

amenerait sans doute pas au camp de l'armée suédoise, situé aux environs de Brześć Kujawski <sup>10</sup>.

Est-ce qu'on en peut tirer une conclusion que les informations de Nordberg et d'Adlerfeld ont été tout à fait inventées? Cela nous semble être peu probable. Ce qu'on peut supposer, c'est que ce n'était probablement que Mehmed Aga qui promit au nom de la Porte Ottomane, qu'on fera racheter des soldats suédois, pris par les Russes et vendus en Turquie, pour les renvoyer par quelque voie au roi de Suède, ainsi qu'il promit aussi de fournir des troupes auxiliaires turques et tatares à son allié, le roi de Pologne.

<sup>10</sup> Voir Adlerfeld, t. III, p. 222 et Ch. v. Sarauw, *Die Feldzüge Karl's XII*, Leipzig 1881, p. 232.

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### AŠ-ŠABĪBĪ — POET AND SCHOLAR

Muḥammad Riḍā Aš-Šabībī was born in 1889 — he died in 1965. He belonged to the well-known Iraqi family of Aš-Šabībī. Muḥammad Riḍā was the son of the poet Ġawād Aš-Šabībī. Bākir, the brother of Riḍā, was the first journalist of the paper „Al-Furāt“, which was published in An-Nağaf, the great cultural centre of Shiism. In this newspaper the revolutionary ideas of 1920 found their reflection. Contrary to his father, who represented the old school in poetry, Bākir made a great effort to modernize his art. In accordance with the spirit of the time, social tendencies begin to appear in his poetic works. As'ad, the son of Riḍā, continued the family traditions in the field of literature and poetry.

The most outstanding figure of the family was Muḥammad Riḍā. He lived and was educated in An-Nağaf, later in Baghdād. From early youth he was interested in literature and poetry publishing his verses and articles in numerous Syrian, Lebanese and Egyptian periodicals, namely: „Luğat al-'Arab“, „Al-'Irfān“, „Al-Muktabis“ etc. Together with Ar-Rusāfi, Az-Zahawī and other poets of the period, Riḍā devoted himself to the struggle for the Arab freedom. He called for the unification of the Arab world demanding complete independence. During the First World War he took part in the Arab revolution, at the head of which stood Sharif of Mecca Al-Husayn Ibn 'Alī.

During the period of 1922—1950 he held the office of education minister five times and was repeatedly elected member of parliament and of the senate. He was president of the Academy of Sciences in Iraq and also a member of the Academy of Sciences in Cairo and Damascus. For his activity in the field of literature

and history he was awarded a doctorate *honoris causa* by the University of Cairo.

After the First World War and the failure of the British to keep their promise made to Husayn to create a great Arab state, Riḍā Aṣ-Ṣabībī addresses a mass meeting demanding the establishment of a constitutional government with the king at its head. He also acted as mediator between Husayn and revolutionary patriots of Iraq and Syria. During the Syrian rebellion, protesting against the French invasion of 1920, he was in Damascus. He took part in the revolt, returning to Iraq after its defeat. He described the events in Syria in his book entitled *Rihla fī Bādīyati As-Samāwa* (Journey through As-Samāwa desert). After 1941 he was one of the organizers of the political party called Al-Ġabha Aṣ-Ṣa'biya (The Popular Front.)

The political involvement of Muḥammad Riḍā was reflected in his literary works. He wrote poems both on socio-political and lyrical themes. He professed the view that „the duty of a poet is to defend the interests of his people“.

The volume of his poetry published in Cairo (1940) constitutes an example of the neoclassical school which developed at the beginning of this century in Iraq and many other Arabic countries. It is divided into several chapters thematically linked with each other. For example, the first chapter (*Bāb al-Ḥamāsa*) contains patriotic poems, the second (*Bāb al-Hikmīyyāt*) moralistic and philosophical verses, while the third (*Bāb al-ʿIṭimāʿīyyāt*) is devoted to works commemorating specific events. The poetic works contained in this collection are the fruit of 30 years of his creative activity. The themes of these verses were inspired by occurrences of greater or lesser importance, which took place in his native country. One of these poems, considered among the best ever written by Riḍā, is the so-called „weeping *ḳasīda*“ entitled *Bagdād wa Dimāṣḳ* (Baghdad and Damascus), dating from 1918. In it the poet shed tears of regret at the fall of Damascus first into hands of the British, and then the French. It is against these two invaders that he directs many of his most expressive verses.

In Riḍā's poetry an important role is played by the problem of the rights of women and their social position. He devoted some of his most beautiful works to the women of Iraq. He writes in

a traditional manner, retaining in the *ḳasīda* both rhyme and metre.

However, by far the strongest side of Riḍā's activity is his social work and scholarship. A large part of his literary output deals with the reform movements in Islam, at the head of which once stood Ġamāl ad-Dīn al-Afġānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh in Egypt. The greatest obstacle in the way of the rebirth of Iraq Riḍā sees in the stagnation of cultural life. He places particular emphasis on the moral regeneration of the nation, saying: „If God desires that the nation should perish he will deprive it of morality“. He laments at the state of the Arab countries, which have lost their unity.

In his research into the history of Iraq Muḥammad Riḍā contributed greatly to the uncovering and popularization of the work of Ibn al-Fūṭī, the great chronicler of the Mongol invasion and rule. Aṣ-Ṣabībī's two volume study on Ibn al-Fūṭī entitled *Mu'arriḥu 'l-'Irāq Ibn Al-Fūṭī* was published in Cairo in 1950. Riḍā portrays Ibn al-Fūṭī as one of the writers who had an excellent knowledge of the political, geographical and cultural aspects of the Mongol problem. Ibn al-Fūṭī knew this period perfectly thanks to his personal contact with the sultan's court and to his participation in the sultan's everyday life. Ibn al-Fūṭī was also a student of literature. In his work he always sought his own way, never imitating others. He spent most of his life in Marāġa, where he enlarged the planetarium and the famous library.

A second work in the field of historical research is the book entitled *Adabu'l-Maġāriba wa'l-Andalusīyīn* published by the Arab League in 1961. It deals with the works of Andalusian and Maghrib poets and writers, who at the turn of the 5th and 6th centuries H (11—12th A. D. centuries) left Spain and North Africa finding refuge in Egypt, especially in Alexandria. Muḥammad Riḍā describes their nostalgia for their native land, while at the same time analyzing their literary writings. He acquaints us with such works as: *Sirāġ al-Mulūk* by Aṭ-Tartūsī, *Al-Ḥadiqa* by Ibn Abī ṣ-Ṣalt, *Kitāb al-Muṭrib fī Maḥāsin Ahli'l-Maġrib* by Ibn ʿIsā Alīsa', and with the manuscript of the book *Ḥarīdatu'l-Ḳaṣr wa Ḡarīdatu'l-Ahli'l-'Aṣr* by ʿImād al-Kātib al-Aṣḥānī“.

Another literary genre pursued by Muhammad Riḍā is that of travel accounts. These are the so-called *Riḥlāt*. One of them is the above mentioned *Riḥla fī Bādīyati As-Samāwa* published in 1964 by the Academy of Sciences in Baghdad. It contains a description of Riḍā's journey to the Hashemite family as the envoy of the Iraqi patriots. The author pays particular attention to the description of the desert itself and to the customs of the people living in it. He is greatly impressed by the shrewdness of the desert people, by their bravery and hospitality. He contrasts them with people from the town, whom he defines as „languid and somnolent“. Another work of the same kind is *Riḥla ilā'l-Maḡribi'l-Akṣā* published in Baghdad by the Academy of Sciences in 1965. In this work Muhammad Riḍā describes his journey to Morocco on the invitation of the Maḡrib government to celebrate the 1100th anniversary of the building of the al-Karawīyyin Mosque and the foundation of its school in the town of Fās. Riḍā is interested in the views expressed in the Madrasah. He divides the rhymes in them into conservative and reformatory. He presents an image of the everyday life, habits, customs and dress of the peoples living in the Moslem territories lying farthest to the west.

Muḥammad Riḍā also shows himself to be an excellent specialist in the field of Moslem pedagogics. He states his opinions on this subject in the dissertation published in 1955 by the Baghdad Academy of Sciences, entitled *At-Tarbīyya fī'l-Islam*. The author criticizes all those who take Western education as their model. He considers that the Islam world should return to its own traditions, to the climate of its own society.

On comparing the two schools from Maḡrib and Spain with the two Eastern schools of Egypt and Iraq, he arrives at the conclusion that the Western schools are more conservative. In the West the method of learning by memory is still prevalent, whereas in the East the level of schools is higher and the methods of learning are more rational. Muḥammad Riḍā mentions in his treatise the names of famous Moslem educationists, for example: Muḥammad Saḥnūn, al-Kayrawānī, az-Zarnūḡī, Ibn Maskawayhī, Ibn Sīnā' (Avicenna), al-Ġazālī and others.

I hope that these pages will succeed in acquainting the reader with the literary and social activity of Muḥammad Riḍā aš-Šabībī,

a reformer and scholar whose lasting contribution to historical research has exerted a great influence upon learning in Iraq and other Arab countries.

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