Identities in early Arabic journalism: The case of Louis bnj
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Citation for published version (APA):

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The Bee in London (1877-1880)

“A speaking monkey from Brazil is one of the distinguished visitors to the Paris Exhibition. This animal was found in the arms of its mother, which had been mortally wounded in a fight with a polecat, by a M. Coulembart, while shooting on the banks of the Amazon. Little Jean Larousse –for so he is named– was given over to the charge of a negress, who was addicted to the use of the word ‘carramba.’ The monkey was noticed to have caught the first syllable of the word, and by dint of proper teaching, has been taught to say ‘papa,’ ‘mamma,’ ‘Maranon,’ ‘Brazil,’ etc. Has the ‘missing link’ at last been discovered? Professor Darwin may find in this case a new proof of his system; but we beg to inform Mr. Darwin, that Darwinism was taught many centuries before him by an Arab philosopher, called Ebin-Tofile, who flourished in Spain in the twelfth century of the Christian era. There is nothing New under the Sun.”¹

In April 1877 Şābūnjī revived al-Naḥla again, this time in London. It became a bilingual publication, in English and Arabic, and it continued to appear until May 1880. The quote above is taken from the English section of al-Naḥla. It is significant because it addresses, in 1878, the topic of evolution and the origin of mankind. This was four years before the so-called Lewis affair, which involved a professor of chemistry at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut who had to resign because of a lecture that allegedly propagated Darwinism.² For the present study the quote is remarkable because Şābūnjī presented Darwin’s thesis as originally a medieval Arab idea. The idea of Arab superiority in the Middle Ages vis-à-vis European backwardness was a well-known topos among Nahḍa

¹ Şābūnjī 1878-1879: 83. In a slightly altered version the quote is also present in the Arabic part of al-Naḥla. This will be discussed in detail below.
² For this issue, see Farag 1972, and Leavitt 1981.
intellectuals of the nineteenth century.\(^3\) With this reference Ṣābūnjī contributes at disseminating this idea among his reading publics. This chapter analyzes this and similar references to identities that are found in *al-Naḥla*.

The present study understands public texts as communication between the author and his public, and references to identities as communicative acts that the author performs for particular reasons. From this point of view, the revived *al-Naḥla* is exceptional because it was bilingual. It targeted two publics: those who read Arabic and those who read English. I assume that there was not much overlap between these two publics because the number of readers who would read both versions would have been very limited. As I will show in this chapter, there are indeed differences between the Arabic and the English texts which give insight into perceived differences between the Arabic and the English publics. In terms of identity, any difference that is found between the two versions can give insight into what it means to be one of the Arabs, or one of the English.

As pointed out in the methodological chapter, Kiesling observed how discourses of identities can be reproduced within communication without explicitly referring to them. He demonstrates how identities are reproduced by invoking background knowledge that is associated with the identities in question. I apply this approach to the Arabic and English versions of the magazine. I will analyze if, and how, the background knowledge that is associated with the Arabic speaking community and the English speaking community reverberate in the texts of the bilingual *al-Naḥla*.

The first part of this chapter gives a general overview of the revived magazine *al-Naḥla*. The second part focuses on the bilingual aspect of *al-Naḥla*; by performing a Discourse Analysis I will analyze how the two different publics, those who read English and those who read Arabic, are represented. The third part follows the principles of Membership Categorization Analysis. I will treat

\(^3\) The societies of the Abbasid era and of Islamic Spain, al-Andalus, were regularly presented as a model of native Arab success during the Nahda era (Sheehi 2004: 25-38).
the two publics as two different identities –Arabs and English, or Anglo-Saxons– and I will analyze how these identities are made relevant and consequential as part of the communication between author and readers. The fourth and final part compares the findings of the Discourse Analysis with those of MCA.

6.1 The magazine *al-Naḥla*

**About the magazine**

After the conflict with Yūsuf al-Dibs and the Maronites, Ṣābūnjī traveled via a long detour to London, where he settled in 1876. There, he started to publish a bilingual magazine in April 1877, again under the name *al-Naḥla* and now also featuring the English title, *The Bee*. This magazine lasted longer than his earlier *al-Naḥla*, with the last issue appearing in May 1880. Each issue had two title pages: an Arabic one that did not change, and an English one that differed per issue. The magazine appeared fortnightly, and each issue consisted of about 20 pages. In its first year the Arabic and English contents generally correspond; there are few articles that are only either in Arabic or in English. In its second year this feature became less pronounced, as more monolingual articles, in either Arabic or English, appeared. As a consequence, the contents in the two versions diverged. The Arabic version focused more on news, current events and international politics than the English version. In turn, the English version included more information about science, history, cultures, and other topics that did not immediately pertain to current affairs. In its third year *al-Naḥla* turned into an Arabic-only magazine, appearing monthly rather than fortnightly. The pages were numbered consecutively through the different issues, and numbering restarted after each year. Hence, the corpus of *al-Naḥla* consists of three volumes, coinciding with three years. It is unknown how many copies were printed of each issue, but a speculative assessment can be made. Based on a

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4 The volumes do not start in January of each year, but in April 1877, June 1878, and September 1879. As a consequence, the first volume spans the years 1877-1878, the second volume 1878-1879, and the third volume 1879-1880.
Arabic title page of *al-Naḥla* 1(10), dated 1 November 1877, London. Image reproduced by permission of the British Library (14599.e.1)
We present our Eastern readers with the portrait of the Earl Granville, who is one of the eminent Liberal politicians of England. The pedigree of his family goes back to Sir Thomas Gower, of Sitzingham, in Yorkshire, one of the many baronets created by James I. The subject of our notice was born on the 14th of May, 1816. His father was the Earl Granville Lewyon-Gower, and his mother was the Lady Henrietta Elizabeth Croydon, the daughter of the Earl of Devonshire. The present Earl Granville represents, therefore, a direct stream of the family which belongs to his house. His political principles are Liberal, and he was the leader of the House of Lords at the time of the Liberal Government.
comparison with circulation numbers of similar magazines, it is unlikely that its print run exceeded 1,000 per issue.\textsuperscript{5}

The magazine was one of the best Arabic magazines in terms of contents, appearance and writing at the time.\textsuperscript{6} Its most prominent asset were the many illustrations that appeared in the first year and a half. The most striking example was the illustration of Sultan Barghash’s ship, featured in Chapter Two of this thesis. These images clearly distinguished \textit{al-Naḥla} from the other contemporary Arabic magazines, and the magazine took pride in this aspect.\textsuperscript{7} The first page of the first issue, as well as the Arabic title page, prominently mentions the ‘magnificent images’ (\textit{al-taṣāwīr al-bahiyya}) that \textit{al-Naḥla} includes. The images depict a large variety of people, places, events, and buildings. Places that are featured include Zanzibar, Kars (one of the battle grounds of the Russo-Turkish war), Japan, Africa, Rome, San Francisco, Penang (on the Malay peninsula), and the Pacific Marquesas islands. Also included are a number of stereotypical images that illustrate ethnic groups. These include a Greek warrior, Africans who hunt a hippopotamus, a Circassian leader on a horse, Chinese who worship their ‘idols’, and Jewish bridesmaids. A few of these illustrations are discussed below. It is possibly for financial reasons that \textit{al-Naḥla} did not feature any more images after its 34\textsuperscript{th} issue, dated 1 December 1878.\textsuperscript{8}

The London-based \textit{al-Naḥla} was distinctively more cosmopolitan and international than its Beirut-based predecessor of the same name had been. This cosmopolitanism is manifested in a number of ways. Firstly, \textit{al-Naḥla}’s bilingualism catches the eye. By making his magazine accessible to those who read Arabic and those who read English, Ṣābūnjī doubled his audience. This

\textsuperscript{5} This speculative assessment is based on a comparison with circulation numbers of similar magazines, found in Ayalon 1995: 148.

\textsuperscript{6} Ṣarārī 1913b: 250.

\textsuperscript{7} The images in \textit{al-Naḥla} were perhaps only rivaled by Sanua’s handwritten illustrations in \textit{Abū Naẓẓāra}, published during the years 1877-1907 in Paris.

\textsuperscript{8} Ṣābūnjī remarks in the issue of 15 November 1878 that “the numerous political events and news of the highest importance” (p. 196) forces \textit{al-Naḥla} to print images only rarely.
observation forms a fundamental point of departure for this chapter.

Secondly, its cosmopolitanism is reflected by the list of recommendations made by a number of notables from the fields of politics, science, and religion. This list, featured in the first issue, includes notables such as Barghash, the Sultan of Zanzibar, A.P. Stanley, the dean of Westminster Abbey, Salar Jung I, the prime minister of Hyderabad, G.P. Badger, the lexicographer who was referred to in Chapter Three, G.C.M. Birdwood, the early advocate of an Arab rather than a Turkish Caliphate, and the Earl of Shaftesbury, a well-known peer and social reformer. These testimonials give al-Naḥla the impression of authority and respectability that its predecessor lacked. Throughout its existence al-Naḥla regularly devoted attention to many other ‘Eastern and Western’ notables, as will be discussed later.

Thirdly, al-Naḥla gave much more weight to political events and current affairs than its predecessor in Beirut. It closely followed the developments of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, the Anglo-Afghan war of 1878-1880 and the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879. As already discussed by Zolondek, al-Naḥla regularly disseminated its opinions about these conflicts. In its first year al-Naḥla adopted a favorable position towards the Ottomans and the British, and a negative position towards the Russians. Article titles such as ‘The Barbarity of the Russians’ bear witness to this position. Another article, “Servia,” [sic] a new synonym for ingratitude’ criticized Serbia’s allying with the Russians. A third article discusses a money collection in London, initiated by Roman Catholics “for the suffering Turks who have been driven from their homes by the Russians”. In the second year al-Naḥla’s pro-British position somewhat changed, as it criticized British imperial policy in South Africa and Afghanistan. However, as already pointed out in Chapter Three, al-Naḥla always praised the freedom of opinion and the freedom of the press that were found in Great Britain. Şābūnjī

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9 Zolondek 1978: 104.
11 Şābūnjī 1877-1878: 229.
also expressed this idea in his response to al-Afghānī’s criticism of the British.

There are no reasons to assume that Șăbūnjī shared the responsibility for the contents of al-Nahla with other people. In general, it seems that Șăbūnjī devoted much more time and expenses to the magazine in its first year than in its second year. In the second year many short anecdotal articles in English appear, many of which have been copied from other sources. In a number of cases Șăbūnjī added some lines of his own to such articles. This also happened to the article about the speaking monkey that introduced this chapter. The usage of unoriginal content roughly coincides with the disappearance of images. In its third year al-Nahla became an Arabic-only publication, and the short English articles also disappeared. In this period Șăbūnjī also established relations with the Beiruti magazine al-Muqtaṭaf. Egyptians and Syrians were able to acquire a subscription to al-Nahla through al-Muqtaṭaf’s Shāhīn Makāriyūs. In addition, al-Nahla and al-Muqtaṭaf reprinted a number of each other’s articles.

It is somewhat unclear when al-Nahla ceased publication. On the one hand, the last preserved issue is the ninth issue of the

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13 A possible exception is his nephew Abraham, who assisted Șăbūnjī in the printing of al-Nahla in 1878.
14 This is revealed by the large amount of digitized material that is available online. In particular, the databases of the national libraries of Australia and New Zealand yielded many results. See http://trove.nla.gov.au and http://www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz. Many articles have also been taken over from Scientific American.
15 This point will be discussed in further detail in Section 6.3, where the English and Arabic texts are compared.
16 Exceptions are the small number of articles that are taken over from other newspapers such as al-Nashra al-Usbū‘îyya, Thamarāt al-Funūn, and al-Muqtaṭaf (see also next footnote).
18 Șăbūnjī 1879-1880: 98.
third volume, dating to May 1880. Ṭarrāzī also confirms this date. On the other hand, indirect evidence suggests that *al-Nahla* continued to appear in early 1883. However, I have not found any issues of *al-Nahla* that have appeared after May 1880.

### Portraits

A substantial proportion of the images in *al-Nahla* are portraits of well-known persons. There were a total of 66 portraits, of which 56 appeared in the first year of publication and 10 in the second year. In general, the portraits can be categorized into three groups. The first group includes 27 portraits of British politicians and notables; the second group includes 19 portraits of Eastern (Ottoman, or Islamic) politicians and notables; and the third group includes 19 portraits of non-British European politicians and notables. The only portrait that does not fit into any of these categories is that of Samuel Crowther, the first African Anglican bishop. In general, the portraits illustrate the articles of the magazine. For instance, reports about the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 are accompanied by the portraits of Czar Alexander II, the Ottoman Sultan, and various generals of theirs. An article about French politics is illustrated with portraits of the French President Mac-Mahon, his opponent Leon Gambetta, and various other French notables. For the same reasons the Imam of Dagestan Shamīl, the Emperor of Austria Franz Joseph, and the Shah of Persia Nāṣir al-Dīn are depicted.

On the basis of Ṭarrāzī’s account it is certain that at least some of the portrayed individuals were also financial benefactors to the magazine. These persons include George Badger (1815-1888), the lexicographer with whom Şābūnjī had cooperated,

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20 Ṭarrāzī (1913b: 250) writes that *al-Nahla* appeared “until it reached its fourth year”.
22 See primarily Şābūnjī 1877-1878: 21, 59, 138, 139.
23 Şābūnjī 1877-1878: 114, 120.
24 Şābūnjī 1877-1878: 55, 72, 80. Imam Shamīl had resisted Russian incursions into the Caucasus until his forces were defeated in 1859.
25 1913b: 250.
Barghash, Sultan of Zanzibar (1837-1888), who is portrayed thrice, and Salar Jung I, the prime minister of Hyderabad (1829-1883), who is portrayed twice. A special case is that of Albert Sassoon (1818-1893), a wealthy British merchant whose ancestors came from Baghdad. Sassoon featured on the cover of the eleventh issue. In response, Sassoon apparently donated a sum of money, because the twelfth issue thanks him for his “liberal donation”. This indicates that paying attention to notables paid off, at least in this case. It was possibly a strategy in order to acquire funding for al-Naḥla, and this can explain the prominence of British notables. These notables include persons such as Henry Bartle Frere, Granville Leveson-Gower, A.B. Kemball, Baroness Burdett-Coutts, the Viscountess Strangford, Robert Napier, and Lewis Pelly, and they are all lauded in the pages of al-Naḥla.

6.2 The representation of the reading publics

The representation the Arab public
The Arabic cover of al-Naḥla includes two lines of poetry which give insight into al-Naḥla’s Arab reading public, and into al-Naḥla’s (and, by implication, Šābūnjī’s) relation with this reading public.

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26 Šābūnjī 1877-1878: 200, 12, 224, 20 and Šābūnjī 1878-1879: 386, 185. Note that Šābūnjī’s brother, Alexander Malcolm, maintained ties with the Nizam. See Chapter Three.


Henry Bartle Frere (1815-1884) negotiated on behalf of the British with Sultan Barghash about the abolition of the slave trade in Zanzibar. Granville Leveson-Gower (1815-1891) was a liberal politician and former leader of the British House of Lords. Arnold Kembal (1820-1908) was British diplomat who played a role in the Russo-Turkish war, and also in East African affairs. Baroness Burdett-Coutts (1818-1906) and the Viscountess Strangford (1826-1887) were philanthropists. Robert Baron Napier of Magdala (1810-1890) was commander-in-chief of the Indian army. Lewis Pelly was a British diplomat in Afghanistan and Persia, and also member of the British delegation that negotiated with Barghash. The prominence of people that Barghash would have met is conspicuous, and it seems that this should be seen in the light of Barghash’s financial support of al-Naḥla. All of this information comes from Šābūnjī’s texts and from the British Biographical Archive.
These lines feature on the title page of the first ten issues and, as such, can be seen as *al-Naḥla’s* leitmotif:

“A bee brings the intellect the sweetness of knowledge / Stretch the hands of acceptance for her, sons of the fatherland! / She returned to the fatherlands after her absence / holding in her claw the honey of love and peace.”

In this verse, the first line sketches an interaction between the ‘sons of the fatherland’ and ‘a bee’. I interpret the sons of the fatherland (*banī al-waṭan*) as pointing to *al-Naḥla’s* Arab public, and the ‘bee’ as pointing to Şābūnjī himself. On one side, the sons of the fatherland are represented as the passive partner in this relationship. They are summoned to stand with their hands stretched out to accept all the good things (the ‘sweetness of knowledge’ and the ‘honey of love and peace’) that the bee delivers to them. From this perspective, the ‘sons of the fatherland’, or the Arab public, are represented as *in need* of everything that the bee, or Şābūnjī, brings. The passivity of the sons of the fatherland is emphasized by the usage of the imperative *muddū* (‘stretch [the hands]!’). In this way, the narrator tells *al-Naḥla’s* Arab public what to do, thereby patronizing them. By implication, this imperative suggests that they would not accept the sweetness of knowledge and the honey of love and peace without intercession of someone who tells them that they should do so.

Contrasting with the sons of the fatherland is a bee, or Şābūnjī, who is depicted as the active partner in their interaction: it is flying incessantly from all the flowers and back to its hive. It is represented as *having* all the good things that the sons of the fatherland need, because it has collected these from the different flowers that signify the different sciences. The bee is represented as doing all these things spontaneously, without anyone telling it what to do or how to do it. In other words, unlike the sons of the fatherland, Şābūnjī does not need intercession by someone who summons it what to do. The hive, as explicitly pointed out, stands
for the magazine *al-Naḥla*. It is the depository of all the good things that the bee collected and that the sons of the fatherland need and hopefully accept.

A second, and somewhat related, opposition is between the fatherland and the ‘abroad’ that is necessarily implicated by the reference to the *return* to the fatherland. This abroad is not specified, except by what the bee takes from there, namely the honey of love and peace. It can be assumed that *al-Naḥla*’s Arab public would interpret this implicit ‘abroad’ as London, England, or the West, because it is *al-Naḥla*’s place of publication. Consequently, Ṣābūnjī sketches the connection between London and the Arabs in this short poem essentially as a one-way transfer, with the bee as intermediary. Ṣābūnjī collects all the good things in London and then transfers these to his Arab public in the fatherland who are waiting for it, hopefully in anticipation and with outstretched arms.

Interestingly, it is only *al-Naḥla*’s Arab readers who are addressed with the phrase ‘sons of the fatherland’, because the poem is given in Arabic only. The relation between the Arab public and Ṣābūnjī, and between the Arab fatherland and the London that is implied, is essentially one of inequality. What I want to point out is that the two lines of poetry are a manifestation of the idea of native failure vis-à-vis foreign success. As discussed in the second chapter, this idea was part of the social consciousness of many nineteenth-century Nahḍa intellectuals; it underlay and rationalized various narratives of reform. Ṣābūnjī presents the magazine *al-Naḥla* as part of a narrative of reform. Its discursive goal, expressed in these two lines of poetry, is to overcome the inferior position of the Arabs, and to thus elevate the Arabs within this hierarchy. In other words, Ṣābūnjī presents his magazine as the medium with which the Arabs can become more progressed and more civilized.

‘Noble admonition for the Easterners’

The narratives of reform of nineteenth-century Nahḍa intellectuals are premised by the opposition between native failure and foreign

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28 The hive carries the text ‘the literary bee with the beautiful images’ (*al-Naḥla al-adabiyya dhāt al-taṣāwīr al-bahiyya*).
success. It is for this reason that the ‘foreigner’ plays a pivotal role in many of these narratives. In his analysis of Buṭrus al-Bustānī’s publications from 1859 and 1860, Sheehi has pointed out how the foreigner came to serve as the “subjective referent for progress in the writings of al-Bustānī and his peers”. The Arabic title page of al-Naḥla, including the two lines of poetry discussed above, does not explicitly refer to foreigners, but implicitly points to the West. This contrasts with the English title page, on which the East and the West are explicitly juxtaposed: the magazine calls itself ‘an illustrated Eastern and Western periodical’. A second example that articulates an East-West-opposition is found in the Arabic-only article ‘Ikhṭār nābil ilā al-sharqiyyīn’ (‘Noble admonition for the Easterners’), which quotes Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī. The binary opposition between East and West lies at the basis of the argument made by al-Afghānī. The following passage gives a quotation of al-Afghānī’s words (qtd 1):

“Sons of the East, don’t you know that the power of the Westerners and their hegemony over you is because of their high level of sciences and knowledge, and your inferiority in these? (…) You have held the highest honor through science and knowledge, but ignorance and error have brought you in this bad state. Are you satisfied that [this bad state] goes on for you, so that the enemies continue to take pity on you instead of the friends?”

This quote forms an explicit bridge between native failure and the successful ‘foreigner’ in the present. As social constructs, the inferior East and the successful West exist and persist through this

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30 Ṣābūnjī 1878-1879: 365. Ṣābūnjī’s article actually quotes the conclusion of al-Afghānī’s –favorable– review of Buṭrus al-Bustānī’s magnum opus, the Arabic encyclopedia Dāʾīrat al-Maʿārif. This review originally appeared on 25 April 1879, in the Egyptian newspaper Misr. Coincidentally, both Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1879: 306-308) and Louis Ṣābūnjī devote attention to al-Afghānī’s review in their respective magazines al-Jinān and al-Naḥla on exactly the same day, 15 May 1879.
31 Unaware of Ṣābūnjī’s article, Keddie (1972: 107) highlights the same conclusion. Keddie’s source is al-Bustānī’s al-Jinān.
and similar references. After a number of such explicit references the Arab reader learns how to interpret less explicit references to the East and to the West. In addition, the quote calls to mind the idea of Eastern success in the past, albeit without defining or discussing it any further. Earlier references to a successful past have taught the reader that al-Afghānī draws upon the ‘fetishized image’ of Abbasid and Andalusi superiority in the Middle Ages. Thus, for the Arabic reading public, acquiring success is also a matter of regaining success; al-Afghānī’s ‘noble admonition’ articulates this idea saliently.

The representation of the English public
In general, the English public is represented as advanced, powerful, and civilized. In a remarkable article entitled ‘The Population and the Dominant Races of the World’, al-Naḥla gives an overview of the world population. This article, which only appears in English, compares different social groups, and it starts with some simple statistics:

“The earth is divided into four great parts, the population of which are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>300,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>820,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>200,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>85,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides these there are about 5,000,000 uncivilised islanders.”

Conspicuous on this simple list is the reference to the islanders. Firstly, they are mentioned separately, outside and after the table of statistics which list the ‘great parts’. This suggests that they are

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32 Sheehi 2004: 25-31. In reference to the ‘fetishized image’ of the Abbasids, Sheehi points to al-jābirī (1980 and 1984-2000). Note that the idea of the ‘dark’ Middle Ages, referred to by Şābūnji in his conflict with the Maronites, diametrically opposes the image of the Middle Ages that al-Afghānī invokes here, and that Şābūnji invokes in the passage that opened this chapter.

33 Şābūnji 1877-1878: 376.
The Bee in London (1877-1880)

the leftovers of the world population. Secondly, these islanders are also special because they are classified as ‘uncivilized’. This explicit reference is meaningful, as it exposes the criterion with which the world population is measured, i.e. in terms of how civilized they are. Thus, the article narrates the normativity of being civilized, a norm that is equally applicable to the entire population of the earth.

Somewhat later, the article discusses the power of ‘races’, and it concludes that “the race which appears to be more powerful than any other is that which speaks the English language”. The rest of the article takes the form of an eulogy on the Anglo-Saxons, as illustrated by the following quote:

“The wonderful courage, science, and force of the Anglo-Saxons will appear from the following fact. In the whole world, except the two countries inhabited by this race [Great Britain and the United States of America], the people of all other races put together have constructed only 45,000 miles of railway; but the Anglo-Saxons, in their two countries, have completed more than 70,000 miles.”

In this quote, the amount of constructed railways is couched as an indication of the success and progress of the Anglo-Saxons, and of the relative backwardness of other peoples. More statistics corroborate the thesis that the Anglo-Saxons are the most successful race. One of these is a comparison between the number of Anglo-Saxons and the number of their colonial subjects. Great Britain rules over India, Šābūnji’s argument goes, but the number of Indians is vastly greater than the number of the British. Šābūnji finds in this skewed proportion a proof of the power of the Anglo-Saxon race. In addition, al-Naḥla also states that “the Anglo-Saxon race is the most assiduous (...) in reading and expounding science and civilisation through the world”, and then points out that this superiority is an indication of God’s blessing. The amount of railroads, colonial subjects, and the assiduity with which reading and science are disseminated carry similar connotations as the ‘sweetness of knowledge’ and the ‘honey of love and peace’ from
the Arabic title page of *al-Naḥla*. They indicate superiority within a hierarchical framework.

In this article Šābūnjī equates race with language communities; he defines the Anglo-Saxon race as those who speak English. In addition, he defines the rest of the population of Europe as “European races, speaking 6 other languages”, without specifying which languages he has in mind. Interestingly, this article is written only in English. From this point of view, Šābūnjī speaks here about his English reading public when praising the power, progress, and civilization of the Anglo-Saxons. The United States is also included in the Anglo-Saxon race, and this country is repeatedly praised throughout *al-Naḥla*. Šābūnjī writes that the “power and superiority of the people of the United States” is caused by the great mixture of different races in America. He thereby suggests that individuals can become part of the successful Anglo-Saxon race by learning English or by emigrating to the United States. This is exactly what Šābūnjī did, albeit 40 years after having written this. He emigrated to the United States in 1918.

A second article that deserves attention is entitled ‘A Remarkable Application of the Telephone’. This article, originally taken from the *New York Herald*, discusses the possibility of transmitting a sermon to all the churches of New York City. From a central position the minister would preach to 500 open tubes, through which his image and speech is transported to the different churches. There, “instead of gazing into the minister’s face they [the churchgoers] will look at a huge funnel-shaped projection in the middle of the chancel”, and hear “his eloquence (...) with all the various modulations”. The article, together with some more background information, is translated into Arabic under the title ‘Istiʿmāl al-Tilīfūn fī Amirikā’.

The short article nicely illustrates the nineteenth-century concern with progress and technological inventions. However, the short digression that follows is worthy of quoting verbatim,

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34 For instance Šābūnjī 1878-1879: 27, 43, 142, 153, 172, 216, 252, 276, 309, 313.
35 Šābūnjī 1877-1878: 29. The reference to the *New York Herald* is given in the article itself.
because it speaks about the Americans. Significantly, this digression is not translated into Arabic:

“Just to fill up this page, we take the liberty of expressing our deep conviction as to the effect of the wonderful American abilities. No wonder, indeed, if we should hear some day that the progressive genius of the great Yankee nation has succeeded in extending the tracks of railways up to the heaven, so that they might, through the magnificent and comfortable Silver-palace cars, convey the pious and good souls of those who had the privilege of praying to God, through the telephone and pyrophone, to everlasting happiness.”

At first sight this statement does not seem serious. However, the anecdote of the ‘great Yankee nation’ cannot simply be explained away as theatrical, in spite of the clearly humorous overtone. The scientific pre-eminence of Americans is a recurrent topos in al-Nahla, each time without a humorous overtone. This quote reproduces the idea that Americans are inventive, energetic, and progressed. It thereby contributes to the reification of this meaning of ‘being American’ among his English public, and not among his Arab public, as this statement is not translated into Arabic. In conclusion, Ṣābūnjī represents Great Britain, America, and the Anglo-Saxon race as superior in progress, civilization, and science. The two discussed articles are not isolated cases in this respect, but form a pattern that is found throughout the English version of al-Naḥla.

36 Ṣābūnjī 1877-1878: 29. A pyrophone is a musical instrument that operates on explosions.
37 A similar representation of America and the Americans has also been seen in the Tarjamatā of 1874, discussed in the previous chapter. In that publication, Ṣābūnjī wrote that the Americans “have reached the highest top of civilization and enlightenment” (Ṣābūnjī 1874: 20).
Representing the Other public

In the two sections above, I have described the representation of the Arab public in the Arabic version of *al-Naḥla*, and that of the English public in the English version. In other words, I have described the representation of the publics who read about *themselves*. I have not yet given information about the representation of the *Other* public: the representation of the English public in the Arabic version or that of the Arab public in the English version.

In the case of the representation of the Arab public in the English version, there is no significant difference with the Arabic version. In the Arabic version *al-Naḥla* assigns itself the role of educator in the light of a narrative of reform: *al-Naḥla* helps the Arab public become more progressed and more civilized. The same principle is discernible in the English version, as is clear from the first page of the first issue of *al-Naḥla*:

“This something has been done of late years for the education and enlightenment of Orientals by means of schools and colleges, and with considerable success. There still remains, however, a great need. This is the absolute lack of a sound periodical literature to supply a knowledge of current events and the advances made in the various branches of sciences and art.”

This quote articulates the idea that the Arab public is in need of progress, civilization, and power, just as in the Arabic version of *al-Naḥla*.

In the case of the representation of the English public in the Arabic version, there is a noticeable difference. In the English version the progress and power of the Anglo-Saxons is explicitly and repeatedly mentioned. In other words, *al-Naḥla* often confronts the English public with the success of the Self. By contrast, the Arabic version of *al-Naḥla* does not substantiate the

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38 Ṣābūnjī 1877-1878: 18. It must be noted that this lack is not so absolute as Ṣābūnjī suggests. Various Beiruti magazines such as *al-Muqtaṭaf* and *al-Jinān* carried similar contents.

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superiority of the English with statistics or other proofs. This is not to say that the English are not represented as superior in progress and civilization. However, their superiority in progress and civilization is not explicitly and repeatedly stressed in texts that address the Arab public. I argue that the superiority of the English was self-evident and not understood as something that should be substantiated or proven. As such, the idea of native failure vis-à-vis foreign success was so well understood that it functioned as background knowledge about Arabs and foreigners. In other words, their superiority was rather taken to require no comment, just as the relative inferiority of the own community.

Şābūnjī as intermediary
The opposition between the backward Arab public and the progressed English public also has repercussions with respect to how Şābūnjī represents himself. As the author and editor of an Arabic magazine, he is obviously seen by his readers as an Arab or as an Easterner. At the same time, Şābūnjī represents himself as progressed and civilized, and therefore unlike his stereotypical fellow Arabs or Easterners. This aspect of difference from the Arab public is discernible in the two lines of poetry discussed above. He assigns al-Naḥla and himself the role of intermediary between the backward sons of the fatherland and the progressed London or the West. It is here that we find an example of Şābūnjī paternalizing his Arab public. A second and much more explicit example of paternalism is found in the English quote discussed above, which points out that al-Naḥla is aimed at the education and enlightenment of the Orientals. The two examples of paternalism show that Şābūnjī pretends to speak on behalf of those who are progressed and civilized. More examples of paternalism will follow in the remainder of this chapter.

Through his progressed eyes Şābūnjī is able to judge the community of Arabs and Orientals, and he thus concludes that they lag behind the English or the Anglo-Saxons. Importantly, his progressed eyes make Şābūnjī similar to his English public. In terms of collective identity, what mattered most to Şābūnjī was to
belong to the group of progressed and civilized people, the group that includes the Anglo-Saxons.

6.3 Language policy in practice
The previous section demonstrated that there is a fundamental difference between the construction of the Arab and the English publics of *al-Naḥla*. The former is represented as in need of change and reform, and the latter is represented as though they are already progressed and successful. I will approach this as background knowledge, associated with the English and the Arab publics. With this information I will now investigate how Ṣābūnjī makes this background knowledge relevant and consequential, thereby following the principles of MCA. In other words, I will investigate how this background knowledge is used in the communication between Ṣābūnjī and his readers. The first section discusses articles that appeared in both English and Arabic, and these will be closely compared; the second section discusses monolingual articles.

The normativity of creation – but only for Arabs
This chapter opened with an article about a speaking monkey which I will now discuss in detail in the following pages. The anecdote was published in both English as well as Arabic, and it is one of the articles that Ṣābūnjī copied from another source. The article follows a general format, which is the same in both English and Arabic versions. The article starts with a curious anecdote about a speaking monkey. This speaking monkey is contextualized by suggesting that this phenomenon shows that humans are the descendants of monkeys, thereby invoking Darwin’s theory of evolution. The article ends with a short historical digression, claiming that Darwin wasn’t really that original and that Ibn Ṭufayl already propagated essentially the same theory in the Middle Ages.

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39 The same article with almost the same words is featured in the *Wanganui Herald* (New Zealand) of 16 January 1877, page 2. It is unlikely that the obscure *Wanganui Herald* is the source of *al-Naḥla*’s article; instead, it can be assumed that both quoted from a third, unknown, publication.
This short historical digression is Şābūnji’s original addition to the anecdote, and this is the part that demands more attention:

“Has the ‘missing link’ at last been discovered? Professor Darwin may find in this case a new proof of his system; but we beg to inform Mr. Darwin, that Darwinism was taught many centuries before him by an Arab philosopher, called Ebin-Tofile, who flourished in Spain in the twelfth century of the Christian era. *There is nothing New under the Sun.*”

By contrast, the end of the Arabic version is more explanatory and more instructional (see the appendix for the original Arabic text, in the opening quote of Chapter Six):

“Is professor Darwin right when he says that the origin of mankind is the ape and the monkeys? The Arab philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl preceded him in this teaching, as he was the first Arab who taught that mankind developed originally from inferior animals. Ibn Ṭufayl lived in the middle of the twelfth century of the Christian era. *(Al-Nahla is not a proponent of what Ibn Ṭufayl or Darwin says; instead it says that mankind was created as a separate category that was not connected with any other inferior animals).*

Aside from some minor discrepancies, the most fundamental difference is the addition in the Arabic text, at the end and between brackets, that *al-Nahla* disagrees with Darwin and Ibn Ṭufayl. This remark is absent from the English text. In this added sentence, Şābūnji explicitly contrasts the theory of evolution with a creationist stance, and, without giving any arguments, dismisses the former and adopts the latter position. This remark is quite sudden and unexpected, as it basically disqualifies what precedes it. The result is that the article in its Arabic variant carries a substantially different meaning as compared with its English equivalent.

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40 Şābūnji 1878-1879: 83.
41 Şābūnji 1878-1879: 86. Original emphasis.
In the second half of the nineteenth century, discussions on Darwin and evolution emerged in Arabic sources like *al-Naḥla*, and various Nahḍa intellectuals attempted to trace these discussions to medieval Arabic sources. Ibn Ṭufayl’s novel *Ḥayy ibn Yaẓān*, in particular, became seen as a precursor to Darwin. It is debatable to what extent this relationship is warranted. To the present study it is irrelevant; what matters here is the message that Ṣābūnjī communicates to his readers. Ṣābūnjī points out that Ibn Ṭufayl was *indeed* a precursor to Darwin; as a public intellectual this message contributed to the dissemination of this idea.

*Al-Naḥla’s* statement in Arabic that it disagrees with Darwin and Ibn Ṭufayl is an unexpected swing which not only exposes the controversy of the idea that people are the descendants of the ape and the monkeys, but also draws extra attention to and reproduces this controversy. I argue that *al-Naḥla’s* opinion on this matter, presented here without any supporting arguments, has discursive ramifications. It reflects and reproduces the idea that the narrative of creation takes precedence over conflicting narratives about the origin of mankind, such as evolution. As such, the remark does not simply or innocently give an opinion; it highlights to its reading public that there is a correct position (creation) and an incorrect position (evolution). Ṣābūnjī thereby directs his Arab public towards the normative answer to the question of how mankind came into being, thereby paternalizing them. By contrast, Ṣābūnjī does not direct his English public towards what to think about this issue.

The Arabic remark contributes to a tense atmosphere surrounding the topic of the origin of mankind. In the Arab world this tense atmosphere erupted for the first time about four years after *al-Naḥla’s* reference to Darwin, with the so-called Lewis affair, the first conflict involving Darwin’s theory of evolution in the Arab world. This conflict was the result of a lecture by Edwin Lewis,

43 For similarities and differences between Darwin and Ibn Ṭufayl, see Attar (Attar 2007: 84-87). Attar (2007: 94n10) also points to Hawi (1974: 103-124), who provides precise arguments regarding why both Ibn Ṭufayl and Darwin fall in one “naturalistic tradition”.
professor of chemistry at the Syrian Protestant College (SPC). In this lecture Lewis favorably discussed Darwinism, angering a number of college officials. As a consequence, the SPC was more or less split between supporters of Lewis and his critics, and the result was that the professor eventually resigned. In spite of its brevity and insignificance, Şābūnji’s remark already reflects and reproduces this controversy.

The question that remains is: Why would al-Naḥla find it necessary to denounce Darwin’s and Ibn Ṭufayl’s theories? The answer can go two ways: it is either Şābūnji’s personally held convictions on these issues that inspired him to denounce Darwin and Ibn Ṭufayl, or it is the convictions – imagined by Şābūnji – of his public that he did not want to offend through endorsing the idea of evolution. In my view, the absence of the remark in the English version is revealing. This absence shows that Şābūnji’s personally held convictions were not decisive in this case. As a consequence, the explanation should lie in the differences between his English and Arab publics, differences that reverberate in the presence or absence of a denunciation of Darwin and Ibn Ṭufayl.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the idea that ‘we’ are essentially religious was a well-known topos during the Nahḍa era. It can be assumed that the reader understands that the idea that mankind descended from monkeys and inferior animals goes against the Abrahamic narrative of the origin of mankind. Al-Naḥla’s final remark, that mankind was created as a separate category, conforms to this religious narrative of creation. Al-Naḥla therefore propounds the normativity of the religious narrative as opposed to its nonreligious counterpart, even though this is not explicitly stated. From this perspective, the article’s final remark also reflects the idea that ‘we’ are essentially religious. Importantly, it is this religious aspect that separates Şābūnji’s own community from the non-Easterners and the non-Arabs. The bilingual nature of al-Naḥla accentuates this disparity here, because the remark is present in the Arabic version and absent in the English version.

In both the Arabic and the English version, Ibn Ṭufayl is represented as a successful Arab who mastered sciences and philosophy centuries before foreigners came to the same conclusions. Ṣābūnjī thereby draws upon the ‘fetishized image’ of medieval success. This ‘fetishized image’ has a function in narratives of reform. The Abbasids and the Andalusians present the Arabs with a model for native success, without foreign intercession. This proves that the Arabs or the Easterners have what it takes to become successful once again. However, in the Arabic version of the anecdote, Ibn Ṭufayl is a poor model for native success because he is also represented as failing, as he did not comprehend the origin of mankind properly. More important is that this issue, the origin of mankind, touches upon the religious essence that makes ‘us’ different from the foreigners. Hence, Ṣābūnjī accuses Ibn Ṭufayl of acting in conflict with this religious essence, which means that Ibn Ṭufayl becomes an even poorer model for native success. The ambiguous representation of Ibn Ṭufayl in the Arabic version of the anecdote demonstrates that Ṣābūnjī struggled with combining the normativity of being religious with the normativity of becoming progressed through scientific superiority.

Progress and science – for the English
As stated earlier, many English articles in al-Naḥla have been copied from other sources. In addition, many of these articles are not translated into Arabic, thus precluding any comparison of the texts. This is particularly the case with short and anecdotal articles, comparable to the article about the speaking monkey. These short English-only articles appeared with greater frequency in the second year of publication, and in many cases the magazine Scientific American is credited as their source. Intriguingly, many of these articles pertain to new scientific discoveries, new theories, and, in short, to the progress and advancement of humanity. The following page, from the second volume of al-Naḥla, illustrates this.

Referring to Scientific American, it discusses a number of new inventions, including a new game apparatus, a fire escape, and an improved child’s carriage. None of these accounts are translated into Arabic. As pointed out earlier, al-Naḥla’s aim was to educate
A BOAT OLDER THAN THE ARK.

During November last an association of boatmen, calling themselves Lacustrians, on account of their trade, being the exploration of the shores of Lake Geneva, in search of antiquities buried in the bottom, discovered in the lake, and near the town of Morges, the remains of a large ancient dug-out. The boat was buried in about 15 feet of earth, and during its excavation, owing to the great fragility of the old wood, it was broken in several pieces. It was finally transported to the museum at Geneva, and there rests submerged in water to prevent the corrosive action of the atmosphere. La Nature has published an engraving showing the construction of the oldest known vessel, the period of the making of which far outdates that commonly ascribed to the construction of Noah's Ark. The length is about 15 feet, breadth 27 inches, and thickness of sides and bottom from 2 to 4 inches. The boat was all hewn from the trunk of an oak, evidently with implements of stone or bronze.

New Inventions

An improved Game Apparatus for playing a game analogious to bagatelle, called "baseline," has been invented by Mr. James M. Stewart, of Franklin Mills. The game is an interesting one, and probably will become popular.

A new Spring Bottom for Vehicles has been devised by Mr. E. D. Cramer, of Hackettstown, N.J. which may spring up and down with the body without getting out of place, and which allows the body to be placed lower on the axle than is usually possible.

A new Fire Escape, consisting of an arrangement of wires, a flanged reel and belt for the person being lowered, has been patented by Mr. Francis G. Bryant, of Seattle, of Washington territory. It seems to be an ingenious and efficient device.

A new desk, which may be attached to walls and which also may serve as a flower shelf, work table, or side table, has been patented by Mears, George and John Rbution, of Hoboken, N.J.

An improved Child's Carriage, so constructed that its body is rocked when the carriage is moved in either direction, has been patented by Mr. H. Borchardt, of Philadelphia, Pa.—The Scientific American.

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and enlighten its Arab public. From this perspective, one would expect that articles such as these have priority for the Arabic version of *al-Naḥla*, because they most succinctly symbolize the desirable progress that *al-Naḥla* prescribes for its Arab public. This, however, is not the case. It is the English public that is presented with this information, in spite of the fact that it is *not* represented as in need of education and progress. In some issues, about ten short articles on discoveries and inventions are simply omitted in the Arabic version.

We find here a discrepancy between, on the one hand, the *discursive* representation of the English and Arab publics, and, on the other hand, the *practical* selection of articles that are presented to the two publics. On the one hand, the magazine upholds the notion that education of the ‘sons of the fatherland’ is its aim. On the other hand, the gap between the foreign state of progress and the state of backwardness of the Arabs is accentuated by denying its Arab public the category of articles that symbolize and articulate the progress that is looked for. The Arabic version of *al-Naḥla* is not entirely devoid of articles that symbolize progress. These articles are, however, significantly underrepresented in the Arabic version.

A separate category of English-only articles are those that treat scientific theories that defy Biblical accounts of history. There are some examples of articles discussing geology in the English part: an exposé of a scientific theory regarding how mountains were formed, a discussion on the ‘fabulous age of the earth’, and an article that presents dinosaurs as a historically sound reality. None of these are translated into Arabic. Similarly, the article entitled ‘A boat older than the ark’, which is featured on page 61 of *al-Naḥla*, also did not make it into the Arabic version. It is not likely that these discrepancies in the two versions are coincidental. It is far more likely that this discrepancy reflects a policy of Ṣābūnjī which stipulates not to disseminate this controversial information among his Arab public. This interpretation is consistent with the repeatedly encountered idea that ‘we’ are essentially religious.

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45 The second year, for instance, discuss telephones, phonographs, and the solar system (Ṣābūnjī 1878-1879: 262-263, 122-123, 40-41, 56-57).

46 Ṣābūnjī 1877-1878: 262-263, 352; Ṣābūnjī 1878-1879: 120.
Following this idea, those narratives that are in conflict with the Abrahamic narrative of the origin of the world can easily be classified as unsuitable for al-Naḥla’s Arab public. As a rule, the Arab reader of al-Naḥla is not confronted with other narratives of history besides the Biblical narrative. The short line in the article about the speaking monkey, discussed in detail above, is the only – subtle – exception that I have found in the Arabic version.

The Other public
Included in a number of issues of al-Naḥla are requests, in Arabic only, to subscribers to pay their subscription fees. The first example is found in the fourth issue of the first year, and this text deserves extra attention. The article starts with the comment that publishing an illustrated magazine requires a lot of money, because “newspapers are not printed with the water of clouds on leaves of the wind”. Ṣābūnjī particularly stresses the costs that are involved with printing images, and with printing Arabic texts in a foreign country. Ṣābūnjī subsequently announces that he would only send new issues of al-Naḥla to those who have paid their subscriptions. He then tactfully thanks those who did pay their fees, while apologizing to those who would not receive any forthcoming issues of al-Naḥla. The last sentence of the article is significant for the present study; it reads (qtd 2):

“We have no need for printing this announcement in English, because the English subscribers have paid their subscriptions in advance, when the first issue of al-Naḥla reached them.”

In an attempt to make the Arab public pay, Ṣābūnjī confronts them with the statement that their English equivalents apparently pay their fees diligently. Whether the English indeed promptly paid is irrelevant to the present study. What is important is that Ṣābūnjī presents it as a reality to his readers.

47 Ṣābūnjī 1877-1878: 50.
48 Whether the English indeed promptly paid is irrelevant to the present study. What is important is that Ṣābūnjī presents it as a reality to his readers.
49 Ayalon 2008: 569-571.
absence of advertisements, subscription was an essential source of funding. It is not immediately clear why al-Naḥla’s Arab public should care about what its English public does or does not do, and why the behavior of the English would be a reason for the Arabs to change their behavior. This is where Discourse Analysis steps in. Ṣābūnjī brings to light a difference in the way in which the Arabs and the English treat a publisher of a magazine, and the difference in their financial dependability. As pointed out above, al-Naḥla’s English public is represented as though they are progressed and successful, while al-Naḥla’s Arab public is represented as backward and failing. This implicit background knowledge underlies the idea that the English behavior is indeed relevant for the Arabs to follow. In other words, this background knowledge mediates Ṣābūnjī’s communication, and makes the reference meaningful in this context.

Paying the fees is the correct thing to do, for both English and Arab subscribers. However, the quote is not simply an innocent call for subscribers to pay. Ṣābūnjī’s pointing to the English in an attempt to convince the Arabs to pay also reflects and reproduces the idea of native failure vis-à-vis foreign success. By means of this juxtaposition, Ṣābūnjī ‘reminds’ his Arab public, firstly, that the Arabs are backward because they fail to act how they should act, secondly, that the English are better than the Arabs because they do act as they should act, and thirdly, that the behavior of the English is a model for the Arabs and therefore relevant to know and to follow.

Finally, two remarks should be made. Firstly, the reference can also be interpreted as Ṣābūnjī’s response to any anticipated charges of unfairness of addressing only the Arab public. Nevertheless, the remark still draws attention to a suggested financial reliability of al-Naḥla’s English public as opposed to a financial untrustworthiness of its Arab public. For this reason it does reproduce the idea of native failure vis-à-vis foreign success. Secondly, the appeal to the Arabs to compare themselves with the promptly paying English is made for the sake of the financial well-being and the continuity of the magazine al-Naḥla. Therefore, Ṣābūnjī makes use of the opposition between native failure and
foreign success for the benefit of the magazine al-Naḥla. In other words, with his call for Arab subscribers to pay Šābūnjī calls upon the desire to overcome the present state of backwardness.

6.4 Native failure and foreign success as a resource
As I already discussed in the second chapter, the opposition between native failure and foreign success is a well-known phenomenon in the writings of nineteenth-century Arab intellectuals. It forms the basis for all kinds of narratives of reform that appear during the Nahḍa era. One of the most pronounced intellectuals in this respect was Buṭrus al-Bustānī. As Šābūnjī’s peer, he played an important role in Chapter Four of this thesis. In his analysis of al-Bustānī’s writings from 1859 and 1860, Stephen Sheehi finds a Hegelian Master-Slave struggle, which was briefly discussed in Chapter Two. This struggle revolves around the issue of how to attain native success without foreign intercession, patronage, or tutelage. Simply emulating the successful foreigner maintains the idea of dependency, inequality, and native incapacity. However, this task is problematic because the foreigner also provides the model for the desired progress and success that native society lacks. 50 This discursive entanglement makes the backwardness of the own community meaningful in the light of the success of the foreign community, and vice versa. Consequently, each Arabic reference to native failure or foreign success reminds the Arab reader of the inferior position of the Arabs, and each of these references thereby reproduces and reifies a discourse that understands that ‘we’ are failing in comparison with foreign others.

In the following pages I will focus on this paradox in Šābūnjī’s al-Naḥla. I approach the concepts native failure and foreign success as social constructs rather than as a reflection of reality. As such, these concepts exist and persist in discourse because Nahḍa era intellectuals repeatedly highlight and discuss these. Following the principles of MCA, I treat references to native failure and foreign success as carrying situated functions that are intended by Šābūnjī within his communication with his reading

50 In the words of Sheehi (2000: 24), the West had become “inextricable from modern Arab subjectivity”.

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public. In other words, I will treat these two concepts as resources, to be invoked by Šābūnjī in ways that fit the communication under the particular circumstances.

One example has already been seen in the discussion on the necessity of paying subscription fees. Šābūnjī confronted his Arab public with, on the one hand, their failure to pay their fees and, on the other hand, the financial reliability of his English public, and he did this in order to convince the Arabs to pay. In other words, he confronted his Arab public with native failure and foreign success in order to realize an ulterior goal. From this perspective, it is clear that native failure and foreign success do not only represent a – perceived– state of affairs, in this case the relation between the Arab public and the English public; they are also resources to be invoked by language users as part of their communicative goals.

Nahḍa era intellectuals saw it as their task to transform native failure into native success, so that no patronizing agent, and no juxtaposition with a successful Other is necessary. However, the Arabs can only become aware of their failure, and then do something about it, after encountering the successful foreigner. This is exactly what Šābūnjī did in his attempt to make his Arab public pay. The paradox lies in the fact that each of these encounters also highlight native failure vis-à-vis foreign success. As social constructs, each of these encounters strengthens the belief that the Arabs or the Easterners indeed fail and, as a consequence, Šābūnjī’s appeal for subscription money also contributes to this idea of failure. In short, the failure of the Arabs demands the presence of a successful Other.

**Foreign success as a resource**

In the previous section a discrepancy was noted between the discursive representation of the English and Arab publics and the practical selection of articles. On the one hand, the Arab ‘sons of the fatherland’ are represented as in need of education and progress, while the English public is represented as already educated and progressed. On the other hand, the articles that most succinctly symbolize and articulate this desirable education and progress are in most cases only presented to the English public. This observation
conflicts with the discursive aim of al-Naḥla: to bring education and progress to its Arab public. In the following section I want to relate this discrepancy to the Hegelian struggle that is discernible in the Arab version: what to ‘do’ with the successful foreigner.

Page 61 (see above) devotes attention to five new inventions, and this information was originally taken from the magazine Scientific American. The information is only given in English. At the same time, it cannot be missed that each inventor was, what Ṣābūnji called, an Anglo-Saxon. Consequently, in these cases the English reader is confronted with the success of his (fellow) Anglo-Saxons, and thus of the Self. The success of the Self that the English reader encounters in al-Naḥla is not an incident; it occurs repeatedly in the English version. Only rarely is the superior progress, civilization, and science of the Anglo-Saxons explicitly mentioned in the Arabic translation. In the various examples given above, the Arab reading public of al-Naḥla remain in the dark about, for instance, the ‘wonderful American abilities’. Thus, the positive representation of the English speaking world was intended to be read by al-Naḥla’s English public, and not by the Arab public. The same goes for Darwinism, dinosaurs, geology, and a ‘boat older than the ark’. These all relate to scientific insights, and these are only presented to the English public.

What Ṣābūnji offers here is an escape from the Hegelian struggle with which al-Bustānī and others are coping. I argue that Ṣābūnji does not problematize foreign success and native failure in the first place, but cultivates this opposition and accepts it as the status quo. In other words, he outright acknowledged foreign superiority and Arabic inferiority, rather than struggling with postulating an ideal Arab in the wake of the native failure that he perceived around him. Concomitantly, Ṣābūnji was not singularly concerned about creating a narrative of reform, about changing native failure into native success, even though he outwardly stated so. When understood in this light, the presence of the short articles in the English version and their absence in the Arabic version is not an anomaly or an inconsistency, but a reflection of the status quo. Similarly, the quote about paying subscription fees, discussed
above, can also be seen as a reflection of the status quo rather than as a manifestation of a struggle with the discursive foreigner.

Ṣābūnjī demonstrates that escaping the Hegelian struggle that al-Bustānī and other Nahḍa intellectuals were coping with is not complex or in any sense eye-catching. His simple solution – acknowledging Western superiority and Arab inferiority without seeing this as a problem– does not result in texts that differ fundamentally from those of his peers. In a sense, Ṣābūnjī’s solution is the logical consequence of accepting the central opposition between foreign success and native failure. To Ṣābūnjī, however, this opposition is not simply the starting point for narratives of reform. Rather than attempting to postulate a future ideal Arab in the light of native failure, Ṣābūnjī simply accepts the status quo as part of a strategy that aims at acquiring success in the here and now. This interpretation leads to the answer of the final question: If native success was not always the main goal of the magazine, for what reason then did Ṣābūnjī go to lengths to publish his magazine?

The most likely answer is that al-Nahla was also a personal means towards success and respect in England. It seems that he particularly attempted to convince his English public that he was a well-informed intermediary between the East and the West. In other words, he attempted to create a favorable image of himself in the context of discussions about British foreign policy and the Eastern Question: as a progressed and civilized Easterner among the Easterners who are normatively or stereotypically perceived as backward.

There are a number of reasons that support this thesis. Firstly, there is funding: the persons who are known to have financially supported the magazine were only British notables and two Islamic politicians under heavy British influence, namely Sultan Barghash of Zanzibar, and Salar Jung I, the prime minister of Hyderabad. Ṣābūnjī was therefore financially dependent on British or pro-British persons. Secondly, the attention to English notables who arguably are of no interest to an Arab public is sometimes striking. The most pronounced example is an article, eight pages long, that is devoted to Baroness Burdett-Coutts and the
Viscountess Strangford. A more modest example is seen on the title page of issue 10 of *al-Naḥla*, depicted earlier in this chapter, in which the liberal British statesman Earl Granville is presented to “our Eastern readers”. Thirdly, Şābūnjī relied on British notables for recommendations and testimonials: 17 are British, one French, and only two are recommendations by ‘Orientals’, in this case the same two who also funded the magazine. Finally, some remarks in a letter to Blunt, also discussed by Kramer, are striking. In a letter dated 22 October 1881, Şābūnjī asked Blunt to “procure for me an English passport” and “some appointment in the British service.”

Thus, both *al-Naḥla’s* contents from the late 1870s as well as his letter to Blunt from 1881 bear witness to Şābūnjī’s inclination towards Great Britain.

To Şābūnjī, the opposition between foreign success and native failure is the starting point for his attempt at representing himself as an atypical, progressed, Easterner. This shows that what is normatively expected of Arab or Eastern intellectuals – to realize success and progress through reform – is an ambiguous and ill-defined task, a mantra which can be invoked in different contexts and with different purposes. The case of *al-Naḥla* shows that the opposition between foreign success and native failure can also be invoked as a resource for unexpected ulterior purposes, to make his subscribers pay or to position himself as an important intellectual.

**Conclusion**

As a bilingual magazine, *al-Naḥla* more or less had two different * raisons d’être*; to inform its Arab public and its English public. At times *al-Naḥla* was primarily directed at its Arab public and at other times primarily at its English public. These two directions are not mutually exclusive but vacillated in importance during the first two years of publication. This changed in its third year, when *al-Naḥla* became an Arabic-only magazine.

In the present chapter I have treated the two publics of *al-Naḥla* essentially as consisting of two collective identities, those

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51 Kramer 1989: 772. The original letter is preserved in the West Sussex Library.
who read English and those who read Arabic. Al-Naḥla represents these two collective identities differently: the Arab public as backward and failing, and the English public as already progressed and successful. These representations reflect and reproduce existing discourses that juxtapose foreign success with native failure. This opposition functions as the background knowledge that is associated with the two collective identities mentioned above. With this in mind, I have analyzed how identities are made relevant and consequential without explicitly referring to them. I have followed the insight of Kiesling, who explains how discourses of identity are invoked and reproduced through the background knowledge that is associated with the identities in question.

Ideas about native failure and foreign success underlie many narratives of reform that intellectuals such as Buṭrus al-Bustānī articulated. They inform their attempts at delineating the contours of the future ideal Arab in the light of the present backwardness. In al-Naḥla, the opposition between native failure and foreign success is discernible in both the English as well as the Arabic version, albeit much more explicitly in the English version.

A comparison between the English and Arabic versions has shown that there is a discrepancy between, on the one hand, the discursive construction of the English and Arab publics, and, on the other hand, the practical selection of articles that are presented to these two publics. This discrepancy is manifested in the fact that articles that symbolize and articulate progress, science, and education are directed to the English public, and not usually to the Arab public, as would have been expected. As a consequence, the English reader is constantly reminded of the success of the Anglo-Saxons, i.e. of the Self. In this way Ṣābūnjī makes the imbalance between native failure and foreign success very pronounced, even though it would be expected that Ṣābūnjī would attempt to bridge this imbalance as part of his goal of bringing ‘education and enlightenment to the Orientals’.

I argue that this discrepancy is the result of a strategy that was aimed at disseminating an image of Ṣābūnjī as a learned and influential Easterner in Great Britain. According to this logic, al-Naḥla was not simply a medium that was intended to inform its
reading public about the state of affairs of the world, or to educate the Orientals; it was also a personal project of Šābūnjī, aimed at realizing success and respect in Great Britain. Thus, referring to foreign success and native failure was not simply a starting point for a narrative of reform. It was also a resource that Šābūnjī cultivated, as part of a project of creating a distinct profile of himself, as a well-informed intermediary between the East and Great Britain.

Finally, Šābūnjī’s acknowledgement of native failure and foreign success can also be seen as a logical – albeit unconventional – option for Arab intellectuals. Šābūnjī shared with persons such as al-Bustānī the analysis that native society was failing vis-à-vis the successful foreigners. From this shared starting point al-Bustānī took one further step: he attempted to change native failure into native success. Al-Bustānī thereby entered the Hegelian struggle that revolved around the question to what extent the successful foreigner should or could function as a model for the Arabs to follow. My analysis shows that Šābūnjī did not take this further step (of attempting to change native failure into native success), even though he outwardly suggests so. Šābūnjī saw the opposition between native failure and foreign not as a problem but as an opportunity from which he could benefit. He thereby avoids the Hegelian struggle that his peers encountered.