

Language Reform by Lebanese Lexicographers in the *Nahḍa*

The case of Sa'īd al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī

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This article provides an overview of the social and literary revival and linguistic regeneration of the nineteenth century in Arab countries, especially in the Syro-Lebanese region. After outlining the work of the most important Lebanese lexicographers, this research focuses on the author Sa'īd al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī and his multiple interests. The aim of this paper is to understand the role of this author in a reform carried out by two groups of intellectuals, one conservative and one reformist, in the period called *Nahḍa*.

1. *Nahḍa* and the role of the Syro-Lebanese region

Nahḍa,¹ or Arab Renaissance, represents a cultural, political and economic rupture that puts an end to the so-called *'Inḥiṭāt*, a period of decadence which led the Arab world to a deadlock and a delay in the cultural and civil fields, if compared to the Western world. This is a situation unique of the Arab world that represents the way in which non-Western societies have conceptualized their entry into the historical stage of modernity. *Nahḍa* replaces the era of ignorance and obscurantism (*'ahd al-ḡahl wa-z-ḡalām*) characteristic of the period between the eighth and fourteenth centuries and characterized by a strong cultural impoverishment.

The allegory of rebirth is a colonial element and the “price of entry” in modernity “was a confession of decadence” (Fieni 2012: 145). It is seen as an historical event whose cultural aspects are a simple echo of larger social and economic forces, especially the growth of the colonial presence of Western powers in the Arab world, the weakening of the Ottoman system, the birth of new forms of capitalist economy, and so on. In other cases, *Nahḍa* is defined as a product of the genius of a pantheon of “great men” (Rastegar 2014: 227-231). In each country there have been people who are credited with favouring a turnaround because they wanted change and they paved the way for later generations. They are called *ar-Ruwwād* (the pioneers) and among them we know, for example, Rifā'a

¹ The term derives from the root NHD, which means “to rise,” “to rise again,” “to awaken.”

Rāfi‘ at-Taḥṭāwī (d. 1873 CE) in Egypt and Nāṣif al-Yāziḡī (m. 1871 CE) and Buṭrus al-Bustānī (d. 1883 CE) in Lebanon.

It is important to understand how the authors were, at that time, a product of socio-economic changes and how, at the same time, they themselves originated new social, cultural and political conditions, within that individual and collective project that was the *Nahda*.

Arab intellectuals, when they travelled to Europe or the United States, physically or intellectually, already had some idea of what they were looking for. Their travel experiences could modify and sometimes completely change their ideas, but they rarely abandoned the initial idea, often determined by their position in their country in the face of power, social status and class interests. It is therefore necessary to revisit the notion of European “glimmer” that inflamed this sort of Arab enlightenment in the nineteenth century, when Napoleon's adventure in Egypt woke up the entire Arab East from its sleep. The history of cultural transformations in Lebanon upsets this Egypt-centric “glimmer” of *Nahda*. While in Egypt the rebirth began with the Napoleonic expedition (1798-1801) and marked a recovery in the economic and social fields, Christian communities of Syro-Lebanese region (*Bilād aš-Šām*) had already implemented a linguistic and cultural renaissance.

Therefore, when referring to *Nahda*, we speak of a composite political, social and literary revival movement, which did not begin at a specific time in history. It was a gradual process, which had already had signs at the end of the eighteenth century and which strengthened itself over the following century, stimulated by different causes in each country.

As already mentioned, in the Syro-Lebanese region *Nahda* had already begun and from there it spread to the other near eastern regions. We speak of Syro-Lebanese region and not of Lebanon because it did not exist as an autonomous region yet, but it was a province of Greater Syria.

Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in this region the illiteracy was rampant, the academic standards imposed by the schools were low and the offer of courses was limited. Furthermore, teachers had no professional skills, there were few libraries and books were limited both in number and distribution. As a result of these problems, the language became impoverished and the writing styles were artificial, with a highly inexpressive vocabulary.

The writings were saturated with colloquialisms and emphasized *Sağ*² at the expense of content. Classical Arabic in Arabic-speaking countries was in decline to the point that the use of colloquial varieties prevailed also in official circles.

In this situation of impoverishment, Arabic language was accused of incapacity in its primary function as a means of expression and could not be placed on the same level as other languages, particularly when compared to English and French. To counter this criticism of Arabic language, some important scholars in the second half of the nineteenth century undertook a defence of the language by planning ways to revive it. This included a return to the roots (*al-'uṣūl*), emphasis on linguistic and literary subjects, translation of modern sciences in Arabic, development of journalism and interest in publishing in general. All these efforts were designed to eliminate the limitations of Arabic language.

There was a vast emigration of intellectuals both internally and in the opposite direction in Egypt and Western countries, which favoured contact between the two shores of the Mediterranean and between West and East. Furthermore, the opening of many schools and the foreign missions operating in the Arab territory and in that area further encouraged contact between the populations, contributing to spreading culture and raising the level of general culture. Writers and intellectuals focused on the regeneration of the language to make it able to express new ideas and new tools and to react to the needs of modern society. This included a correction of dictionaries.

From 1860, the stabilization of American missionary schools in Syria and Lebanon (which will later represent the American University), favoured a linguistic and literary revival of Arabic.

The oldest of the linguistic academies, the Arab Academy of Damascus, founded by Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī (d. 1953 CE), was modelled on the Académie Française and its goals were the protection of the language against dialectal influence, the maintenance of linguistic purity by eliminating all the terms of foreign introduction and adapting the language to modern needs, particularly in the area of science and technology.

The proliferation of academies was, however, a reflection of the political fragmentation of the Arab world and consequently they were themselves a factor in ensuring that the terminological inconsistencies they wanted to avoid continued to be a plague in scientific communication in Arabic. But this was not the only trouble. Scientific progress in the Arab world was conducted, as

² Prose characterized by a rhyme or a similarity placed at the end of the period. It was already in use in pre-Islamic times (*ḡāhiliyya*). It derives from the root *SĠ'* which in other Semitic languages is connected to the "sacred slave of a temple;" in Arabic the root also means the monotonous and cadenced "cooing" of a pigeon (Amaldi 2004: 29).

everywhere, in English, and Arab neologisms found their way only later in university textbooks. Thus, the first goals of academies concealed several internal contradictions and historical inaccuracies.

The academies' desire to protect language from dialectal and foreign influences was based on the idea that dialects were degraded forms of a language that had been corrupted by contact with foreigners but that, at some indefinite point in the past, had been pure. In the early medieval period, drawing a line that distinguished the classical language from the non-classical one had mostly religious political motivations and this was destined to be a limitation. Despite the prescriptions of medieval grammarians, foreign lexicon was continually finding its way into Arabic, particularly in the tenth century, at the time of the Abbasids.

If, according to them, the flow of foreign terms and expressions had to be stopped to preserve the purity of the language, the solution would have been to create an alternative, autochthonous lexicon. In this regard, there were two possibilities. The first was *al-'ihyā'* (to revive) which consisted, precisely, in reusing one's own heritage and exploiting archaisms to indicate something new. An example is the term *qitār* which denoted the caravan of camels bound to each other and which was then used to indicate the train. The second possibility was *al-Iqtibās* (adaptation) which consisted in the use of the heritage of others and, substantially, in the transcription with the Arab alphabet of foreign terms (*ta'rib*; Toelle and Zakharia 2007).

From the beginning, the idea of the academics was to allow the minting of new terms only according to medieval grammar principles. This meant that the simple *ta'rib* had to be avoided at all costs and that the new terms had to be derived according to the principle of analogical derivation (*al-'ištiqāq bi-l-qiyās*). For this reason, the options of the academies were limited to the assortment of attested roots and to a relatively small set of morphological models. But this self-limitation has proved to be impractical and, in practice, ignored by the academicians themselves, since the desire to preserve the "spirit" of the language using only a few derivational schemes showed difficulties in reconciling with modern science. The request for new terms was too high and the analogic system alone was not capable of generating large families of terms comparable to those of Western scientific language (words such as "rheumatology," "rheumatism," "rheumatic," etc.) in which morphemes can be freely added to a fixed base. In some cases, in fact, to make up for this lack, compounds (*naḥt*) were created from the Greek-Latin formations. The simplest type of compound is the one which does not require an abbreviation, such as *barrmā'i* (amphibian) formed by *barr* (mainland) and *mā'* (water) with the suffix *i* indicating the derived adjectives (*an-nisba*).

Language in this period is seen as a sociological organism whose growth and evolution are analogous to that of a population or a nation and, in this case, the nation was formed through two paths: the natural increase of the Arab ethnic group native population (*at-tawālud*) and the assimilation of non-Arabs (*at-tağannus*). Language, in the same way, has grown both through *'ištiqāq* from Arabic roots, similarly to *tawālud*, and through assimilation of foreign lexicon, whereby the *ta'rib* would correspond to *tağannus* (Mağribī 2015).

During the nineteenth century, many Lebanese intellectuals focused on the study of Arabic language. The most important were Father 'Anastās al-Karmalī (d. 1947 CE), 'Aḥmad Fāris aš-Šidyāq (d. 1887 CE), Buṭrus al-Bustānī, Nāṣif al-Yāziğī and Sa'īd al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī (m. 1912 CE). These pioneers had undertaken a reform of the Arabic language (Kašlī 2002: 42) and they can be divided into two groups: the conservative reformists, including Buṭrus al-Bustānī and Sa'īd al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī, and the liberal reformists, among whom the figure of 'Aḥmad Fāris aš-Šidyāq stood out. These scholars agreed on the need for a linguistic reform, but they had a different purpose, method and above all a different conception of reform.

The conservative idea should be understood as a concern for the correct use of Arabic with the intention of purifying the language, while the liberal reformist conception was mostly aimed at making the language an adaptable means of communication with the purpose of simplifying. Between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, there were several linguistic controversies between these two groups of scholars.

The attitude of intellectuals belonging to both groups was mainly critical of classical dictionaries which, in fact, had several limitations. For example, classical lexicographers had left aside the dialects of many tribes, considering that the only one worthy of being called classical Arabic was the dialect of Qurayš tribe (the Prophet's tribe). No ancient dictionary followed the alphabetical order from the beginning to the end of the word³ and there was great confusion in the placement of many words, as well as the repetition of some of them. Many linguists accused each other of having made a mistake. In any case, they mostly used material acquired from other dictionaries such as al-Ḥalīl's *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-'Arab* or Ibn Durayd's *Ğamharat al-Luĵa*.

³ The most complete dictionaries were written on an anagrammatic basis, according to an artificial alphabetical order based on phonetic principles and through the separation of the roots according to the number of the letters that included them. Later, roots were ordered according to the rhyme, considering their final consonant. Each dictionary had an organization system that could be phonetic-permutative, alphabetic, based on the final rhyme and onomasiological. There were also specialized dictionaries, such as those in religious matters (Baalbaki 2014).

In this spirit of criticism, it was remarkable the one by 'Aḥmad Fāris aš-Šidyāq towards Fīrūzābādī's *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*. He wanted to urge Arab scholars to compile a dictionary with a simple organization that would satisfy the needs of the age. He also criticized the contents, believing that Fīrūzābādī (d. 1412 CE) had filled his work with medicinal herbs and their benefits as if it were a medical dictionary. He also complained that he had mentioned many scholars who had nothing to do with language and literature. Aš-Šidyāq believed that the classical dictionaries covered a period of only three hundred years, from *Ġāhiliyya* to Umayyad era, not taking into consideration the poetry after these eras. According to him classical language should not be confined to a certain period. Aš-Šidyāq maintained the linguists' habit of indicating whether a word was in classical Arabic or not.

Father 'Anastās al-Karmalī (d. 1947 CE) was a great scholar of Arabic language, especially regarding dictionaries. His works were mostly essays or articles published in linguistic magazines in which he often commented on linguistic errors in which lexicographers fell.

Another of the Lebanese pioneers of lexicography, attentive to the problems of ancient Arabic dictionaries was Buṭrus al-Bustānī. He noted, with the spread of education, the exaggerated effort of Arabic language students in the study of classical dictionaries (Bustānī 1869: 2). He became known as *al-mu'allim* (the master) and is mainly remembered for his precious work *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*. This dictionary, which is reprinted up to our days, was the first in which verbal roots were arranged in a strictly alphabetical order and, therefore, starting from the first letter. Al-Bustānī's work was based on al-Fīrūzābādī's *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* to which was also inspired for the title. In 1870 he also published a reduced edition, for scholastic use, entitled *Qaṭr al-Muḥīṭ*. Al-Bustānī introduced many words concerning art and science and erased several colloquialisms and post-classical terms (*muwallad*) which, according to him, were not part of the original Arabic language. An important innovation of *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* was the introduction of a biblical etymology of terms. Introducing the Bible in his dictionary, he revolutionized some of the conventions of Arabic lexicography which before that moment was seen under a mainly Quranic perspective. Although he followed the conventional methodologies in his approach to lexicography, with this contribution he succeeded in constructing an alternative and rival narrative for the history of Arab civilization, supporting it with biblical origins. These changes went hand in hand with the contribution of al-Bustānī to the Christianization of the nineteenth-century Syro-Lebanese national identity. The ambition of *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* to become the dictionary of the standard lexicon used by all Arabic-speaking and Arabist readers had wider implications in the development of language during *Nahḍa*, especially in historically defining the role of the Syro-Lebanese Christian elites in the standardisation of Arabic Language.

All the modern lexicographers, in their works, criticized ancient dictionaries even if they drew from them.

The first of these works was *'Aḥkām Bāb al-'I'rāb 'an Luġat al-'A'rāb* of Ğirmānūs Farḥāt.⁴ It was a summary of *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, which he arranged according to the final consonant of the words, taking into consideration the system of rhymes. Farḥāt opted for concision against the redundancy of Fīrūzābādī's work which he criticized in his introduction. Although it was a summary, he added several things to *Qāmūs*, including the use of symbols. For example, ج (Ĝīm) stood for plural جمع (Ĝam') and م (Mīm) for known words which didn't require any explanation معروف (Ma'rūf).

A good example among Lebanese Christian intellectuals in *Nahḍa* was Sa'īd al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī who, between 1889 and 1893, compiled his *'Aqrab al-Mawārid fī Fuṣaḥ al-'Arabiyya wa-l-Šawārid*, a dictionary for students divided into three volumes and containing an appendix inserted to correct the errors and fill the gaps of the classical dictionaries from which he had drawn most of the material. He also compiled an onomasiological dictionary, the *Naḡdat al-Yarā'*, organized precisely in thematic sections. The latter contained 144 pages and was intended to assist students in their schoolwork. It consisted of three parts in which he treated rhetoric, antonyms and proverbs. In the appendix there was a further dictionary that interpreted the words contained in it. He added the vowels to all the consonants of the words because it was a scholastic text.

2. Sa'īd al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī

Sa'īd Ibn 'Abd 'Allāh Ibn Miḥa'il Ibn 'Ilyās Ibn Yūsuf al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī was a linguist and scholar who was part of the majority group of *Nahḍa* intellectuals who dedicated their work to the preservation of Arabic language. His main interests were grammar, lexicography and rhetoric, although he also made important contributions in other fields. His closest collaborators among the intellectuals of the time were Buṭrus al-Bustānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905 CE) while, among later influential figures we can mention Šakīb 'Arsalān (d. 1947 CE) and Mārūn 'Abbūd (d. 1962 CE) who were his students. Šartūnī summarized the tradition of Arab criticism towards the great classics of the medieval period for a new generation of students.

⁴ His birth name was Ğabrīl Ibn Farḥāt. He was born in Aleppo on 20 November 1660 and studied Syriac first and later Arabic. He took religious vows at the age of twenty-three and, along with many other young people, he left his hometown to retire to the monasteries of Lebanon. In 1711 he went to Rome, was received by the Pope, returned to Lebanon and in 1721 went to Aleppo, at the request of the Melkite bishop, to correct the Arabic translation of St. John Chrysostom's works. In 1725 he was elected bishop of Aleppo and received the name Ğirmānūs. He died on 9 July 1732.

Sa'īd al-Hūrī aš-Šartūnī was born in 1849 in Šartūn, a small village in Mount Lebanon, and grew illiterate like many of his contemporaries. He had a religious education from his father and was maintained by his maternal uncle. Sources agree that he would have remained unknown if it had not been for an accident that marked the beginning of his literary career. It is said that at thirteen he threw a stone at a woman while she was climbing a tree in his garden. The woman fell and died due to the accident, so aš-Šartūnī, scared, fled to Aabey in 1862 to avoid an accusation and he never came back to his village. There the American missionaries admitted him to their seminary, an event that marked the beginning of his education. He studied for two years with them before moving to *Sūq al-Ġarb* school (1864-1865) near Beirut, founded by 'Ilyās aš-Šalībī, where he completed his education by learning geography, mathematics, basics of English and refining his own knowledge of Arabic. In this school he received a teacher training ('Aṭiya 2012: 426-430).

Aš-Šartūnī dedicated his life to school activities while teaching in the main schools and institutions of Cairo, Beirut and Damascus. His first job was at the Greek Catholic school for higher education in 'Ayn Ṭrāz in Mount Lebanon region, where he remained for five years before moving to Damascus until 1875. Here he gained the respect of the Jesuit priests who then sent him to Beirut, where he spent the following decades of his life teaching and pursuing intellectual activities (Dāğir 1956: 482). In this period as a teacher aš-Šartūnī wrote the grammar treatise *as-Sahm aš-Šā'ib fi Taḥṭi'at Ġunyāt aṭ-Ṭālib* (The infallible arrow in judging *Ġunyāt aṭ-Ṭālib*), a detailed critique of the simplified grammar of Arabic language *Ġunyāt aṭ-Ṭālib wa Munyat ar-Rāğib* by 'Aḥmad Fāris aš-Šidyāq. When the Jesuit seminary was moved to Beirut in 1875, to the Jesuit College (which today is the Université Saint-Joseph), aš-Šartūnī was called to teach Arabic and work as proof-reader of Jesuit publications, and he did it for at least twenty-two years (Šayḥū 1926: 67). It was at this time that he reviewed and published several works by early Christian Arabs, such as the commentary he wrote on the abbreviated grammar *Kitāb Baḥṭ al-Maṭālib fi 'Ilm al-'Arabiyya* (1891) by Ġirmānūs Farḥāt, one of his most important works which was subject to criticisms of many intellectuals of the period.⁵ There were several copies of this work, but they were all manuscripts until the *Maṭba'a al-Kāṭūlikiyya* which, in fact, belonged to the Jesuits, asked Šartūnī to prepare a copy for printing. He finished his work of correcting errors and commenting on footnotes in May 1882 and in the introduction he stated that the owners of the publishing house were aware that copying it and then copying it again after more than a century and a half would have, somehow, distorted and eliminated some of the features of the

⁵ It was first published in 1705 and then summarized by the author himself in 1707. It was the abbreviated version to be revised and published by Bustānī, Šidyāq and Šartūnī.

original work. In the manuscripts some parts had been lost and Jesuits asked Šartūnī to fix the gaps. The book was printed a fourth time in 1895 by the same publishing house and obtained the printing license by *Mağlis Ma'ārif Wilāyat Bayrūt* (Council of Knowledge of the Province of Beirut). This happened because in 1888 the Ottoman Empire divided the Levant into several provinces (*wilāyāt*) and the one of Beirut, for example, occupied the city itself. For each *wilāya*, it was founded a *Mağlis Ma'ārif* which had the role of granting licenses for printing books. After the license, this book was printed several times. *Baḥṭ al-Maṭālib* is divided into three books. The first of these concerned the conjugation of verbs and contained eight chapters. Each of these chapters contained different researches and, in each research, there were different purposes (*Maṭālib*) (Ziyāda 2000).

At the same time, he worked in Beirut in the *al-Madrasa al-Baṭrakīyya* school (Greek Catholic Patriarchal school) which attracted students from Syria and Egypt and among whose professors is especially noteworthy the intellectual Nāṣif al-Yāziḡī (Maqdisī 2000: 59). Aš-Šartūnī also taught at the *Madrasat al-Ḥikma*, the main Maronite school in Beirut, founded in 1874 by the bishop of Beirut, Yūsuf ad-Dibs. This institute included among its graduates many of the leading figures of literature and politics in modern Lebanon, including two influential writers, Šartūnī's students, Šakīb 'Arsalān (d. 1946 CE) and Mārūn 'Abbūd (d. 1962 CE; Šarabāsī 1963).

The nineties of the nineteenth century were the most productive for aš-Šartūnī's career and it was, in fact, during this period that he compiled his famous dictionary '*Aqrab al-Mawārid fī Fuṣaḥ al-'Arabiyya wa-l-Šawārid* (1889-1893). In this work, he aimed to demonstrate the purity of Arabic language which he claimed it had been contaminated by the mass influx of colloquialisms and the growing influence of foreign languages. He collected all the deviations of language from the most ancient works, even if for a long time these were no longer mentioned in dictionaries. In fact, before his work, no one knew that these deviations were part of the origins of language since, if they found them or noticed them, they would have explained the meanings. Šartūnī grouped these deviations and in front of each word he inserted a ω (*Sīn*), an abbreviation of the adjective *sa'īdiyya*. This term is a relation adjective specifically coined by the author to indicate an addition of his own hand to the dictionary materials and, in fact, it literally means "relative to Sa'id" (the author's own name; 'Aṭiya 1912: 425). In the introduction of the third part he explains the importance, care and control in compiling it.

Like many of his contemporaries, he worked for several years as editor of a newspaper and contributed with articles in authoritative journals, mostly with linguistic topics. He was intelligent and diligent, and he spent most of his time reading. His eclectic interests were reflected in the fact that he was involved in the publication of several works of Maronite history.

In the first twenty years of his career Šartūnī was associated with Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905 CE), a jurist, philosopher, theologian and Egyptian *muftī*. The latter defended modern sciences and the idea of a reform of Arabic language and was his mentor and close friend for life. ‘Aḥmad Šarabāsī in his article *Bayna Muḥammad ‘Abduh wa Sa‘īd aš-Šartūnī* (1972), written in *al-‘Adīb* journal, claimed to have preserved some of the letters that the two wrote to each other and which had never been published. According to Šarabāsī, *imām* Muḥammad ‘Abduh had liked Šartūnī before they met and even more after their meeting. Šakīb ‘Arsalān, nicknamed ‘*Amīr al-Bayān* (prince of eloquence), stated that, after hearing about Šartūnī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh said that when he spoke, light would come from his mouth. Šarabāsī inserted in his article a letter dated 4 Muharram 1394 A. H., using it as proof that the two had not met yet at the time. Here Šartūnī told Muḥammad ‘Abduh about his progress in French and translation, and that he had translated three works of *‘Ilm al-Ḥaṭāba* (science of rhetoric), the three sermons by Fénelon, author of *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (The Adventures of Telemachus). Furthermore, Šartūnī asked him to answer in French so that he could improve to the point of being able to write an entire work in this language.

Šarabāsī also included another letter, in which Šartūnī said he had printed an edition of the pre-modern lexicographical work by Sa‘īd Ibn ‘Aws ‘Abū Zayd al-‘Anṣārī (d. nineteenth century), *al-Nawādir fī-l-Luġa*. Šartūnī hoped that someone in Egypt could subsidise him to continue printing it. In this letter he also spoke of ‘*Aqrab al-Mawārid fī Fuṣṣḥ al-‘Arabiyya wa-l-Šawārid* which he seemed to consider his masterpiece.

Sa‘īd had two younger brothers, Rašīd (d. 1907 CE) and Tawfīq (d. 1962 CE) and had three daughters and a son. The brothers and two of his daughters, ‘Anīsa (d. 1906 CE) and ‘Afīfa (d. 1906 CE), also excelled in the world of literature (Sarkīs 1928: 259). His daughters, despite their premature death, were among the first groups of women writers in Arabic language of the nineteenth century. They contributed to several articles of literary and social nature in important period magazines, among which *al-Muqtaṭaf* was known (Kaḥāla 1977). The death of both his daughters in 1906 put a strain on Šartūnī’s health, which deteriorated considerably. For this reason, he bought a house in a suburb of Beirut, called *Minṭaqat aš-Šayāḥ* (also known as Ṭayyūna), in which he retired to private life until his death.

He died on 18 August 1912 after a long life in health and after establishing himself among the prominent scholars of *Nahda* (‘Aṭīya 2012: 430). Although most of the sources agree on the years of birth and death mentioned here, two date variants are given for the first (1848 or 1847) and one for the second (1907).

His main academic interests were in the fields of grammar, lexicography and *Inšā'* (style, art of composition), through which he is generally believed to have had an important influence on a new generation of “stylists.” He himself was eloquent in his work and he was famous for the abundance of notions he memorized and for the clarity in his works.

His legacy remains in the large body of works he has left on lexicography, grammar, rhetoric, poetry, and more. The pedagogical goal of all his works is unequivocal and, in fact, he also wrote works of a practical nature, like his eight-volume unpublished work for students and teachers on morphology and syntax.

In *Nafaḥat al-Wardatayn*, which he published in 1909, and which contains the writings of his daughters, there are some of his articles and poems. Some are also found in his lost work 'Ašī'at al-Ḥaqq.

Some of his most famous works are: 'Aqrab al-Mawārid fī Fuṣaḥ al-'Arabiyya wa-l-Šawārid, a famous dictionary printed in three volumes, the *Kitāb Baḥt al-Maṭālib fī 'Ilm al-'Arabiyya*, a grammar book, *Aš-Šihāb at-Ṭāqib fī Šinā'at al-Kātib*, *As-Sahm aš-Šā'ib fī Taḥṭī'at Ġunyat at-Ṭālib*, *Kitāb al-Ġuṣn ar-Raṭīb fī Fann al-Ḥaṭīb*, *Ḥadā'iq al-Manṭūr wa-l-Manzūm*, *Nağdat al-Yarā'*, *al-Mu'in fī Šinā'at al-'Inšā'* and *Maṭāli' al-'Aḍwā' fī Manāhiğ al-Kuttāb wa aš-Šu'arā'*.

He also translated several books, including *as-Safar al-'Ağīb 'ilā Bilād ad-Dahab* and *ar-Rihla as-Sūriyya fī 'Amrikā al-Mutawassiṭa wa-l-Ġanūbiyya*.

Many of his scientific, literary and linguistic articles were published in journals such as *al-Miṣbāh*, *al-Mašriq*, *Kawkab*, *al-Barriyya* and *al-Muqtaṭaf*. In 1901, for example, he published the article *al-'Abū-l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī* in the journal *al-Mašriq*.

After delivering a copy of his dictionary and several of his other works to Sultan 'Abdu-l-Ḥamīd, he received the title of *Šayḥ 'Ilm*.⁶

In short, we can describe Šartūnī as author, expert on rhetoric, teacher, poet, father and friend ('Aṭiya 2012: 426).

As an author, Šartūnī reviewed everything he collected and commented on it through footnotes. In the first two parts of his dictionary 'Aqrab al-Mawārid fī Fuṣaḥ al-'Arabiyya wa-l-Šawārid, in fact, we could say that he challenged the Buṭrus al-Bustānī's *Muḥiṭ al-Muḥiṭ* correcting the errors found in the explanation of some terms. He did not, however, add much and we could say that he was more of an imitator than a curator (*Mudaqqiq*). But the advantages of his dictionary are in his third part, which Šartūnī called *Ḍayl* (appendix). Here he included the mistakes he had made himself in the first two

⁶ *Šayḥ 'Ilm* was a title given to scientists by the Ottoman sultan. It corresponds to the Turkish Effendi ('*Afandi*).

parts of the work and he reported what was lost in the language (*Šawārid al-Luġa*). Thus, he achieved an important goal, useful for any student and scholar. None of his works was so precise in organization and content.

In general, when he sat in his library to read and write, he concentrated all his strength on the subject he was studying and what he acquired from the books of other authors was not enough for him. So, he cancelled, simplified and added his opinion always based on linguistics works.

If he had known another foreign language in addition to French, or a Semitic language other than Arabic, his works would probably have been more complete, but even having dealt with Arabic language without mixing it with other languages is to be considered an excellent enterprise.

Šartūnī had a very strong memory and memorized everything he read. This helped him to appreciate Arabic language and made him prepared enough to write it and speak it. This characteristic was very important so that sometimes, when controversies arose on literary subjects, for example on a rhetorical figure such as *Tašbīh* (similitude), he was chosen as a judge because he was able to immediately quote authentic works on the topic of the debate.

For *Inšā'* (art of composition) he followed two methods. One of them was clear and easy to understand and the other was complicated and rigorous. The first method was the one that occurred in his named works, such as *Aš-Šihāb at-Tāqib fi Šinā'at al-Kātib* which contained interesting letters on different topics, all adorned with the simplicity of the contents in *Saġ'* (rhymed prose) and *Naṭr* (prose). In fact, the student found no difficulty in reproducing this method and the linguist could find nothing to criticize. The second method was represented, instead, by the language of the debate (*Munāzara*) and by everything related to it. He was recurring in discussions with his coevals. The journal *al-Muqtaṭaf* had published part of his literary composition when the debate between him, 'Aḥmad Fāris aš-Šidyāq and other legends in the field of linguistics was lit. As the introduction to his dictionary demonstrates, in fact, great authors used this method to prove their linguistic abilities and to criticize and challenge each other, voluntarily or not.

According to Rašid 'Aṭiya (2012: 428), Šartūnī did not excel in the field of teaching as he did in language, criticism and composition.

When he explained, he did it as if there was a group of linguistic experts in front of him and, therefore, he did not take into consideration that, instead, he was talking to a group of young people who knew nothing but what they learned from his lessons. His language was incomprehensible to students, while the most educated ones, who already had linguistic basis, could benefit from his lessons. His method was to give an opinion for each topic, not limiting himself to the examples given by books, but adding his own ones so that the student would get lost.

Šartūnī was linguist and orator. He was not a real poet but, in some situations, he composed some poetry. He respected the prosody, metric and rhymes of al-Ḥalīl and with this poetry he commented his own books, works and portraits of himself and his family (Mu'assasat Ġā'iza 'Abd al-'Azīz Sa'ūd al-Babṭīn li-l-'Ibdā' aš-Ša'rī 2002).

His few poems were harmonious and did not seem repetitive. An example is the two stanzas found below his portrait of 1889:

تَفُوقُ قُدْرَتُهُ تَصْوِيرَ تِمْتَالِ	يُحَاوِلُ الْمَرْءُ فِي الدُّنْيَا الْبَقَاءَ وَ مَا
دَلِيلَ عَجْزٍ وَ هَاكُمُ شَاهِدَ الْحَالِ	وَ الرَّسْمُ يَبْقَى زَمَانًا بَعْدَ صَاحِبِهِ
	('Aṭiya 1912: 429)

<i>Yuḥāwwilu al-mar'u fi ad-duniyā al-baqā'a wa mā</i>	<i>tafūtu qudratuhu taṣwira timṭāli</i>
<i>wa ar-rasmu yabqā zamānan ba'da ṣāhibihi</i>	<i>dalīla 'ağzin wa hākum šāhida al-ḥālī</i>

The human being in his life tries to last	but his ability does not exceed the sculpture of a statue
And the image survives its owner	as a sign of incapacity, and here is the proof.

Rašīd 'Aṭiya in his article *aš-Šayḥ Sa'īd al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī*, which was a sort of commemoration on the occasion of Šartūnī's death, written in 1912 in the journal *al-Muqtaṭaf*, stated that someone believed he did not care about others and that he was not faithful to the promises. He, on the other hand, knew him personally and found him trustworthy and self-confident, and claimed that when he made a promise, he respected it. He also said that Šartūnī responded to the enemy with forgiveness and patience and demonstrated this by writing a poem on the occasion 'Aḥmad Fāris aš-Šidyāq's death, despite the heated debates between them. It was said that he was noble of principles and attentive to friendship as he was to the situation of Arabic language. He and 'Aṭiya were friends for many years and the latter claimed that he often named his enemies to know his judgment, but Šartūnī never said anything bad about them.

3. Šartūnī's Role in the Critical Literature of *Nahḍa*

One of the most important debates between the two groups of reformers of Arabic language in the nineteenth century was the criticism of Arabic simplified grammar of aš-Šidyāq, called *Ġunyāt aṭ-Ṭālib wa Munyat ar-Rāğib*, by aš-Šartūnī who wrote his *as-Sahm aṣ-Šā'ib fi Taḥṭi'at Ġunyāt aṭ-Ṭālib*.

In this work he refuted every single statement by aš-Šidyāq, demolishing his pedagogical, theoretical and traditional aims. For example, he argued that it would take several years to master Arabic, while according to aš-Šidyāq a few days would be enough. This was possible only if someone, precisely aš-Šidyāq, had separated grammar from its well-established roots in traditional grammars and, therefore, violated its holiness. Šartūnī believed that opening the way to every external element (*daḥīl*) left the student hopeless of being able to learn the language.

Šartūnī placed Šidyāq's pedagogical goal under further examination with a series of rhetorical questions. For example, if Šidyāq's purpose was simplification (*tashīl*) of Arabic grammar for Arabs and non-Arabs, was the three-month time he set for learning the language restricted to non-Arabs or it included Arabs? If so, could Arabs have learned it in less than three months? Would it require a teacher? In that case, would all the teachers have been able to teach the language or was it an honour that belonged only to Šidyāq? Then, what would have happened after his death? (Šartūnī 1874: 6-8).

By analysing more precisely Šartūnī's logic behind *Sahm*, his reasons for disapproving aš-Šidyāq can be better understood. Šartūnī warned the unaware reader of the absurdities (*ḥalāl*) and defects (*ḥaṭā'*) in *Ġunya*. Its main purpose was, therefore, to highlight the misconceptions (*'awhām*) and errors (*saqaṭāt*) present in Šidyāq's work because he was afraid that they might spread among students. Furthermore, he stated that his refusal was based on the authentic traditions and sayings (*'aqwāl*) of the Arabic language authorities (*'a'immāt al-'arabiyya*). His observations echo the rebuttal writings of the medieval period, in which it was normal to invoke errors or ambiguities of a previous work as a motivation to publish a corrigendum or write a "better" work. His statements tell us that his attitude was of concern for the preservation of linguistic standards. His reference to the authorities (*'imām*) of Arabic language is significant because he announced that his topics would be based on authorized texts and that he would submit (*taqlīd*) to their linguistic rules.

In this way Šartūnī not only put himself in a position of "vehicle" of the tradition, but he demonstrated to have somehow an authorization. Unlike Šidyāq, he offered a traditional (medieval) goal which was to preserve Arabic language in its traditional context. He did this by demonstrating that Šidyāq's work, with the aim of simplifying grammar, was contradictory to the sayings of imams.

Šartūnī's task in his language disputes was to prove the imperfect nature of Šidyāq's grammar by exploiting more significant topics and techniques. This recalls the critical literature of the medieval and pre-modern period.

There are two broad aspects of Šartūnī's technique that imitate those ones used in previous works and critical commentaries. The first is the fact that the writer presents the claims of his adversary and that, subsequently, he refutes it. For example, he began his disputes with *min saqaṭātihi*

qawluhu fi ṣafḥa... ('and among his mistakes there is what he said on the page...'). Then he continued the statement he intended to criticize by having it followed by *'aqūl* ('I say') or by *wa huwa ḥaṭā' bayyin* ('and this is a clear error') before presenting his argument. The second aspect concerns the use of the question and answer technique, for which the critic introduces a series of conditional sentences to torment the opponent. For example, after presenting the statements of aš-Šidyāq, Šartūnī speculated about the different possible meanings of his words. This practice, in fact, was also found in the critical works of *Nahḍa* in which the writer tormented his opponent with a series of rhetorical questions with answers.

Šartūnī in *Sahm* indicated seventy-six problems of Šidyāq's *Ġunya* but the most important were eight (Patel 2010: 515) and they concerned personal reasons or linguistic doctrine, Šidyāq's grammatical errors, his incorrect use of grammatical terminology and the inadequate definition of grammatical phenomena. These clarifications shed light on some of the underlying factors that prompted Šartūnī's criticism and his position as a grammarian. The section on grammatical errors illustrates both Šartūnī's abilities as a proof-reader and the level of control among *Nahḍa* scholars. One of the main factors underlying aš-Šartūnī's disputes is the violation of the apparent system of agreement between grammarians. According to him this agreement represented a validation tool and indicated that something had become certain from an epistemological point of view and, therefore, no further interpretation could be given. Therefore, grammar's role for aš-Šartūnī is not only to communicate or clarify, but also to preserve the rules that this agreement reflected in the first grammars and commentaries. The objections to the simplified definitions of grammatical phenomena reveal that his problem did not concern the abbreviated nature of *Ġunya* as much as Šidyāq's attempt to break with the pedagogical tradition.

Šartūnī's concept of "adequacy" is determined by the paradigm of grammatical works and commentaries of the medieval and premodern periods. In defining Šidyāq's position as "unorthodox," he confirmed his position as a conservative grammarian. In doing so, it was enough for him to prove that *Ġunya* broke away from the norm. The strength of his criticism lays, in fact, in the traditionalism of Arabic grammar which, in his opinion, derived from the testimony of the first estimated grammar books (*Alfiyya* and *al-Kāfiyya*) and it was preserved through a series of comments and glosses that essentially tried to adapt to the rules established by these authorities. In fact, aš-Šartūnī mentioned them in his work and not only to authenticate his arguments, but also to keep under control any material that swam against the tide.

Sahm is not just a collection of sayings and comments of the authorities and Šartūnī's credit lies in the way he put them together and used them in his arguments. He didn't just highlight Šidyāq's

inadequacy in describing grammatical phenomena, but he also explained how he violated the traditional grammatical vision.

Šartūnī's critique could be considered as an essential component in the tradition of normative grammars, commentaries and glosses, and if one of the aims of these works was to keep grammar and pedagogy alive in their traditional context, then aš-Šartūnī's work probably contributed to this effort in *Nahḍa*.

Šartūnī himself was not immune to criticism. In fact, 'Aḥmad Riḍā (d. 1953 CE) published in the journal *Maǧma' Dimašq* – of which he was a member – a series of researches on Šartūnī's errors and he was even commissioned to compile his own dictionary. Riḍā compiled *Matn al-Luġa* and in its introduction he claimed he found more than four hundred errors out of three hundred pages and he published them in volumes 21 and 22 of the journal *al-Maǧma' al-'Ilmīyyi bi-Dimašq* (Naḥḥās 1997).

Disputes between the pioneers of *Nahḍa* represent the widest power struggle for which the desire to have the right to interpret the past created a highly competitive environment in which the scholar earned prestige as a “vehicle” for tradition.

Generally, aš-Šidyāq is considered one of the most important reformists of his era, and his work dedicated to the simplification of grammar is firmly rooted in the framework of efforts to make Arabic a viable tool for modern communication. In this field, the reformist group has made significant progress in introducing a simple and functional style that today is at the base of newspapers and modern literary Arabic. However, this progress is not reflected in the field of grammar, where conservatism has been and still is particularly strong. Probably Šartūnī's conservative attitude in criticising the first simplified grammar of *Nahḍa*, Šidyāq's *Ġunya*, was a contributory factor in weakening the demand for simplification pursued by reformists. If the function of grammarians was to preserve the grammar in its traditional framework and, therefore, to preserve the purity of language, then Šartūnī certainly gained a position of prestige among Arab grammarians.

4. Šartūnī and his interest in oratory⁷

The contact between the Arab world and the West in the nineteenth century gave rise to new perspectives among Arab intellectuals characterized, as we have already seen, by conservatism or progressivism. For someone West represented only dominion and control; for others, it guaranteed

⁷ As a general introduction to the subject see Qutbuddin (2009).

an opportunity to break away from the past and to overcome decades of decay. For still others, it symbolized a challenge, and this created new attitudes towards traditional heritage.

The main *Nahḍa* reformists believed that, in order to progress, there was a need to preserve and revive classical Arabic and its culture as well as to assimilate the achievements reached by Western civilization. Many of them developed some interest in European languages and literatures and translated and adapted several Western works. They were particularly interested in Oratory.

A good example of a *Nahḍa* Christian intellectual interested in oratory was Sa'īd al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī. In 1902, in the journal *al-Muqtaṭaf* he wrote: 'Regarding 'ilm al-Ḥaṭāba (oratory), I don't know if, heretofore, some Arab has taken care of it.' In this article, entitled *al-Bayān al-'Arabī wa-l-Bayān al-'Afranġī*, Šartūnī compared Arabic and Western rhetoric, suggesting that first Arab scholars had neglected the study of this art.

His Christian background probably made him more tolerant of non-Islamic Western rhetoric and oratory, which is demonstrated in his fieldwork. He revisited the work of Ğirmānūs Farḥāt on oratory and sermons, called *Faṣl al-Ḥiṭāb fī al-Wa'z* with the aim of renewing (*taġdīd*) this art in *Nahḍa* and published it together with the translation from French to Arabic of three of Fénelon's sermons. In doing so, he put together the sermons of two great orators of the time, one eastern (Farḥāt) and one western (Fénelon). Later he translated from French to Arabic Cicero's *Pro Ligario*, a defence oration for the trial of the Roman knight Quintus Ligarius (c. 50 BC), accused of treason by Julius Caesar because he opposed him in a war in Africa. Šartūnī published it in the journal *al-Muqtaṭaf* with the title *Ḥuṭbat Šīšīrūn fī al-Muḥāmā(t) 'an Līkāryūs*. He translated this discourse out of a desire to make it known to Arab speakers, particularly those who had neither knowledge of Latin nor of European languages into which Cicero's speeches had been translated, since none of them was available in Arabic. He also wrote a handbook on the art of the speaker, known as *Ġuṣn ar-Raṭīb fī Fann al-Ḥaṭīb*. It was a pioneering attempt to fill a void about the Arabic available works on oratory, assimilating Western rhetoric with Arab literary perception.

In this work Šartūnī followed the rhetorical theories contained in the works of Aristotle and Cicero but adapted the language and examples to the needs of an Arab audience. His was a pedagogical treaty intended to educate future speakers. In this, he emulated the didactic purposes of the Greek-Roman rhetorical tradition, which began with Aristotle and continued with Cicero and Quintilian.

Like Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Šartūnī's work presented a philosophical approach to the art of oratory and showed an identical concern for the interaction of rhetoric and logic, particularly in the field of invention (*'iḥtirā*), in which aš-Šartūnī took care of describing the artistic means of persuasion.

Moreover, he gave primary importance to order and classification, always taking care of definitions and making every single word a topic of his discussions.

An interesting feature is the description of some recommended metalinguistic elements such as tone of voice, body language and the standing position of the speaker.

He tried to adapt virtually everything to Arab-Islamic culture and tradition similarly to what happened in western Arabic studies. Many of his examples came from Muslim and Christian authorities, including the Prophet Muḥammad, the *'imām* 'Abū Ḥanīfa and Jesus while others were taken from canonical Arabic works for style and eloquence, such as the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī. These examples, taken from Arabic literary and religious traditions, served not only as illustrations of concepts and rules set by Aristotle and Cicero, but also to adapt imported ideas to the framework of Arab-Islamic cultural values and the needs of any Arab audience. The examples served to remind us that the imported concepts and rules were compatible with the Arab-Islamic tradition. This way of thinking reflected the reformist ideas and methodologies of *Nahḍa* figures.

Šartūnī's work is clearly a product of *Nahḍa* movement through the translation and adaptation of Western works and genres. Moreover, the fact of having had access to both autochthonous and non-native works was probably favoured by the spread of press in the Arab world, by the growing contact with Western thought and institutions and by the knowledge of foreign languages.

5. Epistolography as an example of eloquence

About his interest in rhetoric, besides producing a handbook for the art of the speaker, his first great work was *Aš-Šihāb at-Ṭāqib fī Šinā'at al-Kātib*, a handbook on epistolography which included the theory and a large body of letter models on formal and informal topics written in a style designed to resemble the premodern epistolary genre (Gully 2012).

Another of his works, the *Kitāb al-Mu'in fī Šinā'at al-'Inšā'*, is a four-volume handbook, designed for students and teachers, in which Šartūnī covered various aspects of style and composition through a series of chapters in which students were asked to identify superfluous sentences in a passage or to explain words or, for example, underlined sentences.

As already stated, his Christianity explained his interests towards non-Muslims and Western rhetoric and oratory. Šartūnī's theories on letter-writing, in fact, could derive from western *ars dictaminis* (Patel 2009: 39). This influence is clear from the beginning of the work (Patel 2009: 79). Šartūnī presented his judgment from the social position of a correspondent and from the one of the addressee in the same way as the first western epistolography handbooks, especially the French one, did. Stressing that this principle is also inherent in rhetoric, Šartūnī evoked the historical connection

between classical rhetoric and western epistolography and he did so even when he compared the linguistic requirements of both arts. In fact, they both require a short, harmonious and simple language, and their purpose is to expose what is in the mind. He therefore discussed brevity, harmony, clarity and simplicity.

Epistolography handbooks and style and eloquence treatises from the nineteenth century onwards contain general advice regarding brevity (*'iğāz*) and the need to adapt the style to the addressee. This influence was also evident when Šartūnī classified the letter into six parts and assigned to each one of them a separate function, just as in Western treaties although, considering the Bolognese precepts of the thirteenth century, the parts should have been five (*salutatio, exordium, narratio, petitio, conclusio*). But he discarded narration and added signature (*al-'imḍā'*) and date (*at-tārīḥ*) to keep pace with parallel developments in nineteenth-century epistolary writing handbooks, as well as the needs and demands of *Nahḍa* society.

Aš-Šihāb presented several examples of greetings, signatures and addresses to satisfy the secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies of the Ottoman era. At the base of these models there was a hierarchical social approach based on the relationship between the interlocutors: from superior to inferior, from inferior to superior or between equals.

The almost exclusive attention of Šartūnī's handbook, as in many Western handbooks, was to provide models for copying rather than suggestions for rhetorical invention. His collection of greetings, signatures, addresses and letters, capable of satisfying any possible situation, made epistolography an imitation enterprise. Considering the whole together with the strong influence of social and personal hierarchical relations on any topic, classical rhetorical tradition of invention and argumentation was devalued. Therefore, if Šartūnī considered epistolography a substitute for oral communication, then his view assumed that also oral communication (rhetoric) was an imitative process.

As in French handbooks of the nineteenth century, his letters served to cover a practical purpose, and this clearly reflected the degree of reliance in written forms in the absence of oral communication. It is therefore clear that there is a similarity between the two traditions. However, considering that Šartūnī wrote for an Arab audience, he must have referred to the first Arab epistolography treaties. This is reflected in its use of Arabic terminology that is clearly borrowed from early Arab works such as *Šubḥ al-'Ašā fi Šinā'at al-'Inšā'* of 'Aḥmad al-Qalqašandī (d. 1418 CE).⁸ In

⁸ 'Abū-l-'Abbās Šihāb ad-Dīn al-Qalqašandī took his last name from a small town near Cairo, in the Qalyub district, where his family had settled. He died in 1418. He wrote about the almost legendary history and the genealogy of the pre-Islamic Arab

this sense, one could say that Šartūnī assimilated the practices concerning old and new western epistolary genres through Arabic, which allowed him to produce an updated version of the western *ars dictaminis*, adapted to the needs of Arabic-speaking Christians of that period.

The fact that he provided all these models to the Christians who stood next to the secular Ottoman hierarchies, showed his belonging to those *Nahḍa* intellectuals who promoted the idea of a role for Christians within the framework of Ottoman legitimacy, believing that this was among their best opportunities to reach a condition in which Christians and Muslims appeared as equals. Moreover, the strong attention of Šartūnī's handbook to Christians was clearly reflected in his letter models, especially in those dealing with congratulations, New Year's greetings and other festivities that included a predominantly Arab-Christian audience. This points to a change of audience, considering that the literature handbooks available, rooted in Islamic tradition, were mainly aimed at needs and customs of Muslim population. Thus, Šartūnī referred to western *ars dictaminis* which was already rooted in Christian tradition because it offered a ready model and a justification for its approach that was perfect for the prevailing political and socio-cultural climate.

6. Poetry: tradition and rebirth

Nahḍa has stimulated new perceptions of the traditional literary heritage and has pushed towards an adaptation to new realities and conditions. The increasing contact with Western literature has been one of the greatest challenges for Arab writers. As prose has undergone substantial changes with the emergence of new literary and journalistic styles, Arab writers have perceived a sort of threat to their poetry, realizing that it would need renewal and new prosperity too. Arab poetry is deeply rooted in the history of Arab-Islamic culture and to reject it in favour of new foreign literary models would have meant a detachment from centuries of literary tradition. Thus, Arab poets and critics in *Nahḍa*, or the neo-classicists, referred to a livelier era of Arab-Islamic civilization for inspiration. It was the Abbasid period (tenth century) with works of al-Mutanabbī, al-Buḥturī and others. The main goal of neoclassical poets was to adhere to the classical form of *Qaṣīda* (for its meter, rhyme and theme), but also to modernize and expand its content in order to bring poetry closer to real life.

Aš-Šartūnī was among those Christian intellectuals who were interested in classical poetry and, as we already know, in critical literature. This interest is reflected in the large number of handbooks

tribes as well as a handbook on the art of graceful composition, intended for use by candidates for administrative positions in Egypt. The latter contained interesting details on the history, geography and civilization of that country and of Syrian provinces.

and collections that he wrote and published. His thesis on poetry, published as part of his broader pedagogical work on style and eloquence, the *Kitāb Maṭāli' al-'Aḍwā' fī Manāhiġ al-Kuttāb wa-l-Šu'arā'*, deals with various aspects of poetic art in a pedagogical form. He also published a commentary on Ğirmānūs Farḥāt's collection of poems known as *Dīwān Ğirmānūs Farḥāt*, which Šartūnī revised and published for Jesuit missionaries who had requested his assistance because of Farḥāt's omissions. He also contributed with several articles on poetic criticism in school magazines. For example, on *al-Muqtaṭaf* he wrote an article entitled *al-Mufāḍala Bayna aš-Šu'arā'*.

Kitāb Maṭāli' al-'Aḍwā' fī Manāhiġ al-Kuttāb wa-l-Šu'arā', which represents his theory of poetry, is a work on style and eloquence and shows the ideology of neoclassical poets. Šartūnī used the question and answer technique and, in the introduction, stated that he wrote this manual as a reaction to the growth of negative influence of foreign languages in Arabic and with the desire to clarify and simplify the basics of eloquence and good style. The various categories he dealt with testify the literary priorities of *Nahḍa*. Šartūnī's definition of the poet as a spokesman and the comparison between poetry and prose reflects the continuous presence of tradition in his work and it indicates a neoclassical thought. His consideration of the themes is in line with those neoclassical poets of *Nahḍa* who continued to operate in the framework of traditional themes (*'abwāb*).

This Lebanese intellectual considered himself a compiler who had promoted both the renewal and the canonical traditions of poetry and writing. Although he did not have much to add to the themes already discussed in the past, his organization of these traditions and texts in pedagogical form was an innovation in the field of classical and medieval works.

With his commitment to maintain the already existing canon, Šartūnī invested himself with a certain authority and legitimacy for his work, carrying out a pedagogical function and synthesising again the tradition of the Arab criticism typical of the medieval period which was addressed to a new generation of students. He also achieved an ideological purpose by generating an image of unity, identity and continuity between past and present. His work contributed to the neoclassical renaissance of canonical poetic forms of the golden age, making it an integral part of a neoclassical community of poets, writers and critics who shared methodology and literary, pedagogical and ideological interests. Thanks to him, we understand that Arab neoclassical compilation represented much more than a literary genre linked to tradition. It served as a method to revive that Arab literary heritage that preceded the centuries of foreign domination.

7. 'Aqrab al-Mawārid fī Fuṣaḥ al-'Arabiyya wa-l-Šawārid

As already mentioned, Sa'īd al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī was among those intellectuals who during the *Nahḍa* undertook a reform of Arabic language and he was part of the conservative group, whose goal was to preserve purity of language.

The most important and well-known of his works is 'Aqrab al-Mawārid fī Fuṣaḥ al-'Arabiyya wa-l-Šawārid, a simplified dictionary compiled between 1889 and 1893, in which he collected terms from the attested sources of Arabic language and neglected everything he believed not to be Arabic, omitting it from the dictionary. Šartūnī divided his work into chapters following the alphabetical order so the first chapter is related to the letter *hamza*, the second to *bā'*, the third to *tā'*, and so on.

In the introduction (*muqaddimat al-kitāb*) (Šartūnī 1992: 9-25) he stated that he referred to the works of Arabic language authorities such as Ibn Manẓūr (d. 1311 CE), author of *Lisān al-'Arab*, al-Ġawharī (d. 1009 ca. CE), author of *Šihāḥ*, al-Fayyūmī (d. 1368 ca. CE), author of *Miṣbāḥ*, ar-Rāġib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1108 CE) author of *Mufradāt*, and others. Šartūnī also presented his work explaining its organization and the choices he made.

أَفَنْتُ كِتَاباً أَخَذْتُ مِنْ تِلْكَ الْمَصْنُفَاتِ بِالْبَابِ، وَكَافِلاً بِإِذْنَاءِ الْقَصِيِّ لِأَنْفُسِ الطَّلَّابِ. وَ قَدْ وَضَعْتُ فِيهِ كُلَّ مَادَّةٍ فِي صَدْرِ السُّطْرِ مُكْتَنَفَةً بِنَجْمَتَيْنِ. وَ كَذَلِكَ فَعَلْتُ بِكُلِّ فَرْعٍ مِنْ فُرُوعِهَا وَ ضَمَنْتُهُ هَلَالِينَ. فَجَاءَ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ اقْرَبِ الْمَعَاجِمِ مَنْأَلًا، وَ أَسْهَلَهَا مَجَالًا، فَسَمَّيْتُه "أَقْرَبِ الْمَوَارِدِ فِي فَصَحِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ وَ الشَّوَارِدِ". وَ قَدْ قَسَمْتُهُ إِلَى قِسْمَتَيْنِ :

الأوَّل: فِي مَفْرَدَاتِ اللُّغَةِ الصَّرْفَةِ.

الثَّانِي فِي الْمَصْطَلِحَاتِ الْعَامِيَّةِ وَ الْكَلِمِ الْمَوْءَدِ وَ الْأَعْلَامِ، وَ سَيَنْجِئِي عَلَيْكَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ بَيَانُهُ.

I composed a book taking from the works mentioned above and providing students the approach to what was previously incomprehensible. I inserted a term at the beginning of each line enclosing it between two asterisks. I similarly put its derivatives in brackets and, thank God, the most accessible and simple of the dictionaries came out. I called it 'Aqrab al-Mawārid fī Fuṣaḥ al-'Arabiyya wa-l-Šawārid and I split it into two parts.

Šartūnī structured the pages of his dictionary by subdividing them into three columns and above each of them he placed a word. The word above the right column corresponds to the first term within that column. The words above the central and the left column, on the other hand, are those with which these columns end. He highlighted the headwords which needed an explanation by enclosing them between two asterisks and then he inserted in brackets the various grammatical forms derived

from them. It is a clear and useful organization, probably influenced by Šartūnī's knowledge of foreign dictionaries.

All this work had been proposed by Jesuits who, at that time, were looking for a dictionary that gathered pure language. They needed a work without vulgar terms and asked Šartūnī to help them with their educational goals by compiling a dictionary that met their demands.

The most important features and peculiarities of this work can be summarized in seven aims that the author has set for himself and which he listed in his introduction. In these aims, the author proposed to expose the rules and the system of organization of the dictionary itself, to correct the previous dictionaries in some definitions, such as those related to plants and animals, and to identify printing and copying errors. He also indicated and explained several figures of speech to the reader. Some of these goals have been concretely realized through the compilation of the dictionary. For example, the author believed that the right method to define terms denoting plants and animals was to juxtapose the colloquial variants of all the Arab countries to classical Arabic terms. In the dictionary, in fact, he indicates both the classical Arabic term and the Lebanese variant, the one he knew. The realization of this same goal, however, created a contrast with the primary intent of the work to produce a dictionary that was, unlike *Muḥiṭ al-Muḥiṭ* of Buṭrus al-Bustānī, completely free from colloquialisms and that would preserve the pure language.

One of Šartūnī's exploits was to insert, in 1894, an appendix (*ḍayl*) at the end of his work to correct the errors of the various classical dictionaries and of *'Aqrab al-Mawāriḍ* itself.

In his introduction to the appendix (*muqqaddimat aḍ-ḍayl*) (Šartūnī 1992: 26-32) he explains the reasons that led him to add a section to his work. He especially believes that to ensure that a dictionary is complete, it would always be necessary to attach an appendix with the correction of compilation and printing errors. This, according to the author, would even help to reduce the mistakes made in classical Arabic language. Some of the classical dictionaries had a *ḍayl*, like *Tāǧ al-'Arūs*, but they did not contain an integral correction of the errors within the work. Anyway, whenever Šartūnī corrected any mistakes, he also mentioned the attested source from which he drew inspiration to do so.

Besides the one of correction, another purpose of the *ḍayl* was to eliminate the gaps in the dictionary with a process called *takmila* (completion). For example, he sometimes quoted a verb without its *maṣdar* or a noun without its plurals. Moreover, he did not specify that some terms were *mu'arrab* (calque)⁹ and, therefore, he added this last detail where it was missing. He also fixed some

⁹ Literally “Arabised (word).”

vocalizations because, for example, in some cases he had defined a word *muḥarraka*, therefore with first and second radicals vocalized in *fathā*, while they had to be in *fatḥa* and then *sukūn*.

In each one of his corrections, Šartūnī pointed out the errors of *'Aqrab al-Mawārid* caused by the gaps of another dictionary. When he blamed no one, the faults were his. He especially accused *Muḥiṭ al-Muḥiṭ* of having inserted colloquial Arabic terms, sometimes omitting their real origin and assuming they were in *Fuṣḥā*. He justified himself by saying that he compiled his dictionary in a hurry because the work requested by Jesuits was urgent. This led him to draw a lot of material from *Muḥiṭ al-Muḥiṭ*.

8. Final Remarks

Lebanon in the nineteenth century represented a field of great innovation within a general framework that saw Arab countries involved in a sort of Enlightenment. But while in other countries, as in Egypt, this renaissance has mostly involved the economic and social field, in the Syro-Lebanese region local Christian communities had already started a linguistic and cultural renaissance. Writers and intellectuals took care of regenerating language to make it able to react to the needs of modern society by expressing new tools and new ideas. This involved a profound revision of dictionaries.

In a climate of criticism towards classical texts, Lebanese intellectuals have exhaustively represented the spirit of *Nahḍa* between novelty and conservation, original and conventional, *'Iqtibās* and *'Iḥyā'*, through disputes between two groups, the reformist and the conservative ones. To the latter belonged Sa'īd al-Ḥūrī aš-Šartūnī, author with multiple interests and strengths that guaranteed him excellent achievements in the field of classical Arabic language. In fact, teaching in several schools in the region and his work as a proof-reader with Jesuits led the author to a great critical sense and an excellent level of Arabic, and this made him able to compile a dictionary, the *'Aqrab al-Mawārid fī Fuṣḥ al-'Arabiyya wa-l-Šawārid*. This work, through the revision of the dictionaries from which most of the material had been drawn, the need to preserve pure language and the introduction of several innovations, represents the symbol of these two opposing realities, the progressive and the traditionalist one, of the linguistic reform implemented by Lebanese lexicographers in the nineteenth century.

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