

**THE ORIGINS OF ISLAMIC  
REFORMISM IN OTTOMAN SYRIA,  
1855-1914**

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by

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To Enes & Fatma

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## **ABSTRACT**

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**June 2012**

### **THE ORIGINS OF ISLAMIC REFORMISM IN OTTOMAN SYRIA, 1855-1914**

Different agents starting from the nineteenth century until the first quarter of the twentieth century played roles in developing the idea of Islamism in Ottoman Syria. Muslim intellectuals prioritized the idea of reform and progress when they began to see the material decline of the Islamic world vis-à-vis the western powers. These intellectuals in particular were from Ottoman Syria and Egypt which was once under the Ottoman rule. In the case of Syria, one can see three prominent phases that played role in this intellectual movement. The introduction of the modern institutions and practices into Syria after the occupation of Egypt in 1832 could be considered as the first phase. Secondly, the conflict between traditional ulama and growing intellectual elite that had both familiarities with classical and western thought triggered a new reform movement among ulama as a mean of opposition. Thirdly, the British occupation of Egypt provided reformers a new field to implement and defend reform ideas. The reform declarations of Istanbul in 1839 and 1856 and their practical results in the region had also affected the mindset of these intellectuals. To name but a few, Amir Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi (1807-1883), an influential political and reformist in Damascus, made significant contributions to the reform debate in Syria and helped Damascene ulama to have a new understanding of politics, society, and culture. One should also point out that, the political atmosphere was not always welcoming to such intellectual exchanges. From time to time, the reformists in Syria had difficulties by the threat of political discrimination and investigation. The reform debates were also perceived as foreign political intervention to Syria and other Arab lands. Aiming to demonstrate such multi-dimensions of the Muslim reformist movement in the Arab world in the given period, this thesis will particularly discuss political and scholarly activities of Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi (1866-1914) who played an important role in many turning points of this movement.

**Key Words:** Reform, Islamism, Ottoman Empire, Nineteenth century, Syria, Egypt, Ulama, Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi

## KISA ÖZET

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Haziran 2012

### OSMANLI SURİYESİNDE İSLAMİ REFORMİZMİN KÖKENLERİ, 1855-1914

Arap dünyasında İslamcılık düşüncesinin gelişimde on dokuzuncu yüzyıldan başlamak üzere yirminci yüzyılın ilk çeyreğine kadar birçok etken rol oynamıştır. Özelde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, genelde ise İslam dünyasının Batı karşısında maddi alanda geri kalması sonrası ortaya konulan reform fikri, on dokuzuncu yüzyıl Müslüman entelektüellerinin zihinlerini meşgul etmiştir. Suriye ve Mısır mevcut Arap entelektüel birikimine önemli katkıları olan coğrafyalar olarak kabul edilmektedir. Reform ve İslamcılık düşüncesinin gelişimiyle ilgili olarak Osmanlı Suriyesine bakıldığında şu üç faktörün öne çıktığı görülür: Bunlardan ilki, Mısır'ın 1832 yılında Suriye'yi işgal etmesiyle Suriye'nin birçok yeni kurum ve uygulama ile tanışmasıdır. Suriye'nin yaşadığı modernleşme tecrübesinin yarattığı zihinsel dönüşüm Osmanlı merkezi yönetiminin 1839 ve 1856 yıllarında ilan ettiği tanzim ve ıslah amaçlı fermanlarla ayrıca bir ivme kazanmıştır. İkinci olarak, gerçekleştirilen reformlar ulamanın geleneksel önemini ve otoritesini yitirmesine neden olmuş ve bu durum orta sınıf ulema tabakasında yeni bir entelektüel hareketin ortaya çıkmasını tetiklemiştir. Abdülkadir el-Cezairî (1807-1883) gibi kimi siyasetçi ve reformistler, Şam ulemasının yeni düşüncelerle tanışmasında katkı sağlamıştır. Üçüncü olarak, Mısır'ın 1882'de İngiltere tarafından işgali sonrası ülkede görülen reform çalışmalarının bir benzeri Osmanlı Suriyesinde görülmektedir. Ne var ki, karşılıklı entelektüel etkileşim zaman zaman yasaklarla sonuçlanmış ve bu tartışmalar Suriye üzerinde Mısır'ın ve diğer yabancı devletlerin etkileri şeklinde algılanıp meseleyi uluslararası siyasetin bir parçası haline getirmiştir. On dokuzuncu yüzyıl boyunca ve yirminci yüzyılın ilk çeyreğine dek uzanan uzun bir zaman diliminde aranması gereken İslami reform düşüncesinin kökenlerine dair ilmi kişiliği ve politik çıkışlarıyla sürecin dönüm noktalarında yer alan Şamlı alim Cemaleddin el-Kasimi

(1866-1914)'nin hayatı ve düşünceleri Osmanlı Suriyesinde ve Arap dünyasında reform düşüncesinin gelişimine dair önemli ipuçları sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kavramlar:** Reform, Islah, İslamcılık, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, On dokuzuncu yüzyıl, Suriye, Mısır, ulema, Cemaleddin el-Kasımî,



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## INTRODUCTION

In the modern scholarship, the nineteenth century is hailed as the “longest” century of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup> It was a century that the empire experienced a complicated transformation in political, social, and cultural spheres. In the first quarter of the century, Ottoman administration had to deal with the Greek revolt that was supported by Russia, Britain, and France. The support of these “Great Powers” enabled Ottoman Greece to become an independent state in 1829. On the other hand, France occupied Ottoman Algeria in 1830 in a period when the Ottoman capital was struggling with the long-lasting revolt of Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Pasha (1769-1849), the governor of Ottoman Egypt. Along with countering the revolts and foreign occupation, the rulers of the empire tried to improve the conditions of the non-Muslims subjects of the empire and tie them to the system by declaring reform charters. These charters (The Gülhane Edict of 1839 and Reform Edict of 1856) provided new rights to the non-Muslims and made them legally equal with Muslims.

While the Ottoman center was trying to hold the unity of the empire by introducing new regulations and reform charters, separatist movements were on the agenda of many. After the Greek Revolt, Istanbul developed policies that would strengthen the loyalty of Muslim subjects to the imperial system. Within this context, Islamism emerged as a new tool that would enhance the Muslim Arab population in the dissolving empire. While the aims and policies of Ottoman center are well documented by recent scholarship,<sup>2</sup> less attention was given to the impacts of Islamism on the Arab societies in general and on the Muslim Arab intellectuals in particular.

My aim in this thesis is to discuss varying features and motivations of the Arab reform movement that emerged within the framework of Islamism by scrutinizing intellectual debates in Ottoman Syria. To reveal the origins of Islamism

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<sup>1</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

in the Arab world, this thesis would focus on the reformist circles in Damascus and examine Egyptian influence in developing reform discourse and policies in the city. Instead of perceiving it as a peculiar ideology of the Hamidian regime, this study would approach Islamism as a political instrument and motivation of Arab reformists, who had diverse intellectual backgrounds and thus put new insights to the prevailing discussions in the period.<sup>3</sup>

This study approaches the concept of reform in a wide sense that covers whole efforts in modernization process. However, due to the progressive characteristic of this ideology, the concept of reform is also used to designate Islamism in a narrowing sense. It is possible to describe many examples in the literature that conceptualizes Islamism within the framework of reformism. However, one should be aware of the fact that before this ideology there were other movements that emerged as new approaches and in a way to “reform” Islam and Muslim societies. One of these reform attempts was put by Salafis which disapprove of modernity interpretations of religious text and calls its adherents to turn to the practices of *al-Salaf al-salih*, pious ancestors. Wahhabism, which was formulated by Muhammed ibn Abdul Wahhab (1702-1792), was in that sense another reform movement. Although Salafis did not claim to be Wahhabis, due to their joint sources and references to the followers of Muhammed ibn Abdul Wahhab, other reformers used the label of Wahhabi to insult their Salafi adversaries. Acknowledging the influence of Wahhabism on Salafis and many other reformist movements in the period, this thesis will employ the concepts of reform and Islamism interchangeably and will not put Wahhabism into the picture.<sup>4</sup>

Salafism is one of the frequently used concepts in this study. It identifies a progressive approach to religion in the nineteenth century. Salafism, for many, denotes religious reform. On the other hand, the term conservative in this study was

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<sup>3</sup> In his work Kurzman portrays a general picture of the debates among Arab intellectuals. For the discussion of progress and modernization, see Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Source-Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 3-27.

<sup>4</sup> Itzhak Weismann, “Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism: A Reappraisal of the Origins of the Salafiyya from the Damascene Angle.” *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, 41/2 (2001), p. 231.

used to designate the traditional anti-Salafi ulama who opposed reform ideas. For instance, while the conservative ulama insisted on limiting the legal affairs with one of four schools, the Salafi ulama claimed to open gate of *ijtihad* to rule out the limits of these schools.

Different factors played varying roles in developing the idea of Islamism in the nineteenth century in Ottoman Syria. Along with the rising awareness of the political and cultural developments in Europe in the same century, the Ottoman ruling elite had to implement new reforms and regulations in the imperial administration. Encouraged by the central reforms that were initiated with the Gülhane Edict of 1839 and the Reform Edict of 1856, many reformists organized political and intellectual groups to enhance the social and political practices in the Ottoman Empire. The first well-known political group that appeared in this period was the Young Ottomans, who are dubbed as the first Islamists in the empire with their support of Ottomanism. The members of this group emphasized the Islamic character of the empire while focusing on progress and reform. They wanted to have a change in the imperial regime by promoting the idea of constitutionalism.<sup>5</sup>

The ideas of the Young Ottomans echoed in the Arab lands, particularly in Syria. Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883) who was one of the early agents of the reform movement in the Arab region, preached about the unity of the Ottoman realm, patriotism and progressivism. To institutionalize his ideas he founded the Syrian Scientific Society as an intellectual club that would become, according to George Antonius, the cradle for the reformist ideas in the region.<sup>6</sup> Besides his patriotism, Bustani was also the first Arab cultural nationalists who tried to revive Arabic language in the nineteenth century. Having close relations with the Ottoman capital and being a loyal adherent to the idea of Ottomanism, which was a common early

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<sup>5</sup> On the Young Ottomans see Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000 [first publication in 1962]).

<sup>6</sup> George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (New York: Paragon, 1979), p.47.

feature of nationalism in the Arab lands, Bustani and his friends protested against western expansionism.<sup>7</sup>

The idea of “reform” was not only on the agenda for non-Muslim subjects of the empire but also for the Muslims.<sup>8</sup> Leading figures among the Ottoman Muslim reformists such as Namık Kemal (1840-1888) and Khayr al-Din Pasha (1823-1890) expressed the same sentiments with al-Bustani when they discussed the idea of patriotism and progressivism.<sup>9</sup> They did not hesitate to use Islamic sources to indoctrinate their political ideas. This line of thought can be seen in the writings of the other Muslim Arab intellectuals such as Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Rashid Rida (1865-1935) who famously represent the Islamic reform movement in the nineteenth century. Seeing no problem in combining modernity with Islamic tradition, they defended to adopt modern technology in the Islamic state and societies; and these figures promoted the idea of Islamic progressivism. Their main concern was to find an answer to this crucial question: How Muslims would become part of the modern world while remaining adherent to their belief and tradition?<sup>10</sup>

Although the development of Islamism could be handled in various ways, this thesis would focus on some specific points to understand and evaluate the origins of this new ideology. For this aspect, three main factors are important: First, change of the classical role of ulama and the emergence of Salafi understanding of Islam as a means for opposition in the Tanzimat period. Second, the role of Egypt played as an influential reform center for the other regions, especially for Syria. Finally, how the British occupation of Egypt affected other parts of the region. To understand these factors better, this thesis would examine Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi and his circle in

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<sup>7</sup> For the early tendencies in the Arab nationalism see Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973); Butrus Abu-Manneh, “The Christians between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism: The Ideas of Butrus al-Bustani,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11/3 (1980), pp. 288-291; Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> While the secularist characteristics were more determinant for the non-Muslim intellectuals who promoted the idea of patriotism, Islamists generally emphasized Islamic identity and their dependence on the caliph in Istanbul without ignoring the problems of the non-Muslims population of the empire.

<sup>9</sup> Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, p. 11; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 84-95.

<sup>10</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, p. 95.

Damascus for the period of 1855-1883 and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi for the period of 1890-1910.

In terms of the content, this study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is about changing the classical role of ulama. Hereby Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi and his circle would be focal point to examine the change. In the second chapter, intellectual interactions of Syrian reformers with the Egyptians would be analyzed. Within this scope, early modernization of Egypt and its impact on Syria, reformist circles in Egypt and their relations with the Syrians, especially in the period under British rule, would be demonstrated. In the third chapter Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and his reformist ideas, his struggle with conservative ulama in Damascus and his relations with Egyptian reformers will be examined. In brief, the main purpose of this thesis is to reveal the origins of Islamism by looking at its roots in Syria and how it was influenced by Egyptian intellectuals.

On account of her geographical situation, Syria was an important center of learning in the Arab and Islamic world. Since Damascene ulama had good relations with other ulama circles in different parts of the Islamic world and could easily travel to Egypt, Hejaz, Baghdad, and Istanbul, reform debates in these regions could easily affect the Syrian ulama. Most of the ulama in Damascus had contacts in Egypt and some of them traditionally studied at Al-Azhar. Many historical documents exhibit the active relations and correspondence among African, Indian and Asian ulama.

In addition to relations of Damascene ulama with different centers which helped them discover early features of reformism, their status and wealth declined in the Tanzimat period. The Tanzimat reforms decreased the classical role of ulama and their influence on political, legal, educational, and cultural life in Ottoman Syria, which also resulted in the de-valuation of religious knowledge.<sup>11</sup> In this period, new institutions and areas appeared apart from the religious base, and this process provided some advantages to new intellectual elites while ulama lost their privileges

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<sup>11</sup> David D. Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 19.

and prestiges. In the second half of nineteenth century after the deterioration of their status, Damascene ulama encountered new ideas and agents of change, such as Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi, who opened new horizons for discontented ulama with his huge wealth and strong views.

Amir Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi migrated from Algeria and became an important actor in Syrian intellectual and political life. Although he is well known with his resistant role in French occupation in Algeria, his activities in Damascus have not yet become sufficiently enlightened. He considered Egyptian governor Muhammed Ali Pasha as a model for his reforms. Al-Jazairi received a western education and knew about the advances in European countries especially war technology, due to his experiences during his long term resistance to France. He continued his relation with French when he was in Syria. He received support both from the Ottomans and the European powers at the same time.<sup>12</sup> His deep relations with western world and his fame provided him important position in the eye of Syrian ulama. He strengthened the lines of communication between Damascene ulama and the broader reform trends in other regions with his contacts and fame. Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi lived in Damascus from 1855 until his death in 1883, and when he died; his students became very active in Damascene intellectual life. Tahir al-Jazairi and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, who were known as Damascene Salafis, were two of his students who actively engaged with reform movement in Damascus. While Amir Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi had more influence on Tahir al-Jazairi (1852-1920), Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi indirectly benefitted from the atmosphere of this circle. Qasimi is regarded as the second generation in reform circles of Damascus, but it was due to his father, who was the member of Jazairi's circle that he had acquaintance with the original circle.

Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi was born in 1866 and received a classical education in Islamic sciences. He became an *imam* in a middle class mosque in 1886 and had good ties with reformist circles in Damascus and other regions. Qasimi was in the

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<sup>12</sup> For the relations of Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi and other Algerians with the European powers and Ottoman authorities see Tufan Buzpınar, "Suriye'ye Yerleşen Cezayirlilerin Tabiiyeti Meselesi, 1847–1900", *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi/Turkish Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1/1 (1997), p. 95.



center of intellectual debates and he became important defender of reformist views in Damascus against traditional ulama especially after 1900s. In 1900 he was appointed as *imam* to Sinaniyyah Mosque after his father's death. This also provided him important place among ulama circles. Qasimi and his masters and friends such as Tahir al-Jazairi, Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar (1837-1917) and others arranged periodical meetings at their houses. Qasimi corresponded with the reformers abroad and his relations with the reformers outside like Baghdad and other centers from Morocco to Java gave him important position in the eyes of the reformers.<sup>13</sup> This intellectual association was perceived as an attempt to establish a new *madhab* which was called "*Madhhab al-Jamâlî*" which was the reason why the local governors questioned members of this circle in January 1896.

Egypt emerged as an influential region for the other parts of the Islamic world with its geographical and political base for the revival of reformist ideas. It was also the center for the opponents during the Hamidian Regime. Abduh's high position in Egypt where he was appointed as administrator of religious affairs and Sheikh of al-Azhar attracted other reformers to find a place to implement new reform programs under the "free" atmosphere of the British rule. Many reformists found the country impressive with its modern outlook. In his diaries Qasimi mentions how he was impressed by the modern appearance of Egypt.<sup>14</sup> His experience was similar to the other intellectuals who were impressed with the technical developments in European countries when they encountered them for the first time.

Although Syrian ulama circles had already relations with reformers in other regions, Egypt played significant role in the reform movements of Syria. To reveal the reasons of this great influence of Egypt over Syria and other areas, early modernization of the country must be put into consideration. The French occupation

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<sup>13</sup> Cairo's broad, tree-lined streets, large buildings, luxuriant gardens, electric lights, modern technologies like telephone and tramway impressed Qasimi. It was the first encounter of Qasimi with the modern means because he had not visited any European countries before see Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 60.

<sup>14</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 61; there is not any autobiographical study of Qasimi. For his diaries and personal notes see Zafir al-Qâsimî, *Jamâl al-Dîn Qâsimî wa Asruhû* (Damascus, Al-Hashimiyyah press 1965), pp. 133-160.

of Egypt in 1798 was accepted as the first encounter of the Arab Muslims with European powers. This triggered the later reforms in Egypt during the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha, who became the ruler of Egypt in 1805 and started to modernize the country in accordance with the French model by employing French officers. In addition to a modern army, he developed an irrigation system and found a modern transportation and marketing system in Egypt. These developments were highly attractive for the capital and other centers in the Empire and this provided him new opportunities when he struggled with the Wahhabi uprising in Hejaz.<sup>15</sup> After the disagreement with the Ottoman Sultan, Muhammad Ali sent his troops to Syria in 1831 under the leadership of his son Ibrahim Pasha (1789-1848) and ruled Syrian lands for approximately ten years.<sup>16</sup>

While the Egyptian occupation of Ottoman Syria lasted about ten years, its influence on Syrian intellectual and cultural life extended beyond the occupation. In this period Syria experienced a modernization according to the Egyptian model. The commander of the occupying Egyptian army, Ibrahim Pasha, allowed the Christian soldiers of his allies from Lebanon to ride their horses into Damascus.<sup>17</sup> The Egyptians facilitated the growth of trade with Europe by allowing the British to open a consulate in Damascus and Jerusalem. They provided security for non-Muslims who were the leading figures in European trade.<sup>18</sup> New treaties signed with the Europeans, opened the Syrian markets for European merchants and their agents. It was the Syrian Christians and Jews who greatly benefited from these developments while this situation increased the discontent of the Muslim elites of Syria. Non-Muslim populations of Syria could obtain consular protection and immunity from Ottoman taxes in accordance with the capitulatory treaties between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers.<sup>19</sup> The impact of privilege for non-Muslims given

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<sup>15</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, pp. 20-24.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 33; Zeine N. Zeine, *Türk-Arap İlişkileri ve Arap Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*, trans. Emrah Akbaş (İstanbul: Gelenek Yayıncılık, 2003), p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 11. On Ibrahim Pasha's administration in Syria see Moshe Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine, 1840-1861* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 12-20.

<sup>19</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 11; Fruma Zachs, *The Making of Syrian Identity: Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 39-45.

by Egyptians increased with reforms and treaties between Ottomans and western powers.<sup>20</sup> This discontent resulted with a well-known conflict in Lebanon between Druzes and Maronite Christians, which ignited violence against Christians in Damascus in 1860.<sup>21</sup>

Ibrahim Pasha's rule in Syria was the first official Egyptian appearance in the country. It triggered new developments for the decades to come. Another important period for the Egyptian-Syrian interaction started with the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. This occupation occurred after a few years from the Ottoman-Russian War, at which the Russian forces came to Yeşilköy, few miles away from the Ottoman center. In the meantime, the French occupied Tunis in 1881. Egypt under the British rule became a gathering place for people who escaped from Abdülhamid's regime. Among them, there were a considerable number of reformists.<sup>22</sup> It is true that there was already a circle of reformists in Egypt before the British occupation; however, the appearance of the British revived a new reform movement and new ideas in the region. Both these figures and the opponents of Abdülhamid found an opportunity to publish journals and newspapers to spread their ideas. One of the most important and influential reformist figures was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) who stayed eight years in Egypt where he first arrived in 1871 and gave lectures to students at al-Azhar. Students of Afghani such as Muhammad Abduh and Sa'd Zaghlul (1859-1927) became influential in the Egyptian politics.<sup>23</sup> When Afghani went to Paris in 1884, his student Abduh followed his path and they together established a society and published a periodical entitled *Urwa al-*

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<sup>20</sup> In his *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine*, p. 18, Ma'oz mentions that "the new rights of the Syrian Christians sometimes exceeded even those of the Muslims: they were, for example, exempted from conscription and became also relatively richer and more acceptable to the public administration".

<sup>21</sup> For identical designations of subjects in Lebanon see Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East* (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), p. 120. In his article, Weismann talks about the discontentedness of famous scholar Ibn Abidin against the victory of the Egyptian forces. Ibn Abidin complained about the Egyptians politics which discontinued discrimination between Muslims and non-Muslims, See, Itzhak Weismann, "Law and Sufism on the Eve of Reform: The Views of Ibn Abidin" in Weismann, Itzhak and Zachs, Fruma (eds.), *Ottoman Reform and Islamic Regeneration: Studies in Honour of Butrus Abu-Manneh* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p. 72.

<sup>22</sup> Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> For further information on Afghani see Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 109.

*wuthqa* (the Firmest Bond).<sup>24</sup> Due to his criticism against British rule in Egypt, Afghani could not return to Egypt and his student Abduh had an opportunity to represent the ideas of Afghani in Egypt and made a name for himself.<sup>25</sup>

Abduh became a teacher in al-Azhar and established good relations with reformists in different parts of the Islamic world. Abduh had some difficulties with British rule in the early years of the occupation and was put into the prison, then the occupiers sent him to exile for three years due to his role in the Urabi uprising. He followed his teacher during his exile and went to France.<sup>26</sup> While Afghani was prevented from entering Egypt again after the British occupation, Abduh could return to the country in 1888 and became the *mufti* of Egypt in 1889. In 1895, he was appointed as the head of the committee that was responsible for the arrangement of the educational reform program at al-Azhar.<sup>27</sup>

The British occupation of Egypt started a new era in the region since it provided the British a chance to exert influence in other Arab territories easily. This situation increased anxieties of the Ottoman authorities.<sup>28</sup> Due to the fact that Egypt emerged as an intellectual center for the reformists, the Ottoman capital perceived the British-ruled country as foreign lands where the opposition groups could escape and make plans to undermine the Ottoman system. At first, the Ottoman authorities did not pay attention to the ongoing debates among ulama. However, when they saw developments such as Imam Yahya's rebellion against the Ottomans in Yemen,<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Eighteen issues of *Urwa al-wuthqa* were published in 1884 when Abduh and Afghani were in Paris. The journal published discussions on foreign intervention to the Islamic world and the ways in which to prevent the British occupation. This journal had great influence on Syrian reformers. See Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, *al-'Urwah al-wuthqa* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1980); Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 110.

<sup>25</sup> Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, et al (eds.) *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 61.

<sup>26</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 134.

<sup>27</sup> Abduh had good relations with many of European thinkers and became a central figure when his teacher was in Istanbul under the control of the Sultan. After the publication of his periodical *Urwa al-wuthqa* with Afghani, he composed his best-known study, *Risalat al-Tawhid* when he was teaching at Al-Azhar University.

<sup>28</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>29</sup> John Baldry, "Imam Yahya and the Yamani Uprising of 1904-1907", *Abr-Nahrain 18* (1978-1979), pp. 42-47, 60-63.

Wahhabis renaissance,<sup>30</sup> Abbas Hilmi's flirtations with Afghani and the Young Turks,<sup>31</sup> and Kawakibi's book<sup>32</sup> Ottoman fears increased of a plot that would establish a new caliphate in the Arab lands through British support. This fear led the Ottoman administration to increase their control on Salafis and reformers who were in contact with the reformist circles in Egypt.<sup>33</sup>

Reformers in Syria and Egypt were already in contact with each other but with the publication of *Urwa al-wuthqa* they found a new tool to exchange their ideas. *Al-Manâr* that was published by Abduh and Syrian origin Rashid Rida, succeeded *Urwa al-wuthqa*, and had a significant influence on Syrian reformists.<sup>34</sup> As an important figure for the reform in Syria, Rashid Rida continued his relations and correspondences with the reformers in the country even after he fled to Egypt in 1897.

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<sup>30</sup> William Ochsenwald, *Religion, Society, and the State in Arabia: The Hijaz Under Ottoman Control, 1840-1908* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1984), p. 48.

<sup>31</sup> Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>32</sup> Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, pp. 96-98.

<sup>33</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 107.

<sup>34</sup> Mehmet Kalaycı, "Jamâl al-Dîn al-Qâsimî and Syrian Reformism", *Journal of Islamic Research*, 2 (2009), p. 92.

## SOURCES

There are a number of works written in Arabic, English, and Turkish on Islamism in the Arab lands. Autobiographies of the important figures in Islamist movement can be considered as the primary sources in this field. Personal notes and books of Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar provide firsthand information about the main agents of this period. Their notes include details about many important developments in Egypt, Syria, and in the Ottoman capital. Periodicals such as Rashid Rida's *Al-Manar* and Jamal al-Din Afghani and Abduh's *Urwa al-wuthqa* are the most important sources for this period since they reflect the ideas of reformers. Correspondences of reformers with their contacts in different regions in this period also give valuable information about Islamic reform movements in the nineteenth century.

Although there are abundant documents on political events in Damascus and Egypt in the archives and some of them were put into good use in this thesis, the information given in archival documents did not allow the reader to understand the intellectual discussions. However, one can easily see the pressure exerted by the Ottoman capital on the reformists in Egypt from some of the archival sources document, and how many books were written by these figures which were banned by the Ottoman officials.

The life and works of Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi was depicted based on his works and personal notes. Zafir al-Qasimi's work entitled *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi wa asruhu*,<sup>35</sup> which includes personal notes and correspondence of al-Qasimi, is one of the main sources of this study. Other Arabic works on al-Qasimi were also used in this thesis to depict his life.<sup>36</sup> While knowing the fact that the personal library of the Qasimi family and Zahiriyah Library in Damascus contains great amounts of

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<sup>35</sup> Zafir al-Qâsimî, *Jamâl al-Dîn Qâsimî wa Asruhû*; Muḥammad Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, *Imam al-Sham fî asrihi*, (Damascus, Al-Hashimiyyah Press, 1966).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

personal notes and works of reformers, the author of this thesis could not find an opportunity to peruse them.

In addition to archival and primary sources, there are other works which were utilized in this study. The work of David D. Commins on the late Ottoman Syria is one of them.<sup>37</sup> Commins analyses reform debates and changing role of the ulama in Damascus by focusing on some figures such as Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi. Charles Henry Churchill's *Hayat Abd al-Qadir* was another important source which I benefited particularly from in the depiction of the life of Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi and his activities in Damascus.<sup>38</sup> Although there are great amount of sources on Abd al-Qadir's resistance in Algeria, the sources about his life and activities in Damascus are limited. The studies and articles on Algerians and the "Algerian Question" in Syria in the second half of the nineteenth century provide data on Amir's activities and relations with the Ottoman administration and other powers. I also encountered some documents about Abd al-Qadir in the western press. Ramazan Muslu's recent study on Jazairi is also an important source for this thesis.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to Commins' works, the studies of Weismann that cover the reformists and their ideas in Damascus are also remarkable. Weismann analyzes the adventure of reform in the region by focusing on debates between conservatives and reformers. He also tries to examine the origins of Islamism in relation with Sufism and rationalism.<sup>40</sup> Weismann's edited work with Fruma Zachs on reform regeneration presents multi-dimensional perspectives on the origins of reformism. The study of Hasan Kayalı, where he analyzes Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism

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<sup>37</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria*; "Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus, 1885-1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18/4 (1986); "Traditional Anti-Wahhabi Hanbalism in Nineteenth Century Arabia" in Weismann, Itzhak and Zachs (eds.), *Ottoman Reform and Islamic Regeneration* pp. 81-97.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Henry Churchill, *The Life of Abdel Kader, Ex-Sultan of the Arabs of Algeria* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867).

<sup>39</sup> Ramazan Muslu, *Emir Abdülkadir el-Cezairi: Hayatı ve Tasavvufî Görüşleri* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism".

in the constitutional period, is also one of the important sources that needed to be mentioned.<sup>41</sup>

There are also numerous secondary sources on Arab reform movements covering the issues of Arab enlightenment and nationalism. The books and articles on the debates of Arab reformism and Arab nationalism mainly evaluate the Arabic thought in a western sense. Therefore, some of the sources on Arab nationalism and reformism are criticized for their unilateral and prejudiced perspectives that consider Arab reformism as delayed enlightenment and reaction to the Ottoman rule in the region. To understand the approaches of these sources there is a need to know historical circumstances that they were written. As'ad Dagher,<sup>42</sup> Muhammad Izzat Darwaza<sup>43</sup>, Amin Sa'id<sup>44</sup>, and George Antonius<sup>45</sup> wrote their works in the early decades of the twentieth century. In addition to this first generation, C. Ernest Dawn<sup>46</sup>, Albert Hourani<sup>47</sup>, Abdel Latif Tibawi<sup>48</sup>, Elie Kedourie<sup>49</sup>, Zeine N. Zeine<sup>50</sup> penned their studies around the middle of the same century. The approach of the first generation is generally criticized by the latter who could put a more objective and multi-dimensional works on Arab nationalism or "awakening".<sup>51</sup>

The sources on Islamism or Islamic reform are generally written on the case of Egypt and cover mainly the works of Afghani, Abduh, and Rida. Works in this

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<sup>41</sup> Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*.

<sup>42</sup> Dagher, *Thawrat al-arab* (Cairo, 1916 originally published anonymously as being by a member of the Arab societies).

<sup>43</sup> Muhammad Izzat Darwazah, *Hawla al-harakah al-'arabiyyah al-hadithah*, 2. vols. (Sidon: Al-Asriyyah Press, 1950); İzzet Derveze, *Osmanlı Filistininde Bir Posta Memuru*, trans. Ali Benli, (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> Amin Sa'id, *Al-Thawrah al-arabiyyah al-kubra*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Isa al-Bani al-Chalabi Press, 1934).

<sup>45</sup> Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*.

<sup>46</sup> Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*.

<sup>47</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* and his *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

<sup>48</sup> Abd al-Latif Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria, Including Lebanon and Palestine* (London: Macmillan, 1969).

<sup>49</sup> Elie Kedourie, *Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Studies* (London, Frank Cass, 1974).

<sup>50</sup> Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism*; For Turkish translation see Zeine, *Türk-Arap İlişkileri ve Arap Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*. trans. Emrah Akbaş (İstanbul: Gelenek Yayıncılık, 2003).

<sup>51</sup> For an evaluation the sources on Arab nationalism see Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 6-10.



category are, in addition to Hourani, the studies of Charles Adams<sup>52</sup> and Charles Kurzman.<sup>53</sup> These works do not sufficiently cover the Syrian reformers.

There is a clear deficiency in the Turkish literature about Arabic thought and reformism. If one dismisses the recent publications on Arab-Turkish relations due to the new foreign policy of Turkey, one can say that there are hardly any sources on the issues of Arab reform movements in the Turkish language, except some translations of the works of the leading reformists.<sup>54</sup> On this issue, there are also some theses prepared in Turkish theological faculties.<sup>55</sup> However, these theses generally analyze theological problems and religious discussions in this period. The sources on Islamism have been considered as a part of theological studies in Turkey. Due to the lack of studies about reform debates of ulama circles in Arab countries in historical sense, this study aims to shed some lights on the origins of Islamism and make a contribution to understanding reform ideas in Syria.

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<sup>52</sup> Charles Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* (London: Russell, 1933).

<sup>53</sup> Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*.

<sup>54</sup> Rıza, *İttihad-ı Osmani'den Arap İsyanına*, trans. Özgür Kavak, (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2007), pp. 7-8; Muslu, *Emir Abdülkadir el-Cezairi: Hayatı ve Tasavvufi Görüşleri*; Emir Şekib Arslan, *İttihatçı Bir Arap Aydınının Anıları*, trans. Halit Özkan (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2005).

<sup>55</sup> Mehmet Günay, *Cemalüddin el-Kasimi ve Fıkhi Görüşleri*, Marmara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Basılmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 1991; Mustafa Yüce, *Muhammed Cemaleddin el-Kasimi ve Kelami Görüşleri*, Sakarya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Basılmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi 1991; Gökçen Kalkan, *Cemaleddin el-Kasimi ve Tefsirdeki Metodu*, Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Basılmamış Doktora Yeterlilik Tezi, 2007.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **1- HOW REFORM AFFECTED ULAMA: THE CASE OF SYRIA**

Historically the ulama had an important role in producing, controlling, and spreading knowledge in the Islamic world. They were the key figures in shaping the political, social, and cultural life. However, confrontation with the western powers and introduction of reforms into the Muslim societies became a reason for the ulama to lose their influence over the state and society. This new situation triggered debates among the ulama in different parts of the Islamic world. Here, I will focus on the intellectual debates in the Ottoman Damascus in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Special attention will be given to the life and works of Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, two influential figures that had circles and took part in the political events and intellectual debates on reform in Damascus.

Starting from Selim III (1761-1808) reforming and re-organizing of the administrative practices became the primary policy of the Ottoman rulers. Military defeats in the battles triggered new regulations in western model and this re-organization process was resulted with two important edicts: Imperial Edict of Gülhane in 1839 and the Imperial Reform Edict in 1856. These regulations in political life of the Ottomans resulted with changes in social and cultural life. It is generally accepted that after the Tanzimat period the Ottoman elites prioritized the concept of modernism. Change meant to establish new institutions and while disappearing existing ones. New institutions needed new cadres and new trends became more decisive in this period. Generally traditional institutions were damaged and replaced with the new western ones in the nineteenth century. One of the most important institutions and stratum which were affected from the reforms was the ulama. Ulama were among the most important social groups in the empire which had

its own traditions, lifestyle, and wealth. Their knowledge was crucial in worship, education, and judicial affairs. Although these changes and reforms affected the ulama in all of the Ottoman lands from North Africa to Anatolia, Damascus would be the scope to understand the reflections of the reforms and their influence on this group.

Historically, Damascus was an important center for the ulama. Damascene ulama frequently traveled to Egypt, the Hejaz, Baghdad, and Istanbul to study with famous scholars of these cities in which they had long-lasting contacts. In 1890, there were 200 mosques, nearly 200 saints' tombs and holy places, and 14 Sufi lodges and 29 religious schools (madrasah) in Damascus. There were also six religious law courts where ulama were employed. These great numbers of institutions were mostly controlled by the ulama. Their responsibilities in these mosques, madrasahs, and other institutions were arranged according to their levels and prestige in the stratum. In addition to a large number of institutions, Damascus was the learning center of Islamic knowledge and was a gathering center for the ulama from different regions.<sup>56</sup> All the mosques in Damascus had its own community which under the influence of certain members of the ulama. These posts also inherited to descendants of the ulama and sometimes these posts could be led by two or three generations. The mosques and lodges in Damascus played important roles in the core of social and religious life of the region.

While the ulama was controlling the institutions from justice affairs to education, it is important to know how they were affected from new regulations and how new developments diminished their authority. When one looks at the reasons and process which diminished the impact of the ulama particularly in Damascus, he or she encounters first the period of Egyptian rule in 1830s. When Egyptians came to Syria in 1831 they put some restrictions on the ulama in the provincial council and courts. Although ulama got these posts when the Ottoman administration re-organized the region, there would be another development in 1850 when new modern

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<sup>56</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, pp. 7-8.

courts were established far from the control of the ulama. A telegraph linked Damascus to Istanbul in 1861 and new roads which shortened the travel times provided more effective control on the region by centralization of provinces and implementation of administrative reforms. In addition to reforms and official regulations, technological developments increased centralization of the region which resulted with the loss of power by ulama and other local agents. Besides the traditional madrasas, new missionary state schools were opened under the Egyptian regime and some of the Syrian students were sent to study in Egypt where they met the western type of education for the first time.

Starting from 1880, in addition to European schools, new state schools were established in the city. The curriculum of these European and state schools included modern and western subjects. In this period of new developments in cultural and intellectual life of Damascus were emerged. The first printing house was set up and it began to publish books on mathematics, medicine, literature, and history of western countries. In the second half of the nineteenth century, journals and newspapers began to be emerged. *Suriya*, the first newspaper in Arabic and Turkish, was published in 1865. By means of these new prints, the Syrians became more familiar with the developments in the west.<sup>57</sup>

The main factor of the impact of ulama in the community was the Islamic knowledge: when they controlled the knowledge, they could control important posts and wealth. However, political reforms changed the classical cultural and social life and this resulted in decline of the importance of religious knowledge and the protectors of this knowledge.<sup>58</sup> New elites and new institutions emerged as a result of

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<sup>57</sup> For the lists of works published in Damascus between 1870 and 1908 and growing of secular trend see Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 19; According to Commins, “During the period of Ottoman reforms known as the *Tanzimat* (1839-1876), administrative, legal, and educational reforms implemented in Damascus reduced the ulama's influence in two ways. First, the reforms diminished their power by consolidating central control over Damascus and by increasing lay representation on the various new provincial councils. Second, the reforms' underlying assumptions and explicit ideas challenged the ulama's authority by putting in doubt the relevance of their expertise. The bureaucrats and officials who devised the reforms represented an emerging social group with its own outlook and interests that clashed with those of the ulama”. See Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

these developments. Ulama could not get the advantage of this process and began falling in lower positions in comparison to the new rising elites. According to some researchers, these new trends of Islamic thought were the trends or demands of some socio-economical groups that was defined as “the bourgeoisie and the lesser aristocracy”, “middle shaykhs”, “bourgeois essence”.<sup>59</sup> Commins refers to the ulama in Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi’s circle,

They also shared a common position in the ranks of the ulama, namely, middling status, modest wealth, and local posts, but not official posts or the most prestigious local posts. These men stood a cut below the high ulama who monopolized the most important religious posts and accumulated great wealth.<sup>60</sup>

This new intellectual elite was different from the traditional ulama not only with their posts but also with their political interests. For instance, while important and high positions of ulama were fined and exiled for inciting the riots against the Christians in 1860, reformer ulama in the circle of Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi did not support the intervention against the Christian population and protested against the riots. Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi protected non-Muslims in the events and this was welcomed by the western powers.<sup>61</sup> Commins also explains the reasons of the bases for their different interest:

Salafis criticized the practices of Damascus’s official ulama and implied that they themselves possessed the intellectual and moral qualifications for high posts. Therefore, within the boundaries of ulama status group, Salafism represented the outlook of some middle ulama, while in the context of the empire, Salafism expressed the ulama’s desire to recover their former stature.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>61</sup> On May 1860 an interfaith civil conflict broke out in the Mount Lebanon and caused much havoc and heavy Muslim and Christian casualties in Damascus. On the events of 1860 and aftermath turmoil see Leila Tarrazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi played important role in this conflict and protected great number of non-Muslims. For further information see John W. Kiser, *Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd-el-Kader, 1808-1883* (New York, Monksfish, 2008), p. 298; for the background of the events see, Ma’oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine*, p. 18.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

Another important clue to understand social roots of reform is the debate over *ijtihad*. High ranking ulama in the courts were referring to one of four legal schools in decision making but this practice was perceived as emulation by the reformers. The emulation could be only applicable for ordinary people but not ulama, so official ulama in these courts must avoid emulation and the gate of *ijtihad* must be opened. To reformers, this new orientation would provide progress for the Islamic nations. However, criticizing this new Salafi approach against the traditional practice was perceived by the high ranking ulama as threat to their authority. To open the gate of *ijtihad* meant to close the gates of their power and authority.<sup>63</sup>

Wahhabism was one of the early agents that called reform in religious thought in the eighteenth century. Ulama had already been familiar with the ideas of Wahhabis, a group led by Muhammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1702-1792) in Saudi Arabia. Followers of the Wahhabism stood against sacredness of the tombs of the Islamic saints and called practices that attach respect to these tombs as polytheism (*şirk*). With the financial and military support of the Su‘ud family, the Wahhabism extended its influence over Najd and the central Arabian regions. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Wahhabis took control of all the Hejaz region and threatened Syria and Iraq. The Ottomans responded to the Wahhabi uprisings by sending the governor of Egypt, Kavalalı Mehmet Ali and his powerful troops.

In this period, Damascus was threatened by the Wahhabis and Damascene ulama became familiar with their ideas. Originally, the Wahhabis based on Hanbali School and Damascus was one of the leading centers of the Hanbali ulama. However, the Hanbalis in Damascus did not support the new movement. They even defended the sources of their school against this new approach.<sup>64</sup> Although this movement had been eradicated in the eighteenth century by the Ottoman governor, Damascene ulama became more familiar with this thought and it later constituted a base for the reformers in Damascus. Wahhabism could not be only source to the

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<sup>63</sup> Weismann, “Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism”, p. 217.

<sup>64</sup> Commings, “Traditional Anti-Wahhabi Hanbalism in Nineteenth Century Arabia”, pp. 81-97.

reform ideas of Damascene ulama but it was one which affected the ideas of ulama earlier than the other agents. Reformers did not claim themselves as Wahhabis but the concept was generally used as a pejorative term by anti-Salafi ulama against reformers.

It is true that the Muslim reformers in the Ottoman Syria in the nineteenth century adopted Salafi understanding of Islam. The followers of this new approach which claimed themselves as the followers of pious ancestors (*selef-i salihin*),<sup>65</sup> the decline of the Muslim state and societies were due to their misunderstanding of the message of Islam. To recover from the decline, the Muslims had to understand Islam by looking at its original form. To the Salafis, Islam was a rational religion and cannot be against progressivism; therefore, the Muslims should abandon the practice of imitation of the legal rulings of the predecessors (*taqlid*) since these practices made Islamic thought limited. These ideas that can be seen in the other parts of the Muslim world in different forms in the second half of the nineteenth century are still underlying modern Islamic thought or Islamism.<sup>66</sup>

It was these debates and discussions that shaped the intellectual activities of the conservative and reformer ulama in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In their struggle against conservative ulama in Damascus, the reformists tried to find support from leading figures abroad. The figures came to region from outside became very influential for the intellectual life in Damascus and Islamic reform movement. One of these figures was an Algerian, Abd-al Qadir al-Jazairi.

Alusi family of ulama in Baghdad was an important contact for the reformers in Syria. Both Damascene ulama and Alusis tried to revive the theories of the thirteenth century scholar Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328). Khayr al-Din al-Alusi (1836-1899) met with contemporary Indian Muslim reformer, Siddiq Hasan Khan (d. 1889) in 1878 in Egypt. He was impressed with the new exegesis on

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<sup>65</sup> Commins, "Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus", p. 408.

<sup>66</sup> Mümtazer Türköne, *Siyasal İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılığın Doğuşu* (İstanbul: Lotus Yayınevi, 1991), pp. 32-43.

science and reform of Khan, who was an early figure in the Indian *Ahl-i Hadith* movement, and continued his relations. According to Commins, Siddiq Hasan Khan derived many of his ideas from the works of a Yemeni scholar, Muhammad Ibn Ali al-Shawkani (1760-1835), and those of the eighteenth century Delhi reformer, Shah Wali Allah (1702-1762). Both Shawkani and Shah Wali Allah influenced later reformers in Damascus. Khayr al-Din al-Alusi revived studies on Ibn Taymiyyah and he also sent his son Ali Ala al-Din (1860-1921) to study with Khan in India. Ali had been to Lebanon as an Ottoman official and met with the Syrian reformers in this period.<sup>67</sup> According to Weisman, Damascene ulama first encountered the ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah when Nu'man Khayr al-Din al-Alusi had been in Damascus for a few weeks in 1882.<sup>68</sup> In addition to their relations with Baghdad and Egypt, the Damascene ulama had also contacts with important figures in North Africa and Hejaz. These interactions provided them opportunities to follow the developments outside and to have correspondences with others.

Although the idea of reform was generally perceived as apart from the traditional institutions, most of the traditional orders, Sufi families and mosques in Damascus served to develop reform ideas. One of the most important traditional movements which is worth mentioning was Khalidiyyah Naqshbandiyyah Order that was emerged in nineteenth century in Damascus. Kurdish Naqshbandi Shaykh Abu al-Baha Diya al-Din Khalid al-Shahrazuri (1780-1827) arrived in Damascus in 1820. Shaykh Khalid studied with scholars of the Naqshbandiyyah Order in India who were famous with their call to return to the scriptural. This idea for the first time was put forward by Shah Wali Allah, an Indian scholar in the eighteenth century. The discussions among Sufis about returning to scriptural sources could be seen as a Sufi domestic issue. The Khalidiyyah Order in Damascus was in the part called to return the original sources. Shaykh Khalid developed Naqshbandiyyah order with the ideas of the Indian Sufis and established branches in and outside of Damascus.

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<sup>67</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 25.

<sup>68</sup> Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism", p. 209.



Khalidiyyah branch of Naqshbandiyyah Order would be influential for the entire region; it still has millions of followers among Kurdish, Arabic and Turkish people.<sup>69</sup>

This Khalidiyyah Naqshbandiyyah Order contributed to the reform activities in Damascus. The relation of the Order with the reformers started with the Khani family. In 1826, Abd Allah al-Khani (1798-1862) was invited to Damascus by Sheikh Khalid. He became the Sheikh of the order when Sheikh Khalid died in 1827. The members of the Khani family attended the circle of Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi and their relations with this figure continued for three generations.<sup>70</sup> In 1825, when Abd al-Qadir returned from the pilgrimage, he and his father stayed in Damascus for a while and served in Shaykh Khalid's lodge where the relation of Jazairi with this family started.

Bitar family was another important family in Damascus. Hasan al-Bitar was a well-known scholar in the city and his sons Salim and Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar were the members of the Jazair's circles. Later, Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar emerged as an important reformer figure who started correspondence with Muhammad Abduh in 1885. Bitar and Khani family were similar to each other with their adventures in context of reform circles in Damascus.<sup>71</sup>

Tahir al-Jazairi (1852-1920) was another Algerian who was also a member of the reform circles in Damascus. Tahir was among the Algerians who migrated after long resistance against France. He was also a relative of Amir and had been his circle and even continued his activism in Damascus. As well as Tahir al-Jazairi, most of the Algerian families who migrated to Syria took part in Abd al-Qadir's circle. Tahir al-Jazairi's father Salih al-Jazairi (d. 1868) came to Damascus after the French invasion of Algeria and they both took part in Amir's circle. Tahir al-Jazairi also played an important role in the reform circles in the city and had good relation with Midhat

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<sup>69</sup> On the early history of the Naqshbandiyyah see Hamid Algar, "The Naqshbandi Order: A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance," *Studia Islamica*, 44 (1976), pp. 123-152; J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>70</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 37.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Pasha (1822-1883) during his governorship in 1878.<sup>72</sup> They cooperated to establish the first modern state schools in Syria while Tahir supported the establishment of the first public library in Damascus. He was educational inspector and responsible to reform the educational institutions. However, he was dismissed by Abdülhamid for his relations with Midhad Pasha.<sup>73</sup> Tahir al-Jazairi became influential in Damascus particularly following the death of Abd al-Qadir in 1883. A new circle emerged around him and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi in the following decades.

Qasimi family was another important agent in the Damascene ulama. As a member of the third generation of the family, Jamal al-Din played a crucial role in developing the reform ideas. Jamal al-Din's grandfather was Qasim al-Hallaq (1806-1867) who was a hairdresser in Damascus in 1820s and left the trade when he went to study at al-Azhar. He later participated in ulama circles and became a famous scholar in Damascus. Qasim al-Hallaq became a leader in Sinaniyyah Mosque and this provided an important career for him and his children. Muhammad Sa'id al-Qasimi (1843-1900) became the leader in the mosque when his father died in 1867. Jamal al-Din was the elder son of Muhammad Sa'id and he was well educated in the Islamic sciences. Jamal al-Din would be very influential in reform circles with some other contemporary figures such as Tahir al-Jazairi in Damascus and their circle would be called as *Madhhab al-Jamâlî* by the anti-Salafi ulama.

The figures of the early Islamic reform movements in the Arab world were also accepted as the first nationalists and modernization agents by many authors. It is due to the fact that both terms reflect modern trends and sometimes these concepts are interrelated. Since the close relation of Arabism with Islamic reformism, the studies on the Arabic thought and history generally evaluate both trends as the same. According to Ernest Dawn, Islamism was an early version of modern movement in the Arab lands. The process started with Islamism continued and evolved to

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<sup>72</sup> For the relations between Midhat Pasha and reformers in Damascus during his short-term governorship see Zachs, *The Making of Syrian Identity*, pp. 115-118.

<sup>73</sup> Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 48.

Arabism. The backgrounds of the famous Arab nationalists support this claim.<sup>74</sup> In addition to Dawn, Commins distinguishes the Arab nationalists from Islamist according to their generations.

Commins divides the reform period into three different phases particularly for Damascus. First generation was around Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi's circle from 1850 to 1880s. This circle contains sophisticated members from early reformists and conservative ulama such as Tahir al-Jazari. On the other hand, second generation figures were generally born around 1860s and became leading figures in reform activism in the eighties and the nineties. Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and Tahir al-Jazari's circle were examples of this generation. The Salafi emphasis of this group was more determinate. The third generation in the reform history was those who were born after 70s. They became famous Arabist figures in the region. The common ground of the young students who were the members of Tahir al-Jazairi and Qasimi's circle was their educational background. Most of the figures in the third generation in the reform circles were the young people who received secular education and had familiarity with western ideas.<sup>75</sup>

The reasons for the development of Arab nationalism in the third generation are also disputed among authors. According to Antonius, Arab nationalism was the reaction towards Turkish barbarism. This view of the author was criticized by many authors in the next generation. Ernest Dawn, for example, emphasizes interrelated conflicts of different social classes among the Arab elites in development of nationalism.<sup>76</sup> Most of the others such as Zeine, Tibawi, Sharabi, Tibi and Khalidi emphasize the effects of the Turkish nationalist politics of the CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) on the revival of Arab nationalism.<sup>77</sup>

The reaction against reformers aroused when their ideas in Damascus became notable after 1880s. With the support of the authorities and the public, the

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<sup>74</sup> Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 89.

<sup>76</sup> Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

conservative anti-Salafi ulama reacted to modern ideas. Conservative ulama camp included high ranking and influential figures in Damascus. The early reactions against Salafis turned to be more organized intellectual efforts when the periodical of *Al-Haqa'iq* was appeared in 1910. *Al-Haqa'iq* was the monthly journal of anti-Salafi ulama. A number of important figures were associated with this journal. Arif al-Munayyir (1847-1923), Abd al-Qadir al-Iskendarani, Abd- al-Qadir al-Khatip, Hashim al-Khatip(1875-1960), Badr al-Din al-Hasani (1851-1936), Shaykh As'ad al-Sahib (1855-1926), Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi (1869-1920), Muhammad al-Qasimi (Jamal al-Din's uncle), Mukhtar al Mu'ayyad al-Azm (d.1921) were among those who took action against Salafis and contributed to the journal with their articles.

Before 1908, the conservative ulama benefited from the policies of Sultan Abdulhamid who supported traditional Sufi orders and some important leaders of these movements.<sup>78</sup> In the early years of reform activism in Damascus, the conservative ulama tried to get the attraction of the Ottoman administration on reformers and their activities, however, the Ottoman administration did not pay attention to their activities until the intellectual issue became a political problem. As a result of the endeavors of the conservative ulama and political developments in Syria in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the reformers in Damascus were interrogated several times but did not have any serious punishment.

When some important figures fled to Egypt and started to campaign against Abdulhamid, the Damascene reformers and their contacts in Egypt were taken into consideration by the administration. The British supported claims on caliphate and the relation of the British with Muhammad Abduh and his circle in Egypt aroused suspicions over reformers who were in contact with the Egyptian figures. In addition to reform circle in Egypt, the rise of the new Wahhabi movement in Najd, that rejected the Ottoman caliphate, the rebellion of Zaydi Imam Yahya in Yemen who claimed to be the caliph increased the fears of the Ottoman authorities against

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<sup>78</sup> For further information on the politics of Abdülhamid in his period see Gökhan Çetinsaya, "The Caliph and the Shaykhs: Abdülhamid II's Policy Towards the Qadiriyya of Mosul" in Weismann, Itzhak and Zachs (eds.), *Ottoman Reform and Islamic Regeneration*, pp. 97-105.

Islamic reformers. Especially the strong opposition of the Young Turks and their activities in the European countries made Salafis a suspicious, illegal focal point in the eyes of the authorities.<sup>79</sup>

The roles and expectations of the ulama changed in the long history of reform especially during the constitutional period. When new constitution was announced in the last year of Abdulhamid in 1908, this was welcomed by the opposition groups, Islamists, the CUP, Arabists and Non-Muslims. In the new constitutional period, Salafis sided with the CUP and conservative ulama continued their support on Abdülhamid. With the military coup in 1909, the conservative camp was defeated and they needed new allies in their struggle against the reformist camp. The CUP became an important ally of the conservative ulama when the Hamidian period was ended. The conservatives continued their struggle against the reformist camp with the help of the CUP. They also benefited from the intellectual atmosphere of the constitutional process that with the publication of their famous journal *al-Haqa'iq* in this period.<sup>80</sup> They criticized general principals of the reformers by applying to the traditional sources. Although traditional ulama criticized Salafis on their theories about progressivism, this journal was also to call the progressivism and to borrow technical means from Europe. In this period, even anti-Salafis were under the pressure of the overarching paradigm and had to defend Islam as compatible with the modern conditions.

In the constitutional period, the works of both sides were revived with the new environment of freedom. With the new constitution, the reformers could return to Damascus and the CUP held celebrations across the country. This process was the

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<sup>79</sup> Azmi Özcan, “İngiltere'de Hilafet Tartışmaları (1873–1909)”, *Turkish Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2 (1998), pp. 50-55; Tufan Buzpınar, “II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Osmanlı Hilafetine Muhalefetin Ortaya Çıkışı, 1877–1882,” İsmail Kara (ed.), *Hilafet Risaleleri: Abdülhamid Devri* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2002), pp. 37-61.

<sup>80</sup> The first issue was published in August 1910. Abd al-Qadir al-Iskandarani al-Kaylani, listed five subjects that *al-Haqa'iq* would address: religious sciences, Arabic language, ethics, history, and literature. *Al-Haqa'iq* defended the traditional view of Islam against reformers in Damascus. For further information see; Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, pp.118-119; for a description of *al-Haqa'iq*, see Juzuf Ilyas, *Tatawwur al-sihafah al-suriyyah fi al-ahd al-uthmani* Lebanese University, Graduate Thesis, 1972, pp. 175-176, 179-180.

break out of reformist ideas in the Ottoman press and intellectual life. So many new organizations with their new journals appeared. While the constitution provided new atmosphere for the free will and freedom of expression for all the groups, the expectation from the constitution was unrealistic and all the groups other than the CUP were disappointed with the constitutional process. This disappointment was one of the leading factors which directed Salafis to Arabism.<sup>81</sup> After the disappointment from the constitutional process, a new balance emerged among the actors. While Arabists, the Salafi ulama and the non-Muslims supported the Liberal Entente which was founded in November 1911, the conservative ulama began to support the CUP, their former rivalry. Traditional supporters of Abdülhamid became the allies of the CUP against reformers after several years of a coup in 1909. Elections in 1912 that the Salafis supported Liberal Entente and conservatives supported the CUP justified this new balance.<sup>82</sup>

When the First World War started, this balance did not change. However, Arabism became more influential. In the administration of Jamal Pasha in Syria, many figures from the reformers and Arabist camp were interrogated, hung, or fled to Egypt. Shukri al-Asali (1878-1916), Abd al-Wahhab al-Inklizi (1878-1916), Salim al-Jazairi (1879-1916), and Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi (1871-1916) were hung and some of the important Salafis exiled to Anatolia. Most of the Salafis who already had antagonism against the CUP, supported Arab uprising during the war.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Tufan Buzpınar, "The Use of Constitutionalism as a Means of Opposition to Abdülhamid II's Regime; Constitutionalism among the Syrians", *Civilacademy: Journal of Social Scienses*, 8/1 (2010), p. 9; Zeine, *Türk-Arap İlişkileri ve Arap Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>82</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 138; Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 116-130.

<sup>83</sup> Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 192-196.

## **1.1.A POLITICAL ACTIVIST IN DAMASCUS:**

### **AMIR ABD AL-QADIR AL-JAZAIRI**

Amir Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi's life after his migration to Syria would be examined due to his important role in developing reform ideas in Damascus. Amir Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi was a leading person of the resistance movement against France in Algeria from 1832 until 1847 which provided him great prestige in the eyes of Arabs. Amir Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi was well educated in Islamic and western science. He was educated in Arzew, one of the port towns in Algeria and he grew up cognizant about the developments in the West. Abd al-Qadir first left the country when he traveled to Macca for pilgrimage in 1925. On his way he and his father visited Egypt under the rule of Muhammad Ali Pasha and were impressed with the reforms in the country. He also had a long struggle with French and this provided him an opportunity to learn about the importance of technical developments in the war field when he led the resistance movement from 1832 to 1847. At the end of his long resistance Amir Abd al-Qadir was captured by the French in 1947 and was imprisoned for five years in France. Following his release he went to Istanbul and resided in Bursa for three years. Amir was charismatic resistant figure and he won the admiration of European and Islamic countries in his long resistance period. His arriving in Istanbul was admired and celebrated by the crowds of people and he stayed in Bursa for three years.<sup>84</sup>

After an earthquake in 1855 Amir wanted to migrate to Damascus, where he visited in his youth. There had been also great amount of Algerians that migrated to Syria following the resistance which lasted until 1847. He chose Syria to reside in because the Algerian immigrants were mostly under the domination of Amir. He was permitted to migrate to Damascus with his followers by Ottoman and French

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<sup>84</sup> Churchill, *The Life of Abdel Kader*, p. 300; Ali Nedjmi, *Emir Abdülkadir'in Cezayir'deki Direniş Hareketi ve Osmanlı Topraklarındaki Faaliyetleri*, Marmara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Basılmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi (1992), p. 22.

authorities. Due to his reputation, Abd al-Qadir became important actor in Syrian intellectual life in a short time.<sup>85</sup>

Sufi Shaykh Khalid al-Naqshbandi and his follower Muhammad al-Khani were among the early contacts of Amir Abd al-Qadir in Damascus. In 1825 when he was returning from pilgrimage he and his father stayed in Damascus for four month and stayed in the service of Sufi Shaykh Khalid al-Naqshbandi. In his residing with Shaykh Khalid he met with Muhammad al-Khani and learned about the practices of Naqshbandi order. He visited tomb of *Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani (1077-1166)* in Baghdad and met with his successors in this period.<sup>86</sup> This old relation with al-Khani helped him to adopt and participate in Damascus's elite circles in his arrival in 1855.<sup>87</sup>

However Amir Abd al-Qadir was not the only one who migrated to Syria. Following the long resistance lasted in 1947; resistance figures like Amir Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi, and Ahmed Ben Salim surrendered to France. Algerian resistance families were allowed to leave the country and migrate to Syria. The numbers of the Algerians who migrated to Syria were more than ten thousand and migration continued until 1910.<sup>88</sup> The status of Algerian refugees turned to a controversial issue in the level of local and central administration.<sup>89</sup> Ottomans took into consideration

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<sup>85</sup> After the French occupation in Algeria in 1847 a great number of Algerians left their countries and migrated to Syria. The numbers of Algerians who migrated to Syria were more than ten thousands and migration continued until 1910. This also became disputed issue among Ottomans, French and Algerians. For further information on Algerians in Syria see Tufan Buzpinar, "Suriye'ye Yerleşen Cezayirlilerin Tabiiyeti Meselesi, 1847-1900", *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi/Turkish Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1/1 (1997) p. 95.

<sup>86</sup> Muslu, *Emir Abdülkadir el-Cezairi*, p. 32.

<sup>87</sup> Commins explains how Abd al-Qadir became famous actor in Damascus: "By 1855, Jazairi enjoyed entree to the highest political circles in Europe and the Ottoman Empire. He had met with the French emperor three times, the Ottoman sultan twice, and with high military and civilian officials in both France and the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, when he arrived in Damascus in November 1855, the Ottoman governor of Syria, the military commander, local notables, ulama, and townspeople gathered to greet the Algerian hero. During his first years there, he purchased several homes in town and rural lands in southern Syria, northern Palestine, and Damascus's environs. Using money from the enormous pension Napoleon III provided him, the amir became one of the largest landholders in the province". See Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 28.

<sup>88</sup> Buzpinar, "Suriye'ye Yerleşen Cezayirlilerin Tabiiyeti Meselesi", p. 95.

<sup>89</sup> Algerians had started to migrate to the Ottoman Syria before Abd al-Qadir in 1848, after the completion of French occupation. Buzpinar, "Suriye'ye Yerleşen Cezayirlilerin Tabiiyeti Meselesi", p. 95.



the idea of French intervention by using Algerians as an instrument. That Algerians could claim French nationality to be exempt of taxes and using benefits from France's protection. As a result of these fears, Algerians were forced to settle in the interior zones of Syria. They were not allowed to reside in coastal areas since the Ottomans were anxious about the France involvement in the region.<sup>90</sup>

When Abd al-Qadir arrived to Damascus the local ulama invited him to give lectures in Umayyad mosque. These lectures were continued in madrasas and other mosques but mostly in his house. Some local ulama became followers of Amir Abd al-Qadir's lessons and new circle around him appeared in Damascus and in the cities of Lebanon. When we consider the declining the status of ulama in the Tanzimat period, Abd al-Qadir became an attractive figure with his large amount of wealth and new Islamic vision. Numerous number of important families like; Khanis, Bitars, Jazairis and Qasimis; some important figures like Abd al Ghani al-Ghunaymi al-Maydani(1807-1881), Tahir al-Jazairi, Salim al-Bukhari (1851-1927), Abd al-Hakim al-Afghani (1834-1908), Abd al-Baqi al-Afghani (d.1905), Abd al-Qadir ibn Badran (1848-1927) and Ahmad al-Nuwaylati (1868-1938) were in the circle of Abd al-Qadir. As it was stated above they shared a common position in the ranks of ulama, namely middling status, modest wealth, and local posts. In addition to Damascene ulama, Amir had also relations with reformers outside of Damascus like; Shakip Arslan (1869-1946), Muhammad Kurd Ali (1876-1953), and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> After the occupation of Tunis in 1881, the Ottomans became more anxious about the French involvement in Syria and provide more opportunities to Algerians. In the last quarter of nineteenth century, French penetration to Syria was the priority of the French policy in the region, which justified Ottoman fears. Amir Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi was the leading person for the Algerians in this country and he and his sons had good relations with French. They got good amount of wealth from French and Ottomans at the same time. French could find opportunity to use their penetration by using one of Amir's sons, particularly Amir Hashim. Amir Abd al Qadir al-Jazairi died in 1883 but his son, Amir Hashim, continued his relations with France. Although there had been some tensions like the asylum of the Algerian criminals to French consular and French protection of Algerian criminals in 1888, see BOA, Y.A: HUS, 211/72 1305 Cemaziyel Ahir, 26, 19; BOA. MKT. MHM 416/3, 1285, Rabiul Ahir, 17, 4; in the words of Tufan Buzpinar, the question resulted in favor of the Ottomans: "[A]s time progressed the Ottomans took the lead and by the end of the century the overwhelming majority of the Algerian immigrants in Syria became Ottoman subjects." Buzpinar, "Suriye'ye Yerleşen Cezayirlilerin Tabiiyeti Meselesi, 1847-1900", p. 91.

<sup>91</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 223.

In the essay he wrote before migration to Damascus, Abd al-Qadir criticizes traditional practices of ulama and states that the ulama must avoid emulation that this harms our societies and the ulama must practice the rational way to make decisions. In the discussions about reason and knowledge, Abd al-Qadir defends the harmony of religion with rational knowledge. He references to rationalist philosophers in the history of Islamic thought to justify progressive ideas. Muslims must abandon the practice of blind imitation of past authorities (*taqlid*) and this will help them to make use of their own rational as Europeans did.<sup>92</sup>

According to Abd al-Qadir, when someone reconsiders the knowledge and reason in Islamic philosophy he could see how Islam affirms principles of science and the basis of progress. He used many quotations from the works of Plato and Aristotle in his lectures. The ideas expressed by Abd al-Qadir and very few intellectuals in those years would be motto for the next generation reformers, particularly in Damascus. Abd al-Qadir used an eclectic method in his studies and lectures on Quranic exegesis and this was attractive for the ulama and students in his circle.<sup>93</sup> There were approximately sixty students in his circle and mostly his lectures were about Quran and the Hadith.<sup>94</sup>

Besides his political and social personality he had a Sufistic vision that he entered Qadiri order in his early life in Algeria and related with other Sufi traditions.<sup>95</sup> He also studied more on Ibn Arabi and his well-known book *The Meccan Revelations*.<sup>96</sup> He sent two of ulama from his circle to Anatolian province Konya to study and make corrections on this work. He contributed to the revival of interest in Ibn Arabi in his book *Kitab al-mawaqif fi al-tasawwuf wa al-wa'z wa al-irshad*,<sup>97</sup> still is one of applicable source in this field. He also discussed true religious mysticism in his studies, criticizing some rituals of Sufism calling for the true

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<sup>92</sup> Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism", p. 217.

<sup>93</sup> Nedjmi, *Emir Abdülkadir'in Cezayir'deki Direniş Hareketi*, p. 32.

<sup>94</sup> Churchill, *The Life of Abdel Kader*, p. 307.

<sup>95</sup> Muslu, *Emir Abdülkadir el-Cezairi: Hayatı ve Tasavvufi Görüşleri*, p. 24.

<sup>96</sup> Ibn 'Arabî, *Al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, vols. 1–4 (Beirut: n.p).

<sup>97</sup> Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi, *Kitab al-mawaqif fi al-tasawwuf wa al-wa'z wa al-irshad*, 3 vols. (Damascus, 1966).

practice of Sharia. Although Amir himself was a member of different Sufi orders, his ideas on Sufism would be adopted by the next generation of reformers which emphasized true understanding of Sufism and the roots of the religion. According to Abd al-Qadir, the essence of religion and the law of religion is more important than the Sufism, and no one could claim that he follows Sufism rather than the law of the religion.

One of the important opinions of Abd al-Qadir was on the relation of Muslims with non-Muslims, according to Amir, the relations with Christians and Jews must be in brotherhood. This opinion reflects his practices against French prisoners in Algeria which gave him a respected position in the eye of Europeans. His role in the events in Syria and Lebanon occurred between Muslims and non-Muslims in 1860, clarified his approach against non-Muslims. His ideas and practices to protect non-Muslims were well admired by western governments after the events. During the events in Lebanon and Syria started in 1960 between Druzes and Marunits, Abd al-Qadir played important role to stop the murders against Christians and intervened for the sake of Christians and protected many of them. The numbers of the Christians who were protected by Amir in this period was about fifteen-thousand.<sup>98</sup> Amir moved with his followers, about 1,000 armed Algerians and collected unprotected Christians from their houses and carried them to his own headquarters.<sup>99</sup> When the armed groups wanted Christians under the protection of Amir, he refused to give up the Christians and defended them. Some foreign diplomats and workers of the counselors were in the group protected by Abd al-Qadir in this period.<sup>100</sup>

When the events broke out and became an international issue, French invaded coastal parts of Lebanon and Ottoman administration and intervened and kept events under control to prevent further violence. These events and Abd al-Qadir's protection gave him plaudits in European public opinion and governments. He was considered

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<sup>98</sup> Nedjmi, *Emir Abdülkadir'in Cezayir'deki Direniş Hareketi*, p. 37.

<sup>99</sup> Churchill, *The Life of Abdel Kader*, p. 313.

<sup>100</sup> Kiser, *Commander of the Faithful*, p. 298; for the background of the events see Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine*, p. 18.

as the supporter of the non-Muslim and was given awards, gifts and medals by Russia, France, Britain, Prussia, Greece and Ottomans.<sup>101</sup> It was written about heroism of Abd al-Qadir in newspapers and articles and western public opinion admired his efforts. He was also invited to European countries and French citizenship was granted to Abd al-Qadir and the salary which was paid to Amir by France was raised in 1865.<sup>102</sup>

With the help of these events Jazairi increased his protection and wealth from the western countries in Damascus and this aroused suspicion of him. When Turkish authorities ordered general disarmament in Damascus after the events, French consul intervened to accept Jazairi and his community.<sup>103</sup> Amir emerged as an important political figure after 1860 and he was seen as candidate for prospective leader of Arabs. When he was asked by French journalist about his future leadership of Syria he answered as he did not want to be active in politics and he wanted to continue his life without disturbing authorities in Istanbul.<sup>104</sup>

After the events which provided him important fame in the eyes of Europeans, Amir contacted the Masons. According to Commins; Abd al-Qadir Jazairi joined the Masons at the Alexandria meeting when he had been to Egypt. The Masons also admired him for his valuable support in the riots of 1860 and wanted him to participate and help the organization in the Arab lands. Commins also noted that there had been some correspondence of Jazairi with the members of a Parisian lodge. However in 1865 he ended his relations with Masons in his visit to Paris and explained them how it is difficult to establish a Mason lodge because the Ottoman government did not tolerate nor propagate freemasonry and the public is not ready for this kind of organization.<sup>105</sup> However, according to Kiser, the Amir was named honorary grand master of the Syrian Masonic Lodge in Damascus and the relations

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<sup>101</sup> Churchill, *The Life of Abdel Kader*, p. 320.

<sup>102</sup> BOA, DVN. MHM. 31/2 1277 Safer; Kiser, *Commander of the Faithful*, p. 314; for further information on the image of Abd al-Qadir in the western world see Adil Baktaya, "1830: Fransa'nın Cezayir'i İşgali, Abdülkadir'in Yükselişi ve Amerikan Kamuoyunda 'Abdülkadir' Hayranlığı", *Ortaoğu Etütleri* 2/2, (2010), pp. 143-169.

<sup>103</sup> Churchill, *The Life of Abdel Kader*, p. 319.

<sup>104</sup> Kiser, *Commander of the Faithful*, p. 311.

<sup>105</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 30.

of Amir with Masonic Lodge “Henry IV” lasted until 1877.<sup>106</sup> The most relevant source about Abd al-Qadir, *Charles Henry Churchill’s famous book The life of Abdel Kader and at the same time friend of Amir affirms his relations with Masons in Cairo.*<sup>107</sup>

Another important period which gives Abd al-Qadir chance to play political role was the Ottoman Russian war in 1877-78 when the Syrian elites felt the threat of Britain and France and elected prospective leader of Ottoman Syria. They arranged secret committee which would discuss the future of the Syria in case of the defeat of Ottoman Empire. This secret committee nominated Amir Abd al-Qadir as the prospective leader of Syria. The leader of this group was Ahmad al-Sulh and the meeting was held in Beirut during the war. According to the decisions of the committee; they would demand independence in case of occupation of Syria by any European country. If Syria would not be invaded, it must be autonomous country dependent on caliphate to Istanbul.<sup>108</sup>

This was important turning point for the autonomous thought of the region as an Arab country. However, this committee became meaningless in the post war period, but it was good example to understand how Abd al-Qadir became influential within the Syrian elites when they nominated a non-Syrian as a leader of the country. Of course this was due to his fame in the long resistance against French in Algeria and his relations with European powers and his reputation in the eye of them. Some of the members of this committee were exiled and Abd al-Qadir was not allowed to meet with al-Sulh in post war period.<sup>109</sup> Following years of Abd al-Qadir’s nomination, some anonymous statements appeared in Beirut calling the independence of Arabs to get rid of the Turks.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Kiser, *Commander of the Faithful*, p. 313.

<sup>107</sup> Churchill, *The Life of Abdel Kader*, p. 328.

<sup>108</sup> Zeine, *Türk-Arap İlişkileri ve Arap Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*, p. 60.

<sup>109</sup> Zeine, *Türk-Arap İlişkileri ve Arap Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*, p. 61.

<sup>110</sup> These statements were first appeared in the streets of Beirut as anonymous placards, which stickled on the walls of the city near to foreign embassies and governmental buildings. This secret action repeated three times in the city and the statements spreaded to other Arab territories. Who organized these actions is still uncertain but Midhat Pasha and some revolutionary secret Arabism organizations supposed as the responsible of this activity. For further information see; BOA, Yıldız Ar. Kısım, no:

Abd al Qadir became important actor for European countries which they try to increase their penetration into the region. Initially French offered Abd al-Qadir to be leader of Arab lands under French protection. A famous Briton, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922) visited Abd al-Qadir and discussed with him the future caliphate and the leadership of Arabs. The situation in the early years of Abdülhamid did not allow this kind of interventions but great powers kept their agenda of the caliphate until the end of the Hamidian period.<sup>111</sup>

Another important source for the reform ideas in Damascus was the Turkish authorities and their impact on the intellectual life of Damascus. Reform ideas of Turkish intellectuals are not scope of this thesis but their relations with Syrian intellectual circles like Abd al-Qadir and Tahir al-Jazairi is worth to be mentioned in terms of this study. The most famous governor of Syria in the Tanzimat period was Rashid Pasha (d. 1876) who implemented Tanzimat reforms in Syria in close solidarity with reform circles.<sup>112</sup> However, the relations of the Abd al-Qadir's circle with Turkish reformers started with the governorship of Ziya Pasha (1825-1880) in 1877. Ziya Pasha was the leading figure of the Young Ottomans and one of the defenders of constitutional regime.<sup>113</sup> After the announcement of the constitution Abdülhamid suspended the new constitution and parliament. The young sultan also sent constitutionalist figures to provincial duties to different parts of the Empire. Ziya Pasha was the first who arrived to Damascus and stayed for nine months. After Ziya Pasha, military administration took the control of Damascus for the continuing war until civil governor Ahmed Cevdet Pasha (1822-1895), the famous Tanzimat reformer arrived in March 1878. His first-rate knowledge of Arabic helped him to

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18, Evr. no: 94/26; Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, pp. 47-54; Zeine, *Türk-Arap İlişkileri ve Arap Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*, p. 61; Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 33; Tufan Buzpınar, "Osmanlı Suriye'sinde Türk Aleyhtarı İlanlar ve Bunlara Karşı Tepkiler, 1878-1881," pp. 73-89.

<sup>111</sup> Buzpınar, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Osmanlı Hilafetine Muhalefetin Ortaya Çıkışı", p. 59.

<sup>112</sup> On Rashid Pasha see Zachs, *The Making of Syrian Identity*, p. 104.

<sup>113</sup> The Young Ottomans were a group of Turkish intellectual who had come together in 1865. They wanted to develop Tanzimat policies with constitutionalism; they were the first Islamists in the Ottoman Empire that called for an-Islamic unity of the realm against the colonialist European countries. For further information the roots of Islamism see Türköne, *Siyasal İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılığın Doğuşu*, pp. 32-43.

connect with Damascene ulama, like the Amir Abd al-Qadir. Midhat Pasha (1822-1884) was appointed as the follower of Cevdet Pasha with the great hope of reformers. In his governorship, Midhat Pasha established a society to develop the policy of reform in Damascus and opened new schools for the Muslim identities of Syria. Important figures of this period in Damascus like; Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi, Tahir al-Jazairi cooperated with Midhat in new reform policy. The founder of Zahiriyah Library in Damascus Tahir al-Jazairi was one of the members of this group and he could establish the library with the assistance of this society.<sup>114</sup>

With the help of Turkish constitutionalists, Syrian reformers learned about constitutional ideas which they would use these ideas as a means for their opposition to Abdühamid in his ruling period. In addition to Turkish constitutionalists there were also some Syrian figures like; Selim Faris al-Shidyaq (1804-1887) and Khalil Ghanim, both of them exiled agents who defended constitutional ideas which also became effective for Syrian reformers. In addition to these constitutionalist figures, Islamists like; Afghani and Abduh also helped to develop constitutional ideas in Damascus.<sup>115</sup>

Abd al-Qadir played important role for the Syrian reformers with his great amount of wealth and his international fame. He had already relations with the leading figures of European countries. In addition to his relations with the contemporary figures in the European countries, he was also in touch with figures in Islamic countries. He used his relations with Egyptian ruling families to re-organize relations with Ottomans in his visit to Egypt in 1863-64.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Buzpinar, "The Use of Constitutionalism as a Means of Opposition to Abdülhamid II's Regime; Constitutionalism among the Syrians", p. 7; On Ziya Pasha's life and ideas see Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, pp. 337-359.

<sup>115</sup> Buzpinar explains how constitution was used as a tool for opposition by different groups including Islamic reformers and non-Muslims, according to Buzpinar the groups used constitution as a tool for opposition unconsciously in 1908. See Buzpinar, "The Use of Constitutionalism as a Means of Opposition", pp. 7-9.

<sup>116</sup> One of most interesting relation of Amir was with Shaykh Shamil, Caucasian resistant figure against Russians. They had known each other from their pilgrimage performance before the resistance in 1830. They continued their correspondence even after their exile. They also met in Egypt in Amir's travel to Hacc when Shamil was exiled to Medina. Both of them were exiled and defeated Muslim

Abd al-Qadir's circle in Damascus became school for the reformers. Most of the leading figures of the Syrian reformers, Islamists and Arabists are people related with Abd al-Qadir or influenced by his eclectic Islamic vision. Abd al-Qadir's wealth and international vision helped them to establish relations with the reformers in other countries. In 1883 some Egyptians exiled to Beirut including Muhammad Abduh. When they arrived to Beirut, Amir Abd al-Qadir sent his son to meet these important Egyptian figures in Beirut. This was the first contact between the Jazairi's circle and Egyptian reformers. Abd al-Majid al-Khani (1847-1900) and Abd el-Razzaq al-Bitar continued this correspondence with Abduh after this contact. This group continued their relations with Abduh and Afghani after Jazairi's death. They all were the recipients of the Afghani and Abduh's *Urwa al-wuthqa* (The Firmest Bond) in 1884.<sup>117</sup> This journal strengthened the relations between Damascene reformers and external endeavors.

All in all, Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi was an important figure for the Syrian reformers. He played important role especially for the first generation reformers in Damascus. He helped to develop the idea of Islamic rationalism and progressivism with his Sufistic vision and this made him more important in the reformist history. In addition to his sufistic vision and knowledge in Islamic science and philosophy, he was one of the most important political activists of his time and had important roles in politics at the international level. He was the first, among ulama circles in Damascus who expressed the idea of progress and how Muslims had to borrow the technical means of progress. Although this idea was first expressed by Abd al-Qadir in the middle of nineteenth century in Islamic context, it turned to general idea of Damascene elites including Islamists, Arabists and even conservatives in following decades.

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leaders that shared same destiny. Both Shaykh Shamil and Abd al-Qadir were members of important Sufi orders that resisted against foreign occupation. See Churchill, *The Life of Abdel Kader*, p. 321.

<sup>117</sup>*Urwa al-wuthqa* was released as eighteen numbers in 1884 when Abduh and Afghani were in Paris. The journal was prevented to enter the countries under the British occupation. This journal had great influence on Syrian reformers. For further information see Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, *al-Urwah al-wuthqa*; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 110.



One of the most important books of Amir Abd al-Qadir is *Kitab al-mawaqif*<sup>118</sup> shortly known *al-mawaqif* includes information about Amir's Sufi ideas. *Dhikra al-'aqil wa tanbih al-ghafil*<sup>119</sup> which was written on the request of French scholars, summarizes the philosophical views of Amir on rationalism and knowledge. Another study of Amir is *al-Miqrad al-hadd li-qat' lisan muntaqis din al-islam bi al-batil wa al-ilhad*<sup>120</sup> which Amir wrote while in his captivity in France is also about rationalism. He also had one book covering his poems annotated as *Diwan al-Amir Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi*.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi, *Kitab al-mawaqif*.

<sup>119</sup> Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi, *Dhikra al-'aqil wa tanbih al-ghafil* (n.p., 1855).

<sup>120</sup> Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi *al-Miqrad al-hadd li-qat' lisan muntaqis din al-islam bi al-batil wa al-ilhad* (Beirut: n. p., n.d.).

<sup>121</sup> Muslu, "Emir Abdülkadir el-Cezairi, p. 101.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **2. SYRIAN REFORM UNDER THE EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE**

Egypt with ancient history and civilization had great influence on Arab regions. Besides being the location between Asia and Africa, Mediterranean and Nile basin has provided Egypt an important base for a civilization since prehistoric times. The relation of Syria and Egypt goes to early registers and both countries are dubbed as the Cradle of Civilization in the Fertile Crescent. Ottomans conquered Egypt after the battle of Marj Dabiq in the northern part of Syria. When Napoleon invaded Egypt, his aim was to expand to Syria. Even in twentieth century in the sixties there had been unity of states of Egypt and Syria for a short period with the impact of Arab nationalism. During the nineteenth century; Egypt, Syria and Lebanon were vivid centers in terms of reform movements and the developments in these countries affected the whole picture of the region before and after the war period. This study aims to analyze the influence of Egypt on Syrian reform movements under historical, political, and geographical dynamism. Firstly it examines Ibrahim Pasha's occupation of Syria and its effects on Syrian reform movements. Secondly it focuses on the period of British occupation in Egypt in the last quarter of nineteenth century and British interest in Syrian political activism, which aroused fears of Ottoman authorities and resulted with the oppression of the reformers in Syria. Figures like Afghani, Abduh and Rida who were based in Egypt would be scope of this study in terms of their influence on Syria.

In 1811 the powerful Egyptian army entered Arabia to quell Wahhabi uprisings. Ottomans took the control of holy regions with the help of Muhammad Ali Pasha in 1818. His military actions around Egypt and support in the Greek uprisings pushed Muhammad Ali Pasha to claim the leadership of Syria. In 1832 the army of Ibrahim Pasha was riding to Syria as a result of disagreement with the central authority in Istanbul. Ibrahim Pasha ruled Syria for eight years. The rule of Ibrahim Pasha is

accepted as starting point for reform movement and developing of reform ideas in Damascus for many reasons.<sup>122</sup>

The period under Ibrahim Pasha's rule provided more privilege to non-Muslims in Syria. Since Muslims lost their advantages during the period of Egyptian, the privilege given by Egyptians to Christians, triggered a series of events among the religious groups in Ottoman Syria from 1840 to Egyptians withdrew, 1860.<sup>123</sup> In addition to Egyptian politics of protecting non-Muslims, the proclamation of Gülhane Rescript also reinforced the status of non-Muslims in the region. The most important development in the Egyptian ruling period was the opening of foreign consulates in the region. Foreign consulates proceeded with missionary schools and foreign missions appeared with trade enhancement especially in Beirut. All these developments provided economic and political advantages for non-Muslims in Ottoman Syria.<sup>124</sup>

The economic trends also changed in the following decade of Ibrahim Pasha's rule. Egyptians facilitated the growth of trade with Europe by allowing a British consulate to open in Damascus and by providing security for non-Muslims, who were the chief agents of European trade. Syrian Christians and Jews benefited from ruling of Egyptian authority and could obtain consular protection and immunity from Ottoman taxes under the terms of capitulatory treaties between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers. In addition to opening Syria to foreign interest in general, by 1838 Anglo-Ottoman commercial treaty opened Syria to European goods and Muslim traders lost their advantage against non-Muslims who were under the protection of western countries. As a result of trade enhancement, a new class arose in the social life of Syria and a new style of life emerged in the cities like, Beirut and Damascus.

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<sup>122</sup> Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, p. 35.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-58.

<sup>124</sup> Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine*, p. 18.

Egyptian rule in Syria did not only influence the country's economic trends; it also affected educational and cultural life in the region. Egyptians allowed missionaries to open schools in different provinces of the country. There had been already French Lazarist mission school in Syria which was established in 1755; however it was only one until Ibrahim Pasha's period of rule. The Egyptians also established the first state school in Damascus, a military secondary school, and they sent some Syrian students to the new medical school in Egypt. The process which was started by Egyptians continued after the re-establishment of Ottoman authority in 1840. Egyptians set up the first printing press in Damascus; they also brought some books from Egypt on mathematics, medicine, literature, and histories of Western countries. Syria also was acquainted with the press of Egypt in this period, and Egyptian newspapers carried articles about Europe and Arabic translations of works in European languages. All these revived the new secular trend in Syrian intellectual life and by means of these developments, Syrians became more aware of western ideas.<sup>125</sup>

Another important reform of the Egyptian administration in Syria was held in the judicial system, which excluded the local ulama from traditional courts and giving the legal authority to the newly arranged institutions. Although same reform and regulations would be announced a few years later with the Tanzimat reforms, the influence of Ibrahim Pasha's administration on Syria would be more influential than any other reform movement in this period.

Ibrahim pasha established a more regular and modern system that provided security, developed technological means and practices in agricultural system in the region; however changing the former positions of Syrian elites pushed them to resist against Egyptian authority and lend support to insurrectionist movements.<sup>126</sup> The first successive uprising was held in Palestine by the peasants in 1834, which was also supported by Nablus notables. The second was when Ibrahim Pasha's administration

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<sup>125</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 15.

<sup>126</sup> First uprising in Palestine by the peasants in 1834 was supported by Nablus notables, and secondly Ibrahim Pasha's administration failed to control Houran Druzes uprising in 1837. See, Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine*, p. 15.

failed to control the Houran Druzes uprising in 1837. There had been also some other minor rebellions during Egyptian rule in Syria, but the first two were particularly effective. In addition to internal uprisings, the balance changed against the Egyptian administration in Syria at an international level and all the communities in Lebanon gathered and came together to act against Ibrahim Pasha's administration. Foreign pressures and internal rebellions ended eight years of Egyptian rule in Ottoman Syria but the influence of this period reverberated longer than this. Ibrahim Pasha benefited from the Maronites in his ruling period against the Druzes and Muslim uprisings, and this increased the discontentedness and antagonism among the Syrian groups. Changing the internal balance of Syria resulted with serious events among these groups in the following years until 1860.<sup>127</sup>

The events took place among the communities in Syria started in 1841 and continued in 1842 and 1845 following the Ibrahim Pasha's administration. The conflicts in those years resulted with an infamous civil war in Syria in 1860 which attracted the attention of some European countries and launched it as an international issue. After the European interference, and landing the French troops on the coastal areas of Lebanon, the Ottoman authority put harsh controls on the region and divided Lebanon into two districts.

Migration of Christians to Beirut increased following the developments started during Ibrahim Pasha's rule in favor of Syrian Christians. The Syrian city Beirut became prominent with its Christian population in the middle of nineteenth century. The interest of western countries combined with the development of the economy of the city made it a more advantageous environment for Christians. The events between 1840 and 1860 played a leading role in provincial re-organization process of Syria and these developments helped Syrians to be more acquainted with western ideas.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp. 60-64; Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine*, p. 14.

<sup>128</sup> For the details of the conflicts and changing the situation in Beirut see Zachs, *The Making of Syrian Identity*, p. 45.

The influence of Egypt continued until the events in the sixties. In addition, another period in the axis of Egypt and Syria in the context of reform, started again with the reform circles in Egypt around Jamal al-Din al Afghani and continued until the period of British occupation. Following the British occupation in 1882, Egypt played important role for developing reform ideas in the Arab regions, especially for the Syrian opposition. Egypt became an attraction center for the Ottoman opponents when the constitution and parliament were suspended in 1877. Due to the suspension the opponents of Abdulhamid fled to Egypt and European countries to express their constitutionalist ideas. When Egypt emerged as intellectual center for Abdülhamid's opponents, it also attracted Syrian reformers who wanted to cooperate with external figures.

At the beginning of the British occupation in 1882, Islamic reformers including Afghani and Abduh struggled against Britain. Reformers in Egypt had to leave the country in the first years of British occupation. One of the most important agents among Egyptian reformers, Muhammad Abduh, also had to flee to Lebanon in this period. However he could return to Egypt in 1888 and became Mufti of Egypt in 1889 under the British rule. In 1895 he was appointed as the head of the committee which was arranged to reform the educational program of *al-Azhar*. The cooperation of Abduh with the Egyptian-British authority increased the hope for the other reformers in Syria when Abduh was appointed as administrator of religious affairs and Sheikh of Ezher. It was exiting for the reformers to find a place to implement new reform programs.

Among many other centers in the European countries for the opposition in Hamidian period, Cairo was also emerged as leading center for the Young Turks and other Islamic reformers. The politically liberated atmosphere provided by Khedive Ismail (1830-1895), after British occupation in 1882 and in the rule of Khedive Abbas Hilmi (1874-1944), Cairo became the Hyde Park Corner of the Middle East.<sup>129</sup> Great number of Syrian reformers in this period fled to the Egyptian

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<sup>129</sup> Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 46.

‘freedom atmosphere’. Abd al Hamid al-Zahrawi, who wound up in Homs after the incident of 1901, fled to Egypt in 1902. Tahir al- Jazairi immigrated to Cairo in 1907; Rashid Rida, Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1849-1902) and other critics of sultan Abdülhamit settled in Egypt. Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi’s and Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar’s journey to Egypt in 1903-1904 looks like another way of breaking out of their isolation in Damascus.

## 2.1.JAMAL AL-DIN AL-AFGHANI

A person who played most important role in developing Islamism in the whole Muslim world is Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Although the origin of Afghani is still disputed, he became very influential on reformers, especially in his eight year stay in Egypt. Afghani first studied in Afghanistan and stayed in Iraqi Shi’i center Najaf and India. In addition to his activism in Islamic religious circles in those countries, he also played important role in the local politics in many of them. He left Afghanistan in the early seventies and went to Egypt on his way to Istanbul. He met with his prospective students in Cairo and stayed in Istanbul for a while. After some problems with the ulama circles in Istanbul, Afghani had to return back to Egypt where he stayed eight years until his second arrival. After his prolonged work in Egypt, he was deported to India by Khedive Tawfiq, where he stayed for five years. Authorities in Egypt were afraid of his influence over the educated class and relations with other countries. After the British occupation of Egypt, he could not enter the country and had to leave for Paris in 1884 where he was joined by his disciple Muhammad Abduh.<sup>130</sup>

When Abduh and Afghani were in Paris they established a secret society aiming the unity of Islamic countries and reform. It was not a very influential society but they could open some branches in Islamic countries like Sudan. The most important work of Afghani and Abduh in their European experience was *Urwa al-*

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<sup>130</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp. 108-109; for further information on Afghani see Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, pp. 4-2.

*wuthqa*, Arabic periodical which was published eighteen issues. The journal defended the unity of Muslims against British occupation and expansion. Although the publication of the journal was forbidden in British controlled countries, the distribution was very fast and its influence on reformers was great.<sup>131</sup> Even the Syrian reformers in the circle of Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi were subscribers of the Journal. It was first text announcing and addressing the reformist ideas in this wide sense in Islamic world, particularly in Syria.<sup>132</sup>

The activities of Afghani were not limited with this journal only. He visited London and met numerous of European intellectuals in 1885. He aroused the interest of Europeans with his intellectual activities and met with Ernest Renan (1823-1892) and Wilfrid Blunt, who would be very active in the caliphate debates following years. After his European travel, he went to Iran and Russia, and when he returned to Iran again he had problems with the Shah regarding the privatization of Tobacco Company. He was deported from Iran and this time welcomed by Abdulhamid in 1891. The friendship of Afghani with sultan did not continue much and he had to wait in Istanbul until 1897 when he died under the administrative restrictions of the Sultan.<sup>133</sup>

When we look at his travels and activism, there is no other agent who could be compared with Afghani in the nineteenth century in terms of Islamic activism. Afghani lived in a century when European countries were the leading powers in the world, and he tried to develop his ideas on how to get rid of western influence in Muslim countries and how they could become independent countries and progress against western powers. He called 'true' Islam, which would provide the unity of Muslims against British rule. Although there were some other European countries that occupied Islamic territories, Afghani focused on British occupation in Egypt and India. He tried to revive the resistance against Britain in those countries by

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<sup>131</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 110.

<sup>132</sup> Afghani and Abduh, *al-'Urwah al-wuthqa*; See an archival document about how the activities of Afghani and Abduh and their Journal were perceived by the Ottoman authorities see BOA, Y. PRK. AZJ. 9/106 1301 Zilkade.

<sup>133</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p.111; Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, pp. 9-10.



exemplifying Mahdi movement in Sudan.<sup>134</sup> He exemplified newly unifying of European countries like Germany and called the unity of Shi'ite, Sunni sects like Iran and Afghanistan. Afghani approaches the reconciliation of Islamic sects to create political power in Islamic world and to end to disunity of Muslim nations.<sup>135</sup>

Against claims of Renan that Islam is the enemy of science and progress, Afghani, like many other contemporary reformers, defended Islam against the criticism of Renan. He tried to show how the essence of Islam is applicable to modern rationalism. Although he emphasized the rationalism in Islam, he criticized extreme modernist movement of Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) in India.<sup>136</sup> He wrote *al-Radd ala'l dhahriyyin* (The Refutation of the Materialists) against the movement of Ahmad Khan.<sup>137</sup>

According to Afghani, reason should be used in interpreting the Quran. When someone uses reasoning in interpreting Quran, he cannot find any contradiction of modern sciences with religious truths. In this context modern institutions and concepts could be extracted from the Quran. The doors of *ijtihad* are not closed that they are open for the contemporary issues as they were in the first generation of Islam. Traditional imitation demolishes reasoning and modern rationalism which is actually appropriate to the essence of the religion. Instead of traditional imitation, we must imitate the European principals that made them more developed.<sup>138</sup>

Afghani was the pioneer of the reformers in his age in many respects. He had contributed to the reform debates in Islamic world and even started the debates in some other non-Muslim parts of the world. There were numerous amounts of followers of Afghani in the Ottoman capital, Afghanistan, Iran and other countries.<sup>139</sup>

In terms of our study, the relation of Afghani with Syrian reformers started with Abd

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<sup>134</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 114.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>137</sup> Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, *Al-radd ala al-dariyyin*, translated from the Persian into the Arabic by Sheikh Muhammad Abduh, (Cairo: Al-Rahmaniyyah Press, 1925).

<sup>138</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 127; Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>139</sup> Nasr Abu Zayd, *Reformation of Islamic Thought* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 27.

al-Qadir al-Jazairi and scholars in his circle. Syrian reformers were acquainted with the journal of Afghani but they could not find opportunity to meet with him like the Egyptians. Instead of Afghani, most of the Syrian reformers continued their contacts with Afghani's disciple, Abduh.

## 2.2. MUHAMMAD ABDUH

On the contrary to his master, Muhammad Abduh was of Egyptian origin whose main activities and scope of field was Egypt. He was member of ordinary Egyptian family and educated in traditional religious institutions. He studied in Azhar from 1869 to 1877 and this allowed him to meet with contemporary figures like Afghani.

He met with Afghani in his first travel to Egypt. They discussed issues such as the interpretation of Quran, and the approach of Afghani influenced him a great deal. When Afghani arrived to Egypt second time, he became important disciple in Afghani's circle. They studied Islamic philosophical texts with Afghani, and Abduh wrote articles in *Ahram* and became editor of *Waka'i al-misriyya* with encouragement of his master. Abduh resisted against British occupation and he was put in prison after the occupation for a while. Following the British occupation, he was exiled to Beirut then went to Europe to work together with his master. Although he tried to arrive at Sudan via Tunis and Egypt again to get in touch with the resistance movements in these countries, he failed and returned to Beirut again.<sup>140</sup>

He stayed three years in Beirut and became teacher in one of the schools of the Turkish Benevolent Society.<sup>141</sup> It was during the period when young Syrian reformers and Egyptian intellectuals interacted with each other. Abduh's house in Beirut was full of Syrian young intellectuals in this period like in Cairo and they

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<sup>140</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 133; for biography of Abduh see Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, p. 18.

<sup>141</sup> Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, p. 64.

studied with him about Islamic science and Arabic. Abduh got in touch with reformers in Damascus like Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar in this period and they continued their correspondence when he returned to Egypt again. According to Weismann, Abduh's reliance on the Sunni sources facilitated the adoption of a strong rationalistic approach underlying modernism, among the more traditional reformist circles of Damascus.<sup>142</sup> However this process also influenced Abduh with the vision of Salafis in Damascus and this pushed him to adopt a more Sunni and Salafi approach, instead political vision of his master Afghani. According to this view, Abduh was influenced by the Salafi approach of Syrian reformers, and even some Egyptians suggested that Abduh was the disciple of Bitar when he was in exile in Beirut.<sup>143</sup> The first contact of Syrian reformers with Abduh started with Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi in Abduh's exile to Beirut. Abdal-Majid al-Khani (1847-1900) and Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar members of the circle of Jazairi contacted with Abduh after 1883. Members of this circle were also receivers of *Urwa al-wuthqa*, the journal of Abduh and Afghani and this strengthened the relations of reformers with Egypt.<sup>144</sup>

After his exile for his role in Urabi insurrection, he could return to Egypt in 1888 and one year later he became Mufti of whole Egypt.<sup>145</sup> In 1895 he became the member of administrative body of Azhar.<sup>146</sup> He was at the height of his career and he cut his relations with Afghani in this period. He wrote his famous book *Risalat al-Tawhid*<sup>147</sup> in those years in Azhar and wrote also some exegesis on some parts of Quran, and then these texts would be collected in their study *al-Manar* with Rida. He learnt French and got in touch with some European thinkers like Blunt in those years.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism", p. 233.

<sup>143</sup> Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism", p. 234; Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar, *Hilyat al-bashar fi tarikh al-qarn al-thalith ashah*, 3 vols. (Damascus: Majma al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah, 1961-1963), p. 16.

<sup>144</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 30.

<sup>145</sup> Abduh's status in Egypt as Mufti was disturbing the Ottoman administration. See, BOA, Y.A. HUS. 487/116 1323 Rabiulahir; Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, p. 69.

<sup>146</sup> Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, p. 70.

<sup>147</sup> Abduh, *Risalat al-tawhid*.

<sup>148</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 139; Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, p. 58.

Abduh addressed many practical social and cultural issues from an Islamic rational perspective. According to Abduh, Islam contains principles for the rationalism but the new ulama could extract from Islamic sources and provide a basis for progress. Islam could be interpreted as civilization, *shura* as parliamentary democracy, and *ijma* as public opinion. According to Abduh, a true Muslim uses reason in his affairs of the world and the infidel (*kafir*) who closes his eyes to the light of the truth and refuses rational proofs.<sup>149</sup> Muslims could become strong and prosperous again when they acquire from Europe the principals of science, like the first generations of Islam which reflects the pure faith.

He had a mystical experience with his teacher Shaykh Darwish, and had Shazeli background. However he criticized some practices of Sufism like many other reformers. Despite the critics of reformers about mysticism, many reformers in this period had also a mystical background and they called true mysticism which was applicable to the essence of the religion. He did not give permission to publish of Ibn Arabi's *Futuhāt-ı Makkiyyah* (The Meccan Revelations) since he was afraid to encounter of someone non-competent with this text.<sup>150</sup>

Abduh is one of the nationalists among these Islamic reformers. He emphasized the importance of deep ties among people who live in the same country, particularly under occupation. The stronger the unity among different subjects of the country, the more would the country will develop. The solidarity among different faiths in the community for general welfare is also crucial for progress. He makes references to the Quran and *hadith* to prove interfaith relations on the question of Indian Muslims.<sup>151</sup> At the beginning of occupation, he opposed British rule in Egypt, he did not fully agree with this but in later years when he was Mufti of Egypt he had a good relationship with British authority.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp.144. 148.

<sup>150</sup> M. Sait Özervarlı, "Muhammed Abduh", *DİA*, vol. 30, 2005, p. 483.

<sup>151</sup> Indian Muslim asked Abduh about cooperation with non-Muslims in their countries and Abduh suggested them to cooperate with non-Muslim Indians. See Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 156.

<sup>152</sup> Abduh had good relation with Cromer and sometimes he used this relation as the balance against Khedive who wanted to dismiss him from his official post. Cromer also saw the reformers around Abduh as the natural allies of European reformers, see Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 158.

Abduh became the most influential person in his age among many other Islamic reformers. His friends and students in Egypt like; Farid Wajdi (1875-1954), Mustafa Abd al-Raziq (1885-1947), Qasim Amin (1865-1908), Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid (1872-1963) became very influential in Islamic and nationalist movements. Abduh's followers in Egypt published journal *al-Jarida* after their master's death and they also established a political party People's Party (*hizb al-umma*) which is known also *hizb al-Imam* in Egypt. Abduh's influence was not limited with only Egypt; he was also the mastermind behind the reformers in Syria and other countries. Most of the Syrian reformers were acquainted with Abduh since his exile to Beirut and some left their countries to meet with him and his group in Egypt. Particularly when he was appointed as Mufti of Egypt, he became attractive figure among reformers.<sup>153</sup>

There were important figures among Syrian reformers who were in contact with Abduh. Figures like Amir Shakip Arslan (1869-1946), Muhammad Kurd Ali (1876-1953), Abd al Hamid al-Zahrawi, Tahir al- Jazairi, Rashid Rida, Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar were in contact with Abduh, and most of them met him either in Syria or in Egypt. All these figures faced with some interrogations and investigation for their relations with Abduh and reform circles in Egypt. When Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar went to Egypt, they also met and attended the preaching of Abduh and they discussed issues on Islamic sources. In addition to these reformers, Abduh's most important disciple and most important contact among Syrians was Rashid Rida. They published famous *al-Manar* after Rida fled from Syria. Rida continued his correspondence with Syrians when he was in Egypt and became a contact point for Syrian reformers in Egyptian reform circles.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., pp. 161-192.

<sup>154</sup> The activities of reformers in Egypt were observed by the Ottoman administration. This archival document indicating the efforts of reformers in Egypt as establishing new state in Arabian peninsula under the Arab caliphate and establish new school similar to Protestantism in Europe, BOA, Y.EE. 127/71 1318 Muharrem.

### 2.3.RASHID RIDA

Although there are numbers of people who could be mentioned as related with Egyptian reformists in Syria, one of them played important role as a Syrian origin, Rashid Rida. He was born in Tripoli and well educated in Islamic science and Arabic language. He followed *Naqshabandi* order for a while, but he had some doubts about mystical sources of Islam. When he attended Mawlawis' religious ceremony, he objected to the rituals and left this order.<sup>155</sup> Like the other reformers, Rida had a mystical background but he criticized some practices of Sufis and called for true mysticism. He was aware of the reformists in Egypt and elsewhere in the Islamic world and he encountered with *Urwa al-wuthqa* and he explains the effect of the journal:

I found several copies of the journal among my father's papers and every number was like an electric current striking me, giving my soul a shock, or setting it in a blaze, and carrying me from one state to another.<sup>156</sup>

When he encountered with the *Urwa al-wuthqa* he tried to reach Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. He could not reach Afghani but he followed his disciple Abduh. In 1897 he fled to Egypt<sup>157</sup> and started to publish *el-Manar* with Abduh. Rida continued to publish *Al-Manar* until he died in 1935.<sup>158</sup>

*Al-Manar* was published for 30 years and played important role in different parts of Islamic countries. The main purpose of the journal was to spread ideas of Islamic reform and facilitate progress in the Islamic world. *Al-Manar* is accepted as a continuation of *Urwa al-wuthqa*, Afghani and Abduh's journal in many respects and included essays of contemporary reformers and exegesis of Quran, *fatwas* and news from the Muslim world. The journal published the exegesis of Abduh and this was

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<sup>155</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 225.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>157</sup> On Rida's emigration to Cairo to seek greater intellectual freedom see Shakib Arslan, *Al-Sayyid Rashid Rida, aw ikhd'arba'in sanah* (Damascus: Ibn Zaydun Press, 1937), pp. 128-129.

<sup>158</sup> Rashid Rida, *Tarikh al-ustdah al-imam al-shaykh Muhammad Abduh*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Al-Manar Press, 1931); Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, p. 177.

continued by Rida after his death. *Al-Manar* supported the caliphate at first but participated in the opposition to Abdulhamid in the last years of his rule. He welcomed the constitution after Hamidian Regime but supported the Arab revolt in the First World War. *Al-Menar* was the longest running journal which reflected the ideas of reformers, particularly Rashid Rida in the Arab world and other Muslim countries. Since it was published for a long time, it reflects the trend of reform discussions in different periods. In parallel with Rida's ideas, the stand point of the journal also changed in this long period.<sup>159</sup>

When he was in Lebanon, Rida believed that there would be more opportunities in Egypt to spread and campaign reformist views when he arrived at Egypt in 1897. He attended scientific circles in Cairo with his master Abduh and they published *al-Manar* with Abduh until his death in 1905. Rida involved in political debates in Egypt after Abduh's death and stayed there until reinstatement of the constitution in 1908. After the announcement of the constitution, he returned to Syria and went to Istanbul to find support for the school which he had planned to establish.<sup>160</sup> Rida traveled to India and some Arab countries and had good relations with the reformers in Muslim countries.<sup>161</sup>

Like Afghani and Abduh, he asked why Muslim countries declined in every aspect of civilization. What happened in the past, in the first generation period, could happen again if we re-create Islamic civilization based on the Quran. Without technical advance, Muslims cannot revive Islamic civilization. He emphasized how west could get rid of the Church and called Muslims to unite around the 'truth'. Stagnation and imitation are the obstacles that prohibit Muslims from reaching new laws of the civilization.<sup>162</sup>

Rida's masters Abduh and Afghani had good relations with European agents and they had traveled to some European countries. This allowed them to place

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<sup>159</sup> Muhammed Harb, "El-Menar", *DIA*, vol. 29 (2004) p. 116.

<sup>160</sup> Rıza, *İttihad-ı Osmani'den Arap İsyanına*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>161</sup> M. Sait Özervarlı, "Reşid Rıza", *DIA*, vol. 35 (2008), p. 14.

<sup>162</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp. 232-235.

European civilization as an important field in their thought. However Rida went to Europe once for a short time and did not know any European languages. Instead of European countries, he visited Islamic countries and most of his relations were in Islamic countries. Due to this fact, his ideas against Christianity and Europeans are more hostile than his masters. In reference to technical development, he emphasized *jihad* as the important duty of the religion, like Afghani.<sup>163</sup>

After he left Egypt in 1897, he became an important actor in political and intellectual life of the country. Although Abduh became an official actor in Egypt, Rida of Syrian origin did not have any official responsibility. Like his master, Rida also had good relations with the reformers in Egypt and other countries. When Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi travelled to Egypt, they first visited Abduh and Rida, who they were already in contact with.<sup>164</sup>

Rida also played leading role in establishing Ottoman Consultative Society (*Jamiyat al-shura al-uthmaniyya*) with Rafiq al-Azm (1867-1925). Some Turkish members of the CUP like Saib Bey (1887-1939) were the members of this society. The society was very active until 1808 when the society ended its activities after the announcement of a constitution.<sup>165</sup> Rida was involved in some Arabist organizations and supported Arab rebellions during the First World War.

When Rida fled to Egypt in 1897 he could not return to the country until 1908. In this period he attended the campaign against Abdülhamid in Egypt and continued his relations with Syrian reformers. *Al-Manar* was the most important periodical among Islamic reformers in this period and reformist ideas were spreading with the articles in this journal. Endeavors of Rida and other reformers in Egypt encouraged other reformers in the Ottoman lands, especially in Syria. External

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>164</sup> For correspondence of Rida with Qasimi see Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 56.

<sup>165</sup> For further information on propaganda of the society in Ottoman territories see Zeine, *Türk-Arap İlişkileri ve Arap Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*, p. 57; Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 46.



support to reformers in those centers helped them in their struggle against internal conservative figures.<sup>166</sup>

After the announcement of the constitution, the reformers in Egypt could get into Syria because of a new process which provided a favorable atmosphere for the reformers and Abdülhamid opponents. Rida also could find opportunity to visit his country and meet with the reformers in Syrian cities in this period. He visited his homeland and other Lebanon cities, and then moved to Damascus. Reformers in Damascus like Qasimi and Bitar met him in the station and offered him an opportunity to give lectures in famous Umayyad mosque. Rida's lecture at the mosque was cut by members of local conservative ulama and they protested against the speech of Rida and the CUP authorities who were the allies and supporters of reformers. Rida had already suffered an attack during his Syrian journey when a man struck him on the head with a club in Tripoli. Police arrested Salih al-Tunisi for his responsibility in the event, but ulama called their followers to act against reformers and CUP authorities. The event turned to small uprising against CUP in Damascus. Rida left Damascus and police chief As'ad Bey was removed from his post at the end of the event.<sup>167</sup>

As we mentioned before, reform ideas in Syria were revived with the first interaction of Syrians with Egyptian policies. However another important phase started with the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. Although this provided reformers an open environment for their campaign, it also triggered the reformist impressions on the rest of the reformers in Ottoman Syria. The Ottoman Administration did not care much about reform debates, but the expansion efforts of Britain through to the other Arab countries increased the fears of the authorities and

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<sup>166</sup> Due to the influence of al-Manar over reformers in Syria and other parts of the Empire it was forbidden to enter to Ottoman territories in Abdülhamid period. See, BOA, BEO, 1178/88279 1316 29 Rabiussani; BOA, İrade-i Hus. Gen. No: 387, Hus. No: 46, 18 Rebiül-ahir, 1320.

<sup>167</sup> BOA, DH.MKT. 2653/38 1326 Şaban; Commins, "Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus," pp. 415-416; Rıza, *İttihad-ı Osmani'den Arap İsyânına*, pp. 99-110.

the people who were in contact with reformers in Egypt were regarded as suspicious for their relations.<sup>168</sup>

Some new developments in the first years of twentieth century increased the suspicions of Ottoman authorities against reformers in Syria. The debates on caliphate started among Arabs and Europeans as to whether the Ottoman dynasty deserves to hold Caliphate or not. The works and studies of reformers with British agents like Blunt and others justify the anxieties of the Ottoman authorities.<sup>169</sup> The idea of new caliphate under the British control would be established in Arab countries increased the fears of the authorities.<sup>170</sup> The debates on the caliphate were also revived by Abbas Hilmi and he was close associate with reformers and young Turks.<sup>171</sup> In addition to debates on caliphate, Wahhabi movement in Najd was rising again and threatening the Hicaj. Another uprising in Yemen by Zaydi Imam Yahya was also rejecting the traditional authority of caliphate. When Muhammad Abduh was mufti of Egypt under the British control, he was also one of the leading figures among reformers in other parts of the Empire; the relation of Egyptian reformers with Syrian reformers increased the fears of the authorities. It was supposed that Britain would use Islamic reformers by means of Abduh and penetrate Syria. After the suspension of the constitution in early years of Abdülhamid rule, some Turkish reformers had already fled to Egypt to campaign against Abdülhamid, this was also perceived as another threat. Due to the congress of Young Turks in Paris, the situation of opposition and Salafis in Damascus also deteriorated. Since the perception of Ottoman authorities of reformers in Egypt as a foreign tool to provide the means to intervene to Syria, Egyptian patented works and studies were forbidden

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<sup>168</sup> Archival sources indicating political activities of Egyptian Khedive in Ottoman Arab territories even before British occupation see BOA, Y. A. HUS. 159/80 1295 Zilkade; BOA, Y.EE.40/3 1299 Ramazan.

<sup>169</sup> BOA, Yıldız Sad. Hus. Maruzat 400/87, 2 Cemaziyel-ahir, 1317.

<sup>170</sup> Özcan, “İngiltere’de Hilafet Tartışmaları”, pp. 50-55; Buzpınar, “II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Osmanlı Hilafetine Muhalefetin Ortaya Çıkışı”, pp. 37-61.

<sup>171</sup> Abbas Hilmi met secretly with Afghani who was under the control of Abdulhamid in 1895 in his visit to Istanbul. They discussed about the future plans on Arab caliphate, Abdülhamid was informed about this meeting. See Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, pp. 108-109; Arab caliphate concept first used by Wilfrid Blunt an English aristocrat see W. S. Blunt, *The Future of Islam*, (London: Kegan Paul Trench, 1882), pp. 84-92.

to enter Syria. There are great numbers of archival documents that show the precautions against Egyptian journals and documents in this period.<sup>172</sup>

The opponent figures in Cairo in the early twentieth century consisted of different reform groups like Arabists, Islamists, members of the CUP, and some minority figures. They were all allied with the constitutional government against Abdülhamid and this provided them the goal of congruence. Conservative ulama in Damascus benefited from the political fears of Ottoman administration and blamed their adversaries as they were involved in a secret political agenda with Egyptians and the British administration in Egypt. Ottoman authorities investigated reformers in Syria who were close associates of Abduh and Rida from 1902 until 1908. Ottoman authorities' anxieties about Egyptian and British intervention to coastal provinces of Syria pushed them to investigate the homes of reformers. Muhyi al-Din Himadah, former mayor of Beirut was arrested on account of his relations with Rida and reformers in Egypt. Rida's house in Lebanon was also investigated and his brother was arrested. All these developments aroused suspicious within Salafis in Damascus and first they came in front of the court in 1896 to organize mujtahids club (*jamiyyat al-mujtahidin*) that it was also called as "*Jamali School*" referencing to Jama al-Din al-Qasimi.<sup>173</sup> Damascene reformers would be interrogated again when an Egyptian reformer Ahmad al-Husayni came to Syria in 1904. The tension in Damascus increased in 1906 when another interrogation process in Damascus against Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi was occurred to propagate Wahhabism in Damascus, which revives *ijtihad* and attacks on emulation.<sup>174</sup>

A great number of reformers could get in to their countries following the announcement of the constitution in 1908. The perception of Ottoman administration against reformers was the same even in constitutional, CUP ruling period. It was

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<sup>172</sup> Political fears of the authorities pushed them to take precautions against published works in Egypt Egyptian journals were banned to enter to Ottoman lands BOA, DH.MKT. 715/5 1321 Rabiussani; BOA, MF.MKT.959/21 1324 Şaban; Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism", p. 230; Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 110.

<sup>173</sup> See Chapter III for details of these events.

<sup>174</sup> To see the details of these investigations and interrogations against Syrian reformers see next chapter on Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi.

feared that Egypt and Britain would use reformers against the Turkish administration in Syria and would initiate rebellions like in Najd and Yemen. When the balance changed and the coalition between Salafis and CUP ended, Damascene reformers were in front of the judge again for cooperation with separatist Arabist movement in constitutional period. Qasimi and Bitar were arrested for supporting the ideas of Kurd Ali and his declaration on Caliphate. The movement, Syrian Renaissance Society, which was in cooperation with CUP a year ago became an illegal separatist group and was banned in Syria during this period. Most of the members of this society were the followers of Islamic reformer circles.<sup>175</sup> The threat increased in the election process in 1912, and British administration in Egypt tried to use reformer groups to motivate them against Ottoman authorities. Published works of Britain and British supported documents were reported to be spread in Syria.<sup>176</sup> There are many reports of the Ottoman authorities, especially before First World War about British agents' contacts with Syrians in order to set their support in the occupation of Syria.<sup>177</sup> According to these reports some reformers in the region were supported by Britain, some of them supported by France and some others demanded decentralization of the Empire. In any case reformers were important contact for the Egyptian and British authorities in Syria, and this view would be mostly justified with their support for Arab uprisings in the First World War.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Commins, "Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus", p. 419.

<sup>176</sup> Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 123.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

## CHAPTER III

### 3. MODERNITY VERSUS TRADITION: JAMAL AL-DIN AL-QASIMI AND HIS IDEAS

People claim that  
My school is called al-Jamali  
To which, when men ask me for a legal opinion,  
I ascribe my decision.  
No! The truth is that I  
Am of the Salafi creed.  
My school is what is in the book of God,  
My Sublime Lord,  
Then that which is sound of the oral reports,  
Not disputable opinions.  
I follow the truth and I am not  
Satisfied with men's opinions.  
I consider emulation ignorance  
And blindness in all instances.<sup>179</sup>

Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi was the member of important ulama family in Damascus. His life, relations and thoughts are important regarding the focus of this study. He lived in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century and he played important role in the reform debates. He was a reformist scholar and well educated in Islamic sciences. Important reformers like; Tahir al-Jazairi and Abd el-Razzaq al-Bitar were close friends of his. Qasimi's additional importance in terms of this thesis is his role between different reformist generations. Since he was born in 1866, he was aware of Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi's circle and became focal point in reform debates in Ottoman Damascus in the last years of nineteenth century. He and

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<sup>179</sup> Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar, *Hilyat al-bashar fi tarikh al-qarn al-thalith ashhar*, 1: 436; Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*. p. 54; for the full Arabic version of this poem see Muḥammad Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, *Imam al-Sham fi asrihi*, p. 91.

his friends in his circle would be masters for the next generation Arabists in Damascus. His reformist views, scholarly personality, relations with other reformers in other regions made him important in terms of this study.

The main source on Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi is his library in Damascus. The famous book covering his studies and notes belongs to Zafir al-Qasimi. He compiled Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi's notes with his study *Jamdl al-Din al-Qasimi wa asruhu*.<sup>180</sup> Another important source covering the personal notes of Jamal al-Din is Muḥammad Qasimi's, Imam *al-Shām fī aṣrihi Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi*, The most important source benefited from in this thesis is the studies of Commins. Commins' book on *Islamic Reform in Damascus* examines Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and his century. There are also some theses on Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi in Turkish theological faculties, and they are generally related with his views on exegesis, *fiqh*, and *kelam*.<sup>181</sup>

Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi was born in 1866. Qasimi's grandfather Qasim al-Hallaq (1806-1867) was hair dresser and he left his work and went to Egypt to study Islamic sciences. Qasim al-Hallaq studied with important ulama in Damascus and Egypt and became influential in ulama circles in Damascus. He did not have important duties since he was the member of middle class ulama. Muhammad Sa'id al-Qasimi (1843-1900), Hallaq's son and father of Jamal al-Din, followed his father's way. He grew up as scholar and became an assistant in his father's service in Sinaniyyah mosque. When Qasim al-Hallaq died in 1867, Muhammad Sa'id, just 24 years old, succeeded him as prayer leader, teacher, and preacher at the Sinaniyyah mosque. Third generation Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi grew also in his father's serving and he acquainted himself with the scholars in his father's circle in Sinaniyyah mosque in his early years. He particularly grew close with Jazairi, who was a friend of his fathers.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi wa 'asruhu*.

<sup>181</sup> Mehmet, Günay, *Cemalüddin el-Kasimi ve Fikhi Görüşleri*; Mustafa Yüce, *Muhammed Cemaleddin el-Kasimi ve Kelami Görüşleri*; Gökçen Kalkan, *Cemaleddin el-Kasimi ve Tefsirdeki Metodu*.

<sup>182</sup> On Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi's youth, see Zafir al-Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi*, pp. 23-30.

The early education of Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi followed the usual course for the children of ulama. He memorized the Quran, learned to read and write, and then studied the classical texts concerning language and the religious sciences. He also attended a government school when he was twelve years old.<sup>183</sup> This gave him opportunity to see modern way of education besides his traditional one. In 1880 he became an assistant of his father and started to give some evening lessons. He received certificates (*ijazat*) from different ulama in Damascus<sup>184</sup> but the most important teacher of Qasimi was Muhammad al-Khani, who was friend of Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi.<sup>185</sup> Khani educated Qasimi on Sufism and other religious courses, and he also invited Qasimi into the Naqshbandi order, which Jamal al-Din attended its rituals for a short time.<sup>186</sup> In those years with Khani he met with some important figures who would be well aquanited with in his later life; One would be Ahmad al-Jazairi (1833-1902) who regarded himself as heir to the leadership of the Algerian community in Damascus after his brother Abd al-Qadir's death.<sup>187</sup> Another friend of Qasimi was Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar, who was among early contacts of Abduh in Syria.

Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi as the grandson of an important scholar in Damascus started his career as Shafi'i prayer leader at the Annabah mosque. He was less than 20 years old when he started his service. Qasimi gave lessons in the mosques in different cities of Syria with the nomination of the state in Ramadans from 1890 to 1895.<sup>188</sup> In 1900 he was appointed as Imam to Sinaniyyah mosque after his father's death and this also provided him prestige among ulama circles.

Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi first appeared as an opposition reformist figure in 1896 in Mujtahids Incident (*hadithat al-mujtahidin*). Ahmad al-Jazairi, Jamal al-Din

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<sup>183</sup> Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi*, pp. 23-30.

<sup>184</sup> To see some samples of his certificates see Muḥammad Jamal al-Dīn al-Qasimi, *Imam al-Shām fi asrihi*, p. 134.

<sup>185</sup> Itzhak Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism", p. 226.

<sup>186</sup> Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi*, pp. 26-29.

<sup>187</sup> Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism", p. 218.

<sup>188</sup> Ali Turgut, "Cemaleddin el-Kasimi", *DĪA*, vol. 7 (1993), p. 311.

al-Qasimi, Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar and Salim Samarah decided to meet once a week and take turns hosting one another. The number of the members of this group increased with the attendance of some important people from ulama, which attracted some rivalry from ulama members. Some people started to spread rumors about Qasimi and his friends, so that Qasimi's group became known as the mujtahids' club (*jam'iyat al-mujtahidin*), and it became identified with Qasimi, so people called it “*the Jamali school*”.<sup>189</sup> In addition to new school of Jamali, rumors spread that the group had a secret political agenda against the Ottoman state of this group. Since the situation was very sensitive, especially claims about British influence from Egypt to other Arab countries, this pushed Ottoman authorities to take investigate these claims.

Claims were discussed in the provincial administrative council and it was decided to establish an investigative committee. The committee consisted of 8 different ulama, and police called the members of Qasimi's circle to the central religious court. Ahmad al-Jazairi's French protection gave him immunity from the inquisition but five other ulama and Qasimi went in front of the court related with the claims. Qasimi who was the younger member of the committee, and others denied the claims and they explained the purpose and principals of the committee which contradicted with other claims. With the pressure of his family and Muhammad Sa'id al-Qasimi, Jamal al-Din was released next day, on condition that they would discontinue the meetings.<sup>190</sup> In spite of the decision of the court, they persisted. The next year jurisconsult made investigation in the court and incarcerate Qasimi for one day, Muhammad al-Manini (1835-1898) apologized from Qasimi and his group for his offensive manners in the court. Jurisconsult invited Qasimi and his father to dinner in his house after two years to apologize before his death.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 50.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>191</sup> According to Commins, “*Ottomans did not interrogate Qasimi and his group because of their views but on account of suspicions of a political plot. Concerning with ijihad and the authority of the legal schools reflected the outlook and interests of official ulama such as Mufti Manini. Who concocted the episode and what exactly motivated them remains a mystery. They successfully played on Manini's insecurity and persuaded him that the group challenged his status, an affront he took seriously.*” See Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, pp. 53-54.



The second event related with Damascene reformers took place in the first years of twentieth century. Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi from the circle of Salafis in Damascus published an essay in 1901 entitled *Jurisprudence and Sufism* which was the first publication by a Salafis group in Damascus, which attacked emulation and dogmatic adherence to the legal schools directly, and asserted *ijtihad* as an indispensable method for understanding and practicing religion. Zahrawi was arrested and sent to Istanbul for final disposition of the case. In Damascus the police confiscated several dozen publications of the essay including Jamal al-Din's copies. Zahrawi was important partner of Rashid Rida and would be actor in Arab national movement and would preside over the first Arab Congress in Paris in 1913.<sup>192</sup>

Between 1896 and 1902, Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi composed 20 works; most of them as brief essays. In total he has about one hundred studies in different areas, including books, essays, notes, itineraries and incomplete autobiographies. The most important one is his exegesis *Mahasin al-ta'wil* 17 volumes,<sup>193</sup> *Dald'il al-tawhid*<sup>194</sup> covering his studies in *kelam* and important study in *usul al-fiqh* is *Al-Fatwa fi al-Islam*.<sup>195</sup> Another famous one *Islah al-masajid min al-bida' wa al-'awa'id*, which is about innovations in mosques.<sup>196</sup>

The influence of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1292-1350) and Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) on Qasimi is well known and there are some references to these thirteenth century scholars in his studies. However Qasimi became aware of Ibn Taymiyyah in the last years of his study. He contacted with Muhammad Abu Talib al-Jazairi in Beirut about his studies on Ibn Taymiyyah. He also wrote to the Iraqi reformer Khayr al-Din al-Alusi, requesting a license connecting him to the Baghdad scholarly tradition and to Siddiq Hasan Khan, the renowned Indian reformer. In his letter, Qasimi expressed admiration for Alusi's clear view and mentioned that he had

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., pp. 57; for his life and his political activities see Ahmed Tarabein, "Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi: The Career and Thought of an Arab Nationalist", in Khalidi et al (ed.), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 97.

<sup>193</sup> Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, *Mahasin al-ta'wil*. 17 vols. Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1957 Cairo).

<sup>194</sup> Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, *Dald'il al-tawhid* (Damascus: Al-Fayha Press, 1908).

<sup>195</sup> Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, *Al-Fatwa fi al-Islam*. (Damascus: Al-Muqtabas Press, 1911).

<sup>196</sup> Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, *Islah al-masdjid min al-bida' wa al-'awd'id* (Cairo: Al-Salafiyyah Press, 1923).

met Alusi's son, Ala al-Din in Baalbak, during Qasimi's Ramadan teaching tour (probably in 1894) when the younger Alusi was serving in Baalbak's district religious court. They mentioned about how to revive Salafi approach and forgotten studies of Ibn Taymiyyah. This was encouraging for Qasimi in spite of his adversaries in Damascus, that there were some comrades which give a hope for the future of reformist ideas. His correspondence continued with reformists' circles from Morocco to Sudan and Java. Publishing articles in the Arabic press of Beirut and Cairo provided him a prestigious reputation in reformist circles.<sup>197</sup>

In 1903 Qasimi and his friend Bitar decided to go to Egypt to meet with famous reformers like Abduh. Qasimi and Bitar wanted to meet with their friends and observe the progress and development of Egypt. Qasimi first met with Abduh in his visit to Egypt but Bitar had already met him in his years in Beirut.<sup>198</sup> After their arrival, Qasimi mentioned in his notes, how he was impressed by the modern appearance of Egypt and he expressed his appreciation through his diaries. He appreciated Cairo's broad, tree-lined streets, large buildings, luxurious gardens, electric lights, modern technologies like telephone and tramway.<sup>199</sup> It was the first encounter of Qasimi with modern means because he had not visited any European countries before. His experience is similar to other intellectuals who were impressed with the developments in European countries when they had visited them for the first time.

In Egypt Qasimi and his friend met, discussed and studied with Mohamad Abduh and Rashid Rida.<sup>200</sup> As Syrian national, Rida had already flown to Egypt and had been publishing *Al-Manar* with Abduh. Qasimi and his friend stayed in Cairo for four weeks. They attended the lessons of Muhammad Abduh and he also invited

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<sup>197</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 60.

<sup>198</sup> On Qasimi and Bitar's journey to Egypt see Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi*, pp. 133-160.

<sup>199</sup> Three years later electric lighting and a tramway came to Damascus. Qasimi wrote in his diary on 12 February 1907, "The tramway officially ran from in front of the courthouse to al-Salihyyah . . . and a line was extended to illuminate Bab al-Sarijah with electricity. Civilization has burst in on Damascus and no wonder, for today is the age of electricity and steam." See Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi* p. 376; Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 160.

<sup>200</sup> Qasimi attended Abduh's lessons seven times; four of them were on exegesis see Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi*, pp. 133-160.

them to his house. During his stay in Cairo, Abduh influenced Qasimi and they discussed issues on which they generally agreed. They met with other Syrian friends in the exile and some important Egyptian figures during their visit to Cairo. Abduh met them at the station when they were leaving for Alexandria. They only stayed for five days in Alexandria and returned to Beirut. They also met with some reformers in Beirut like Abu Talib al-Jazairi who had first sent his books on Ibn Taymiyyah to Jamal al-Din.<sup>201</sup>

Qasimi's travel to Egypt increased his fame in Damascus; Rashid Rida mentioned about him in *al-Manar* and his relations with different figures in different regions increased his prominence among the local ulama in Damascus.<sup>202</sup> However, he would be interrogated when an Egyptian reformer Ahmad al-Husayni came to Syria in 1904.<sup>203</sup> Qasimi and his friends visited Husayni when he arrived at Damascus in the Hotel but a police officer called them in for interrogation and took them to the governor Nazim Pasha. Since he was afraid of British penetration by exploiting Damascene local reformers, Governor Nazim Pasha asked them about Husayni and their views on *ijtihad*. Qasimi did not visit any country other than Egypt and his visit to Madina, where he met with important scholars. He re-visited Egypt with his old friend in 1913 and met there with the reformers like Rashid Rida again. When Qasimi's travels are compared with other reformers like Rida and Afghani they are fewer than the other reformers, and he also did not agree to leave Damascus to live in Egypt as many other reformers did.<sup>204</sup>

Tahir al-Jazairi was another important companion of Jamal al-Din. Tahir al-Jazairi's father Salih al-Jazairi (d. 1868) came to Damascus after the French invasion of Algeria. Tahir al-Jazairi also played important role in the reform circles in Damascus and had good relations with Midhat Pasha in his governorship in Damascus in 1878. They cooperated to establish the first modern state schools in

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<sup>201</sup> Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi*, p. 157.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p.148-151; For Rida's review, see *al-Manar*, 1 (1904); Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, *Shadhray min al-sirah al-muhammadiyah* (Cairo: Al-Manar Press, 1904).

<sup>203</sup> Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi* pp. 206-209; Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*. pp. 62.

<sup>204</sup> Kalkan, *Cemaleddin el-Kasimi ve Tefsirdeki Metodu*, p. 10.

Syria and Jazairi also supported the establishment of the first public library in Damascus. He was educational inspector and responsible for reforming educational institutes, but was dismissed by Abdülhamid for his relation with Midhad.<sup>205</sup> Tahir al-Jazairi became an influential person after the death of Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi in 1883 and another circle emerged around him and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi in the next decades. Both Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi and Tahir al-Jazairi cooperated with Midhat in his governorship period to implement his reforms. Tahir al-Jazairi, as one of the members of this society, established a new library via the assistance of this society. Tahir's relation with Midhat was the most important contact between reformers in Damascus and Young Ottomans.<sup>206</sup>

Tahir al-Jazairi had already relations with Qasimi's father; although they knew each other for many years, Tahir and Jamal al-din became close friends especially after 1900.<sup>207</sup> They met frequently in those years until Tahir fled to Egypt in 1907. Tahir's circle was active in the last quarter of nineteenth century and some Turkish constitutionalist officials and Syrian Arab intellectuals were members of this circle. Tahir al-Jazairi himself was Salafi figure but students in his circle like Rafiq al-'Azm, Shukri al-'Asali<sup>208</sup>, 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Inklizi, and Salim al-Jazairi (1879-1916) would be prominent figures in the Arab nationalist movement in the next decades. Tahir himself was important contact between Arabists and Salafis.<sup>209</sup>

In addition to his relations with prominent Arabist figures and some secondary students like Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib (1886-1969), Salah al-Din al-Qasimi, Arif al-Shihabi (1889-1916), Lutfi al-Haffar (1891-1968), Salih Qanbaz, and Uthman Mardam-Beg, who were all born between 1886 and 1892 and studied at Maktab 'Anbar. They were the members of this Tahir al-Jazairi and Qasimi's circle. The mentioned figures will have established a famous Arab Renaissance Society

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<sup>205</sup> Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 48.

<sup>206</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, pp. 90-91; Buzpinar, "The Use of Constitutionalism as a Means of Opposition to Abdülhamid II's Regime", p. 7.

<sup>207</sup> Itzhak Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism", p. 231.

<sup>208</sup> For the life of Shukri al-Asali see Samir Seikaly, "Shukri al-Asali: A Case Study of a Political Activist", in Khalidi et al (eds), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 73.

<sup>209</sup> Itzhak Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism", p. 222.

when they went to Istanbul for the higher education.<sup>210</sup> Salah al-Din al-Qasimi brother of Jamal al-Din was also a member of this society and young group at Maktab Anbar. He participated in lessons and meetings of Tahir al-Jazairi at Qasimi's home. After 1900 Qasimi's home was the gathering place for most of the reformers including Tahir al-Jazairi. Jamal al-Din's brother Salah al-Din became acquainted with senior circle members like Asali, Inklizi, Salim al-Jazairi, Muhammad Kurd Ali, and Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar. According to Commins, Salah al-Din al-Qasimi still lived at home with his older brother in 1907, so we may assume that Jamal al-Din encouraged or did not object to Salah al-Din's joining the Arab Renaissance Society.<sup>211</sup>

When we look at this picture we can understand that Salafis were older generation who were born before 1866. However Arabists who had been to circles of Salafis were generally born after 1880. The commonality of Salafis was their traditional religious education and their interest in science and western progress. Arabists as next generation and followers of these Salafis studied in Maktab Anbar, which was secular and covering western curriculum. The young generation was influenced by the progressive and reformist ideas of Salafis, emphasizing Arab culture.

When Egypt became a gathering place for the reformers in Syria, some important figures fled to Egypt and started to campaign against Abdulhamid and the Ottoman state in the early 1900s. As it is mentioned above, the relation of Damascene reformers with Egyptians were taken into consideration as a political agenda that helped Britain penetrate the region. In 1906 the anti-Salafi ulama benefited from these developments and accused Damascene reformers like Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi to propagate Wahhabism in Damascus that revived *ijtihad* and attacked emulation. Salafis in Damascus were also charged with cooperation with the British rule in Egypt. It started with debates between

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<sup>210</sup> Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 48.

<sup>211</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 97; Cemal Zekeriyya Kasım, "Arapların Osmanlı Devletinden Ayrılması", *İki Tarafın Bakışı Açısından Türk - Arap Münasebetleri*, (İstanbul: IRCICA, 2000), p. 445.

Shaykh Badr al-Din al-Hasani (1851-1936) and Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar covering the issues in Qasimi's essays. Debates and poems of two sides against each other resulted with the complaints of anti-Salafis to the governor. Another official investigation started after this complaint, but no one from the Salafi camp was arrested. The same year Qasimi and Tahir al-Jazairi went to Lebanon. They first visited Qasimi's relatives in Baalbak, and then went to Sofar by the invitation of Shakib Arslan<sup>212</sup>, Arslan and Qasimi had met several times in Damascus before. Conservative ulama campaigned against Qasimi and Tahir as they fled, while the investigation was continuing.

After the events settled down in 1906, there were no significant events that took place until 1908, when Qasimi's office in Damascus was investigated. On March 1908, police entered Qasimi's room in the Sinaniyyah mosque and took his books and works. The investigation lasted for two months and the authorities gave his materials back two months later. According to Qasimi, fortunately police had not discovered his private library, which includes many forbidden works printed in Egypt.<sup>213</sup> Between 1896 and 1908 conservative ulama tried to persuade Ottoman authorities to arrest Salafis but except Qasimi's one night custody, none of the Damascene reformers were arrested nor exiled.<sup>214</sup>

During the Abdülhamid period, Young Turks, Arabists, Islamists and other reformers worked and defended for the constitutional government. When the constitution was announced, reformers showed their enthusiasm towards the announcement of the constitution in 1908. CUP and Arab Renaissance Society members organized demonstrations in Damascus and other Syrian cities. Like other reformers, Jamal al-Din also welcomed the constitution and expressed his feelings:

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<sup>212</sup> Shakib Arslan is Druze notable who cooperated with reformers and later became a leading voice of pan-Islamism after the world war. For further information about his life see Arslan, *İttihatçı Bir Arap Aydınının Anıları*.

<sup>213</sup> Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>214</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 114.

A telegraph [message] from Grand Vizier Said Pasha came to the provinces today in accordance with the issuing of the sultanic decree to implement the constitution and to elect members of Parliament. Thus have coincided the freedom of America on July 4, the freedom of France on July 14, and the freedom of the Ottoman Empire on July 24.<sup>215</sup>

[I]n the week during which the Ottoman nation was granted constitutional practice based on the principles of justice, respect for consultation, spreading the sciences, and liberating the people from the chains of tyranny. Praise God for that week which toppled the monarchy, altered the country's condition, and transformed the land. The former life has been cast off, the life of lethargy and humiliation, captivity, weakness, and ignorance, and it has been replaced by the life of might, energy, power, knowledge, and solidarity. To you, our Lord, is praise for clearing away the hated clouds, for removing floods of sorrows, for making the sky rain down blessings, for making streams of dignity flow.<sup>216</sup>

Enthusiasm of Salafis about the new constitution ended in disappointment. At the beginnings of the constitutional process, reformers stood by the CUP, but conservatives as traditional followers of Abdülhamid campaigned against CUP, unlike the reformers. After a few years passed from the announcement of the constitution, a new balance emerged among Arab intellectual life. While Arabists, Salafi ulama and non-Muslims supported Liberal Entente which was founded in November 1911, the conservative ulama started to support CUP instead of Abdülhamid. The change in the balance of the powers stemmed from the centralization politics of CUP. Indeed they supported more controlled policy from the center on Arab regions, which means to weaken local forces and undermine local actors. In opposition to CUP, reformer groups supported Liberal Entente for the policy of this party on decentralization and autonomy of Ottoman regions. The centralization politics of CUP, especially after 1913, triggered opposition against the state in the Arab lands that the new policy of the CUP believed were under relatively more Turkish control, and diminishing local powers. This situation deteriorated especially in Hijaz, when the CUP tried to extend the railway from Medina to Macca. This was also perceived as more control for the central administration.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi* pp. 214-215; Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 175.

<sup>216</sup> Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 206.

<sup>217</sup> Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 154-158.

However, the announcement of the constitution was a turning point for the region and intellectual debates. With the new constitution, reformers from outside of Damascus could return to the country, produce new studies, and books in the Ottoman press and intellectual life blossomed in this short period of press freedom. While the constitution provided new atmosphere for free will and freedom of expression for all groups according to Buzpinar; expectations were unrealistic from the constitution and all the groups other than CUP were disappointed with the constitutional process, this disappointment was one of the leading factors which directed Salafis to Liberal Entente and even Arabism.<sup>218</sup>

While the new process provided favorable atmosphere for the reformers and Abdülhamit opponents, conservative ulama still had more force in the public arena. An event took place in 1908 demonstrating how conservatives were more powerful, even during the constitutional period. After the announcement of the constitution in 1908, the actors who fled to Egypt could return to Syria. Rashid Rida was one of them. He visited Syrian and Lebanese cities on this occasion. He also visited Damascus with the invitation of Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar. In his second day lecture in the Umayyad mosque, an anti-reformist scholar Sheikh Salih al-Tunisi interrupted his speech in front of the crowded people and accused Rida of being a Wahhabi.<sup>219</sup> While the debates were continuing among ulama in front of the audience, Rida left the mosque quickly. Police Chief As'ad Bey arrested Tunisi, but this was not tolerated by anti-reformists scholars. They sent people to mosques and called people to save Tunisi from the CUP government, which allegedly sought to get rid of all the ulama and wipe out Islam. Protests were held in Damascene streets with chants, “Down with As'ad, down with the Committee, down with the constitution! Long live the governor!” People gathered around governmental

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<sup>218</sup> Buzpinar, “The Use of Constitutionalism as a Means of Opposition to Abdülhamid II’s Regime”, p. 9.

<sup>219</sup> Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi (1869-1920) came from an old ulama family of Tunis. He migrated to Damascus and played important role in traditional ulama circles particularly in the riot against the Salafi Rashid Rida and the Committee of Union and Progress. On Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi, see Arnold Green, *The Tunisian Ulama, 1873-1915: Social Structure and Response to Ideological Currents* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 171-181.



buildings and disorder broke out in the city. Traditional ulama were blaming Qasimi and other reformers for supporting Rida. Rida left Damascus at the same day and after this disorder As'ad Bey was removed from his post and Qasimi could not leave his home for three months, like other reformers after this event.<sup>220</sup> This was an instance when the conservative ulama showed reformers their traditional power in public. In addition to this, during the CUP ruling period, interrogations and complaints against reformers appeared again and Qasimi and Bitar were in front of the prosecutor in 1909 when the coalition between reformers and CUP ended.

After Kurd Ali's declaration against Caliphate, which claimed that the caliphate had ended after the first four caliphs in Islamic history, and that the current caliphate was not legitimate leader of Muslims, the situation for the reformers deteriorated. Although he apologized next day for his declaration, Kurd Ali had to leave the country and fled to Egypt. Adversaries of reformers in Damascus blamed Qasimi and other Salafis in this occasion. This time they were asked about their relations with Wahhabis and with Syrian Renaissance Society. The society claimed to open branches in rebellious provinces like Yemen and Najd. They did not sentence any reformers, but Arab Renaissance Society that Jamal al-Din's brother Salah al-Din was the member of, was closed by CUP in this period.<sup>221</sup> This development in the early constitutional period shows that reformers were under the pressure of Hamidian regime and they supported constitutional activities against the Sultan, but after the announcement of the constitution and military coup of the CUP, they met with the same difficulties which they were acquainted with in the former period.

The circles in Damascus around Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi were the main source for the reformist view of Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi. He studied with his father and learned more from ulama in his father's circle. He also met with the books in his father's library and started a modern school when he was 12 years old, but his education at home and in his father's way became more determinant for his life. He

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<sup>220</sup> Commins, "Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus", pp. 415-416; Rıza, *İttihad-ı Osmani'den Arap İsyânına*", pp. 99-110.

<sup>221</sup> Commins, "Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus", p. 419.

was interested in developments in the west and the experience of Algerian resistance figures against French troops during the war period. He studied history, literature and examined socialism.<sup>222</sup> Besides his traditional religious education, he was acquainted with eclectic Islamic vision of Abd al-Qadir through his father and friends like Bitar, Tahir and Ahmad al-Jazairi. He also developed relations with the reformers outside of Damascus. His status in the stratum of ulama pushed him to oppose some of the practices of the high level ulama. He emphasized the reform in religious and educational institutions, referring to the famous thirteenth century reformer Ibn Taymiyyah. Like the other reformers, he insisted on the requirement of knowledge in western sense in order to progress:

To covet knowledge, to dedicate oneself to acquiring it and striving night and day to obtain its general and specific truths. Knowledge! Knowledge! No nation has reigned except by knowledge, no nation has risen except by knowledge, no nation has become great except by knowledge. Therefore make it your ambition to obtain knowledge, to increase knowledge, and to give all effort [*al-ijtihad fi*] to learning and teaching.<sup>223</sup>

Despite the fact that some of his friends left Damascus and went to Egypt to live and campaign against the regime and the conservative ulama, he did not leave Damascus, but only visited Egypt for a short time. It was very important for him to strengthen his relations with reformers. He met and discussed with the famous reformers like Abduh and Rida. However he did not meet with Afghani, but he was aware of his ideas by means of the environment around him. He had also correspondence with reformers from Java to Morocco, and articles about his endeavors in Damascus in the reformers' journals like *al-Manar*, which gave him great importance. He invited Rashid Rida to Damascus and had some difficulties with the authorities after the events with conservative ulama. All these gave him important role as he was the leader of the Damascus branch of the reform movement during his age<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Turgut, "Cemaleddin el-Kasimi", p. 311.

<sup>223</sup> Qasimi, *Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi*, p. 221; Commins, *Islamic Reform in Late Ottoman Syria*, p. 127.

<sup>224</sup> Kalaycı, "Jamâl al-Dîn al-Qâsimî and Syrian Reformism", p. 93.

According to Qasimi, the decline of Islamic world stemmed from the misunderstanding of Islam. To progress and revive Islamic world against the west we need to understand the origins of our religion, and in order to understand the basis of the religion we need to apply first generation sources or return to sources of Salaf, (the way of the pious ancestors *al-Salaf al-salih*).<sup>225</sup> Qasimi held that Islam was a rational religion: Islam calls for reason; and whoever employs reason to study the natural world will grow stronger in faith.<sup>226</sup> Qasimi believed that imitation (*taqlid*) was the source underlying many conflicts among Muslims; therefore, he showed, as other reformists did, a fierce opposition to blind imitation. He called all Muslims to follow the way of Bukhari without making any sectarian discrimination, and opening the ways for *talfiq*, means be able to make use of different schools.<sup>227</sup> To implement all these reforms, we need to open the ways and doors of *ijtihad*; it is important to solve the contemporary problems and to progress. To do this, the Quran and Sunnah would be primary sources and main reference.<sup>228</sup> Personally Qasimi belonged to Shafi'i school, but he did not limit himself to this tradition.<sup>229</sup>

Muhammad al-Khani, the teacher of Qasimi gave him instructions on Sufism and he promoted Qasimi's access to Naqshbandi order. Qasimi followed Naqshbandi order for a short time and used the name as Qasimi Naqshibendi in his earlier works.<sup>230</sup> Qasimi left the order and criticized the practices of Sufism. He claimed that Sufism must be purified from polytheism, and innovations. According to Wiesmann, Qasimi lost his interest in the Sufi path at an early age, forty-one, probably as a result of the general spread of the rationalistic attitude among his generation.<sup>231</sup>

Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and his Salafi friends did not play an important role during the First World War. In the administration of Jamal Pasha, some of his friends like; Shukri al-Asali, Abd al-Wahhab al-Inklizi, Salim al-Jazairi, and Abd al-Hamid

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>226</sup> Commins, "Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus", p. 407.

<sup>227</sup> Kalaycı, "Jamâl al-Dîn al-Qâsimî and Syrian Reformism", p. 96.

<sup>228</sup> Commins, "Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus", p. 408.

<sup>229</sup> H. Mehmet Günay, "Cemaleddin el-Kasimi ve İlmi Kişiliği", *SAÜİFD*, 1 (1996), p. 258.

<sup>230</sup> Günay, "Cemaleddin el-Kasimi ve İlmi Kişiliği", p. 260.

<sup>231</sup> Wiesmann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism", p. 219.

al-Zahrawi were hung, and some important Salafi figures exiled to Anatolia. Most of the Salafis, who already were antagonistic against CUP, supported Arab rebellions during the war. In this period, due to their illness, Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar did not face any prosecution, but most of the others from Salafis and Arabists faced problems in the governorship period of Jamal Pasha.<sup>232</sup> The first generation of Salafis passed away between 1914 and 1920. Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi died of typhoid fever in April 1914; Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar died in 1917; Tahir al-Jazairi passed away in 1920, four months after returning to Damascus.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Kalaycı, “Jamâl al-Dîn al-Qâsimî and Syrian Reformism”, p. 196.

<sup>233</sup> Commins, “Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus”, p. 421.

## CONCLUSION

The origins of Islamism are related with social and political developments in eighteenth and nineteenth century. As a result of a declining Islamic world, particularly the Ottoman Empire relative to western powers, western rationalism, progress and science emerged as ideals and became valued concepts in the intellectual life of Muslims. The question of how western rationalism and science was applicable for Islamic world and how to be a Muslim and modern at the same time was answered in the affirmative by Islamists in that Islamic reformers wanted to show how Muslims need to adopt western science instead of refusing it.

Before Tanzimat reforms in Ottoman lands, Damascus was ruled by an Egyptian administration from 1832-1849, followed by the regime of Ibrahim Pasha. The rule of Ibrahim Pasha lasted for eight years, during which time Syria was opened to modern Egyptian and western influence. Syrians met with modern way of life after the foreign missions were opened in Syrian provinces in this period. The policy of Egyptian administration in Damascus and other Syrian provinces, and the opening of foreign consulates from European countries increased the advantages of non-Muslims, while discounting Muslims.

Modernization of Syria was advanced with the reforms of Ottomans in the next decades. The emergence of new modern institutions and change in paradigm in this period decreased the importance of ulama and religious knowledge. Instead science and western rationalism became a priority in many respects. A new social class among ulama appeared in this period opposing the traditional authority of high ranking ulama and criticizing the traditional way of their authorities. This middle class of ulama lost their advantages in the new balance and they criticized high ranking ulama and their traditional practices. According to the criticism by the new approach, which was defined as Salafism or contemporary Islamic thought, since

they claimed themselves as the followers of pious ancestors (*selef-i salihin*), the Muslims declined in the last centuries since they misunderstood the message of religion. To recover this they need to understand Islam by looking at its original form. Islam is a rational religion and cannot be compared against progressivism. Muslims should abandon imitation of the legal rulings of the predecessors (*taqlid*) since it divides Islam (*fitna*), and *ijtihad* cannot be limited only to these legal schools.

Social, economic and political developments in the first half of nineteenth century triggered the religious and intellectual discussions in the second half of nineteenth century. Besides social, economic and political developments, some figures and agents played important role in developing Islamism in the Arab world. Although they did not use the concept of Wahhabism to describe themselves, reformers in Damascus were already acquainted with the ideas of Wahhabis in Najd; the movement helped them to develop their views in many respects. Due to the geopolitical position of Syria, Damascene ulama were in touch with other reformers in Iraq, Egypt, Hicaz and Istanbul. This wide range of interaction provided reformers opportunities to find partners in other regions to strengthen the solidarity against the conservative ulama. Damascene reformers tried to revive some old sources like Ibn Taymiyyah, the famous scholar of thirteenth century, to ground their ideas with the help of some reformer ulama figures in neighboring countries like Alusis in Baghdad. Exceptional figure for Damascene reformers was Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi who arrived to Damascus in 1855 and influenced dozens of ulama with his eclectic approach and political activism. Jazairi opened new horizons for the middle class of ulama in Damascus and helped them to develop relations with other reformers in different centers.

In addition to the role in Ibrahim Pasha's period in 1832-1839, Egypt replayed an important role in the last quarter of nineteenth century in developing reform ideas in Syria. Expanding new circles around Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and after the occupation by Britain, Egypt became more tolerable atmosphere for the reformers of Syria. Syrian reformers had contacted with Abduh and other reformers

in Egypt. Important Islamic figures like Rashid Rida, Abd al-Hamid al Zahrawi, Tahir al-Jazairi, Abd al Rahman al-Kawakibi, and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi fled to Egypt. They got in touch with Afghani and Abduh and the journals published by them like *Urwa al-wuthqa* and *al-Manar*, which provided intellectual support in developing reform ideas in Ottoman Damascus. When Egypt became the equivalent of Hyde Park Corner for reformers, Ottoman administration feared intervention of foreign countries, especially Britain in Syria by means of reformers. Some investigations and interrogations were launched against reformers in Damascus from 1896 to 1912 as a result of these political fears.

Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, as one of the most important Syrian scholars, played an important role among Damascene reformers. Qasimi first interacted with ulama members of Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi and another circles around him, and Tahir al-Jazairi appeared in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Qasimi's reformist ideas, his struggle with conservative ulama in Damascus, and his relations with Egyptian reformers made him important agent for reformers in Damascus.

Islamism or Islamic reformism played an important role in the adoption of western technology and methods in the Islamic world through the nineteenth century. Islamists insisted on that Islam as a religious system is compatible with progress and there is no reason for the Muslims to be as progressed as Europeans. This issue was on the agenda of the intellectuals in the Islamic world. This study aimed to demonstrate this intellectual debate in Ottoman Syria, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century. While this study partly tried to present the motives of the agents of this period, it also showed how historical developments influenced the growth of reform ideas among Muslim intellectuals in Syria.

The first opportunity for the Syrian reformers was the occupation of the country by the Egyptian army in 1832. This "foreign" intervention affected the socio-cultural balance in the region. Under the new regime, non-Muslims found a way to introduce and adapt western thought and methods in Syria. As a reaction to these developments, Muslim intellectuals in the country published works to prove that

Islam is compatible with new developments in science and rational thought. Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi, one of the leading figures of the intellectual circles in Syria, played an important role in the opening of new horizons to the Syrian ulama. The process that was started with Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi from 1850 to 1880 gained speed with Tahir al-Jazairi and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. On the contrary to the Jazairi's circle, the Salafi approach became more influential in the second generation. It was during this second period that the Salafi publications appeared prominently among reformist literature. Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and Tahir al-Jazairi had good relations with other reformers outside of Syria and they continued their debates with the conservative ulama. Their solidarity with Egyptian partners helped Syrian reformers to develop their ideas. Their contacts with Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida helped Syrian reformers to strengthen their intellectual manner against local conservative figures.

After 1908, a third generation of intellectuals who consisted of mostly Arab nationalists emerged in Syria. They were under the intellectual shadow of Islamists but during the constitutional period their nationalist approach became more decisive. They were influenced from Tahir al-Jazairi and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi. Although they attended the circle of Qasimi for some years, most of these students were educated in newly established western schools, and they were more aware of western nationalist ideas. Contrary to the Islamic reformers in the center of the empire, most of the Islamists in the Arab region supported the Arab uprising during the First World War.

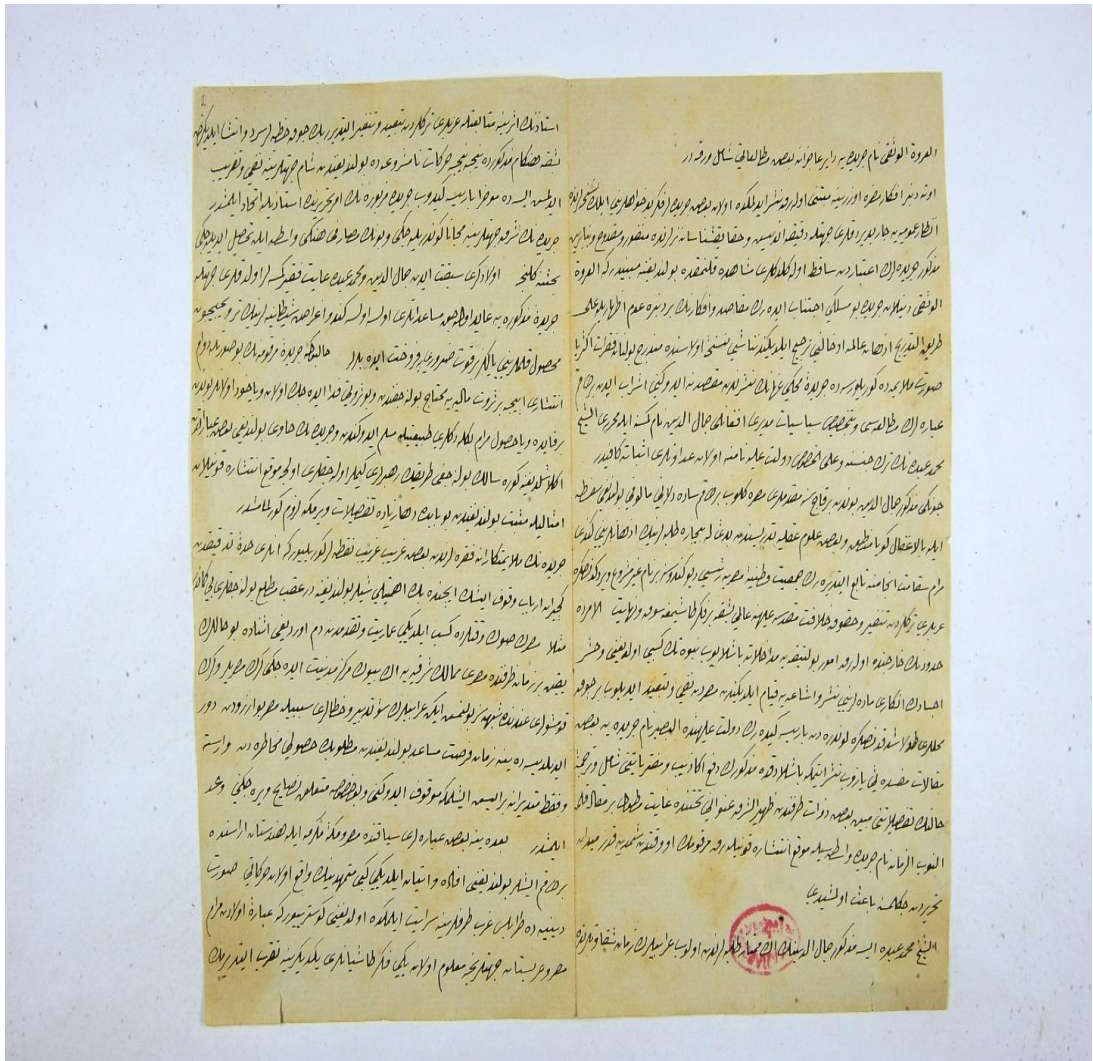
This study tried to show historical dynamism of Islamic reform movement in Ottoman Syria. To understand better the dynamism of the Islamic reformism, new research should be conducted on Arab Islamic reform ideology in comparison with Islamic reform movements in the center of the empire, which had more Turkish character in nature.



# APPENDICES

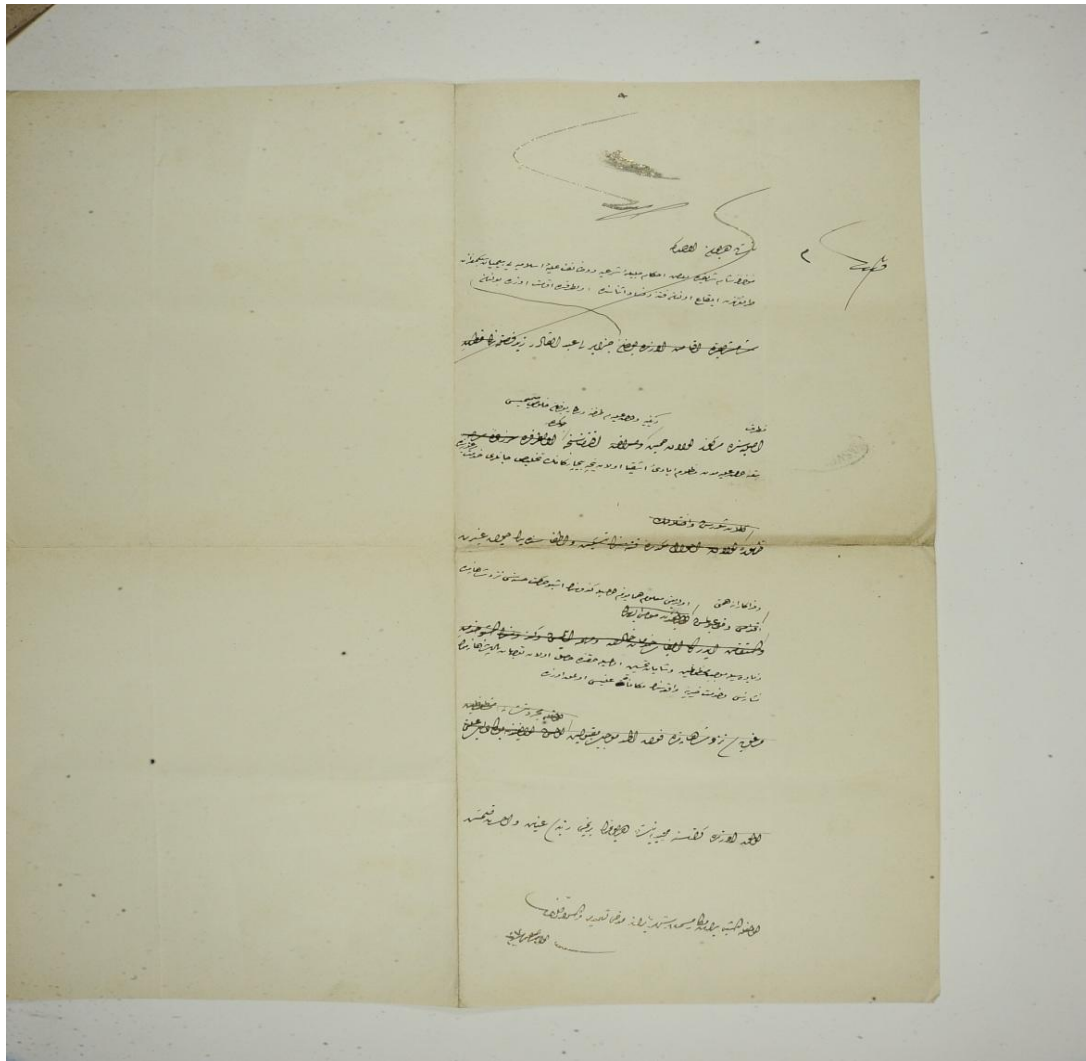
## Appendix -1

An archival document about how the activities of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh were perceived by the Ottoman authorities. BOA, Y. PRK. AZJ. 9/106 1301 Zilkade.



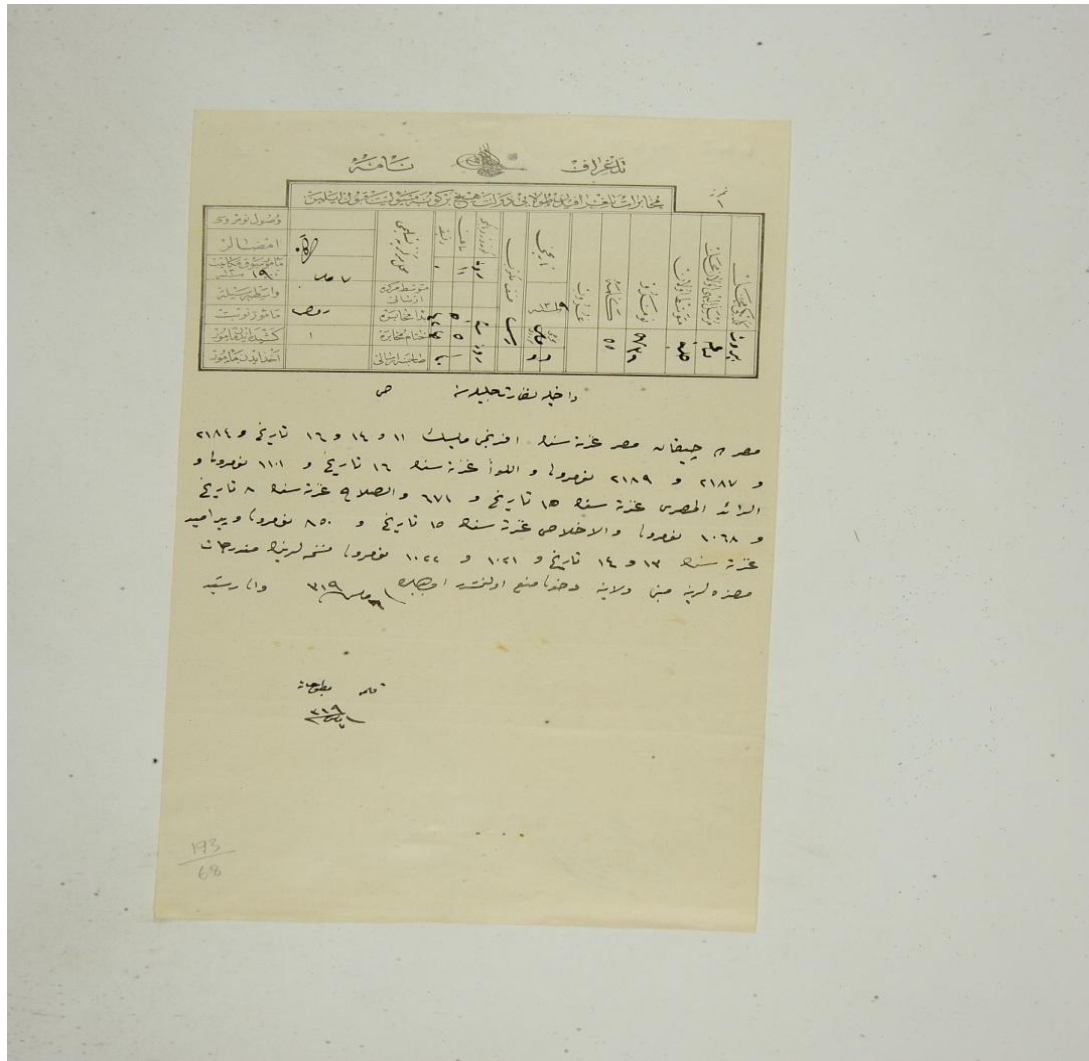
**Appendix-2**

A document about an award from Ottoman administration to Amir Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi following the events of 1860. BOA, DVN. MHM. 31/2 1277 Safer.



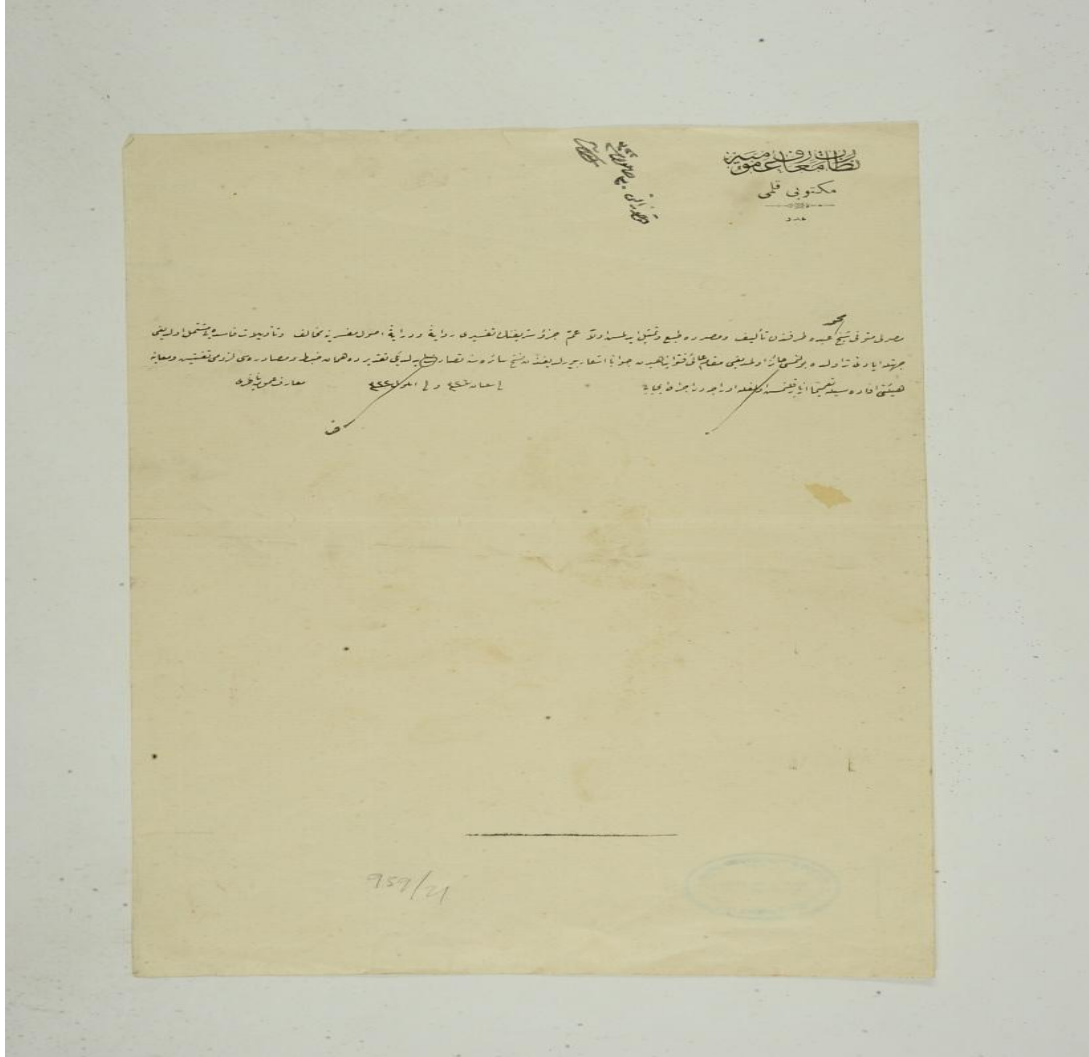
### Appendix-3

An official document about the precautions of Ottoman administration against published works in Egypt. BOA, DH.MKT.715/5 1321 Rabiussani.



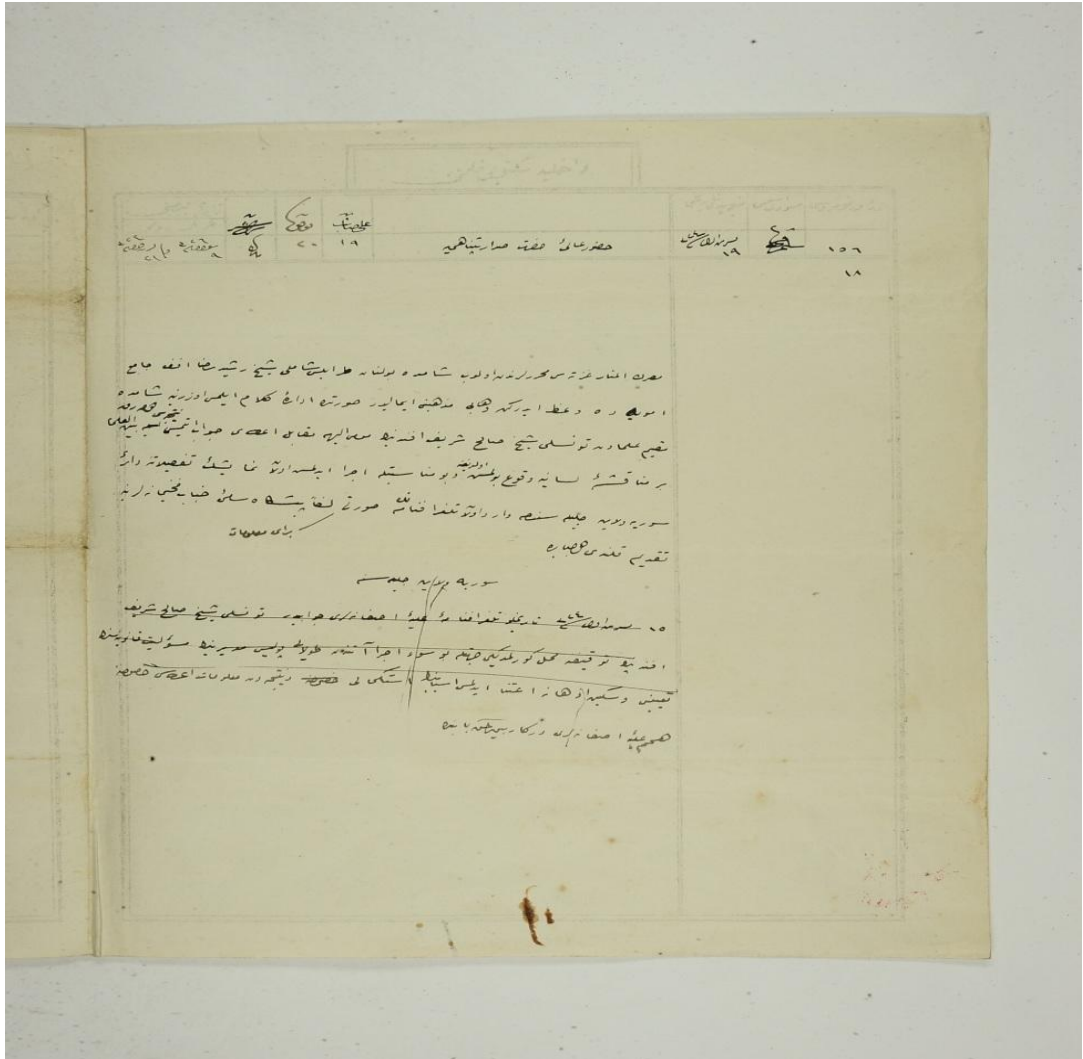
**Appendix-4**

An official document about the precautions of Ottoman administration against published works in Egypt. BOA, MF.MKT. 959/21 1324 Şaban.



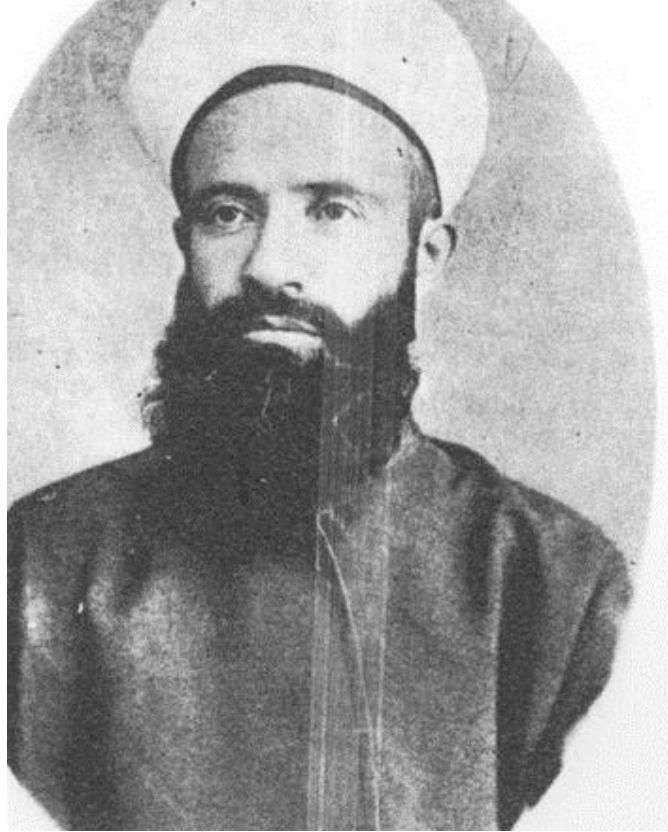
**Appendix-5**

A document about the event in Damascus between Rashid Rida and conservative ulama in Umayyad mosque in 1908 BOA, DH. MKT. 2653/38 1326 Şaban.



**Appendix-6**

Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi (1866-1914)



**Appendix-7-a**

Amir Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi (1807-1883)



**Appendix-7-b**

Amir Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi (1807-1883)





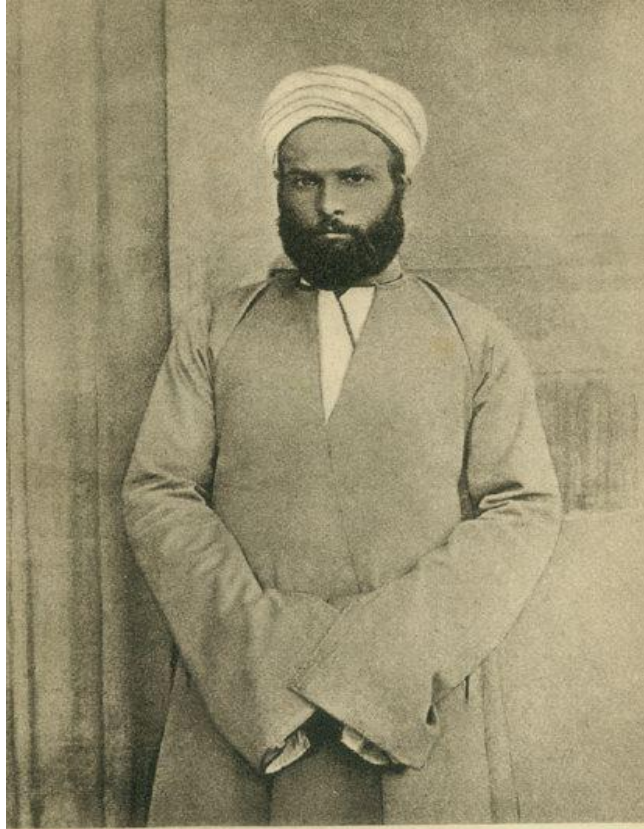
## Appendix-8

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897)



**Appendix-9**

Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905)



**Appendix-10**

Rashid Rida (1865-1935)



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