Identities in early Arabic journalism: The case of Louis bnj
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Bio-bibliographical sketch of Louis Ṣābūnjī

“This is the biography of an eccentric man, the likes of whom the past centuries have only seen few (...) Minimally concerned with the vanities of the world during good times, and very patient during hard times. To him, the world and its delights are mere objects, of which he only takes what he needs in life. He is gripped by the love for freedom and independence, under all circumstances. His nature has driven him to learn the skills that civilization requires of him, so that he can provide for his needs independently when the times are hard. So he learned making shoes and clothing, embroidery, carpentry, mechanics, chemistry, medicine, photography, trading, cooking, making sweets, and so on. He studied ten languages, mathematics, and all the sciences that his intellect could encompass. [He did all this] in order to become the most independent person in his activities, and the most professional in his actions.”

The quote above is from Ṣābūnjī’s unpublished Arabic biography, written in about 1890 by the English mathematician George Frost (1816-1896), who had learned Arabic from Ṣābūnjī. His description is somewhat theatrical and pedantic, but, as will be shown in this chapter, it does illustrate Ṣābūnjī’s biography fairly well. In particular, his eccentricity and his desire to independently steer his own course seems to be an accurate reflection of his character. The present chapter presents a bio-bibliographical of Louis Ṣābūnjī.

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1 Only the first 49 pages of this manuscript are preserved. It is kept in the library of the University of Istanbul, shelf mark A6926. Its title page is given in the appendix. The Arabic manuscript does not carry a title, but I list it as Tarjamat ṣāḥib nashrat al-Naḥla. In the footnotes I refer to it as "Frost 1890". I thank Mr. Özcan Geçer for pointing out this manuscript to me.
2 George Frost was a mathematician who “studied thirty languages and dialects” (Boase 1965: 365).
3 It seems that Frost wrote the biography under the guidance of Ṣābūnjī himself. It is possibly for this reason that the biography does not include any critical notes.
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Frost’s biography is partially preserved, and remained un Studied. Its presence was nevertheless known to Philippe de Ṭarrāzī, who mentions it in his bibliography of Ṣābūnjī. Ṭarrāzī’s work was published in 1913 – when Ṣābūnjī was still alive – and still remains the most important source for information about Ṣābūnjī. Many details that Ṭarrāzī provides are not encountered in Ṣābūnjī’s texts. It is therefore likely that they knew each other personally. They both belonged to the Syriac Catholic church, and they both were living in Beirut in 1870.

In the second half of the twentieth century, a number of studies about Ṣābūnjī appeared. In 1969 Jean Fontaine published a short and very general profile of Ṣābūnjī which focused on his religious beliefs. Fontaine’s account is based on archival material and Ṣābūnjī’s own texts. In 1978 Leon Zolondek published an article that discusses the years between 1876 and 1890 when Ṣābūnjī lived in London. Finally, in 1978 Martin Kramer wrote an article about Ṣābūnjī’s relation with Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, an English aristocrat and poet who was also one of Ṣābūnjī’s financiers. Kramer based his article on the correspondence between Blunt and Ṣābūnjī in the early 1880s. Besides these, in 1998 Azmi Özcan published a biographical overview of Ṣābūnjī in Turkish.

The present chapter aims, firstly, to expand upon these earlier studies and, secondly, to present an updated profile of Louis Ṣābūnjī. The chapter is largely based on sources that have not yet been systematically studied, such as Frost’s biography. The chapter follows a chronological order, starting with Ṣābūnjī’s birth in a small town in Northern Mesopotamia in 1838 and ending 93 years later with his death in Los Angeles in 1931. I have divided his life span into three phases. The first phase, from his birth until his arrival in Great Britain in 1875, is characterized by the prominence

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4 1913b: 71-81.
5 In addition, Philippe de Ṭarrāzī’s father, Naṣr Allāh, was the financier of Ṣābūnjī’s al-Naḥla, published in Beirut in 1870 (Ṭarrāzī 1913b: 47).
6 1969: 99-102. This article was reprinted in 1996 (Fontaine 1996: 29-34). Fontaine also wrote the entry about Ṣābūnjī in the Encyclopaedia of Islam (2nd ed.).
of the Syriac Catholic Church. Earlier studies do not contain much information about this period; the present study therefore fills an important gap. The second phase, from 1875 until his move to Istanbul in 1890, coincides with the years that are discussed in detail by Zolondek. I have found some new material, but Zolondek's study remains the best source of information about Šābūnjī's biography during these years. By taking into account Šābūnjī's earlier and later years, I have been able to add a number of interpretations to Zolondek's work. The most important interpretation is that his biography during his British years is characterized by a political awakening that was entirely absent in the earlier phase, and by his detachment from the Syriac Catholic Church. The third phase, from 1890 until his death in 1931, is also largely ignored by earlier studies. I have been able to find a number of new sources which shed new light on his biography during the last years of his life. In spite of this, his biography for these years remains sketchy.

This is not the place to give an extensive biography of Louis Šābūnjī. Instead, I focuses on three aspects. Firstly, I devote attention to the rough contours of his biography, including his places of residence, occupations, his networks, et cetera. Secondly, I will focus on the pursuits and affairs that Šābūnjī attached special importance to, as reflected in his various publications. Thirdly, special attention is given to the inconsistent and contradictory opinions on a variety of topics that he ventilated in his texts. In this chapter I will provide a comprehensive interpretation for this puzzling aspect of Šābūnjī's oeuvre.

3.1 Mesopotamia, Mount Lebanon, Rome (1838-1875)

Early years (1838-1865)
Louis Šābūnjī was born on 7 November 1838 as Yūḥannā (John) Šābūnjī in Derik, now a town in Turkey, about 40 kilometers west of Mardin and about 60 kilometers south of Diyarbakır.\(^{10}\) His birth

\(^{10}\) In another source Šābūnjī gives the date as 21 April 1838 (Šābūnjī 1919b: i); Fontaine argues that he was baptized on 20 April 1833 (Fontaine 1996: 29), but this is certainly incorrect.
name John was used until he was given the name Louis at the age of fifteen (see below). The area around Derik and Mardin is known in Arabic as al-Jazīra, and in English as Northern, or Upper, Mesopotamia. It is located on the borders of present-day northern Iraq, northeast Syria, and southeast Turkey. His father Jacob (Yaʿqūb) Ṣābūnjī was an engineer and an architect in the service of the Ottoman Empire who was responsible for constructing public buildings. His ancestors were originally from Şanlıurfa (ancient Edessa, also known as Urfa and al-Rahā), but Jacob Ṣābūnjī had already settled in Diyarbakır before John was born. Jacob Ṣābūnjī must have been a successful and wealthy government official. In 1846, at the age of 8 years, John traveled with his father to the town of Jermuk, hundreds of miles away in modern-day Armenia, “in order to bathe in its mineral and sulfuric waters”. It is safe to assume that such a trip was outside the possibilities of the vast majority of the population of Diyarbakır at that time. Jacob Ṣābūnjī died at the age of 61 in Diyarbakır, and John’s mother died in 1899, aged 85.

John had at least three brothers and one sister. Two of his brothers also rose to prominence. Firstly, George (Jirjis, 1840-1910) became the leading photographer of Beirut, and one of the most famous Arab photographers of his time. Secondly, Alexander Malcolm (Iskandar Malikī, 1849-1921) easily superseded his brother Louis in eccentricity. Also known as Alexander Malcolm Jacob, his life became enshrouded in fantastical myths. He led a highly unusual life as a trader in antiquities and jewels in India, as a magician, and as a political informant. He lent his name to the Jacob Diamond, the eighth largest known diamond in the world. In addition, he stood model for the characters Lurgan Sahib in

11 Frost 1890: 1. His parents lived in Diyarbakır, but because of the plague they fled to Derik where John was born.
12 Frost 1890: 4. Jermuk is still a spa town in Armenia.
13 Ṣābūnjī 2007: 156. She is buried in the island of Büyükada, near Istanbul, where Louis lived later in his life. I thank Mr. Özcan Geçer for this information.
15 For example, the story goes that he was an Armenian Jew who was sold as a slave when he was ten, and that he performed the Hajj to Mecca.
Louis Ṣābūnjī took care of his upbringing, first in Beirut, and later in London. Abraham still lived in that city in 1909. Philippe (Filip) was the son of George Ṣābūnjī, and Sophie was a daughter of Warda. In addition, two other photographers with the surname Ṣābūnjī, possibly nephews, were active in the late nineteenth century: a certain M. Sabounji was listed in Cairo, while David (Dāwud) Ṣābūnjī was active in Jaffa.

Jacob Ṣābūnjī, John’s father, was a member of the Syriac Catholic Church, a small denomination that traces its origin to Syriac Orthodox Christians who had converted to Catholicism in the preceding two centuries. Since the early seventeenth century Catholic European missionaries had been present in Syria, and the Syriac Orthodox community was an important target because of their perceived weakness. The activities of the Catholic missionaries resulted in a schism that created a short-lived Syriac Catholic Church in Aleppo in the 1660s, which disappeared again around the year 1700. After 1776 a group of Syriac Orthodox clergymen from Syria and Northern Mesopotamia, under the

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16 His biography was written by John Zubrzycki under the title The Mysterious Mr Jacob (2012). Alexander Malcolm is often mentioned by Louis Ṣābūnjī in his diary (see Ṣābūnjī 2007: 115, 126, 134, 247, 248, 317, 361, 372).
17 On Michael, see Frost 1890: 17. On Warda, see Ṣābūnjī 2007: 115, 126, 189.
18 Ḥallāq 1874: 25 and Ṣābūnjī 2007: 34, 357. Abraham was also employed by Louis as his printer in London. His name appears on the title pages of al-Naḥla during June and July 1878.
19 On Philippe and Sophie, see Ṣābūnjī 2007: 115, 126, 189, 366.
21 I use Syriac here because the liturgical language of these Catholic and Orthodox churches is Syriac. For further background information on the Syriac Catholic Church, see primarily O’Mahony 2006 and 2010.
22 Frazee 1983: 132-134.
leadership of Mīkhāʾīl Jarwa (1731-1800), converted to Catholicism, effectively re-establishing the Syriac Catholic Church. This time, oppression forced Jarwa to resettle in Mount Lebanon where he enjoyed the protection and support of the local –Catholic– Maronites. There, far away from his co-religionists in Syria and Northern Mesopotamia, Jarwa founded the Sharfa, or Charfet, monastery in the year 1786. At the time of John’s birth in 1838, the Syriac Catholic church had about 15,000 members, and in 1853 it counted five bishops, in Mardin/Diyarbakır, Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, and al-Nabk/al-Qaryatayn.

At the age of eleven, John left Diyarbakır for the Sharfa monastery in Mount Lebanon where, on 3 January 1850, he enrolled in its school. Ṣābūnjī’s description of the school is highly unfavorable. The head of the school, Yūsuf Ḥāyik, was uneducated and incompetent, and educational standards were very low. According to Ṣābūnjī, the students were kept busy by carrying bricks and stone, and by constructing new buildings for the monastery. On his own account, John left the school as a result of these hardships and went to Aleppo in 1852. There, at the age of only thirteen or fourteen years old, he joined bishop Anṭūn al-Samḥīrī (1801-1864). Together they returned to Sharfa where Ṣābūnjī enrolled in the school again on 23 November 1853.

The Syriac Catholic Patriarch, Buṭrus Jarwa, died in 1851 and the election for a new Patriarch took place on 30 November 1853 in Sharfa. It was for this reason that al-Samḥīrī made this trip to Sharfa. In this period the church was still very much in its formative phase, having only four bishops available for the position of patriarch, including al-Samḥīrī. The elections, in which al-Samḥīrī himself was elected as the new Patriarch, were followed by

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23 Chalfoun 1980: 222. The Sharfa monastery and school is very close to the Maronite Patriarchate at Bkerké, Mount Lebanon.
28 Fontaine 1996: 29. The biography of Frost argues that Ṣābūnjī had been al-Samḥīrī’s secretary in the year 1853, but this is possibly an overstatement.
the first Syriac Catholic synod ever. On the same occasion John Šabūnjī, at the age of 15, was promoted to the rank of subdeacon (rutbat al-abūdiyākun) and from that moment on he became known as Louis Šabūnjī or John Louis Šabūnjī. Soon after the election, the new Patriarch al-Samḥīrī went to Rome in order to present himself to the Pope. Through al-Samḥīrī’s intercession, Šabūnjī was accepted as a pupil at a Catholic college in Rome, the Collegio Urbano. In late 1854 Šabūnjī left Sharfa, and on 29 January 1855 he enrolled at this college.

All pupils of the Collegio Urbano came from countries that were considered targets for Catholic missionary activity. During the nineteenth century the average student population was about 110, comprising students mainly from the Balkans and the Near East. They were trained for a position in the clergy in their native countries. The college was officially aligned with the Propaganda Fide, officially known as the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide. This missionary institution was founded in 1622 and was aimed at spreading the Catholic faith over the world. The Propaganda Fide was also directly involved with the Syriac Catholic Church during the nineteenth century. It regulated to a large extent its internal affairs, as it confirmed the appointments of Patriarchs and approved the Synod proceedings. Šabūnjī’s move to Rome also bears witness to the close ties between the Vatican and the Syriac Catholic Church. Šabūnjī stayed at the school for eight and a half years, studying a variety of topics and acquiring a doctorate. In 1909 Šabūnjī held Italian citizenship, possibly acquired as a consequence of his education in Rome.

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29 O’Mahony 2010: 147.
30 Frost 1890: 7. Fontaine (1996, 29) writes that Šabūnjī became subdeacon on 25 March 1853; this is remarkable because both Frost (on Šabūnjī’s account) and Fontaine (on the basis of the Sharfa registers) note that Šabūnjī was not present at Sharfa.
32 Jezernik n.d.
33 Guilday 1921.
34 O’Mahony 2010: 142; Patelos 1981: 357.
35 Šabūnjī 2007: 354. His brother Alexander Malcolm asserted in 1899 on his passport application (see Zubrzycki 2012: opp. p.169) that his parents held Italian
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On 21 June 1863 Ṣābūnjī left Rome and boarded a ship to Alexandria. He traveled overland to Cairo, Jerusalem, Beirut, Aleppo, Diyarbakır, and finally Mardin, where he arrived in November 1863. Mardin was the seat of the Syriac Catholic Patriarch, and after his years of study in Rome Ṣābūnjī presented himself to Patriarch al-Samḥīrī. There, after hesitation on Ṣābūnjī’s part, al-Samḥīrī ordained Ṣābūnjī and in December 1863 he arrived in his hometown Diyarbakır, where he settled as a priest.36

Since 1862 Diyarbakır had had a resident Syriac Catholic bishop, Philip ‘Arkūs (1827-1873).37 Within half a year of Ṣābūnjī’s arrival in the city, the two became involved in a conflict on priestly conduct. Ṣābūnjī allegedly recreated or walked in a garden which ‘Arkūs viewed as unsuitable for priests. Looking for support, Ṣābūnjī approached the Patriarch al-Samḥīrī, but he passed away in June 1864. With the Patriarch deceased, ‘Arkūs became the highest church authority in the area. In the summer of 1864 the relation between Ṣābūnjī and ‘Arkūs had become so tense that ‘Arkūs more or less exiled Ṣābūnjī from Diyarbakır. It is not only Ṣābūnjī’s account in which ‘Arkūs is depicted as a difficult and controversial; other sources also attest this.38 In 1866, two years after al-Samḥīrī had died, ‘Arkūs succeeded him as Patriarch in a dubious deal. Allegedly, ‘Arkūs acquired the Patriarchy in exchange for waiving a claim on the accumulated finances of the deceased al-Samḥīrī. The course of events severely compromised the position of ‘Arkūs and strained his relation with the Vatican for a number of years.39

After his departure from Diyarbakır, Ṣābūnjī went to Aleppo, where he stayed with the local Syriac Catholic Bishop George Shalḥa (1818-1891) for two days.40 He then traveled to the

citizenship. As is apparent from Zubrzycki’s biography, Alexander Malcolm was notoriously unreliable. There are no other indications that suggest that the Ṣābūnjī family was of Italian origin.

39 O’Mahony 2010: 148. Patelos (see source above) gives a detailed account of the charges of simony against ‘Arkūs.
Sharfa monastery in Mount Lebanon, where he stayed a few months. Half a year later, George Shalha appointed Şābūnjī as head of the Beirut parish, which counted about a hundred Syriac Catholics in 1852. The number was probably higher in 1864, but Beirut was definitely not a major Syriac Catholic city. Şābūnjī arrived in the city around April 1865.

**Beirut (1865-1874)**

At the time Şābūnjī arrived in Beirut, the city was a center of literary and cultural innovation. Especially for printing and education the 1860s and 1870s were a decisive period. The various journals and newspapers that were initiated in this period shaped to a large extent the future contours of Arabic journalism. Simultaneously, various schools were founded, significantly altering the educational system of Beirut and Ottoman Syria. Şābūnjī thus arrived at the right time and place, and he became heavily involved both in publishing and education.

Şābūnjī’s interest in education most prominently appears in the founding of a school for his community, the ‘Syriac School’, which opened in 1867 and which, according to Şābūnjī’s own account, eventually counted 100 pupils. The opening of the Syriac School was preceded by two other schools that deserve discussion. In 1863 Buṭrus al-Bustānī started the ‘National School’ (al-Madrasa al-Waṭaniyya) in Beirut, which was explicitly founded as a non-denominational school, open to everybody. This aspect reflected al-Bustānī’s narrative of national unity, which he framed as a response to the sectarian violence that had devastated Mount Lebanon in 1860. The non-denominationalism of al-Bustānī’s school clearly contrasts with the religious basis of Şābūnjī’s school. Nevertheless, Şābūnjī alleges that there were children of various

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41 O’Mahony 2010: 146.
42 The most comprehensive account of Beirut during this period is given by Kassir (2003: 158-297).
44 Diab 1983: 117.
45 Al-Madrasa al-Suryāniyya, see Frost 1890: 33.
different religious denominations among the pupils of his school.\textsuperscript{47} This suggests that the school was not open only to members of his religious community

The second important school that should be mentioned is the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), which was opened in 1866 by American Presbyterian missionaries. It rapidly became the most prominent institution of higher education in Ottoman Syria, and Šābūnjī was hired as an instructor of Latin.\textsuperscript{48} Besides teaching in the Syriac school and the SPC, Šābūnjī also taught the children of Franco Pasha (1814-1873), the Ottoman governor of Mount Lebanon, who hired him for this task in 1868.\textsuperscript{49} Three of Franco Pasha’s children eventually became high-ranking Ottoman diplomats.\textsuperscript{50} In addition, Šābūnjī also explicitly advocated female education in 1866,\textsuperscript{51} even though in 1901 he would lament its allegedly corruptive influence.\textsuperscript{52}

Besides teaching, Šābūnjī also produced three educational books. His first book, \textit{Uṣūl al-qirā’a al-ʿArabiyya wal-tahdhībāt al-adabiyya} (‘The Principles of Reading Arabic and of Literary Education’, Beirut, 1866) is an instruction book for students of Arabic. The second book, \textit{al-Mirʾāt al-saniyya fī al-qawāʿid al-ʿUthmāniyya} (‘The Sublime Mirror of Ottoman Grammar’, Beirut 1867) is an Arabic translation of an Ottoman grammar book. The original Ottoman book, written by Mehmed Fuad Pasha and Ahmet Cevdet Pasha and published in 1850, is significant because it is an attempt at simplifying and modernizing the Ottoman language. Its aim was to stimulate literacy by bringing the Ottoman language more in line with the day-to-day language of the Turkish speaking community.\textsuperscript{53} The third book that Šābūnjī published in Beirut, in 1868, was a collection of poetry by ‘Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ, a medieval

\textsuperscript{47} Frost 1890: 33.
\textsuperscript{48} Tibawi 1966: 181.
\textsuperscript{49} Frost 1890: 41.
\textsuperscript{50} Akarli 1993: 194.
\textsuperscript{51} Šābūnjī 1866: 63-100.
\textsuperscript{52} Šābūnjī 1901: 151-155. Šābūnjī also writes that he used to have a favorable opinion on female education, but that this changed after he saw that it resulted in ‘vice and corruption’ (\textit{al-radḥā’il wal-fasād}, Šābūnjī 1901: 152).
\textsuperscript{53} Mardin 2006: 324-325.
Egyptian poet. This publication included the full set of Arabic diacritics, or ḥarakāt, as a learning aid for students.

Ami Ayalon has pointed out that the distinction between authors, publishers and printers in nineteenth-century Beirut was rather blurred. Šābūnjī was no exception to this rule. In 1865 he brought an old Syriac printing press from the Sharfa monastery to Beirut. This press had been acquired by the Syriac Catholic Patriarch Buṭrus Jarwa in the year 1820, but was never used at Sharfa. It is unclear whether Šābūnjī succeeded in printing anything on it, as there are no publications before 1877, in any language, that can be firmly traced to this press. Šābūnjī returned the press to Sharfa in 1870.

Šābūnjī’s most important literary accomplishment in Beirut was the publication of his magazine al-Naḥla in May 1870. As discussed in the previous chapter, Arabic private journalism was a recent phenomenon in Beirut. The year 1870 witnessed a sudden boom in journalism, with the launch of seven different titles in Beirut alone, including Buṭrus al-Bustānī’s al-Jinān and Šābūnjī’s al-Naḥla. The latter magazine, al-Naḥla, was a weekly magazine consisting of 16 pages. Al-Naḥla existed for only eight months; following a conflict with Buṭrus al-Bustānī it was banned by the Ottoman authorities after the 31st issue, of 24 December 1870. The ban, as well as the character of al-Naḥla, will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Another field in which Šābūnjī was active was photography. His biographer Frost claims that Šābūnjī introduced

54 Ayalon 2008: 564.
55 Nasrallah 1949: 67-68.
57 Coakley 2006: 62. Significantly, Šābūnjī himself claimed that in the period 1865-1870 he printed books in Arabic, Syriac, and Turkish (Frost 1890: 32). This information was taken over by Ṭarrāzī (1913b: 72) and probably from Ṭarrāzī by Nasrallah (1949: 68). Nasrallah specifically claimed that Šābūnjī’s first book, Uṣūl al-qirā’a al-ʿArabiyya wal-tahdhibāt al-adabiyya, was printed on this press, but the book itself does not give any information on this issue. It is certain that his other books, as well as his al-Naḥla magazine (1870), were printed on other presses.
58 Nasrallah 1949: 68.
59 For the role and function of photography in nineteenth-century Beirut, see Sheehi 2007.
photography in Beirut, and that he experimented with the necessary chemicals until he was satisfied with the results in 1869. In 1875 and 1876 he was awarded patents for inventions concerning photography.\footnote{The first in Manchester (Zolondek 1978: 102) and the second in Paris (Debbas 2001: 49).} He subsequently taught the techniques to his brother George, who became Beirut’s most prominent photographer.\footnote{Frost 1890: 40.} Some of Šābūnjī’s later publications include photographs, such as his collection of poetry or \textit{Dīwān} (1901) and his travel account of (probably) 1890. However, photographs were rather expensive additions; his collection of poetry was printed without them, and the images were to be ordered and paid for separately.\footnote{Šābūnjī 1901: 547-548.} Most images in his other publications are lithographs.

Perhaps because of the problems with censorship in Beirut, and perhaps also because of the problematic relationship with the Syriac Catholic Patriarch ʿArkūs, Šābūnjī left Beirut and started to travel abroad. In August 1871 he boarded a ship bound for Palestine, and he only returned to Beirut at the beginning of the year 1874. Šābūnjī wrote a travel account which was published in four parts in 1890, of which only one part has been found.\footnote{The complete collection of issues was apparently only seen by Jean Fontaine in the late 1960s (1969: 100), and he dated it to 1896. However, it had already been published and read by an Ottoman official in January 1891 (Šābūnjī 2007: 73), and for this reason I date it to 1890.} In spite of this, based on the one issue and on other sources a general outline of the trip can be reconstructed.\footnote{The other sources are his \textit{Dīwān}, and two English publications (Šābūnjī 1919b: i, ii and Šābūnjī 1923: 13-20).} It is certain that his first stop had been Egypt. In 1871 he published a pamphlet in Cairo, \textit{al-Naḥla al-ḥurra}, in which he continued his conflict with Buṭrus al-Bustānī. Šābūnjī thereby became the first Syrian émigré intellectual in Egypt, to be followed about a decade later by many more who fled Hamidian censorship. From Egypt he traveled to the United States, via France and London. It seems that the year 1872 was largely spent in the United States; his \textit{Dīwān} mentions New York, New Jersey, Chicago, Sacramento, and San Francisco. In the same
year he published two pamphlets in America, one on the Syriac Catholic liturgy and one on the state of affairs of Syria. From San Francisco he traveled to Japan and China, and the year 1873 was largely spent in East Asia. He returned to Beirut via the Arabian peninsula and Egypt. Šābūnjī claimed to be the first ‘Semite’ to have traveled around the world.

One of the two pamphlets published in America in 1872, *Old Mother Phoenicia and her Young Daughter America*, deserves some attention. In this pamphlet Šābūnjī speaks on behalf of the Syrians and more specifically the Christian Syrians. The text, which was possibly also given as a lecture, was primarily aimed at raising awareness among the American public about the sorry state of the Christian Syrians. Šābūnjī attacks Islam and the Muslims:

“The Mahometans [sic] have obscured the beauty of their lands, debased its magnificence, stripped it of its ornaments, torn its royal mantle, overturned its splendid throne, shattered its scepter, torn the crown from its brow, annihilated the strength of its empire, destroyed its celebrated lyceums, burned its rich libraries, ruined its industry, and crushed out the vast commerce of the Phoenician nation (...), laid waste its fertile fields, sowing them with the bones and skulls of the wretched inhabitants, and watering them with the blood of the miserable Syrians.”

In addition, Šābūnjī alleged that Muhammad was a “false prophet”, that Islam was a “lewd and brutal religion”, and that the Quran contained “deceitful promises and carnal pleasures”. Šābūnjī also

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65 Šābūnjī 1872a; Šābūnjī 1872b.
66 Šābūnjī 1919b: i, ii.
67 In the early twentieth century the concept of Phoenicia, or al-Fīniqiyya in Arabic, became a fundamental part in the narrative of Lebanese nationalism. In 1872 this term did not yet carry this political association. See Kaufman 2004: 21-54 for the emergence of this narrative in the nineteenth century.
68 Its title page states that it is a “historical lecture given in America”. It is unknown whether this lecture was ever given.
framed his criticism of Islam in terms of gender, denouncing polygamy, concubinage with female slaves, veiling, and divorce practices that disadvantaged women. He described the Turks as “pusillanimous” for forbidding women to learn to read and write, and he argued that the Sharia allegedly taught that women had no souls.\footnote{Ṣābūnjī 1872a: 22-28.}

Ṣābūnjī’s was not the first text in which a Christian Arab ventilated anti-Islamic sentiments. In 1859 another Arab intellectual from Syria, Rizq Allāh Ḥassūn, finished a book in which he propagated similar views.\footnote{This book, Ḥaṣr al-lithām ‘an al-Islām, was never published, but it is preserved as a manuscript (Ayalon 2001: 63).} In around 1877 Ḥassūn and Ṣābūnjī became acquainted in London, where they found themselves in similar circumstances, as Arab journalists abroad.\footnote{Tarrāzī (1913b: 248) alleged that they also cooperated in Ḥassūn’s newspaper Mīrāt al-Ahwāl, but this cannot be verified from the existing copies.} Significantly, none of Ṣābūnjī’s other writings reveal similar opinions towards Islam or Muslims. This is perhaps understandable, as it is unlikely that such anti-Islamic sentiments would have met a favorable reception in Syria. Nine years after Old Mother Phoenicia was published Ṣābūnjī’s aggression towards Islam had seemingly vanished. In 1881 Ṣābūnjī enthusiastically engaged in the debate on the position of the Ottoman Sultan as the leader of the Islamic community, leading a contemporary observer, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, (see below) to describe Ṣābūnjī as “much more in sympathy with Islam than with his own faith.”\footnote{Blunt 1907: 86.}

Upon returning in Beirut in early 1874, Ṣābūnjī immediately started publishing again. In March 1874 he published a vehemently anti-Maronite pamphlet under the rather unexceptional title Tarjamatā al-ʿallāma al-khūrī Yūsuf Dāwud wal-sayyid al-fāḍil Yūsuf al-Dibs (‘Biographies of the erudite priest Yūsuf Dāwud and the honorable Yūsuf al-Dibs’). In the Tarjamatā he speaks about the “simple cave-dwelling inhabitants of Mount Lebanon”, about the “hills of Lebanon that are entirely enshrouded in the mist of ignorance”, and about the Maronite clergy who
cajoled its inhabitants into believing that Yūḥannā Mārūn, founder of the Maronite community, was a saint.\textsuperscript{74} Because of its polemical contents, the pamphlet enraged the Maronites in Beirut to such an extent that Ṣābūnjī’s safety could not be guaranteed. All copies of the \textit{Tarjamatā} were confiscated by the authorities. Within days Ṣābūnjī left Syria, only returning 40 years later. A few months after these events took place the pamphlet was added to the Vatican’s list of banned books.\textsuperscript{75} This conflict will be analyzed in detail in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

\section*{Relations with the Syriac Catholic Church}

As a Catholic priest he joined the staff of the Syrian Protestant College in 1866. While staying in Europe and America, he allegedly maintained “a number of amorous adventures” with foreign ladies.\textsuperscript{76} In addition, Blunts remark about Ṣābūnjī’s sympathy for Islam also raises questions on his religious conviction. Against this background, some scholars have speculated on the religious convictions of Louis Ṣābūnjī and his relation with his church. Jean Fontaine discerns a certain looseness towards the Catholic faith.\textsuperscript{77} Louis Cheikho and Albert Hourani even went as far as stating that, in later years, Ṣābūnjī had simply lost his faith.\textsuperscript{78} On the other hand, Ṭarrāzī, who probably knew Ṣābūnjī, wrote that he always maintained personal religious beliefs, despite various conflicts with the higher clergy.\textsuperscript{79} In any case, Ṣābūnjī’s concern for religion never faded, and it appears most clearly in the religious painting, which he authorized to make in 1908 and which is depicted and discussed later in this chapter.

Ṣābūnjī’s position within the Syriac Catholic clergy was a rather ambivalent one. On the one hand, he maintained friendly relations with various high ranking clergymen. Thanks to Patriarch

\begin{footnotes}
\item[74] Ṣābūnjī 1874: 10-12.
\item[75] Bujanda 2002: 794.
\item[76] Fontaine 1969: 100. Fontaine does not refer to a source for these amorous adventures.
\item[77] Fontaine (1969: 102) writes that “he did not show much piety, and cultivated it even less.”
\item[78] Shaykhū 1926: 152; Hourani 1980: 93.
\item[79] Ṭarrāzī 1913b: 77. Ṭarrāzī did not specify Ṣābūnjī’s convictions any further.
\end{footnotes}
al-Samḥīrī (in office 1853-1864) Şābūnjī had received a thorough education in Rome, and thanks to the same person he had acquired the position of priest. Throughout Şābūnjī’s biography al-Samḥīrī is represented as an honest man, aiming to develop and expand his community. Thanks to Patriarch Shalḥa (in office 1874-1891) Şābūnjī acquired the parish of Beirut, arguably the most dynamic cultural city of the Arab world at the time. A third high official with whom Şābūnjī maintained good relations was the Syriac Catholic Archbishop in Damascus Yūsuf Dāwud (1829-1890) who also played a prominent role in the conflict between Şābūnjī and the Maronites, to be discussed in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

On the other hand, relations with the Patriarch ‘Arkūs (in office 1866-1873) were very strained, ever since they both worked in Diyarbakır in 1863. ‘Arkūs was Patriarch during most of Şābūnjī’s period as a priest in Beirut. Şābūnjī’s position in Beirut, away from the centers of Syriac Catholic Christianity, might have given him some autonomy, but it is clear that Patriarch ‘Arkūs from time to time interfered with Şābūnjī’s affairs. Two examples of this interference are mentioned in Şābūnjī’s biography. Firstly, Şābūnjī decided to learn how to play the piano, but he was prohibited to do so by the Patriarch ‘Arkūs, who argued that music was a frivolous activity unworthy of priests. Secondly, Şābūnjī was employed as a teacher by the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut and by the Ottoman governor of Mount Lebanon, Franco Pasha. Şābūnjī stated that he accepted these positions in order to alleviate his allegedly problematic financial situation, but again ‘Arkūs forbade him to engage in these activities. It is unclear whether Şābūnjī obeyed ‘Arkūs, but it seems certain that his relation with the church authorities gradually deteriorated during his presence in Beirut.

Simmering in the background was another a conflict on the Latinization of the Syriac Catholic liturgy, a topic that touched upon the relationship between the Syriac Catholic Church and the Vatican. In July 1866, Şābūnjī sent a letter to the prefect of the Propaganda Fide in Rome, complaining about ‘Arkūs’ behavior.

81 Frost 1890: 41.
82 Frost 1890: 44.
Bio-bibliographical sketch of Louis Ŝābūnjī

towards Catholic missionaries who propagated the use of Latin as the liturgical language instead of Syriac.\(^{83}\) In the light of the various later conflicts in Ŝābūnjī’s life, it is not unreasonable to suggest that his complaint was inspired by his dislike of ‘Arkūs. It is perhaps fitting, then, to see in Ŝābūnjī’s complaint about the issue of the Latinization of the Syriac church an excuse to express this antipathy of ‘Arkūs to higher authorities.

‘Arkūs’ disapproval of various of his activities undoubtedly contributed to Ŝābūnjī’s drifting away from the church authorities. According to Ŝābūnjī’s biography, “Patriarch ‘Arkūs spoiled his life” in Beirut and he lamented his position “as a toy in the hands of those who do not appreciate his value”.\(^{84}\) It can be surmised that the church authorities were unhappy about Ŝābūnjī’s sudden departure and absence from the parish for more than two and a half years. However, the conflict with ‘Arkūs did not drive Ŝābūnjī away from the Syriac Catholic Church. Upon his return in 1874 Ŝābūnjī enthusiastically sided with the Syriac Catholic bishop Yūsuf Dāwud in a theological discussion about the origins of the Maronites, which Dāwud conducted with the Maronite Archbishop of Beirut Yūsuf al-Dibs (1833-1907).\(^{85}\) This issue will be discussed in-depth in Chapter Four of the present study.

On the basis of an unknown source Fontaine writes that eventually, in 1889 in London, Ŝābūnjī entirely gave up his position as a priest for the Syriac Catholic Church.\(^{86}\) This claim is somewhat dubious because he continued to maintain relations with the Patriarchs Shalḥa and Raḥmānī (in office 1898-1929) after 1889.\(^{87}\) Through Ŝābūnjī’s intercession, the Syriac Catholic Church was able to acquire a piece of land in Ṣişli, Istanbul in 1899.\(^{88}\) In addition, the painting that Ŝābūnjī commissioned, depicting the different

\(^{83}\) Patelos 1981: 358-359.
\(^{84}\) Frost 1890: 47.
\(^{85}\) This topic is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.
\(^{86}\) 1969: 100. Fontaine found this information handwritten in the margin of one of Ŝābūnjī’s books, the exact location of which is unknown. In the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Fontaine refers to the year 1899, but this should likely be read as 1889 because Ŝābūnjī was not in London at the later date.
\(^{87}\) Ŝābūnjī 2007: 37, 152, 259.
\(^{88}\) Ŝābūnjī 2007: 152, 289.
religions and finished in 1908 (discussed in detail below), prominently displays himself as a priest of the Syriac Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{89}

3.2 London (1875-1890)

Upon fleeing Beirut, Şābūnjī traveled to Liverpool, and from there to the United States for a second time, where he stayed for a few months. In 1875 he returned to Great Britain, first to Manchester and later to London, where he settled for nearly 14 years.\textsuperscript{90} As I have mentioned above, Şābūnjī’s life in the period 1876-1890 has received more attention by scholars than other periods. This is partly because of the high quality of the new version of his \textit{al-Naḥla} magazine that Şābūnjī published in London during the years 1877-1880, and partly because of his political activities. In particular Leon Zolondek presents important information about this period.\textsuperscript{91} Şābūnjī’s move to Great Britain in 1875 heralded a new phase in his life, a phase in which the Syriac Catholic Church hardly played a role. Given the prominence of the Syriac Catholic Church in Şābūnjī’s earlier texts, its disregard is a significant shift. Instead, Şābūnjī’s writings after his move to Great Britain are characterized by a political awakening that was absent before. Politics was generally avoided earlier, and \textit{al-Naḥla} of 1870 explicitly excluded it.\textsuperscript{92} Closely associated with this new focus on politics was the expansion of Şābūnjī’s social network which, within a few years after his arrival in London, included a number of important figures in national and international politics. Some of these persons, such as Sultan Barghash of Zanzibar, and the Khedive Ismā‘îl of Egypt, funded Şābūnjī in his various activities, particularly in the publication of his revived magazine \textit{al-Naḥla}. His political

\textsuperscript{89} Şābūnjī 1919b: 67. This detail of the painting is also reproduced by Ṭarrāzī (1913b: 48).
\textsuperscript{90} Şābūnjī 1919b: ii.
\textsuperscript{91} For a comprehensive account of Şābūnjī’s biography during these years I refer to Zolondek’s work (1978). In this chapter I present a general survey with key data, expanded by a number of interpretations and new sources.
\textsuperscript{92} In general, Şābūnjī also adhered to this self-imposed limit.
awakening during the years 1875 until 1890 is furthermore remarkable because his political preferences sometimes diametrically oppose each other. This puzzling aspect will be discussed in the following pages.

Ḥassūn, Badger, and Barghash

When Ṣābūnjī arrived in London, the city was the home of Rizq Allāh Ḥassūn (1824-1880). Ḥassūn has already been mentioned in this study, as the author of an anti-Islamic text, and as the founder of the first private Arabic newspaper in history Mirʾāt al-Aḥwāl (Istanbul, 1855). This newspaper ceased to appear in the same year, but was revived by Ḥassūn in London in 1876 under the same title. Ṣābūnjī and Ḥassūn had various things in common: both were from Syria, both were Christians, both went to school in Mount Lebanon, both were interested in poetry, and both engaged in polemics.

In spite of their common ground, the two had markedly different careers: Ḥassūn had worked in Ottoman government service in Istanbul and was sent to Syria as a translator after the sectarian violence that took place in Mount Lebanon and Damascus in 1860. For a short time Ḥassūn was also responsible for the levying of taxes on tobacco. However, in 1862 he fell in disgrace with the Ottoman authorities and was thrown into jail. After his release he traveled to Russia, learned Russian, and stayed there until about 1867. He subsequently went to London, where he finally settled down. There he published a few collections of poetry that are noted for its innovative qualities, wrote a catalogue of a collection of Arabic manuscripts, and republished Mirʾāt al-Aḥwāl.

Presumably because of his experiences in Syria in 1860 and his dismissal from government service, Ḥassūn emerged in London as a fierce critic of the Ottomans and he ventilated these opinions

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93 For information on Ḥassūn, see primarily Ayalon 2001 and Ṭarrāzī 1913a: 105-110.
in *Mirāt al-Aḥwāl*. The overarching theme of this newspaper was his concern about Turkish misbehavior towards the Christians of the Ottoman Empire, and the activity and inactivity of Great Britain and Russia in these matters. Ḥassūn and Ṣābūnjī knew each other; they both cooperated in the compilation of the English–Arabic dictionary, published by George Percy Badger (see below). Ṭarrāzī also states that Ṣābūnjī cooperated with Ḥassūn in the publication of *Mirāt al-Aḥwāl* as its political editor, but Ḥassūn explicitly denies this in the newspaper.

In April 1877 the first issue of Ṣābūnjī’s revived *al-Naḥla* appeared in London, and it continued to be published until May 1880. The bilingual magazine appeared fortnightly, and each issue consisted of about 20 pages. *Al-Naḥla* magazine was one of the best Arabic magazines in terms of contents and appearance at the time. Its most eye-catching asset were the many illustrations, which clearly distinguished *al-Naḥla* from the other contemporary Arabic magazines. One of the most elaborate pictures to be found in *al-Naḥla* was a magnificent two-page drawing of the steam-yacht ‘Glasgow’, escorted by a spouting whale. Imagery of this size and level of detail was unseen in the history of Arabic journalism.

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96 I have found 21 issues, at the British Library, the Dār al-Kutub in Cairo, and Harvard library. The earliest issue (nr. 2) is dated 26 October 1876, and the latest (nr. 34) is dated 7 June 1877.

97 Ḥassūn overwhelmingly talks about the Turks (al-Atrāk) and Turkey (Turkiyya) when referring to the Ottomans and the Empire. This usage reflects the negative connotations that the term ‘turk’ carried in the nineteenth century, also in Arabic sources (see Suleiman 2003: 71-72).

98 Ṭarrāzī 1913b: 248.

99 In an announcement Ḥassūn writes that he received books for Louis Ṣābūnjī, which Ḥassūn ‘found strange’ as he was the only person involved in *Mirāt al-Aḥwāl* (Ḥassūn 1876: 3, dated 8 December 1876).

100 Ṭarrāzī 1913b: 250.

101 The images of *al-Naḥla* were perhaps rivaled by those of James Sanua in his *Abū Nazẓāra*, published during the years 1877-1907 in Paris. Sanua’s handwritten illustrations, however, were of a distinctly different style.

102 Ṣābūnjī 1878: 216-217. The ship was ordered by Barghash, the Sultan of Zanzibar, who also financially supported *al-Naḥla*.
In its third year *al-Naḥla* turned into an Arabic-only magazine, appearing monthly rather than fortnightly. From April 1878 onwards, Ṣābūnjī was in the possession of a printing press, which he used for printing *al-Naḥla*. He also used this press to print a travel account of the visit of Sultan Barghash of Zanzibar to London, and an Arabic translation of an eighteenth century book *The Economy of Human Life* by Robert Dodsley, in an edition of 50 copies.103 The contents of *al-Naḥla* will be discussed in more detail in the sixth chapter.

Zolondek surmises that Rizq Allāh Ḥassūn introduced Ṣābūnjī to George Percy Badger (1815-1888), an English Orientalist, Anglican minister and compiler of an English-Arabic dictionary.104 Badger presumably introduced Ṣābūnjī to Sultan Barghash of Zanzibar, who became Ṣābūnjī’s most important benefactor for a number of years.105 Sultan Barghash (1837-1881, in office 1870-1881) is credited for reforming and modernizing his East African Sultanate: he built roads, buildings, and a water supply, and thereby modernized Zanzibar town, now known as Stone Town. He also brought the first printing press to Zanzibar in 1879 and the second in 1884, and these presses produced a number of, primarily religious, Arabic books.106 Most importantly, Barghash played a role in British foreign policy in the early 1870s. It was at the explicit instigation of the British authorities that Barghash banned the extensive slave trade in Zanzibar in 1873.107

One of the British officials who took part in the negotiations that led to the abolition of the slave trade was the abovementioned

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103 *Risālat al-iqtīṣād fī al-ḥayāt al-bashariyya*; translated by J. Catafago; one copy is preserved at the British Library, London.

104 Wilfrid Blunt, who is discussed below, later wrote that Ṣābūnjī had done most of the work for the dictionary (Blunt 1907: 86), and this information had been taken over by various other sources (such as Sadgrove 2005: 155). However, Zolondek has shown that Blunt and Badger were incompatible characters, and the quote about Ṣābūnjī’s diligence and Badger’s presumed negligence is therefore of little value (Zolondek 1978: 107-108).

105 Zolondek 1978: 103.


107 About the abolition of the slave trade in Zanzibar, see primarily Lyne 1905 and Coupland 1939.
Percy Badger. Two years later, in June and July of 1875, Barghash visited Great Britain and France, and Badger was assigned as the Sultan’s official interpreter for his visit to Great Britain. Barghash arrived in England on 8 June 1875, and three days later an official welcome reception took place in London amidst heavy rain. The Sultan’s trip was meticulously recorded by Barghash’s secretary Zāhir bin Sa‘īd, and based on the latter’s notes and contemporary newspaper accounts, Šābūnjī compiled a comprehensive Arabic account of the Sultan’s visit. Šābūnjī subsequently printed the travel account in 1879 under the title *Tanzīh al-abṣār wal-afkār fī riḥlat Sulṭān Zanjabār* (‘The Recreation of the Sight and Mind; A Narrative of the Visit of His Highness the Sultan of Zanzibar’). It is a detailed account, illustrated with many drawings of the persons whom Barghash met and of the sites of interest that he visited. It recounts the various official events, dinners, and visits of the Sultan, but also excursions to the zoo, the races, and the beach at Brighton. It has been reprinted three times in the last thirty years, but for some reason it has not received scholarly attention.

There are no reasons to assume that Šābūnjī met Barghash during his trip in 1875, a time when the former probably resided in Manchester. The very first issue of *al-Naḥla*, dated 4 April 1877, already prominently featured Sultan Barghash. This suggests firstly that Barghash financed *al-Naḥla* from the start, and secondly that Šābūnjī came into contact with Badger around 1876. In any case, Zolondek notes that “the citations praising him [Barghash] are too numerous to mention” in *al-Naḥla*.

In exchange for funds Šābūnjī not only praised Barghash in *al-Naḥla*, but the Sultan also employed him. This is reflected, firstly,

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109 Šābūnjī 1879: 15.
110 For a second contemporary report of Barghash’s visit to Great Britain, see Lyne 1905: 90-95.
112 Both Blunt and Ṭarrāzī write that Barghash was an important financer (Ṭarrāzī 1913b: 250; Blunt 1907: 87).
by the travel account that Ṣābūnjī compiled, and secondly, by the translations that Ṣābūnjī made for Barghash. Preserved at the Rare Books Library of the University of Istanbul is an autograph manuscript of Ṣābūnjī, containing Arabic translations of British reports and letters discussing the abolition of the slave trade in Zanzibar in 1873. Most of the reports were written by the official British negotiator, Sir Bartle Frere (1815-1894), who presented them to the parliament of the United Kingdom in the years 1872 and 1873, immediately before the official abolition. The manuscript also includes a large body of correspondence between various persons involved in the negotiations. Perhaps the most interesting letters are those by Barghash himself, summarized and translated into English by Badger, and again translated into Arabic by Ṣābūnjī at Barghash’s request. These letters give a fascinating view on Barghash’s complicated position between international politics on the one hand and local concerns on the other hand (qtd 1):

“...A few Arabs visited me this afternoon, and I told them about what the English government wanted from us [to cease all slave trade activities]. They told me in unison ‘we don’t accept this; we do not ruin ourselves with our own hands’. I told them that if we ignore their demand, they send their ships and force us to do so.”

Sultan Barghash, apparently interested in English intelligence on these matters, authorized Ṣābūnjī to make these translations, albeit only years after the events that the manuscript describe took place. Based on the internal evidence in al-Naḥla and on the colophon of the slavery manuscript, it seems that Ṣābūnjī was in Barghash’s service during the years 1877-1881. The only proof

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114 See in the bibliography Ṣābūnjī 1881.
115 Ṣābūnjī 1881: 43.
116 The manuscript includes exact dates; Ṣābūnjī started writing it on 15 July 1878, and he finished it in the year 1881.
117 Ṭarrāzī (1913b: 73) states that Ṣābūnjī was in Barghash’s service for eight years but this is not substantiated by other sources. Fontaine (1996: 30) alleges that Ṣābūnjī spent a few years in Zanzibar, but there are no indications that Ṣābūnjī ever visited Zanzibar, nor any other part of Africa except Egypt.
of contact between Barghash and Šābūnjī after 1881 is the presence of a manuscript in the Zanzibar National Archives about the Egyptian nationalist leader Aḥmad ʿUrābī, which must have been written by Šābūnjī after 1883.\textsuperscript{118}

**Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī in al-\textit{Naḥla}**

One of the various persons to whom Šābūnjī paid attention in \textit{al-Naḥla} is Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī.\textsuperscript{119} He is regarded as one of the most important Islamic reformers of the nineteenth century, and it is for this reason that their relation is worth discussing in some detail.

The first encounter between Šābūnjī and al-Afghānī took the form of an exchange of opinions, which is briefly discussed by Keddie.\textsuperscript{120} In October 1878 al-Afghānī, who resided in Egypt at that time, had published a violent anti-British text in the Egyptian newspaper \textit{Miṣr}.\textsuperscript{121} He argued that the English are selfish plunderers, liars, expansionists, and bad colonial administrators. Šābūnjī took notice of this article, and discusses it in an Arabic-only article that appeared in \textit{al-Naḥla} in November.\textsuperscript{122} In this article, entitled ‘\textit{Miṣr wa-Afghān wal-Ingīlz}’ (‘Egypt, Afghans, and the English’), Šābūnjī writes that he agrees with some of al-Afghānī’s statements and disagrees with others, and that “historical events show us that some of [al-Afghānī’s] statements exceed the proper bounds.” Šābūnjī also relates that Badger had translated al-Afghānī’s polemical text into English, and that Šābūnjī had discussed it with some British politicians, who remain unnamed. \textit{Miṣr} reprinted Šābūnjī’s article from \textit{al-Naḥla}, and al-Afghānī

\textsuperscript{118} Mkelle 1981: 19-20. It seems that no other material of Šābūnjī survives in Zanzibar (Sadgrove 2005: 156).

\textsuperscript{119} This was already noted by Kedourie (1966: 19-20), Keddie (1972: 102-103), and Kudsi-Zadeh (1970: 6,7,11,29; 1968: 197-206).

\textsuperscript{120} Keddie, however, did not address Šābūnjī’s contributions, besides those that have appeared in \textit{Miṣr}.

\textsuperscript{121} The original Arabic article would have appeared in issue 16 of \textit{Miṣr}, but this issue was not found. It is also absent in al-Afghānī’s \textit{Tatimmat al-bayān} of 1879, which was not seen by Keddie (see Keddie 1972: 103 n37). What we do have is Badger’s partial translation, published in \textit{al-Naḥla} (see below).

\textsuperscript{122} Šābūnjī 1878-1879: 169.
responded to it two weeks later, again in Miṣr.\textsuperscript{123} Al-Afghānī again stresses the reproachable behavior of the British vis-à-vis the Afghans.

Soon after, Ṣābūnjī responds with an article in which he writes that al-Afghānī’s remarks about the English are one-sided generalizations, that there are many British individuals who defend the Afghans and who disagree with the official British policy on Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{124} Ṣābūnjī illustrates this anti-essential image of the English by pointing out that the “freedom of opinions, freedom of the press, and freedom of newspapers” in Britain enables al-Afghānī to ventilate his opinions in the British press in the first place. This argument is substantiated by a lengthy summary of Badger’s English translation of the original anti-British text from Miṣr. This English-only summary, entitled ‘An Afghan on the English’, appeared in the same issue of al-Nahla.\textsuperscript{125}

It seems that al-Afghānī did not respond to Ṣābūnjī again. Ṣābūnjī, however, did mention him a few times later. In a lengthy bilingual commentary on the Anglo-Afghan War of 1878-1880, he referred to al-Afghānī in a negative sense, as one of the Easterners who unfairly equate the British Government with the British people.\textsuperscript{126} Contrasting with this critical reference is a short article that appeared in May 1879 in al-Nahla.\textsuperscript{127} This article, ‘Ikhṭār nabil ilā al-sharqiyyīn’ (‘Noble admonition for the Easterners’, discussed in detail in Chapter Six), quotes al-Afghānī, who stimulates the Easterners to regain their pride and independence by acquiring knowledge. Without any reservation Ṣābūnjī lauds al-Afghānī’s analytical insight. Similarly, in October 1879 Ṣābūnjī criticizes the Khedivial authorities in Egypt for al-Afghānī’s arrest and

\textsuperscript{123} The two articles are featured in issue 21 (22 November 1878) and issue 23 (6 December 1878) of Miṣr. Found in Keddie 1972: 103 n37.

\textsuperscript{124} Ṣābūnjī 1878-1879: 195-196, 206-207.

\textsuperscript{125} The summary is also translated into French (Kudsi-Zadeh 1968: 200-203). Badger’s complete translation appeared in the Homeward Mail, probably in November 1878.

\textsuperscript{126} Ṣābūnjī 1878-1879: 289-292, 301-304; the article dates to 15 March 1879. The English version prominently mentions al-Afghānī’s name, but the Arabic version, perhaps significantly, omits his name and merely speaks of ‘some Easterners’.

\textsuperscript{127} Ṣābūnjī 1878-1879: 365.
deportation from Egypt.\textsuperscript{128} This article again favorably discusses al-
Afghānī and presents him as an important intellectual. The remaining issues of \textit{al-Naḥla} do not contain any more articles by or about al-Afghānī.\textsuperscript{129}

It is unclear whether Ṣābūnjī personally knew al-Afghānī in this period. Only in the summer of 1871 were the two in the same country, Egypt, at the same time. It is unlikely that they met, given their different concerns and occupations at that moment. In any case, al-Afghānī and Ṣābūnjī had been in contact with each other before January 1883, as is clear from Ṣābūnjī’s correspondence with Wilfrid Blunt (see next section).

**Blunt and Egyptian Nationalism**

After \textit{al-Naḥla} ceased to appear in 1880, the most important person within the social network of Ṣābūnjī for a few years was Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), an English aristocrat, former diplomat, and poet who became fascinated by the Islamic and Arab world. Together with his wife Lady Anne Blunt (1837-1917), he had traveled to various areas of the Middle East during the years 1873-1879, including Algeria, Mesopotamia, Nejd (presently part of Saudi Arabia), and Persia.\textsuperscript{130} Blunt subsequently devoted much time and effort to the subject of Islamic reform, on which he published a book in 1882 under the title \textit{The Future of Islam}. Blunt was also interested in the Egyptian nationalist movement and its leader Ahmad ʿUrābī (1841-1911). As is apparent from Blunt’s different publications, Ṣābūnjī played an important role for Blunt in both issues, as intermediary and translator of the Arabic letters that were sent to him.\textsuperscript{131} In return, Blunt financed Ṣābūnjī.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{128}] Ṣābūnjī 1879-1880: 22.
\item[\textsuperscript{129}] One anonymous article in \textit{al-Naḥla}, ‘On our unfortunate intestine divisions’ in English and ‘al-Taqassum aşl al-fasād’ in Arabic (Ṣābūnjī 1877-1878: 241), is attributed to al-Afghānī by Kudsi-Zadeh (1970: 11). However, this is not the case; the error is based on an incorrect reading of Kedourie’s texts (cf. Kedourie 1966: 19; 1964: 52).
\item[\textsuperscript{130}] Hourani 1980: 91.
\item[\textsuperscript{131}] The persons who sent letters to Blunt included Ahmad ʿUrābī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh, and also the Sultan of Zanzíbar, to whom Ṣābūnjī probably introduced
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Ṣābūnjī was hired as an instructor of Arabic for Lady Anne Blunt in 1880, and through her Ṣābūnjī was introduced to Wilfrid Blunt. Ṣābūnjī remained in Blunt’s service until the end of 1883. In spite of their close contact Blunt’s various publications contain a number misrepresentations about Ṣābūnjī, and they do not seem to be entirely trustworthy. About al-Naḥla Blunt wrote that it preached Islamic religious reform “on the most advanced lines of thought”, a statement that is wishful thinking if not plainly incorrect. Similarly, Blunt incorrectly asserts that al-Naḥla “denounced him [Sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd] especially as an usurper of the title of Emir el Mumenin and Caliph”, and he erroneously writes that Ṣābūnjī had done most of the work on Badger’s dictionary. It is possible that Ṣābūnjī himself incorrectly informed Blunt about his antecedents.

An important source on the relation between Blunt and Ṣābūnjī are the letters that Ṣābūnjī sent to Blunt, and these have been investigated by Martin Kramer. A short summary of the information about Ṣābūnjī’s life in these years, as found in Kramer’s article, suffices here. In November 1881 Blunt left for a trip to the Arabian peninsula because of his interest in Islamic reform. However, he did not venture beyond Cairo, where he became fascinated with Aḥmad ʿUrābī, the leader of the Egyptian nationalist movement at that moment. Six months later, Blunt sent Ṣābūnjī to Egypt in order to function as his intermediary with ʿUrābī, while Blunt stayed in England. In this capacity Ṣābūnjī witnessed the British bombardment of Alexandria in July 1882 on board a ship. For Blunt’s publications, see the bibliography Blunt 1907; 1921; 1909; 1919; 1911.

Blunt 1907: 299.
Blunt 1907: 87.
This is also noted by Kedourie (1966: 19).
Blunt 1907: 87. It was not al-Naḥla that denounced the Sultan, but two later pamphlets.
Badger and Blunt had been in conflict, and in this light Zolondek (1978: 105) interprets Blunt’s suggestion that Ṣābūnjī “did the main work” as a sneer towards Badger.
Kept at the West Sussex Library.
Kramer 1989.
anchored in the harbor. Among the European refugees on the ship, Śabūnjī was, in his own words, “the only one who wished good luck and success to Arabî [ʿUrâbî] and his colleagues.” In December 1882 ʿUrâbî was tried for his insurgency, convicted and sent to Ceylon in exile, where he remained until 1901. In October 1883 Blunt and Śabūnjī traveled to Ceylon together in order to visit ʿUrâbî there. However, upon arrival in Colombo their paths separated, quite literally, as Śabūnjī left “and did not any more return” to Blunt.

The reason for their sudden separation is unclear, but within months Śabūnjī’s perception of ʿUrâbî changed 180 degrees, calling the latter “the biggest liar I ever saw in my life”. Śabūnjī expressed his antipathy towards ʿUrâbî not only in al-Naḥla, which he revived for the third time in 1884, but also in his unpublished biography of ʿUrâbî. This change of position towards ʿUrâbî not only strained his relationship with Wilfrid Blunt, who remained on friendly terms with ʿUrâbî, but with many other figures in the Egyptian nationalist movement too. Both Zolondek and Kramer assume that, because of his changed position towards ʿUrâbî, Śabūnjī found a new patron in the deposed Egyptian Khedive Ismāʿīl. This claim is credible, as Śabūnjī himself wrote that, after his return from Ceylon in 1883, he visited the ex-Khedive Ismāʿīl in Naples, who confided to him that, “had I remained the ruler of Egypt Arabî [ʿUrâbî] would never have dared to stir a finger.”

In his concern for the reformation of Islam, Blunt established ties with Islamic modernizers, and specifically with Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905). He was introduced to ʿAbduh in January 1881 in Cairo, and was undeniably impressed by him.

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140 Blunt 1907: 556.
141 Blunt 1909: 19.
142 Letter dated 6 January 1884. West Sussex Library. The cause of the quarrel seems to have been financial in nature.
146 Śabūnjī 1919b: viii.
147 Blunt 1907: 92. See also his book The Future of Islam.
148 Blunt 1907: 105.
Blunt used his portrait on the title page of his *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* (1907), and they remained in close contact for years. It is unclear if, or to what extent, Şābūnjī maintained ties with ʿAbduh, and it is also unclear whether they ever met. In any case Şābūnjī translated the Arabic letters that ʿAbduh sent to Blunt into English.¹⁴⁹ Two years later, Blunt also established ties with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī. In a letter dated 10 January 1883 Şābūnjī writes to Blunt that “my friend Jamal-oud-Din” is anxious to meet him on 13 January 1883.¹⁵⁰ This letter makes it clear that Şābūnjī introduced al-Afghānī to Blunt.

Many years later, in 1925, the magazine *al-Manār* republished two of al-Afghānī’s articles about British foreign policy. According to *al-Manār* these two articles were originally published in January 1883 in *al-Naḥla*, when al-Afghānī made a short visit to London.¹⁵¹ This statement suggests that *al-Naḥla* continued to be published after 1880, but there is no convincing proof that this is the case.¹⁵² In addition, the reliability of *al-Manār*’s reference is debatable because it was recorded more than forty years after the events took place.

On 14 September 1883 Blunt met al-Afghānī again, this time in Paris.¹⁵³ Also present at this meeting were Şābūnjī and the Egyptian James Sanua (1839-1912). Sanua is best known for the *Abū Naẓẓāra* magazines that he published during the years 1877-1907 in Paris. These publications made Sanua the most famous Egyptian nationalist journalist of the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁴ It is

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¹⁴⁹ Letter from Şābūnjī to Blunt, dated 19 April 1882. West Sussex Library.
¹⁵² See also Zolondek 1978: 108.
¹⁵³ Blunt 1909: 12-14; 1911: 45. Importantly, at this moment al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh were corresponding, but did not yet form a couple. Only in late 1883 did ʿAbduh join al-Afghānī in Paris. From then on they started working together, primarily in the publication of their 1884 newspaper *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*. See Keddie 1972: 186-188, 213.
¹⁵⁴ For information on Sanua, see primarily Gendzier 1966. The term ‘nationalist’ does apply on Sanua because his aims were decidedly political in nature. The credo of his magazine was ‘Egypt for the Egyptians’.
likely that Ṣābūnjī and Sanua knew each other in September 1883. Al-Naḥla was in its first year pro-British, but it gradually became more critical of British foreign policy during the following years. This shift eventually brought Ṣābūnjī and Sanua in agreement in their rejection of British colonial rule in Egypt. Sanua also praised Ṣābūnjī in 1880 and again in 1883. In addition, in 1883 Sanua mentioned in his journals that Ṣābūnjī defended the Egyptian nationalist party in London.

Sanua’s magazines, appearing under a variety of titles in order to circumvent the censor, stand out because of their satirical and critical tone towards English interference in Egyptian affairs. The magazines were generally bilingual in (sometimes colloquial Egyptian) Arabic and French, and included drawings by Sanua himself. Sanua was highly critical of the Egyptian khedives Tawfīq and especially Ismāʿīl, who, he repeatedly argued, squandered Egypt and allowed the British to take control. Sanua also harbored a personal hatred towards Ismāʿīl, as the latter had expelled him from Egypt in 1878 for political reasons. “Isma’il invariably appeared in Sanua’s work as a fat, corrupt pharaoh” as Gendzier observed. As discussed above, four months after Ṣābūnjī met Sanua, the former turned against ʿUrābī, angering the Sanua. Again two years later their friendship was restored and Ṣābūnjī published about a dozen articles in Sanua’s magazines during the years 1886-1891.

The Arab Caliphate
As pointed out above, Blunt argued that Islam should be reformed in order to prosper, and al-Afghānī shared this analysis. However, they did not share the proposed political solution. In particular, they disagreed on the position of the Ottoman Empire and the Sultan. Al-Afghānī regularly appears as an advocate of an Ottoman Caliphate. However, to Blunt it was the Ottoman Turks who were
responsible for the perceived decay of the Muslim world. Blunt suggested that, in order to achieve progress, the Caliphate should be taken out of the hands of the Turks and be returned to the Arabs. Blunt is credited as the person who first popularized this idea through his articles in the Fortnightly Review, which were later collected in his book The Future of Islam, published in 1882.

Martin Kramer suggests that either Šābūnjī or an associate of both Blunt and Šābūnjī, G.C.M Birdwood (1832-1917), introduced the idea to Blunt. Blunt himself mentioned Šābūnjī or the Persian ambassador in London, Malkum Khān (1833-1908), as his source. In any case, Šābūnjī was involved. In January 1881 he published a pamphlet in London under the title al-Khilāfa (‘The Caliphate’), in which he outright rejected the Ottoman claim to the Caliphate, and allegedly “urged the Arabs to rise against Ottoman Rule”. Šābūnjī thereby became one of the earliest Arab critics of the Ottoman Empire. The publication of this pamphlet was preceded by Blunt’s articles propagating essentially the same ideas, but there is no reason to believe that Blunt had financed al-Khilāfa. In any case, Šābūnjī never ventilated such opinions in the issues of al-Naḥla, which had appeared in the previous three years. Ram Lakhan Shukla and Azmi Özcan have found some revealing details about al-Khilāfa in a letter that Šābūnjī sent to his brother Alexander Malcolm in India. The Ottoman authorities, through the Ottoman ambassador in London, Musurus Pasha, tried to silence Šābūnjī’s anti-Ottoman voice. To accomplish this the ambassador offered him fifty pounds. In his turn Šābūnjī demanded 5,000 pounds in cash, an enormous amount that would deter Musurus

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160 For more information on Arab opposition to ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd’s position as Caliph, see Buzpinar 1996.
163 1907: 87.
164 Of this pamphlet only its title page is partially known; it is printed in a later publication of Šābūnjī (1917: 35).
165 Özcan 1993: 113; Özcan 1997: 120. I write allegedly here, because Özcan has not seen the pamphlet himself. He found his information in archives in India. Shukla, whom Özcan does not mention in his work, had pointed to the same sources in 1973 (cf. Shukla 1973: 203-204).
Bio-bibliographical sketch of Louis Šabūnjī

Pasha. The ambassador subsequently approached an Indian resident of London, who then published another short-lived periodical with the title *al-Ghayra* with the sole purpose of counterbalancing *al-Khilāfa*.

It appears that *al-Khilāfa* was one isolated pamphlet. However, it was soon followed by another pamphlet under the title *al-Ittiḥād al-ʿArabī* ("The Arab Union"), which was probably financed by Blunt. Its aim was, according to Ṭarrāzī, to unite the Arabs against the Turks, and it allegedly featured similar polemical contents as *al-Khilāfa*. The cover prominently depicted the Kaʿba in Mecca, evoking strong associations with Islam. *Al-Ittiḥād al-ʿArabī* witnessed three issues until it ceased publication because Šabūnjī understood that “there was no hope for concord among them [the Arabs]". It is difficult to assess the influence or reach of these pamphlets, but they allegedly had “a wide circulation in India”, and “found their way in every city of Turkey”. His brother Alexander Malcolm, who worked as a jeweler in India, apparently aided the spread of Louis’ pamphlets in India. In any case, it seems that Šabūnjī did not express anti-Ottoman sentiments after 1881 anymore. Interestingly, this softening of the tone towards the Ottomans was mirrored by Wilfrid Blunt, who also took a more moderate position during the years 1883 and 1884.

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166 £5,000 in 1880 is equal to about £241,550 in 2005. See the currency convertor of the British National Archive: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/
167 Ṭarrāzī 1913b: 252; Shukla 1973: 203-205; Özcan 1993: 114. According to Ṭarrāzī the Indian founder of *al-Ghayra* was not only ignorant and short-sighted, but also emaciated and disfigured from smallpox. Shukla writes that *al-Ghayra* "called upon all Muslims to make common cause in the endeavour to exterminate Christians from the countries occupied by Muslims", but this is likely to be incorrect.
169 1913b: 252. Ṭarrāzī also states that three issues were produced, but none have been found.
170 Its cover is also printed in a later publication of Šabūnjī (1917: 33).
171 Ṭarrāzī 1913b: 252.
172 Özcan 1993: 113-114; Shukla 1973: 204. These representations are perhaps somewhat exaggerated.
173 Zubrzycki 2012: 27.
Jacob M. Landau discusses an Arabic anti-Turkish leaflet (or, as Landau calls it, a handbill) from March 1881, with the title *Bayān-nāma al-Umma al-ʿArabiyya*.175 Various scholars mention this leaflet as one of the first expressions of Arab nationalism.176 The leaflet was printed on one side so that it could be glued to a wall. It appeared in various places around the Middle East, including Baghdad, Khartoum, and Algeria. It addressed both Christians and Muslims and urged them to liberate themselves from the Turks. It is signed, anonymously, by the ‘Society for Watching Over the Rights of the Arab Millet’. Landau surmised that its author “was probably Muslim, well-versed in Arabic and with a better than average grasp of both Ottoman affairs and world events”.177 Unknown to Landau, Shukla has found archival sources in India that indicate that this handbill was produced by Ṣābūnjī in 2,000 copies.178 Other circumstantial evidence that points to Ṣābūnjī is that the leaflet was apparently printed in London,179 that Wilfrid Blunt also wanted to publish an Arabic newspaper to subvert Ottoman authority,180 and that Muslims and Christians are both addressed even though Islam played a more prominent role.181 Ṣābūnjī never mentioned this handbill anywhere, but the indications that point to him are convincing. For this reason I have added the *Bayān-nāma* to Ṣābūnjī’s bibliography that is found in the appendix of the present study.

The last letters that Ṣābūnjī sent to Blunt date from 1884, and in the next several years not much is known about him. He revived *al-Naḥla* in 1884 for a short period, assuming an aggressive anti-ʿUrābī tone.182 He wrote a number of articles in Sanua’s

175 Landau 1977.
177 Landau 1977: 218. The full text is also given by Landau in this article, in the original Arabic and in an English translation.
178 Shukla 1973: 203-205. I thank Mr. John Zubrzycki for mentioning Shukla’s book to me.
181 This aspect is mentioned by Landau.
182 Kramer 1986: 780, n27. No copy of this periodical or pamphlet has been found.
Bio-bibliographical sketch of Louis Ṣābūnjī

magazines, mainly lamenting the English occupation of Egypt.\textsuperscript{183} He also worked as an instructor of Arabic in the Imperial Institute, where he taught George Frost, who later wrote the partially preserved biography of Ṣābūnjī. This institute, which still exists under the name Commonwealth Institute, was founded in the 1880s as a permanent exhibition where the British population could “wonder at the benefits colonial rule afforded them”.\textsuperscript{184} It commenced teaching foreign languages in the autumn of 1889. In addition, he assisted the Iranian ambassador in Britain, Malkum Khān (in office 1873-1889), in publishing the first issue of his Persian magazine \textit{Qānūn}, dated 21 February 1890.\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Qānūn} later became recognized as an important magazine advocating reform in Persia.\textsuperscript{186} There is no reason to suggest that Ṣābūnjī continued his assistance to the ambassador after this initial issue.

\section*{Islam}

A final note should be made regarding the issue of Ṣābūnjī’s position towards Islam. His pamphlets \textit{al-Khilāfa} and \textit{al-Ittiḥād al-ʿArabī} from 1881 represented Islam in a decidedly positive manner. The latter pamphlet prominently depicts the Ka’ba in Mecca on its cover. In addition, Blunt wrote that Ṣābūnjī was “more in sympathy with Islam than with his own faith”, a statement that was taken over by Hourani and Kedourie.\textsuperscript{187} Nine years earlier, however, Ṣābūnjī had referred to Islam as a “lewd and brutal religion”, and vilified Muslims, the Quran, and the Sharia in \textit{Old Mother Phoenicia and her Young Daughter America}. In order to maintain his credibility in 1881 it can be assumed that Ṣābūnjī had an interest in keeping this 1872 pamphlet away from his public.\textsuperscript{188}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{183} Zolondek 1978: 109-110. \\
\textsuperscript{184} MacKenzie 1984: 122, 127. \\
\textsuperscript{185} Ṣābūnjī 2007: 58, 61, 67. \\
\textsuperscript{186} On this magazine, see primarily Algar 1973: 185-205. Algar’s book also contains a reproduction of the first page of the first issue, edited by Ṣābūnjī (but his name is not mentioned). \textit{Qānūn} has been reprinted in Tehran in 1976. \\
\textsuperscript{187} Hourani 1983: 269; Kedourie 1966: 19. \\
\textsuperscript{188} After Ṣābūnjī had died under suspicious circumstances in 1931, the \textit{Los Angeles Times} wrote the following: “A report that the aged man [Ṣābūnjī] might have been murdered because of semipolitical writings about the former Turkish Sultan also
\end{flushleft}
It can of course be argued that Ṣābūnjī simply changed his mind between 1872 and 1881. I find this explanation unsatisfactory, first of all because several other conspicuous changes of opinion are also found in his writings.\textsuperscript{189} I would argue that the sentiments expressed in both publications were written in order to please his intended reading public. Thus, \textit{al-Khilāfa} and \textit{al-Ittiḥād al-ʿArabī} were written in order to align with the sentiments and opinions of an Islamic and Arab readership, who would appreciate a pro-Islamic and pro-Arab message. This hypothesis is supported by a passage in one of Ṣābūnjī’s letters to Blunt. Referring to the anti-Ottoman \textit{al-Ittiḥād al-ʿArabī},\textsuperscript{190} Ṣābūnjī wrote that “you [Blunt] see now that I did all I could to make the paper attractive & interesting to the Arabs.”\textsuperscript{191} Thus, the statement shows that \textit{al-Ittiḥād al-ʿArabī} was inspired by the idea to ‘make it interesting’ for the Arabs. This interpretation seems more credible than the interpretation that Ṣābūnjī changed his mind on the topic of Islam over the years.

By contrast, \textit{Old Mother Phoenicia} was an English text, written in order to raise awareness of the inferior position of the Christians in Syria. Its reading public would have consisted of non-Muslim Americans who were interested in the Orient, or in the Holy Land.\textsuperscript{192} Thus, \textit{Old Mother Phoenicia} acquired its meaning in the context of generally negative ideas about Islam, about the Turks, and about Turkish misbehavior towards Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire, held by the American public.\textsuperscript{193} Again, the absence of any other indications that Ṣābūnjī held anti-Islamic views was discounted by the police. They declared they learned that a political work written by him when he first came to this country some years ago had been burned in a New York fire” (Los Angeles Times 1931d: 2). It seems that this report refers to \textit{Old Mother Phoenicia}, published almost sixty years earlier.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item [189] These changes of opinion will be discussed in more detail in the last section of the present chapter.
\item [191] Letter dated 12 May 1882. West Sussex Library.
\item [192] It is important to note that the large scale emigration of Christian Syrians to the USA only started about a decade later (Akarli 1993: 61); consequently his audience would not have consisted of Christian Syrians.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
views, in combination with the contradictory indications mentioned above, suggest that *Old Mother Phoenicia* does not necessarily reflect his personally held conviction.

Interestingly, in 1899 a number of Christian Syrian immigrants in America formed ‘The Society of Young Syria’, which attacked the Ottoman Empire along essentially the same lines as Şâbûnji did in *Old Mother Phoenicia*. Unlike Şâbûnji in his earlier pamphlet, the Society of Young Syria had a political, and specifically a nationalist, goal: to liberate the Syrians from Ottoman domination. Şâbûnji, at that time in the service of the Ottoman Sultan (discussed in the following section) wrote negatively about this movement. He compared it with the failed nationalist movement of ʿUrâbî in Egypt, and he argued that its founding members were naïve dreamers. In the light of these conflicting sentiments and statements, it is almost impossible to reconstruct Şâbûnji’s true opinion on Islam and Christianity. In these cases it is the circumstances in which he wrote that reverberate through his texts.

3.3 Istanbul, America (1890-1931)

**In the service of the Sultan**

In 2007 Şâbûnji’s diary, covering the years 1888-1892 and 1899-1910, was published in Turkish, and this diary is an indispensable source for Şâbûnji’s biography after his London years. From this diary his activities and concerns can be reconstructed. In London in 1889 Şâbûnji started The Foreign Concessions Company, a company that was aimed at capitalizing on the railroad construction in the Ottoman Empire. Şâbûnji was to function as an intermediary between British investors in London and the

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194 Groiss 2011: 44-46.
195 This article is included in his diary (Şâbûnji 2007: 164-166). The editor of the diary writes in the introduction (p.9) that this and other articles were originally not part of the diary but inserted later.
196 This diary was originally written in Arabic. It was translated into Turkish and published serially in the 1950s in a Turkish newspaper. It was republished in 2007 (see in the bibliography Şâbûnji 2007). The location of the original Arabic manuscripts is unknown. I thank Mr. Özcan Geçer for this information.
197 Zolondek 1978: 115, n104. Şâbûnji was its largest shareholder.
Ottoman authorities, who were looking for parties to develop the infrastructure of the Empire. In the autumn of 1889 he made a two-month visit to Istanbul, and in February 1890 he settled there. His diary mentions three commercial projects, the most important of which was the attempt to acquire the concession to build a railroad from Tripoli (now Lebanon) to Basra (now Iraq) near the Persian Gulf. Bypassing the Suez channel, this route would offer a second, potentially profitable, traveling option to India. The company also vied for the concession for drying a swamp near Izmit. As the furthest inland port in Anatolia, this town was strategically located on the proposed route to the Persian Gulf. In addition, the company was interested in developing a coal mine near the Black Sea, presently in the Bartın province of Turkey.\footnote{See primarily Şābūnjī 2007: 39-52.}

Şābūnjī was unable to acquire any of these concessions, and his competitor, the Lebanese Yūsuf Muṭrān, acquired the railroad concession on behalf of French investors.\footnote{Şābūnjī 2007: 15-16. Note that in 1890 the railway network of the Ottoman Empire was very limited. Construction on the Baghdad railway only began in 1904 by German parties, after long negotiations with the French and the Ottomans. See McMurray 2001 for more information.} The other two projects, seemingly less prioritized, also failed. Nevertheless, Şābūnjī had been able to establish relations with a number of high ranking Ottoman officials, and this Ottoman network proved useful. It was through the minister of education Munif Pasha that he was offered a position in the Ottoman bureaucracy, in the service of Sultan ʿAbd al-Hamid II, in 1891.\footnote{On Munif Pasha, see Mango 1993: 573.} As a secretary-interpreter, his task was to monitor the European press coverage about the Ottoman Empire. Şābūnjī was employed in the period 1891 until 1909, and during this time he wrote a number of articles.\footnote{Şābūnjī himself stated that he wrote “more than three hundred articles” (Şābūnjī 1909: 1), but this figure is possibly exaggerated.} He eventually lost his function as monitor of the European press, but he was then hired as the teacher of the Sultan’s son Burhān al-Dīn (1885-1949). In spite of the recurrent issues about his remuneration that are mentioned
Bio-bibliographical sketch of Louis Ṣābūnjī

in his diaries, Ṣābūnjī made a wealthy impression to Blunt when the two met in London in 1909.202

Ṣābūnjī’s position in the service of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II was quite remarkable. Only ten years earlier his pamphlets had expressed anti-Ottoman sentiments that targeted the very same Sultan. Ṣābūnjī’s position somewhat resembled that of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, who lived in a “gilded cage” in Istanbul during the years 1892-1897.203 The two possibly maintained relations, but this is uncertain as Ṣābūnjī’s diaries over the years 1893-1899 are missing.204 However, the differences between the two are more pronounced, as Ṣābūnjī was free to go as he pleased, and he apparently did not have any conflicts with the Ottoman authorities.

From 1904 onwards Ṣābūnjī occupied a magnificent mansion on the island of Büyükada, the ‘Bee Hive Hotel’. Now known as the Sapuncakis Köşkü, it can still be seen in the eastern part of the island. The house has recently been restored, after it had been neglected for years. Its tympanum is decorated with the title page of his London-based al-Naḥla, carved out of stone.205 The fence is decorated with elaborate bees. The house prominently features the Eye of Providence, suggesting associations with Freemasonry.206 Ṣābūnjī’s letterhead also features Masonic symbolism (see the image), which again suggests that Ṣābūnjī was a Freemason. Elie Kedourie writes about Nahḍa intellectuals that “to be a freemason was to show one’s dislike of orthodox, traditional religion, the power it gave to ecclesiastics, and the hatreds and

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202 Blunt 1921: 250.
204 His 1892 diary is extant, but it does not mention al-Afghānī.
205 On this house, see Tuğlacı 1989: 396-401. However, Tuğlacı erroneously attributes the building to a Yorgi Sapuncakis, who opened a flower shop in 1874. This shop grew into a chain of flower shops in Istanbul, under the name of Sabuncakis. I thank Mr. Özcan Geçer for this information. Ṭarrāzī (1913b: 76) also gives an image of the house.
206 Searching for “sabuncakis” or “sapuncakis” on the internet yields many photos of the house, both before and after the restauration.
divisions it promoted and perpetuated”. This could easily apply to Şābūnjī too.

Besides devoting himself to his official tasks, Şābūnjī published his collection of poetry in Alexandria (1901), and he wrote a number of manuscripts in Arabic and Ottoman that are preserved in Istanbul. It can be assumed that Şābūnjī’s position in the service of the Sultan limited his freedom of expression, especially on such high-profile issues as the Caliphate. In this light it is to be expected that his writings are biased towards the Sultan, the Ottoman Empire, and Ottoman policy in general. Şābūnjī’s writings from this period, though, supersede this expectation; they are extremely laudative towards the Sultan and the Ottoman administration, and occasionally they diametrically oppose his earlier statements on the Arab Caliphate and on Islam. Two of Şābūnjī’s Arabic treatises can justly be classified as propaganda for the Ottoman claim to the Caliphate.

The first treatise, dated after 1897, is an eulogy on Sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II, under the title Nubdha muqtaṭafa min tarjamat ḥāl al-Ḥadra al-Sulṭāniyya (‘Abridged Excerpt from the Biography of His Highness the Sultan’). It treats a range of topics, all of which stress the beneficiary role of the Sultan for the Ottoman Empire. About the Caliphate, Şābūnjī wrote that the Sultan (qtd 2) “spared no efforts to unite them [the Muslims] in the great Caliphate, of which he is the firm cornerstone and the strong foundation, and make them into one union ‘as if they were a solid structure’ (sura al-Ṣaff, āya 4) who support each other”. About Islam and the spread of Islam in the West, Şābūnjī wrote (qtd 3): “And among the wonderful things that happen during his Caliphate is the spread of Islam, even in the largest cities of Europe and America such as London, Liverpool, Paris, New York, and others. These include building mosques, opening schools, and publishing religious texts there [in Europe and America] in English and French in order to widen the sphere of influence of this faith in the

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208 See the bibliography for more information.
209 It is preserved at the University of Istanbul.
210 English translation of this Quranic verse is by Marmaduke Pickthall.
Christian dominions and the European capitals”. In addition, Šābūnjī approvingly quotes the former American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Alexander Terrell (in office from 1893 until 1897). He pointed out that the Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire (qtd 4) “were never oppressed by the Muslims or by government officials only because they were Christians”, and that the Turks (qtd 5) “surpass any other nation in integrity, hospitality, courage, and manliness. The Turks are paramount when it comes to culture and good morals”.

The second treatise, entitled *Al-Nabadhāt al-Siyāsiyya* (‘The Political Excerpts’), dates to 1904; it mainly targets Russian foreign policy vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire and Japan. The Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire had a long history of conflicts. The most recent conflict was the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 and 1878, which was closely followed in Šābūnjī’s *al-Naḥla* (and in which he adopted a pro-Ottoman position). In his 1904 treatise Šābūnjī attacks not only the Russians for being oppressive and abusive, but also Syrian Christians who emigrated to America. Šābūnjī observed that they side with the Russians (qtd 6) “only as a result of the unity of the religion and faith [Christianity]”. Šābūnjī relates this shortsightedness to “their reproachable Eastern fanaticism”, and he continues a few pages later by suggesting that (qtd 7) “one pagan or Buddhist Japanese is better than a thousand Christian Russians who are fanatic and oppressive”. It is difficult to assess to what extent –or if– any of these expressions tell us anything about Šābūnjī’s true position towards Russians, Japanese, Muslims, or British.

The ‘heroic Young Turks’

Šābūnjī’s position in the service of the Sultan apparently came to an abrupt end when ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II was deposed in April 1909 by the Young Turks. One year earlier, in July 1908, the Young Turks

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211 Šābūnjī n.d.b: 40-42.
213 Šābūnjī n.d.b: 74-75.
214 It is also preserved at the University of Istanbul.
had succeeded in establishing an Ottoman constitution, thereby undermining the absolute power of the Sultan. In the months between these events Şābūnjī found himself between the two opposing camps. His position in the entourage of the Sultan stood in ill contrast with the political agenda of the revolutionaries. In other words, Şābūnjī found himself on the side of the losing party, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II. It is in this context that he published *The Free Ottoman* in 1909, bilingually in English and Ottoman.

*The Free Ottoman* is an elaborate attempt to save face towards the revolutionary Young Turks. Throughout the text Şābūnjī attempts to sketch his position vis-à-vis the Sultan, the Sultan’s (former) policymakers, and the revolutionary Young Turks –the “heroic Young Turks”\(^\text{216}\)– as favorably as possible. For example, Şābūnjī suggests that he had already for years advocated the same policies as the Young Turks now proposed, but that he was counteracted by influential Ottoman government officials who had an interest in preserving the status quo. At the same time he suggests, firstly, that the Sultan did not listen to his sound arguments and secondly, that the Sultan was merely a puppet of other high Ottoman government officials, “poisoning the mind of H.I.M. [His Imperial Majesty] the Sultan with treacherous reports”.\(^\text{217}\) He thereby also understates Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II’s intellectual and personal capabilities. In general, *The Free Ottoman* depicts the Sultan as passive and pliable, and also as a despot, as will be shown below.

The publication of *The Free Ottoman* is also remarkable because of its ambiguous representation of Islam. On the one hand Şābūnjī champions Islamic reform and argues that the new Ottoman constitution, bypassing the Sultan, is perfectly in conformity with Islamic law.\(^\text{218}\) On the other hand he argues that the Quran is largely copied from Jewish and Christian sources, thereby dismissing the prevailing Islamic position on the Quran. He then concludes that “no one cognizant of the obvious sources from whence its constituent parts were mainly derived can for a moment

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\(^{216}\) Şābūnjī 1909: 3.
\(^{217}\) Şābūnjī 1909: 28.
\(^{218}\) Şābūnjī 1909: 12-20.
believe it [the Quran] to have been penned under the immediate inspiration of God”.219

Finally, ʿUrābī also returned, albeit as a caricature of Islamic fatalism. Ṣābūnjī suggested that ʿUrābī failed to defeat the British because his religious practices allowed the British to move forward. Rather than fighting, he was “wasting his time in repeating to his soldiers and the surrounding people the usual Mussulman formula ‘God Almighty is just and Great, and He will help us to drive the English troops away’”. Ṣābūnjī then concludes that “God is Great! There is no mistake about that; but the time when the Almighty sent His Angel to exterminate the hostile armies of Senaharib has long since gone by, and God Almighty has in place of the exterminating angel allowed man to invent and use the ‘Maxim’, the ‘Krupp’, and the ‘Armstrong’ gun”.220

**Representing the Sultan**

Over the years, significant shifts are discernible in the representation of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II and of the Ottoman Empire in Ṣābūnjī’s writings. His *al-Naḥla* of 1877-1880 was significantly pro-Ottoman,221 but this position had already changed in 1881 when he denounced Sultan ʿAbd al-Hamid II as a usurper of the Caliphal title, and allegedly “urged the Arabs to rise against Ottoman Rule”.222 Ten years later Ṣābūnjī was hired by the very same Sultan, overcoming any earlier objections towards an Ottoman Caliphate. Again a few years later, Ṣābūnjī argued that the Sultan was the “firm cornerstone” of the Great Caliphate.223 Finally, in 1909, Ṣābūnjī called the Sultan a despot who ruled with “complete indifference as to the immorality of the means he employed for the accomplishment of his end”.224

Noticing the inconsistency between *al-Naḥla* and *al-Khilāfa*, Azmi Özcan states that “for some reason he [Ṣābūnjī] changed his

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219 Ṣābūnjī 1909: 27.
220 Ṣābūnjī 1909: 33.
221 Zolondek 1978: 103.
222 Özcan 1997: 120.
223 Ṣābūnjī n.d.b: 40.
224 Ṣābūnjī 1909: 47.
attitude and turned against the Ottomans”.\(^{225}\) I question the idea that Şābūnjī changed his mind. Instead I argue that Şābūnjī simply wrote what his intended audience wanted to hear, and what would be most advantageous for him to write under the circumstances. This makes it very difficult, and perhaps impossible, to assess what Şābūnjī really thought about the Sultan and the Ottoman Empire. I want to draw attention to the idea that his writings mirror the ideological and political circumstances in which he wrote.

A comparison between the *Nubdha muqtaṭafa* and *The Free Ottoman* makes this mirror-function overtly clear. The first text was written when Şābūnjī was part of the entourage of – and therefore financially dependent on – the Sultan. It is not coincidental that the *Nubdha muqtaṭafa* turned out to be essentially a eulogy of the Sultan. In the second text, *The Free Ottoman*, Şābūnjī writes that the Sultan had destroyed “the traditional institutions of the Ottoman Empire” and had replaced it with “a personal despotism direct in its actions and unlimited in its sway”.\(^{226}\) Hinting at the Young Turk revolution, he continues by referring to ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II as a “willing instrument in the new order of things” and as an “uncomplaining lamb [who] allowed himself to be shorn of much of his old autocratic rights and privileges”.\(^{227}\) The text is accompanied by an image that pathetically depicts the Sultan; rather than ruling an empire, he is caring for a baby that symbolizes the Ottoman Parliament (see image).

From these two examples it becomes clear that Şābūnjī’s representation of the Sultan cannot be seen in isolation of the political and ideological circumstances in which his texts were produced. A change in the circumstances, such as the Young Turk revolution, is therefore reflected in the representation of the Sultan. The same aspect is discernible in the contradictory representation of Islam, discussed above.

\(^{225}\) Özcan 1997: 120.
\(^{226}\) Şābūnjī 1909: 47.
\(^{227}\) Şābūnjī 1909: 46-51.
After 1908

In 1908 Ṣābūnjī commissioned a large painting, which illustrated the different religions. Of this painting, measuring 4 by 2.5 meters, a photograph is preserved at the Library of Congress, from which it was possible to reconstruct the original painting. It consists of thirteen columns, depicting thirteen different religions. It visualizes the idea that all the different religions are derived from the ‘pure natural religion’, which is depicted prominently at the highest position in the center. Six religions are depicted on each of its side. To the left are the Egyptian religion, Mosaic religion (Judaism), Christian religion, Moslem religion (sic), Protestant religion, and the Greek Church. To the right are the Assyrian religion, Mithraic religion, Brahman religion, Buddhist religion, Pagan religion, and the Syrian (sic) Catholic religion. A variety of scenes, temples, and activities that are associated with these religions are depicted in their respective columns. Remarkable is the prominent position of the Syriac Catholic Church. In spite of its numerical insignificance and its comparatively short history, it is depicted as standing on equal footing with the other religions.

It is clear that Ṣābūnjī attached much importance to this painting, taking it with him on his subsequent journeys. In 1909 he also played with the idea of making wax sculptures of the individuals it depicts, but this was not carried out. Ṣābūnjī published two texts about it, recording the meaning of the individual images and of the painting in its entirety. He argued that the different religions are all manifestations of a “divine prerogative instilled in the human mind”, a “sublime and heavenly impulse” of the Creator of the Universe. As such, the different religions do not form a hierarchy, but are rather represented as equal vis-à-vis each other. The careful observer, however,

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228 See in the bibliography, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Online Catalog n.d.
229 See for instance Ṣābūnjī 1917: 6-10, and the two texts that he wrote about it: n.d.a and 1919b.
231 The first Illustrated Key (Ṣābūnjī n.d.a, probably published in 1909) counted 40 pages, while the second Key to the Historico-Religious Chart (Ṣābūnjī 1919b) was 136 pages long.
Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C. (LC-F81-15795)
understands that the Syriac Catholics receive disproportionate attention. The juxtaposition of the various religions, just as the primacy of a ‘pure natural religion’, may also suggest a Masonic perspective.

After the Sultan was deposed in 1909, Şābūnjī remained for a few years in his house on Büyükada Island. He then traveled to Beirut, where he returned for the first time after 40 years. From there he went to Egypt in 1914, where he was at the outbreak of the First World War. He stayed in Egypt for three or four years, publishing at least one pamphlet in 1917. In 1918 Şābūnjī traveled to the United States. US Immigration records show that he arrived in Seattle on 24 October 1918, on board of the aptly named Arabia Maru. The octogenarian was the only non-Japanese on the ship, which came from Yokohama. His nationality is recorded as ‘Assyrian’, his last residence as Alexandria, Egypt, and his destination as Washington, D.C. Şābūnjī spent the last thirteen years of his life in the United States. During these years he published an Arabic book about attaining longevity, an English explanation of his large religious painting, and an English fictional story about the private life of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II.

In spite of his wealthy appearance in 1909, Şābūnjī spent the last few years in poverty in a hotel in Los Angeles, living on charity. Besides an old watch, his painting was “virtually [his] only worldly possession”, and even this had “practically no value except to a religious zealot”. His death at the age of 93 on 24 April 1931 sparked some attention in the Los Angeles Times because it happened under suspicious circumstances. Two persons were arrested on suspicion of involvement with his death, and five days later a jury found them guilty of robbery and murder. However, the autopsy suggested a natural death, and none of Şābūnjī’s few belongings were of any value except to a religious zealot. His death at the age of 93 on 24 April 1931 sparked some attention in the Los Angeles Times because it happened under suspicious circumstances. Two persons were arrested on suspicion of involvement with his death, and five days later a jury found them guilty of robbery and murder. However, the autopsy suggested a natural death, and none of Şābūnjī’s few belongings were of any value except to a religious zealot. His death at the age of 93 on 24 April 1931 sparked some attention in the Los Angeles Times because it happened under suspicious circumstances. Two persons were arrested on suspicion of involvement with his death, and five days later a jury found them guilty of robbery and murder. However, the autopsy suggested a natural death, and none of Şābūnjī’s few belongings were of any value except to a religious zealot.

235 Şābūnjī 1919b, published by Mr. A. de Martino of the Italian Library, New York.
236 Şābūnjī 1923, published by the Real American Syndicate, Jersey City.
237 Los Angeles Times 1931b.
238 Los Angeles Times 1931a. The information that he was murdered returned in a few later sources, such as Kaḥḥāla (1959: 161).
possessions were gone, ruling out robbery as a motive. Initially, the police were “unable to decide whether it was a murder or an accident”, but eventually they concluded that his death was caused by a fall against the bathtub. In the end, even his death at a very advanced age might not be what it seems: an enigmatic end to an equally enigmatic character.

**Freedom as a central theme**
If there was any central concern in Şabûnjî’s writings throughout his life, it must have been the desire to freely express his opinions, even though these were inconsistent and unsteady. This concern is already manifest in the conflict with the Bustânis in 1870, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Şabûnjî observes that the intelligentsia fight each other on the scientific battleground with ‘the pens between the fingertips’, and then argues that there is nothing wrong with such a war. After he was prohibited from publishing in Beirut, his search for freedom of expression inspired him to emigrate to Egypt, which he explicitly calls a free country. His move to London in 1876 following his conflict with the Maronites can also be seen in this light. Undoubtedly, the freedom of the press in London facilitated expressing the anti-Ottoman sentiments that he articulated in *al-Khilâfa* and *al-Ittihâd al-ʿArabî* in 1881. Şabûnjî explicitly praises the freedom of the press in England in the pages of his *al-Nâhla*, for instance in his response to Jamâl al-Dîn al-Afghâni’s representation of the British people. In 1880 the magazine, by then Arabic-only, devoted a lengthy article to the concept of freedom, in which Şabûnjî finds parallels between “the freedom that the foreigners always demand” and the freedom that the pre-Islamic Arabs in the Christian Lakhmid kingdom of al-Ḥîra –presently in Iraq– enjoyed.

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239 *Los Angeles Times* 1931a.
240 *Los Angeles Times* 1931d and 1931c.
241 Şabûnjî 1870b: 162.
242 Bibliotheca Alexandria n.d.
Around the turn of the twentieth century Ṣābūnjī’s praise for European and American freedom of expression became more explicit. The theme figures prominently in his diaries of 1899 and 1900, in which he refers to the freedom of Europe and particularly the United States.244 His praise acquires an almost theatrical form in his 1904 treatise on Russian foreign policy, *al-Nabadhāt al-Siyāsiyya*, which is shortly discussed above. He applauds Great Britain and America for the freedom that they allow, and he concludes the treatise by stating: “Long live freedom in any time! Let oppression disappear from every country!”245 The title of his 1909 publication, *The Free Ottoman*, also bears witness to his ideal.

At the age of 80 Ṣābūnjī emigrated to the United States, a country that he had visited twice before, in 1872 and 1874. It is likely that the freedom of expression that was available there contributed to the favorable impression that he had of this country. By the time he arrived, in October 1918, the world had changed dramatically since the time that he had engaged in journalism. While in the United States he was unable, or perhaps unwilling, to regain the prominent position that he held in earlier decades. His involvement with international politics and with journalism was reduced to memories, as was the material wealth that he had enjoyed while in Istanbul. He spent his last years in poverty, far away from Northern Mesopotamia, Beirut, Rome, London, and Istanbul. His death in a hotel on the West Coast of the United States powerfully symbolizes his biography. Constantly vacillating between an East, various fatherlands, and his religious community, his life was that of an intellectual who was nowhere really at home.

**Final note: Ṣābūnjī as gauge**

In this chapter various inconsistencies and contradictory opinions have been mentioned. I have explained these by suggesting that Ṣābūnjī wrote what his intended audience wanted to read, what he imagined what his intended audience wanted to read, or what would be most advantageous to write. As he pointed out in a letter to Blunt, Ṣābūnjī attempted to make his writings ‘interesting’ for

244 See for instance Ṣābūnjī 2007: 160-166 and 216.
his target audience. This explains why a change of context and target audience is mirrored by a sometimes dramatic change in opinions.

The idea that Ṣābūnjī wrote what his intended readers wanted to hear means that Ṣābūnjī’s texts not only give insight into his opinions and concerns –and even this is questionable– but also into those of his target audience. This aspect is an asset to the present research. In the following three case studies, I approach Ṣābūnjī’s journalistic texts as a window into the issues about community and identity, outlined in the previous chapter. His responsiveness in adapting to his social environment potentially makes Ṣābūnjī’s writings more illuminating than those of less pliable and less inconsistent individuals like Buṭrus al-Bustānī or Khalīl al-Khūrī. It is along these lines that I approach Ṣābūnjī as a gauge with which to gain insight into the concerns and opinions of his target audience, particularly those that relate to the practices, characteristics, features, and values of the identity of their own community.