-47; Zayn, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 476, 496-497; Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, VII, 321-322.

²³ Muḥammad Rushdī al-Mīqātī, *al-Āthār al-ḥamīd fī manāqib al-shaykh Rashīd*, Tripoli 1341/1923; Darnīqa, *al-Ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyya*, 255-259; Nawfal, *Tarājim 'ulamā'*, 55-58; Rāfi'ī, *al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir*, 12-14.

²⁴ Jisr, *Nuzhat al-fikr*, 71-73, 79-80, 83-89, 136-139, 232-237; Mīqātī, *al-Āthār*, 55-61, 83-87.

²⁵ Ṭabbākh, *Flām al-nubalā'*, VII, 234-242; Nawfal, *Tarājim 'ulamā'*, 30-31; Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, VII, 349-350.

²⁶ Ṭabbākh, *Flām al-nubalā'*, VII, 349-361; Qusṭāqī al-Ḥimṣī, *Udabā' Ḥalab dhāwī al-athar fī 'l-qarn al-tāsī' 'ashar*, Aleppo 1925, 32-33; Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, I, 148.

The most important development in the Sufi reformist activity at this period, however, was the introduction of a reinvigorated branch of the Naqshbandiyya order in Damascus. The founder of this branch, Khālīd al-Shahrizūrī (1776-1827), was an Iraqi Kurd who traveled as far as Delhi to tread the path under the chief master of the most orthodox and activist Naqshbandī sub-order, the Mujaddidiyya.²⁷ Founded in India at the beginning of the seventeenth century, this sub-order encouraged its shaykhs to seek influence with the Mughal rulers to safeguard the Muslim character of the country in the face of Hindu numerical superiority. Their work acquired additional importance in the next century, after the empire began to disintegrate rapidly, Delhi falling into the hands of the British in 1803, seven years before Khālīd arrived there.²⁸ He returned home a year later as a Naqshbandī master imbued with a strong sense of mission, dedicated to preventing a similar fate from overtaking the Ottoman Empire. Introducing two major innovations in the path he received – a concentrated form of *dhikr* and a rapid ordination of disciples – Shaykh Khālīd was able to create an efficient organization, and through it to exert great influence not only in the Arab provinces in which he worked but even in the highest echelons in Istanbul. Khālīdī deputies supported Maḥmūd II in his move against the Janissaries in 1826, the last obstacle to the restoration of the sultan's absolute rule, and stood behind the promulgation of the Gülhane Rescript by the young Abdülmejid in 1839, the founding document of the Tanzimat reforms.²⁹

Encountering growing difficulties in his work in Iraq, Shaykh Khālīd decided to move to Damascus in 1823, where he brought about a considerable religious awakening among both *‘ulamā’* and common people. Khālīd's most faithful adherents in the city were young men of religion hailing from local merchant families whose fortunes were severely affected by the deteriorating law and order situation. They included the founders of the major reformist families of late Ottoman Damascus such as Ibn ‘Ābidīn, the foremost Ḥanafī jurist of the time,³⁰ Ḥasan al-Shaṭṭī, the leading Ḥanbalī scholar in the city,³¹ and Ḥasan al-Bīṭār, the *shaykh's* representative in the southern quarter of the

²⁷ On the Naqshbandiyya in general see Hamid Algar, "A Brief History of the Naqshbandi Order," in *Naqshbandis*, ed. Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popovic, and Thierry Zarcone, Istanbul and Paris 1990, 3-44; Trimmingham, *Sufi Orders*, 62-64, 92-96. On Shaykh Khālīd see Albert H. Hourani, "Sufism and Modern Islam: Mawlana Khalid and the Naqshbandi Order," in: A.H. Hourani *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, London 1981, 75-89; Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in the Ottoman Lands in the Early 19th Century," *Die Welt des Islams*, 22 (1982), 1-36.

²⁸ Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, New Delhi 1983, II, 174-263.

²⁹ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript," *Die Welt des Islams*, 34 (1994), 173-203.

³⁰ Muḥammad Muṭī' al-Ḥāfīz, *Faqīh al-ḥanafīyya Muḥammad Amīn ‘Ābidīn: ḥayātuhu wa-āthāruhu*, Damascus and Beirut 1994.

³¹ Muḥammad Jamīl al-Shaṭṭī, *Mukhtaṣar ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, Damascus 1339/1920, 157-159; idem, *Rawḍ al-baṣhar fī a'yān Dimashq fī l-qarn al-thālith ‘ashar*, Damascus 1365/1946, 64-65.

Miḍān.³² Khālīd, however, refrained from appointing his Damascene disciples as deputies, preferring instead to employ his companions from Iraq, and subsequently also a local adherent from the provincial town of Hama, Muḥammad al-Khānī (1798-1862). Basing himself in the southern Murādiyya mosque, Khānī remained the only Khālīdī shaykh in Damascus after his master's death and throughout the period of Egyptian rule. He regarded himself as head of the entire order, though as an outsider his base in the city remained always precarious, most of his deputies being foreigners. After the Ottoman restoration Khānī was obliged to share authority with Khālīd's brother, who settled in Damascus under the new sultan's patronage.³³

In the four years he spent in Syria, until his untimely death in a plague in 1827, Shaykh Khālīd's activity remained focused on Damascus. The disciples he attracted from other parts of the country were mainly students of religion who had come to study here rather than in Cairo. It is not clear whether Khālīd appointed any of them as his deputy. The most successful among these adherents was Aḥmad al-Tiẓkilī (1781-1867), who acquired a considerable following among the 'ulamā' of Homs.³⁴ To his *silsila* belonged Muḥammad al-Ḥāmid, the leading 'ālim of post-independence Hama, and Sa'īd Ḥawwā, the foremost ideologue of the Muslim Brethren under Asad.³⁵ Shaykh Khālīd's principal adherent in Aleppo, Aḥmad al-Ḥajjār (1776-1861), was initially a disciple of Ibrāhīm al-Hilālī, who had brought the Khalwatiyya to the city in the previous generation. Returning to Aleppo in the 1830s at the request of its inhabitants, Ḥajjār followed his senior colleague, Aḥmad al-Tirmānīnī, in dedicating his energies to the revival of religious studies rather than to the *ṭarīqa*. Faithful to the Naqshbandī heritage, he differed from Tirmānīnī in seeking influence with the rulers and in his efforts to restore abandoned mosques and schools.³⁶ Khālīd's principal disciple in Tripoli, Aḥmad al-Urwādī (d. 1858), though a respected 'ālim, was unable to spread the order in this predominantly Khalwatī city. A native of the small offshore island of Urwād, his base of

³² 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Biṭār, *Ḥilyat al-bashar fī tārikh al-qarn al-thālith 'ashar*, 3 vols., Damascus 1380-1383/1961-1963, II, 463-475; Muḥammad Adīb Taqī al-Dīn Ḥiṣnī, *Muntakhabāt al-tawārikh li-Dimashq*, 2nd ed. 3 vols., Beirut 1399/1979, II, 651.

³³ Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh al-Khānī, *al-Bahja al-saniyya fī ādāb al-ṭarīqa al-'ālīyya al-khālīdiyya al-naqshbandiyya*, Cairo 1303/1885, 1-2; 'Abd al-Majīd al-Khānī, *al-Ḥadā'iq al-wardiyya fī ḥaqā'iq ajilla' al-naqshbandiyya*, Cairo 1308/1890, 262-272; As'ad al-Ṣāhib, *al-Fuyūḍāt al-khālīdiyya wa'l-manāqib al-ṣāhibiyya*; on the margins of *Nūr al-hidāya wa'l-'irfān fī sirr al-rābiṭa wa'l-tawajjuh wa-khatm al-Khwajagan*, Cairo 1311/1893.

³⁴ Biṭār, *Ḥilyat al-bashar*, I, 197; 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṭahmāz, *al-'Allāma al-mujāhid al-shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥāmid*, Damascus and Beirut 1971, 206.

³⁵ See my "Sa'īd Ḥawwā: The Making of a Radical Muslim Thinker in Modern Syria," *MES*, 29 (1993), 607-611.

³⁶ Ṭabbākḥ, *Flām al-nubalā'*, VII, 295-299, III, 352; Aḥmad Taymūr, *A'lām al-fikr al-Islāmī fī 'l-'aṣr al-hadūth*, Cairo 1967, 228-233, Ghazzī, *Nahr al-dhahab*, II, 117, III, 286.

power, like that of Khānī in Damascus, was always precarious.³⁷ Thus, in religio-geographical terms, the result of Khālid's work in Syria was to further divide the country into two main Sufi reformist spheres; one, the Naqshbandī, was centered in Damascus and its provincial towns of Hama and Homs, and the other, Khalwatī, radiated from Tripoli along the coast and into Palestine, and was also predominant in Aleppo. On the other hand, the expanded work of both the Naqshbandiyya and the Khalwatiyya in the Syrian lands during the early Tanzimat period reflected, and was facilitated by, the growing control of the provincial urban centers over their peripheries.

The 1850s marked another major shift in the history of the late Ottoman Empire, with the turn of its government, now in the hands of the Sublime Porte, to the path of Westernization,³⁸ and with the integration of its economy into the European-dominated world market.³⁹ In Syria, this double challenge brought about a parallel shift in the focus of the Sufi reformist tendency, from the practical framework of the orders to theoretical formulations within the Akbarī theosophical tradition. The inspiration again came from outside, through the agency of Amīr 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī (1807-1883), the leader of the Muslim resistance to the French occupation of Algeria.⁴⁰ During his five years of captivity in France following his defeat in 1847, 'Abd al-Qādir witnessed at first hand the achievements of Western science, but also went through a grave spiritual crisis which led him to the teaching of Ibn 'Arabī. He consequently dedicated the rest of his life to the mission of redefining the relationship between mysticism and rationalism, in an effort to maintain the viability of Islam in the modern world. Through an experiential interpretation of Ibn 'Arabī's teaching, 'Abd al-Qādir called upon Muslims to appropriate the rationalist-scientific approach of the West to their worldly affairs and to adopt a tolerant attitude toward non-Muslims, particularly Christians, the leaders of the modern experience.⁴¹

³⁷ Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān al-Urwādī, "al-'Iqd al-farīd fī 'uluw al-asānīd," MS., Princeton University Library, Yahuda Collection, 821, Garrett Collection, 793h, 1268/1851; Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Baghdādī, *al-Ḥadiqa al-nadiyya fī ādāb al-tariqa al-naqshbandiyya wa'l-bahja al-khālidiyya*. On the margin of 'Uthmān al-Wā'ilī al-Najdī, *Aṣfā al-mawārid min silsāl aḥwāl al-imām Khālid*, Cairo 1313/1895, 77; Muḥammad al-Rakhāwī, *al-Anwār al-quṣṣiyya fī manāqib al-sāda al-Naqshbandiyya*, Cairo 1344/1925, 263-264; Miqāṭī, 31, 89; 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī, *Fihris al-fahāris wa'l-atḥbāt*, 3 vols., 6th ed., Beirut 1982-1986, I, 125.

³⁸ See especially Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire: 1856-1876*, Princeton 1963.

³⁹ Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800-1914*, New York and London 1993, 83-99.

⁴⁰ Of the immense literature on the life of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī most useful are Philippe d'Estailleur-Chanteraine, *L'Emir magnanime Abd-El-Kader le croyant*, Paris 1959; Raphael Danziger, *Abd al-Qadir and the Algerian Resistance to the French and Internal Consolidation*, New York and London 1977; and the biography written by his son, Muḥammad al-Jazā'irī, *Tuhfat al-zā'ir fī tārikh al-Jazā'ir wa'l-amir 'Abd al-Qādir*, Beirut 1384/1964.

⁴¹ Weismann, *Taste of Modernity*, 155-192. See also Michel Chodkiewicz, *Emir Abd el-Kader: Ecrits spirituels*, Paris 1982.

‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī chose Damascus as his place of exile after his release, not least because Ibn ‘Arabī’s tomb was located there. Arriving in 1855, he soon formed around him an elite circle of disciples, which consisted of sons of Shaykh Khālīd’s most devoted adherents in the previous generation, as well as of the heads of the Algerian community belonging to the North African Raḥmānī branch of the Khalwatiyya-Bakriyya order.⁴² While the Algerian followers of ‘Abd al-Qādir continued to regard him as their political and religious leader, his Damascene disciples joined him out of disappointment with the religious leadership of the city, which had diverted the Naqshbandī-inspired reforms of the early Tanzimat period to its own advantage. Prominent among the local disciples were ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Bīṭār (1837-1916) in the Mīdān,⁴³ and Muḥammad al-Khānī the Younger (1831-1898) in the Murādiyya mosque.⁴⁴ ‘Abd al-Qādir advised this religious vanguard to concentrate on its spiritual mission rather than criticize the non-*sharī’a* basis of the Tanzimat reforms. On the other hand, he encouraged his disciples to ally with the emerging layer of Muslim entrepreneurs who were engaged, in cooperation with the Christians whom they defended during the 1860 riots, in the export of Syrian grain to the West.⁴⁵ ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Bīṭār was later to become the founder of the Salafī trend in Damascus. Among his Algerian colleagues were Aḥmad al-Jazā’irī,⁴⁶ ‘Abd al-Qādir’s young brother, and Ṭāhir al-Jazā’irī, whose father had been affiliated with the Raḥmāniyya.⁴⁷

As in the case of Shaykh Khālīd before him, and despite the much longer period he spent in the country, nearly three decades, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī made little effort to propagate his teaching outside Damascus. Nevertheless, reformist *‘ulamā’* from other cities of geographical Syria, which in 1864 was for the first time administratively united under this name, were attracted to his views, those among them who studied in Damascus actually joining his circle. This was particularly conspicuous in the coastal cities. Thus in Tripoli ‘Abd al-Qādir’s sympathizers included ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāfi‘ī (1816-1890), the leader of the third generation of this illustrious Khalwatī family and

⁴² On the Raḥmāniyya order see Ahmad Nadir, “Les Ordres religieux et la conquête française,” *Revue Algérienne des Sciences Juridiques* 9 (1972), 822-825; Julia A. Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1994, 39-91.

⁴³ Bīṭār, *Ḥilyat al-bashar*, I, 9-20 (written by the editor, Muḥammad Bahjat al-Bīṭār); ‘Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Fāsi, *Mu’jam al-shuyūkh al-musammā riyāḍ al-janna aw al-mudhish al-muṭrib*, 2 vols., Rabat 1350/1931, II, 69-70; Adham al-Jundī, *A’lām al-adab wa’l-fann*, 2 vols., Damascus 1954-1958, I, 220-222.

⁴⁴ Khānī, *al-Ḥadā’iq al-wardiyya*, 276-290; Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, “Ta’ṭīr al-mashamm fī ma’āthir Dimashq al-Shām,” MS. in possession of the author 1901, 22-24.

⁴⁵ Weismann, *Taste of Modernity*, 193-195.

⁴⁶ Muḥammad Muṭī al-Ḥāfiẓ and Nizār Abāza, *Tārīkh ‘ulamā’ Dimashq fī ‘l-qarn al-rābi‘ ‘ashar al-hijrī*, 3 vols., Damascus 1986-1991, I, 96-97; Qāsimī, “Ta’ṭīr al-mashamm,” 65-71.

⁴⁷ ‘Adnān Khaṭīb, *al-Shaykh Ṭāhir al-Jazā’irī rā’id al-nahḍa al-‘ilmiyya fī Bilād al-Shām wa-‘lām min khirrijī madrasatihi*, Cairo 1971, 91-92.

the principal deputy of Muḥammad Rashīd al-Miqātī.⁴⁸ Rāfi'ī was later appointed to Zaydī Yemen, where he became acquainted with the works of Ibn Taymiyya, the fore-runner of the Salafiyya, and was probably the first 'ālim to teach his works systematically in Syria.⁴⁹ Even closer to 'Abd al-Qādir was Muṣṭafā al-Maghribī (1828-1886), who was attracted to the amir's circle while studying in Damascus. Officiating as *qāḍī* in various Syrian cities, he was honored upon his return to Tripoli in 1878 with a seat on the administrative council, but soon thereafter felt compelled to adopt an oppositional stance towards the government.⁵⁰ Muṣṭafā was the father of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Maghribī, a prominent Salafi and close friend of Rashīd Riḍā, who after the Ottoman demise dedicated himself to the regeneration of the Arabic language.⁵¹ From Tripoli 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī's teaching was carried to Beirut, the new commercial capital of the Syrian province, by Ibrāhīm al-Aḥḍab (1826-1891), a student of 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāfi'ī who moved there to become part of the local cultural renaissance (*Nahḍa*). A gifted author and poet, Aḥḍab was appointed to the educational council of the city in addition to his work as editor of the first Muslim paper in Syria, *Thamarāt al-Funūn*.⁵² Further south, 'Abd al-Qādir had close relations with Ḥasan al-Dajjānī, a student of Muḥammad al-Jisr and head of a leading Khalwatī family in Jaffa.⁵³

There is no evidence in our sources for any direct influence of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī's Akbarī teaching in Aleppo, which remained the capital of its own separate province. Here the young generation of men of religion gathered around another outsider and Sufi reformist, Ḥusayn al-Bālī of Gaza (1819-1855), a Naqshbandī adept and *littérateur* whose views nevertheless largely corresponded to those of 'Abd al-Qādir.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ See his compilation and extension of his *shaykh's* sayings in 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāfi'ī, *Tarṣīf al-jawāhir al-makkiyya fi tazkiyat al-akhlāq al-murdiyya*, Cairo 1884.

⁴⁹ Jazā'irī, *Tuḥfat al-zā'ir*, 623; *al-Manār* 21, 3 (1919), 157-160, 30, 1 (1929), 66-68; Nawfal, *Tarājim 'ulamā'*, 83-87; Jundī, *A'lām al-adab*, II, 301-302; Yūsuf Aliān Sarkīs, *Mu'jam al-maṭbū'āt al-'arabiyya wa'l-mu'arraba*, 2 vols., Cairo 1342-1347/1923-1929, II, 923-924; Zayn, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 493-495.

⁵⁰ Ḥāfiẓ and Abāza, *Tārīkh 'ulamā' Dimashq*, III, 27-30; Sāmī Dahhān, *Qudamā' wa-mu'āṣirūn*, Cairo 1961, 273; Zayn, 573-574.

⁵¹ On him see especially Muḥammad As'ad Ṭalas, *Muḥāḍarāt 'an al-shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Maghribī*, Cairo 1958.

⁵² Zaynab al-Qārūt, *al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Aḥḍab: ḥayātuhu wa-mu'allafātuhu*, Tripoli 1981; Jurjī Zaydān, *Tarājim mashāhir al-sharq fi 'l-qarn al-tāsī' 'ashar*, 2 vols., Cairo 1910-1911, I, 151; Yūsuf As'ad Dāghir, *Maṣādir al-dirāsa al-adabiyya*, Beirut n.d., 84-87; Jazā'irī, *Tuḥfat al-zā'ir*, 873-875; Zayn, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 458-460; Nawfal, 122-124; Jundī, *A'lām al-adab*, II, vol. 2, 328-329; Sarkīs, *Mu'jam*, 366-369.

⁵³ Jazā'irī, *Tuḥfat al-zā'ir*, 600, 618; Jisr, *Nuzhat al-fikr*, 59-60, 161.

⁵⁴ Our principal source of information on Ḥusayn al-Ghazzī, Ṭabbākh, *Flām al-nubalā'*, VII, 281-285, states that he was content with a short note since his son, Kāmil al-Ghazzī, was writing a full biography. Ghazzī's biographical dictionary, however, which constituted the fourth volume of his encyclopedia of Aleppo, is lost. For further details see also Gabriel Rabbath, "Notice sur la vie et les travaux du Sheikh Kamel el-Ghazzy," *Revue Archéologique Syrienne*, 3 (1933), 1-2; Ghazzī, *Nahr al-dhahab*, I, 469, II, 285; Ḥimṣī, *Udabā' Ḥalab*, 5-6; Dahhān, 224-225.

Imbibing his reformist zeal during his studies at al-Azhar, Bālī encountered animosity in his hometown and was forced to leave for Tripoli. From here he was invited in 1848 by some leading Aleppine merchants to settle among them. Ghazzī, as he henceforward became known, spent the last six years of his life in Aleppo, a period that saw the anti-Christian riots of 1850, of which he disapproved.⁵⁵ In this short period he attracted a large number of students and, like ‘Abd al-Qādir, an elect group of young reformist *‘ulamā’*. Among his prominent adherents was Aḥmad al-Kawākibī (1829-1882), father of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and the link of the entire group to the Hilālī Khalwatī *zāwiya*.⁵⁶ Thus, geographically speaking, Amir ‘Abd al-Qādir’s teaching, though directed at the reformist elite, extended the religious influence of Damascus to Tripoli and other cities included during the late Tanzimat period within the newly established province of Syria. This and the apparent lack of connection between ‘Abd al-Qādir and Ḥusayn al-Ghazzī, his counterpart in Aleppo, once again demonstrated the co-relation between, and dependence of, Sufi reformist patterns of diffusion and politico-administrative realities.

It was under the Hamidian regime of the 1880s that reformist men of religion in the Syrian cities began to distance themselves from Sufism toward the Salafī ideas. Restoring power to the palace, Abdülhamid II, while accelerating the pace of modernization in his empire, established an autocratic rule through the combined strategies of administrative centralization under his own person and religious populism.⁵⁷ The Young Turks used basically the same measures in establishing their authoritarian military regime after the revolution of 1908.⁵⁸ Faithful to the legacy of their predecessors, the emerging Salafis continued to approve Ottoman state reforms in accordance with the Khalwatī and Naqshbandī teachings, as well as the growing application of Western-type rationalism as prescribed by the Akbarī theosophy. Yet they could not accept the harnessing to the regime of popular Sufi *shaykhs*, and conservative *‘ulamā’* in general, who lent religious sanction to the autocracy of sultan and, following him, that of the Young Turk. The reformists, meanwhile sought to carve for themselves a new autonomous space vis-à-vis the state by reimagining the model of the pious forefathers, *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, as based on a consensual form of government and a rational type of religious deliberation (*ijtihād*).

⁵⁵ Ghazzī, *Nahr al-dhahab*, III, 287-288. For an analysis of the riots in Aleppo see Ma’oz, *Tootman Reform*, 101-107.

⁵⁶ Ṭabbākh, *Flām al-nubalā’*, VII, 375-377; Dahhān, 14-15.

⁵⁷ Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*, Princeton 1980; Stanford J. Shaw, “Sultan Abdülhamid II: Last Man of the Tanzimat”, in *Tanzimat’in 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu (Bildiriler)*, Ankara 1991, 179-197, ed. İsin Durou and Gonol Buyuklinanlı; Butrus Abu-Manneh, “Sultan Abdulhamid II and Shaikh Abulhuda al-Sayyadi,” *MES*, 15 (1979), 131-153.

⁵⁸ Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics 1908-1914*, Oxford 1969; Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1997, 141-143.

The rise of Arabism in the last years of Abdülhamid II's rule and, more emphatically, under that of the Young Turks, marked the growing awareness among graduates of the modernized Ottoman school system of the ethnic aspect of state centralization. Taking the Salafî notion of the exemplary forefathers a step further, the Arabists consequently set out to forge, in pursuance of European models, their distinct nation on the basis of a common culture, language, and history. These educated youths' preference of a larger Arab identity over the local sense of patriotism that had been developed in Syria in the previous period of the late Tanzimat⁵⁹ certainly reflected solidarity with comrades in the other Arab provinces of the empire who shared their plight. It may also have signified the failure of the mostly Christian notion of a Syrian fatherland to take among the Muslim population. But, the adoption of Arabism in late Ottoman Syria also seems to have been a perpetuation of the geographically determined patterns of diffusion that we have discerned among the Sufi reformist movements of the preceding generations. Faced with the dismantling of the Syrian province by Sultan Abdülhamid during the 1880s,⁶⁰ the new educated elite in the various cities of the country proved determined to follow their religious antecedents in seeking inspiration and support from outside, rather than transcend the re-imposed inner administrative divisions and join forces among themselves. The search for an external focus of national identity became marked during World War I, when the Arab cause was entrusted to the Sharîf Ḥusayn of Mecca. It continued to characterize the Syrian political scene throughout the French Mandate period, when the nationalist parties' loyalties were divided between Transjordan and Iraq, and culminated after independence in the rash union with Egypt in 1958. Paradoxically, it was only under the rule of the pan-Arab Baath Party that Syria felt sufficiently unified to cautiously assert a national identity all for itself.

⁵⁹ See the contribution of Fruma Zachs in this volume.

⁶⁰ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Establishment and Dismantling of the Province of Syria," in *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani*, ed. John Spangolo, Reading 1992, 8-26.