

5 Concepts that changed the world

Waṭan as one of Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī's "Eight Key Concepts"

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This chapter: The understanding of *adab* that we will meet in the chapter below resembles the one observed in the preceding chapter to a large extent. Like Khalīl al-Khūrī's and Aḥmed Midḥat's novels, al-Marṣafī's *Epistle* takes up pressing issues of its time to discuss them in detail, from several angles, and with as many of its relevant implications as possible. All three examples of Middle Eastern *adab* from the second half of the nineteenth century give proof of the authors' eagerness to refer to contemporary realities, and show *udabā'* who conceive of themselves as public intellectuals whose task it is to contribute to their societies' progress with critical analyses and well-informed guidance in times that are experienced as an age of large-scale transformation and corresponding challenges. For al-Marṣafī, who is writing at the beginning of the 1880s, Westernisation seems to have become so ubiquitous and 'normal' that he no longer asks himself, as al-Khūrī and Midḥat still may have done, whether the process of Westernisation might still be reversible, nor does he seem to be as concerned as they were about issues of cultural identity and possibly negative moral consequences. What matters most for him, as a person of rural background, is applicability in *practice*, advantages and disadvantages of certain types of technology, or ideas, be they labelled 'Western' or 'Oriental'. Apart, perhaps, from a more sober nature and, as an Azhar-trained scholar, a sceptical attitude towards novels as a genre of fiction, i.e., of much fantasy and supposedly unrealistic imagination, al-Marṣafī's wellknown disposition as a practitioner may have been the reason for him not to have chosen to 'dramatise' his ideas in a novel, but rather stick to the conventional genre of *risāla* ("epistle", or "treatise"). Therefore, most of his *adab* lacks the new emotional, dramatising dimension that we observed in Khalīl al-Khūrī's and Aḥmed Midḥat's texts in the preceding chapter. Nevertheless, his *risāla* is a fine example of emerging/emerged subjectivity at work, albeit with a

¹ Because in al-Marṣafī's day the term *risāla* still had a rather broad meaning, I will refer to his text as the "Epistle" or the "Treatise" interchangeably.

focus on ‘sober’, ‘unemotional’, ‘dry’, ‘scientific’, scholarly discussion of his topics. But this, too, is *adab*, and like al-Khūrī’s *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* and Aḥmed Midḥat’s *Felâtun Bey ile Râkım Efendi*, al-Marṣafī’s *risāla* is also a fine document of the ‘reproductionist’ phase of nineteenth century Middle Eastern modernity.² For, as the chapter will demonstrate, al-Marṣafī’s way of treating his subject matter, the eight “key concepts” of his time, among them *waṭan*, consists essentially of an ‘*adabtation*’, an attempt by the author to deal with the phenomena and challenges of his time with the help of a traditional template, viz., the *risāla*. In doing so, he seeks to harmonise the demands of modernity – the key concepts that need scholarly comment and informed interpretation – with a traditional approach, the discursive methods provided by classical philology, i.e., by *adab* techniques. With this ‘classicism’, al-Marṣafī’s *Risāla* is clearly characterised by that “individualising reproduction of the general and lawful” that is typical of the Resultant component of ‘global’ “Reproductionism”. Other important elements constituting this “individualising reproduction of the general and lawful” are, by the way, the many quotations from the Quran and the Prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) with which al-Marṣafī seeks to support his arguments.

For an example of a Nahḍa text that combines both, classicist approach and creative fiction, see below, Chapter 8, where we will discuss the structure of one of the *maqāmāt* that form part of Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq’s *al-Sāq ‘alā l-sāq fī-mā huwa l-Fāryāq* (1855).

Within “Reproductionism”, both Midḥat’s *Felâtun Bey* (1875) and al-Marṣafī’s *Risāla* (1880/81) belonged to the third phase, classified as ‘concretisation phase’ in Walter Falk’s periodisational terminology. For each ‘global period’, Falk identifies three phases: an initial one (“phase of marking”, *Markierungsphase*) in which first signs of a new way of experiencing the world are marked as surprising turns in the plot or the result; a second one (“phase of visualisation”, *Visualisierungsphase*) in which protagonists (and authors) become fully aware of the main traits of a new period; and a third one (“phase of concretisation”, *Konkretisierungsphase*) in which the conclusions reached in the Resultant component of the overall PAR structure³ appear as necessary supplement, or complement, to the main idea of the Potentiality component. The latter is the case both in *Felâtun Bey* and the *Risāla*. The most prominent feature in the Potentiality components of both texts is the tendency, felt everywhere in contemporary everyday life, to use modern artefacts, techniques, and ideas to leave the good old world behind with

² For a brief presentation of “Reproductionism” and other ‘global’ periods, see above, (end of) introduction to Chapter 4, and for further discussion (incl. references) see Chapter 18.

³ PAR = Potentiality – Actuality – Resultant; see above, introductory section to Chapter 5.

the aim to hopefully reach a better life. The artefacts, techniques and ideas themselves are quite well known by the time, and a general need for reform and progress is accepted in principle and no longer in question. What is needed, however, is a detailed concretisation of how the new and modern can be harmonised with the old and traditional. Both texts provide a multitude of such details, a feature that serves as a concretisation that appears as necessary complement of what was in need of detailed supplementary elaboration.

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5.1 Introduction

The author and the text that form the focus of this article, Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī and his *Risālat al-kalim al-thamān* (“The Epistle of the Eight Words/Concepts”), are not completely unknown to previous studies of the history of modern Arab thought. Yet, although the *Risāla* is mentioned in quite a number of overviews and has even become the subject of a lengthy article (Delanoue 1963), I believe it has not yet received the attention it deserves, both for its wide influence and the deep impact it had on its author’s disciples, and as an example of how Western concepts became ‘naturalized’ in a period of emerging Arab/Egyptian national self-consciousness. As I hope to be able to show, the *Risāla* can be read as a document of “indigenous self-assertion.”⁴

5.2 The author

The author himself is interesting in more than one respect.⁵ To begin with, al-Marṣafī (who was born in 1815, lost his sight at the age of three, and later studied at the *riwāq* of the blind at al-Azhar) was a most influential and inspiring teacher for such ‘celebrities’ as Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī, Aḥmad Shawqī, ‘Abdallāh Fikrī, Ḥifnī Nāṣif, and even Muḥammad ‘Abduh. This is due to his teaching at Dār al-‘Ulūm, the Teachers’ Training College. ‘Alī Mubārak, then Minister of Education,

⁴ This expression is inspired by the subtitle of Bardenstein’s *Translation and Transformation* (2005). As I attempt to show, we are dealing here not only with a case of “Dressing French Texts in Arab Garb” (the title of Bardenstein’s ch. 3), but also, and more so, with one of “Bringing it all Back Home” (ch. 4), i.e., with a case of indigenous integration.

⁵ Biographical information in the following is gathered from Delanoue 1963, Delanoue 1989, and Ziyāda 1982.

had called upon al-Marṣafī to help ‘design’ this College, and it was there that al-Marṣafī taught, as its first teacher, from the College’s very foundation in 1872 until 1888, when poor health forced him to retire.⁶ He died only two years later, in 1890.

Second, al-Marṣafī is interesting because he can be regarded as a representative of a rather large group, perhaps even the majority, among the late nineteenth-century Egyptian educated elite: a group that, in my opinion, has not received sufficient scholarly attention because they were not as spectacular as, on the one hand, the secularists and political journalists of the time and, on the other hand, the Afghānī-Riḍā-‘Abduh group who advocated Islamic reformism (or reform Islam, *iṣlāḥ*).

A third fact that makes al-Marṣafī interesting is his rural background. Although he probably was born in Cairo, his family had a background in a village in al-Qalyūbiyya province, and al-Marṣafī seems to have always had contact with the countryside, kept himself informed about what was going on there, and also brought a rural perspective to his writings (as we shall see shortly).

5.3 The *Epistle*: general importance and background

Risālat al-kalim al-thamān, the “Epistle on the Eight Words/Terms/(Key) Concepts”, is not a piece of literature in the modern sense of the word, but a rather prosaic treatise. Its significance for *Visions and Representations of Homeland in Arabic Literature*⁷ is mainly in two aspects: first, it demonstrates what key concepts of nineteenth-century political discourse, like *umma*, *waṭan*, *ḥukūma*, or *ḥurriyya* which, as al-Marṣafī says, were “on the people’s lips” (lit., “tongues”: *‘alā alsinat al-nās*, 39) in those days, meant to a tradition-oriented, rather ‘average’ educated person with a rural background like al-Marṣafī. Second, it illustrates how new ideas from outside the country were introduced into an existing set of concepts or way of thinking. That system, however, I will argue, was not ‘literature’ in the modern sense of the word, but *adab* (which at the time still rather meant “culture” in general than “literature”, which is a more recent development; cf. Guth 2010b, *passim*).

⁶ At Dār al-‘Ulūm, he formulated a general program that was taken up by many of his pupils. “This programme for reviving the language was gradually spread through almost all the Arab countries – with or without reference to al-Marṣafī – from the last years of the nineteenth century, thanks to the efforts of the reformists”: Delanoue 1989.

⁷ I.e., the volume edited by Sebastian Günther and Stefan Milich (2016) where the present chapter was published for the first time.

It is true that the concepts of *umma*, *waṭan*, *ḥurriyya*, etc. themselves were already in use when al-Marṣafī wrote about them – most of them are found as early as in al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's writings⁸ – and it is also true that, in his interpretation of these concepts, al-Marṣafī is neither particularly innovative nor does he present in-depth analyses or programmatic explanations of them, since he is more of a practical spirit than a theoretician (as will be pointed out in section 5.4, below). Yet, it was apparently due to this practical inclination and his pedagogical talent that he became 'Alī Mubārak's first choice for the job at Dār al-'Ulūm which made him become so influential among his contemporaries. And although, in terms of content, there is probably not much in the *Risāla* that goes beyond al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's *Takhlīṣ al-ibriz fī talkhiṣ Bārīs* (published in 1834) or his *al-Murshid al-amīn lil-banāt wa-l-banīn* of 1872, al-Marṣafī seems to have his finger on the pulse of his time, an assumption that is corroborated by the fact that the book was republished in 1903, this time edited by Muḥammad Mas'ūd in the newspaper *al-Mu'ayyad*.⁹ Indeed, the treatise was written shortly before the 'Urābī uprising and published shortly after the event, i.e., at a time when, as Delanoue rightly observes, the defense of the country was “à l'ordre du jour”: the press was incessantly talking about foreign interference and the exploitation of the fellah by foreign usurers, about too many foreigners occupying too many administrative posts, and about the latest conquests of the colonial powers (Delanoue 1963, 11; my translation). Perceived as a treatise on key concepts of the time, it was eagerly read by contemporaries, particularly in the winter of 1881–1882 when Egypt was living through revolutionary days and public discourse revolved around such issues as having a constitution, the pros and cons of a parliament, the limitation of powers, etc. (Delanoue 1963, 5).

⁸ They have, however, no entry yet in al-Taḥānawī's *Kashshāf* (1745), nor do they appear with a non-classical meaning in al-Zabīdī's *Tāj al-'arūs* (cf. vol. 26, 260–61, in the 2001 edn). Al-Marṣafī is therefore, despite the terms' currency, one of the first to turn them into entries in a work that is meant to be a kind of encyclopedia, paralleled only by Buṭrus al-Bustānī's *Dā'irat al-ma'ārif* (1876–82, remained incomplete, even after the project was resumed by his sons; the last volume, no. 9, appeared in 1887 and stopped at 'Sulayk', i.e., did not include 'waṭan').

⁹ I have not seen this edition myself, but rely on the data given by Delanoue 1963, 2, fn. 3: “2e éd. par les soins de Muḥammad Mas'ūd, rédacteur au *Mu'ayyad*, imp. al-Ġumhūr, Le Caire 1903, 144 p.”

5.4 ‘Waṭan’ in *al-Kalim al-thamān* – an analysis

Before examining the ‘homeland’ chapter more closely, let us first have a look at the *Treatise* in general and see which position the *waṭan* chapter is assigned within the text as a whole.

Al-Kalim al-thamān: General characteristics (including structure)

The eight “words”, or key concepts, that the *Treatise*’s title announces as its topic, are *umma* (nation, national community), *waṭan* (homeland, French *patrie*), *ḥukūma* (government), ‘*adl* (justice), *ẓulm* (injustice, despotism), *siyāsa* (ruling, politics), *ḥurriyya* (liberty, freedom), and *tarbiya* (education, instruction).¹⁰ Given that these concepts were in no way new and might even be considered to have been quite dated when al-Marṣafī decided to make them the topic of his *risāla*, Delanoue asks why the author did not choose others, e.g., *shūrā* (parliament), *qānūn asāsī* / *lā’iḥa asāsiyya* (constitution), *thawra* (revolution), *istibdād* (despotism), *musāwāt* (equality), or *ikhā*’ (fraternity), especially since these were much more prominent in journalistic discourse of the time (Delanoue 1963, 9).¹¹ He has no definite answer to this question but claims that al-Marṣafī’s choice should be explained by a wish to counterbalance the all too politicised climate in which one talked much about new institutions, without moral concerns or ideas about how to achieve all these high-minded goals in practice (ibid., 28¹²).

¹⁰ The English translations of the Arabic terminology given in parentheses here should be considered approximations only. The terms are all calques, i.e., loan translations (‘Lehnübersetzungen’) from the French in which a meaning borrowed from outside has been transferred to an indigenous Arabic word. As often when a term is not borrowed as such (i.e., as a recognisably foreign loanword), the newly acquired additional meaning is added to a word already existing in a language and the new meaning interferes with the old one and often produces ‘hybrids’ (which, from the perspective of the donor language, sometimes may even appear to be misunderstandings or ‘wrong’ translations). It is the purpose of the present article to show what can happen to a term like French *patrie* when it becomes Arabicized. For the semantic history of political and sociological vocabulary during the *nahḍa* in general, cf. especially Monteil 1960, Hourani 1962/1983, Rebhan 1986, Lewis 1988/1991, and Sawā’ī 1999; see also my own studies Guth 2010b (on *adab*) and Guth 2011 (on *riwāya*, = Chapter 7 of the present volume).

¹¹ See the preceding footnote on the English renderings in parentheses.

¹² “Dans le climat passionné de l’actualité, [...] on ne s’occupait que de la politique, de création d’institutions nouvelles” while al-Marṣafī “parlait morale et éducation”.

[As] an advocate of a reasonable modernity, legitimized by constant reference to moral and cultural examples from the glorious ages of Islam[,] the author seems reserved and anxious about the haste of some (doubtless the partisans of ‘Urābī, officers, groups of intellectuals, and notables) who would like to modify institutions prematurely to create a true parliamentarianism.

(Delanoue 1989, unpag.)

Another possible explanation, according to Delanoue, of al-Marṣafī’s choice of eight slightly less than topical concepts may have been his predilection for educational subjects, a conclusion one is tempted to draw from the quite uneven distribution of pages in the *Risāla* in favour of *tarbiya*. In the edition printed in 1982 (arranged by Kh. Ziyāda), the chapters have the following lengths:

Chapter	Length (in pp.)
<i>umma</i>	20
<i>waṭan</i>	20
<i>ḥukūma</i>	9
‘ <i>adl</i> – <i>ḡulm</i> – <i>siyāsa</i>	1
<i>ḥurriyya</i>	3
<i>tarbiya</i>	46
Total	99

As is evident from this table, education was al-Marṣafī’s main concern. The *tarbiya* chapter not only occupies almost half of the book (it is the only one that the author divides into sub-chapters¹³), but, figuring at the end of the *Treatise*, it is also the book’s very culmination. That the text had a mainly pedagogical intention can also be inferred from the preface, in which al-Marṣafī says that with the *Risāla* he wanted to address particularly the *adhkiyā’ al-shubbān min ahl hādhihi l-azmina* (39). Reading this, Delanoue is reminded of a French textbook that stresses that “[l]e bonheur d’une nation est lié à l’éducation dès l’enfance” (Delanoue 1963, 24). On the other hand, the extremely short entries on ‘*adl*–*ḡulm*–*siyāsa* and *ḥurriyya* may either be explained by the same predilection for the

¹³ These are: *al-tarbiya* (“de l’éducation”: 10 pages), *al-murabbī* (“de l’éducateur”: 5 pages), *al-murabbā* (“du sujet à éduquer”: 7 pages), and *mā bi-hi l-tarbiya* (“des moyens et du contenu de l’éducation”: 24 pages) – titles translated as in Delanoue 1963, 23, length in pages as in the edition mentioned above.

question of education or, as some have read it, as an indication of the author's cautiousness in a precarious political situation.

Delanoue thinks that the whole *Risāla* is constructed “*d’une façon assez confuse*”, that it testifies to a rather unsystematic way of thinking and that, on top of this “apparent disorder”, it displays a great deal of naiveté in that it mixes “conceptions médiévales et [...] idées modernes mal assimilées” (Delanoue 1963, 10). I am convinced, however, that this is not true and that the *Epistle* is more structured than it may appear at first sight, and that we are not dealing with an example of naiveté but rather with a realistic world view (although frequently interspersed with commonplace advice and idealistic admonitions). We shall now take a closer look at al-Marṣafī’s approach, taking the chapter on *waṭan* as an example.

Waṭan

Al-Marṣafī starts by distinguishing two usages of the term *al-waṭan*. For the masses (*al-‘amma*), he says, the word signifies *tilka l-qit‘a min al-arḍ allatī ta‘muruḥā l-umma* (“that piece of land [or: the Earth] that is inhabited by the nation”, 62). In contrast to this ‘*ammī*’ (“popular”; today one would probably say *sha‘bī*) understanding of the term, there is however also the *khāṣṣī* one, i.e., that of an educated elite (*al-khāṣṣa*). For them, *al-waṭan* is not only the homeland of the nation, but has the much wider meaning of a *maskan* (“dwelling place”) in general; as such, one can apply it in many contexts: the senses (*idrākāt*) are housed by the soul (*rūḥ*); the soul is housed by the body (*badan*); the body is housed by the clothes (*thiyāb*), etc. – continuing further outward, through *dār* (“house”), *darb* (“road, alley”), and *madīna* (“town”) to *quṭr* (“country”), *arḍ* (“earth”) and, finally, the most comprehensive of all – ‘*ālam*’ (“world/universe”). The arrangement of the terms here follows a hierarchy of ‘spheres’ reminiscent of the Neo-Platonic model, in which the next higher and more general sphere includes the lower and more specific one:

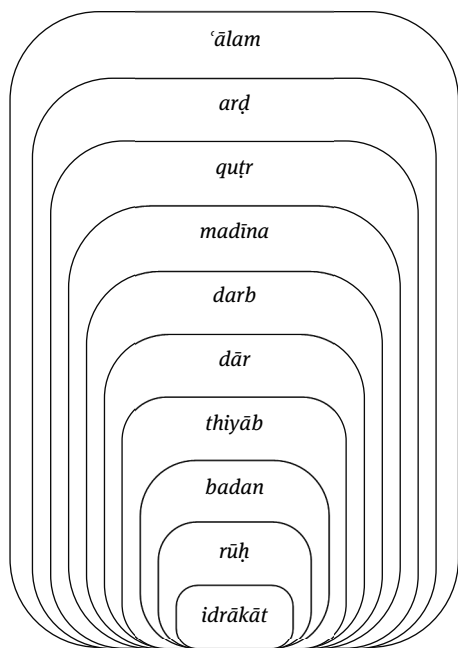


Fig. 1: ‘Neoplatonic’ hierarchy in al-Marṣafī’s arrangement in his treatment of the term *waṭan*

This definition is followed (after some general remarks) by a discussion of the present state of affairs in Egypt along these lines, i.e., taking *badan*, *thiyāb*, *dār*, *darb*, *madīna*, *quṭr*, *arḍ*, and *‘ālam* as starting points for remarks on a large variety of subjects, ranging from the textile industry and sheep breeding to the cultivation of cotton and the use of fertilizers, to the deplorable condition of roads and the increased traffic in Cairo. Delanoue calls this “*détours*” (deviations), which he does not consider worth pursuing (Delanoue 1963, 16); but I think the rather traditional way of arranging his material and the quite demanding language (a much more difficult Arabic than that of contemporary journalism) should not mislead us to overlooking (a) that the author conforms to a pattern (rather than losing his way) and (b) that all this is done for a very *modern* purpose – the ultimate end of al-Marṣafī’s treatise is the Egyptian nation’s well-being and the spirit of patriotism (*waṭaniyya*) which he says should guide all educational efforts in the country.

The author's approach in the *waṭan* chapter is very much a *philologist's* formalistic one. The fact that the classical dictionaries equate *waṭan* in a very general sense with *maskan*, the "seat" of something, allows the philologist to pull out all the stops and open the discussion of the concept by setting a formula for *encyclopedic diversification* within the framework of the concept: From "*waṭan*" he proceeds to 'x as a *waṭan*=*maskan* of y', in the literal as well as the figurative/metaphorical meaning. In this way he generates a new series of terms – *badan*, *thiyāb*, *dār* etc. – each of which can serve as a starting point for the discussion of details. The issues he picks out for discussion, however, are not chosen at random; on the contrary, all are issues of relevance for the *nation*, i.e., the Egyptian *umma*, or his own *waṭan* (taking the word in its '*āmmī*' sense). So, what we are faced with here is a traditional operation (philological association) in order to discuss modern, nationally relevant issues with an almost encyclopedic ambition. We can call this an '*adab*-tation', a treatment of the modern topics according to the rules of classical *adab*.

In order to do this, al-Marṣafī assigns each of the possible meanings of *waṭan* something to which it is entitled – he calls it *ḥaqq* (Delanoue translates this as "un statut qu'il faut respecter"; Delanoue 1963, 16) – and consequently talks of *ḥaqq al-badan*, *ḥaqq al-thiyāb*, *ḥaqq al-dār*, etc., thereby arriving at some kind of norms that compatriots should observe or obey for their "bodies", "clothes", "houses", etc. to function properly. In all these cases, al-Marṣafī's ultimate frame of reference for this 'functioning properly' is Egypt as a whole.¹⁴

For the sake of brevity, the following pages present but a brief summary of the "rights" that al-Marṣafī says should be observed in order to maintain the proper functioning of the "homelands=seats" that he focuses on in his discussion of the *waṭan* concept:

***badan*:** The body has a right to be kept healthy and taken care of. So it is its owner's duty to observe personal hygiene, to see to physical training (luckily, God Almighty, in His wisdom and benevolence, has granted the believers an incentive for this by making the daily prayers obligatory), to dress the body in clothes that suit the season, to feed it, etc.

***thiyāb*:** The clothes are entitled to be kept clean, a claim that al-Marṣafī says is supported by a *ḥadīth*. In addition, everyone should know what the clothes he

¹⁴ As Delanoue (1989) observes, there is also an element of purification in the Shaykh's approach: "The matter of greatest urgency for al-Marṣafī is the spreading among the élite as well as the masses of a reformed education (*tarbiya*, *adab*), modern in some of its forms, but based on an Islam whose faith and practices would be purified of the innovations (*bida'* [...]) accumulated during the ages of decadence."

or she wears are made from and ensure that the type of material continues to be available. So, from mentioning silk, wool, and cotton, al-Marṣafī easily directs his encyclopedic discourse to silkworm breeding, the raising of sheep, and cotton planting. There is almost no indigenous silk production anymore, he says, and wonders: why? Aren’t there reports from classical times about Egypt being a center for this craft? A similar lack of interest is to be noted also with regard to sheep: the “people of our country” (*ahlu bilādīnā*) have neglected sheep farming, and as a consequence, expensive foreign sheep are being imported. Given the high quality of Egyptian wool, however, it should be easy for anybody gifted with “rational thinking and insight” (*al-fikr wa-l-naẓar*) to understand that sheep breeding should be encouraged for the sake of the “common welfare and the benefit of the nation” (*al-maṣāliḥ al-‘āmma wa-manāfi‘ al-umma* – very typically, al-Marṣafī here addresses the intellectuals, *ahl al-fikr wa-l-naẓar*, and argues with reference to Egypt’s public weal). The deplorable lack of sheep in Egypt has two main causes, the author continues, leading the reader now from economic considerations to social questions: first, the lower classes are too poor to buy animals and start breeding them; second, the land where sheep could be kept is used by the rich to produce expensive things, with the only aim of getting the money to buy unnecessary, and also un-Egyptian, luxury goods such as mirrors or furniture with ledges or shelves made of marble on which to place scent bottles and little jars of ointments, body lotions, and hair gel. The Shaykh sets the tone here for a discussion of social issues that he will return to and deepen on several later occasions, namely the idea that the class differences in Egypt are too great and that the rich should refrain from pursuing egoistic goals in order to allow the social gap to narrow; for this, in the end, will make society more stable and secure. – As for cotton, the author is not against it but warns that its cultivation is a full-time job and cannot be done alongside other professions, as is currently practiced. Furthermore, due to the expansion of cotton growing, the famous Egyptian linen (*kattān*) from which clothes for kings and emirs were made and the *kiswa* of the Holy Ka’ba used to be woven, has disappeared from the market.

dār: Choose the right place to erect your house! Houses used to be built a bit above the level of agriculture. Nowadays, the soil is often taken to gain fertilizer, so the houses have come to be on an equal level with the fields, which makes them highly susceptible to water damage. Today, everybody talks about fertilizers, many collect their cattle’s excrement and urine as dung and liquid manure, and much else is done without proper knowledge, although the traditional method of fertilizing the fields through the annual flooding of the Nile seems to be more effective. So, let scientists analyze the various kinds of fertilizers and

decide which is best in which case for which kind of crop! A science-based analysis would certainly lead to a ban on taking down the traditional little house hills. (Again, al-Marṣafī is talking to the *ahl al-ma'rifa*, “the knowledgeable”, here, and it is obvious that his traditional Azhar education in no way prevents him from making use of the knowledge and techniques of contemporary natural sciences.) – The discussion of what the *dār* is entitled to leads the author further to discuss building materials and the question of maintenance and repair as a question of responsibility toward the next generations and fellow citizens in the homeland (*waṭan*), supported by a *ḥadīth* saying that the reward for someone who builds a house will be the profit drawn from it by other human beings (*man banā binā'an kāna lahū ajrahū mā 'ntafa'a bihī khalqun min khalqī 'llāh*, 73).

***darb* and *madīna*:** The idea of solidarity and cooperation for the well-being of all is also followed in the sections on *ḥuqūq al-darb* and *ḥuqūq al-madīna*. For the neighborhood as well as the whole city, the condition of the roads is important. Al-Marṣafī here opts for introducing the Western system with the coaches, horses (and maybe even donkeys) having to obey traffic rules on regular right and left tracks, rich and poor driving (or lining up) on equal terms behind each other, while the pedestrians stick to pavements on either side of the road. In this way, he says, one will prevent the current situation of people crowding the roads like cattle huddling around the drinking trough, with coaches speeding around knocking down pedestrians or squeezing donkey carts to the house walls. He also supports the idea of giving each coach a license number and tag to facilitate tracking down offenders. Once these and similar improvements are achieved, the police will have increased capacity for fighting crime, which will make life in town more secure.

***quṭr*:** Al-Marṣafī remains very general here, although for him *al-quṭr* is Egypt. What is interesting, though, is that for his discussion of the *ḥuqūq al-quṭr* he returns to what he had said about *al-dār*, now using the “house” as a metaphor for the Egyptian state: to build a solid *dār=quṭr* you will need good planners, good building materials, good workers, etc. Anyone who dwells in this house=country should enjoy peace of mind (*suknā, rāḥat al-qalb*) and good health, and should be in good form and happy. Overall happiness can be achieved if everyone tries to moderate his desires and aspirations; and when everyone feels safe and secure, they will easily consent to performing collective duties; for example, to help dig a canal or temporarily serve in the military. – There follows an excursion into national history to show that the three main obstacles that al-Marṣafī believes prevented the establishment of a harmoniously balanced national community in

the past – the Mamluks, the Beduins,¹⁵ and the village *‘umdas* – have been solved already by Muḥammad ‘Alī... or at least nearly solved, since the *‘umad* have preserved at least *some* of their former privileges, such as the right to take for themselves a sheep or a cow when someone’s child gets married, or the *ius primae noctis*, i.e., the right to spend the first night with each new bride, a custom that still causes a lot of violence in the countryside.

arḍ: The paragraph on *ḥaqq al-arḍ*, i.e., what Earth is entitled to, serves the author as an occasion to develop some ideas about international relations. The fact that, according to him, national identity is, first and foremost, a question of language; that because of the big differences between languages nations will not mix; and that, at the same time, nations *have* to deal with each other to gain access to each other’s natural resources, etc., makes international treaties and laws and the establishment of good relations necessary. This task is something that cannot be achieved by the masses (*al-‘awāmm*) who are made for bodily work, but only by the elite of *dhawī l-‘uqūl al-nayyira wa-l-afhām al-ṣaḥīḥa wa-l-ārā’ al-nāfidha min ahl al-dhakā’ wa-l-fiṭna* (“those among the intelligent and bright ones who have enlightened minds, the right understanding, and convincing opinions”), who are as few in number as are the prophets whom God has sent to humankind (80 – a passage more than indicative, in its almost blasphemous likening of the men of enlightenment to messengers with divine missions, of the leading position the author claims for the new reform-oriented educated elite). There is a natural aggression (*ṭabī‘at al-‘udwān*) among the nations, like egoism among individuals, and it is the enlightened intellectuals’ task to make the others understand that it makes more sense to work together for common goals and the “interests/concerns of mankind [or: Humanity]” (*muqtaḍayāt al-insāniyya*) than to fight against others for the sake of purely national interests.

‘ālam: The very last section on what the world is entitled to gives the previous section an even more universal framework and is reminiscent of the “Think global!” slogan of our own times. The world was given to humankind as a whole so that they may profit from it, enjoy its gifts, and thereby perceive God’s mercy and benevolence (*raḥma*). So, in everything one does, the preservation of the world as a whole, as God’s creation, should always be the ultimate goal. At the same time, everything in the world being a sign with a meaning, it can be a starting point from which to draw knowledge and understand God’s wisdom. Al-Marṣafi here obviously follows the widespread etymology that derives *‘ālam* from *‘ilm* (“knowledge”) in the sense of “something that can, or should, be known”. With this turn, he comes back to his favorite concern – learning and education.

15 The author here mixes Bedouins with Gypsies (cf. 77, fn. 20 by the editor, Kh. Ziyāda).

As a whole, the *idrākāt* → *rūh* → ... → *arḍ* → '*ālam* structure mirrors very appropriately two main characteristics of al-Marṣafī's thinking and approach: it is both *hierarchical* (bottom-up) and *holistic, organic*.

The *hierarchical* component is not only an expression of a desire to treat reality scientifically and systematize the world. It also implies, as an aspect of this, a view of mankind and society along hierarchical categories. Al-Marṣafī does not envisage a radical change in the prevailing social order, because he takes the general division into '*amma* and *khāṣṣa* as an expression of God's will. The '*amma/khāṣṣa* division is complemented by the division of mankind as a whole into two categories:¹⁶ those made to work with their bodies and those made to work with their mind or intellect, and it is the latter upon whom the duty to lead the former is incumbent. They should do so with the help of simple rules, as if they were handling camels, which you teach to stop or go on certain commands and which in turn will obey if addressed correctly. In this way, the intellectuals/educated are assigned a prominent role within the elite: it is they who should have the power of "commanding right and forbidding wrong" (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*, cf. Delanoue 1963, 12), i.e., to exercise legitimate authority.¹⁷

The hierarchy also implies that the more general is superior to what is lower in 'rank', i.e., to the specific and individual. Therefore, the well-being of all, the common interest (*al-maṣlaḥa al-'amma*), should be given priority over individual concerns, and relations among individuals should be governed by the search for what is best for all/the whole. In principle, *al-maṣlaḥa al-'amma* should not be too difficult to obey, since common sense, or intuition, easily knows what is right and what is wrong, what should have priority over what. But in case of doubt, the intellectuals should interpret and guide rightly.

The *holistic* and *organic* components inherent in al-Marṣafī's way of arranging his subject matter correspond to his holistic and organic vision of God's creation, in which everyone and everything have their place according to the function they fulfil in the whole. For the system (world/universe) and its subsystems (earth, individual countries, social classes, etc.) to function properly, everyone should know his/her function and accept the place assigned to her/him in the preordained hierarchical social order.¹⁸ Hierarchical order and the holistic character of the system overlap and complement each other, for example on the level

¹⁶ For the author, this division seems to be not only a matter of belief, i.e., a religious truth, but also a fact that can be proven scientifically. To learn which group a person belongs to, one may use the science of physiognomy (*firāsa*). Cf. Delanoue 1963, 25.

¹⁷ For the concept, cf., e.g., entry "al-Amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar", in *EI*².

¹⁸ « Il est sûr qu'il veut une société hiérarchisée, mais où chacun ait sa place. » Delanoue 1963, 25.

of the *umma*: as the ‘higher organism’, the *umma* will be well if its citizens find among themselves a harmonious balance between egoistic incentives (which may be good for the nation’s economy and its civilizational progress) and solidarity with the poor (which is necessary for the maintenance of social peace as well as from a moral point of view). As can be seen from this remark, the author also integrates economical and social considerations in his treatment of the current situation, a fact that again underscores the integral, holistic character of his approach (cf. Delanoue 1963, 28). It goes without saying that, as a scholar trained at al-Azhar, our Shaykh always has a quotation from the Quran or a *ḥadīth* ready to support his argument; but he may also weave a pleasant anecdote or a personal experience into his discourse, or compare human behaviour to that of animals (Delanoue 1963, 10), illustrating that not only is the system in accordance with the Creator’s will but that many – nay, (if not) all aspects of reality and life form part of it.

5.5 Conclusion

Being an educational treatise, not a work of fiction, Ḥusayn al-Marṣāfi’s *Risālat al-kalim al-thamān* is not abundant with literary visions and representations of the homeland. Yet, the Shaykh’s way of organizing his discourse about *al-waṭan* and of ‘representing’ it through a number of examples can tell us something about the way a new concept like the French term *patrie* was integrated into an inherited system of thinking (indigenous appropriation) and its imagery.

This way was at once traditional *and* reformist – and this was evidently the secret of the *Risāla*’s success. With its jump from the concrete, ‘popular’ meaning of *al-waṭan* via lexicography (*waṭan*=*maskan*) to the world of imagery (*a* as a ‘home’ of *b*, *b* as a ‘home’ of *c*, etc.), it fulfilled, on the one hand, the traditional aesthetic ideal, realized above all in poetry or *inshā’* (high chancellery style), to jump from reality into the world of similes, metaphors, metonymies, etc. On the other hand, while poetry or *inshā’* would remain in this sphere, i.e., on the abstract level of beautiful words connected with each other through semantic (tropics) or phonological (paronomasy) overlapping, in this way stressing the “self-referentiality of literary language” (Hamarnah 1998, 231), al-Marṣāfi *jumps back* from there to the reality, or realities, of *al-waṭan*, from the heroic concept of *la patrie* (or the popular understanding of “*al-waṭan*”) via lexicography back to sheep breeding and cotton growing, to the disadvantages of animal dung and urine as fertilizers and the advantages of, and hence the necessity to return to,

the traditional ways of manuring and fertilization through flooding, to the principles of international relations as well as man's responsibilities and duties in, and hence his accountability for the well-being of, the world as a whole.

If this work falls in the category of *adab* – which I firmly would argue¹⁹ – we note a turn to 'realism' that is very similar to the turn made by writers who began to stick to new genres like the *riwāya*²⁰ (which operated on yet another representational model) at the threshold from 'traditional' (classical and post-classical) to 'modern' literature. It is the same turn that can be observed overall in literary writing from the 1860s on, first in theater, then also in other genres;²¹ the turn away from language and philology as self-referential toward the "referential function of literary language" (Hamarneh 1998, 231) which from this time forward will be one of the main characteristics of 'modern' Arabic literary discourse.

19 Delanoue too thinks the *Risāla* is not only an "esquisse d'un lexique politique" but "aussi un ouvrage d'*adab*, où il s'agit de distraire autant que d'instruire" – Delanoue 1963, 10.

20 Cf. Guth 2011.

21 Cf., e.g., Haist 2000, in particular her notes on the early historical novel's 'realism'; Guth 2003b, *passim* (follow references given under the heading "Realismus" in the Index).