

## Introduction

The Author: Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī

Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī was born on the 30th of March, 1858, into an illustrious family that traced its origins to the town of Muwayliḥ on the coast of the Ḥijāz in the Arabian Peninsula. His father, Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī (1843–1906)—only fifteen years older than his son, had inherited the family silk business along with his brother ‘Abd al-Salām, and both brothers were closely involved in the political life of Egypt during the reign of the Khedive Ismā‘īl (r. 1863–79).

For a brief period at the age of ten, Muḥammad attended the famous school at Khurunfish in Cairo which was run by the Jesuit order and catered for the sons of the aristocracy, but from the time he was fifteen he was taught privately. As a young man he made the acquaintance of many of his father’s friends, among whom Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh.<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad later attended ‘Abduh’s lectures at al-Azhar, the same institution that he was to criticize with such vehemence in the newspaper articles that were later to be published in edited form as *Ḥadīth ‘Īsā ibn Hishām (What ‘Īsā ibn Hishām Told Us)*. He also had occasion to meet other important figures in Egyptian cultural life of the times, including Shaykh Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī and Maḥmūd Pāshā Sāmī al-Bārūdī, the famous statesman and poet, both of whom took an interest in his education.<sup>2</sup>

In 1872, Ibrāhīm’s fortunes suffered a severe setback. He had been attracted to the newly founded Stock Exchange, and in the course of speculation lost the 80,000 pounds which had been bequeathed to him by his father.<sup>3</sup> Leaving ‘Abd al-Salām to manage the business as best he could, Ibrāhīm retired to his house for three months. We learn from various sources that when the Khedive Ismā‘īl heard about this, he summoned both brothers to the palace, gave each the title of Bey and 3,000 pounds, and ordered his entourage and harem to dress themselves exclusively in al-Muwayliḥī silks.<sup>4</sup>

Following the financial crisis of 1879, the Khedive Ismā‘īl was forced to abdicate and went into exile in Naples. He invited Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī to join him as his private secretary and tutor to Prince Aḥmad Fu’ād (later King Fu’ād

the First).<sup>5</sup> Putting Muḥammad in the care of his uncle, ‘Abd al-Salām, Ibrāhīm left Egypt for Italy. Through his uncle, Muḥammad met Ibrāhīm al-Laqqānī, a barrister and writer who was also a friend of Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī. Al-Laqqānī introduced Muḥammad to some of his own friends, amongst whom were ‘Abdallāh Nadīm and Ḥasan Mūsā al-‘Aqqād. These three men were the protagonists of the “Egypt for the Egyptians” movement, and Muḥammad wrote regularly to his father in Italy describing the discussions he heard and the general political situation in Egypt.<sup>6</sup> On April 5, 1882, Muḥammad became a clerk in the Ministry of Justice, but he did not remain in the post for long. In June, ‘Abd al-Salām al-Muwayliḥī left for Syria to convalesce from an illness, and Muḥammad was left on his own during the turmoil which led up to the revolt of Aḥmad ‘Urābī, the riots in Alexandria, and the subsequent British landing and occupation. Ibrāhīm had sent his son a leaflet he had written in support of the Nationalists, entitled *Al-Jannah taḥta ḡilāl al-suyūf* (*Paradise Under the Shadow of Swords*), and Muḥammad was arrested distributing copies of this document. Put on trial before a military court on the orders of ‘Uthmān Pāshā, the Minister of the Interior, he was condemned to death. However, Buṭrus Ghālī Pāshā, a friend of the Muwayliḥīs who was Permanent Under-Secretary to the Minister of Justice (*Wakīl al-ḥaqqāniyyah*), interceded on Muḥammad’s behalf with the Khedive Tawfīq, claiming that Muḥammad had been encouraged by his father, that his uncle—who was his official guardian—was convalescing in Syria, and that he was not old enough to be considered politically troublesome. The sentence was commuted to exile.

Muḥammad now joined his father in Italy, where he learned Italian and some Latin, and continued his studies of French with a lawyer friend of his father. He also helped his father to produce the newspaper *Al-Ittiḥād*. But the Ottoman Sultan wrote in 1880 expressing his displeasure at the views published by the newspaper, so the Khedive Ismā‘īl was compelled to order Ibrāhīm to stop printing. In 1884, Ismā‘īl sent Ibrāhīm to Paris from Italy, and Muḥammad accompanied his father. In the French capital both Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī helped Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh with the publication of *Al-‘Urwah al-Wuthqā*. This newspaper was to have a tremendous influence in the Arab Middle East, not only because of its outspoken attacks on the British presence in Egypt and the evils of excessive Westernization, but also because of its advocacy of the idea of Pan-Islam based on the Ottoman Caliphate. The Muwayliḥīs were later to support all of these points of view with vigor in their own newspaper following their return to Egypt.

The fourth issue of *Al-Ittiḥād* was circulated in Europe, Turkey and Egypt, and its criticism of the Ottoman Sultan caused a considerable stir. The Ottoman court contacted its ambassador in Paris, and, despite protests in *Le Figaro*, Ibrāhīm was expelled from the country and traveled to Brussels.<sup>7</sup> Al-Afghānī wrote from London at that time, and suggested Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad come to England. Father and son accepted the invitation. Once there, they assisted al-Afghānī in the publication of further issues of *Al-‘Urwah al-Wuthqā*. Ibrāhīm himself produced further issues of *Al-Ittiḥād* and *Al-Anbā’* as well as a new newspaper called *‘Ayn Zubaydah*. During their stay in London, the Muwayliḥīs were introduced to Lord Randolph Churchill and Lord Salisbury, but any further entrées into British political society were cut short by another turn of events.

Ibrāhīm had been changing his tack somewhat by supporting the Ottoman government in his newspapers through fierce attacks on the policies of Gladstone’s government, and this seems to have pleased the Sultan. Hagopian Pāshā, the “Nāẓir al-Khaṣṣah al-Sultāniyyah” (Supervisor of the Sultan’s Entourage) was sent to London in January 1885. We learn that he, together with Qastākī Pāshā, the Ottoman ambassador in London, tried to persuade Ibrāhīm to go to Istanbul where, they asserted, he would discover that the Sultan had forgiven him for the unfavorable comments he had made in his newspapers in the past. But, with the memory of his recent expulsion from France still fresh in his mind, Ibrāhīm was (not unnaturally) dubious about the Sultan’s intentions, and sent Muḥammad to Istanbul to find out the real terms of the invitation. When Muḥammad confirmed that the Sultan’s offer was sincere, Ibrāhīm came to Istanbul and was appointed a member of the Education Council. Ibrāhīm soon made the acquaintance of Munīf Pāshā, the Minister of Education, who allowed Muḥammad to use the Fātiḥ Library with its large collection of manuscripts. Among the works which Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī transcribed were *Risālat al-ghufrān* (*The Epistle of Forgiveness*) by the famous poet, Abū l-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī, several treatises by al-Jāḥiẓ (including one on magnanimity, *al-Nubl*, and another on envy, *al-Ḥasad*), and the *Dīwān* of Ibn al-Rūmī. Another friend of Ibrāhīm whom Muḥammad met at this time was al-Shinqīṭī who is one of the dedicatees of *Ḥadīth ‘Isā ibn Hishām*.<sup>8</sup> In addition to all this, Muḥammad found time to write some articles for the newspaper, *Al-Munabbih*, at the invitation of ‘Abdallāh al-Mughīrah.

In 1887, Muḥammad left his father in Istanbul and returned to Cairo where he helped ‘Ārif Bey al-Mardīnī (the private secretary of Mukhtār Pāshā, the Ottoman Commissioner in Cairo) to edit *Al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah*, a daily newspaper

which had first appeared in 1885 but ceased publication when al-Mardīnī was invited back to Istanbul by the Sultan a few months after Muḥammad's return to Egypt.<sup>9</sup> Muḥammad continued to write articles for other newspapers in Egypt; *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, for example, he wrote under a variety of pseudonyms such as "an Egyptian who knows his country" and "*al-Badī*." At the head of these articles he was described as "a distinguished man of letters in Egypt whose eloquence will fascinate all those who are fond of literature." In them he broached a variety of topics including the Nationalist Party, slavery, and the Legislative Council and its schemes.<sup>10</sup> On his return from Istanbul, Muḥammad had renewed his acquaintance with Ibrāhīm al-Laqqānī and Buṭrus Ghālī. These two men were among the circle of friends who would meet regularly at the house of Princess Nāzli Fāḍil, the niece of the ex-Khedive Ismā'īl and wife of Salīm Abū Ḥajīb, the Mufti of Tunis. This circle served as the meeting place for a remarkable collection of figures from Egyptian political and intellectual life, and of some non-Egyptian ones as well; we are told that Lord Cromer attended occasionally.<sup>11</sup> In addition to those already mentioned, the members included Muḥammad 'Abduh, Sa'd and Aḥmad Faṭḥī Zaghlūl, Qāsim Amīn, Muṣṭafā Fahmī, 'Alī Yūsuf, and Ḥāfīz Ibrāhīm, a list which includes some of the leading spirits in the movement to reform Egyptian society. There seems little room for doubt that much of the discussion which must have taken place at the meetings of this circle is directly reflected in the series of articles that al-Muwayliḥī was to publish under the title *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman*. Another interesting figure with whom Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī was acquainted at this time was the Englishman, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who had been very closely involved in the defense of 'Urābī after the collapse of the 1882 revolt. Blunt mentions the "Moelhis" many times in his *Diaries*, and from this source we can obtain some interesting pieces of information about Muḥammad's activities during this period. Blunt tells us for instance that Muḥammad was a close friend of Mukhtār Pāshā: "To these Arabist visitors from Cairo were gradually added other sources of native information, the most important of whom were my old friends Aarif Bey and Mohammed el Moelhi, nephew [sic] of my old friend Ibrahim el Moelhi, both of whom were now much in the confidence of the Ottoman High Commissioner in Cairo, Mukhtar Pasha Ghazi."<sup>12</sup> Blunt also tells us that 'Abd al-Salām, Ibrāhīm, and Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī were all involved in the intrigue of 1893, as a result of which Muṣṭafā Fahmī was dismissed as Prime Minister by the Khedive 'Abbās the Second and replaced for a period of days by Fakhri Pāshā.<sup>13</sup> Ibrāhīm may have been informed about these events through correspondence with his son, but in any case, Muḥammad was a frequent visitor

to Istanbul during this period; in 1892, he was there to be decorated as a Bey (second class), and again in 1893 when Blunt went to Istanbul in an unsuccessful attempt to gain an interview with the Sultan. In this same year, Muḥammad delivered a lecture to the Language Academy (*al-Majma' al-'Ilmī*) on the acquisition of the talent for creative writing by learning poetry.<sup>14</sup>

In 1895 Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī decided to leave Istanbul. He had made many friends in the Ottoman capital, including al-Shinqīṭī, Munīf Pāshā, and Ibrāhīm Bey Adham, for whose newspaper, *Al-Ḥaqā'iq*, he had written several articles describing state occasions. He had, however, grown tired of the court intrigues and decided to return to Egypt. He was unable to keep this fact a secret from the Sultan's spies, and Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamid sent someone to find out why he wished to leave. Ibrāhīm sent back the reply that he wished to return to his own country and see his son and friends again. The Sultan seems to have been satisfied and did not prevent him from leaving. In 1896, Ibrāhīm collected the articles which he had written about life in Istanbul and published them at the Egyptian *Al-Muqaṭṭam* press under the title *Mā Hunālik*. When copies of the book reached Istanbul and were brought to the Sultan's attention, however, he dispatched a letter to Egypt with the order that they should all be collected and sent to him in Istanbul. Ibrāhīm had no wish to incur the Sultan's hatred and set about collecting as many copies of the book as he could, which he duly sent to Istanbul.<sup>15</sup>

In December 1895 Muḥammad had been appointed Mu'āwin of the province of Qalyūbiyyah and later Ma'mūr of the district of Burullus, but he resigned the latter post after a short while and in 1898 joined his father in producing his new newspaper.<sup>16</sup> The first issue of *Miṣbāh al-sharq* appeared on April 14, 1898, and the paper soon established a high reputation for itself. This was due in no small part to the fact that the majority of the content was written by the Muwayliḥīs and indeed was frequently unsigned, a fact which was later to give some of Muḥammad's enemies the opportunity to dispute the authorship of the articles that eventually became the book *Ḥadīth 'Isā ibn Hishām*. The paper contained news from Istanbul and items of local interest as well as extracts from Arabic literature, including essays of al-Jāḥiẓ and poems from the *Dīwān* of Ibn al-Rūmī which Muḥammad had transcribed in Istanbul. The leading articles dealt with such topics as the Pan-Islamist movement, the British occupation of Egypt, the war in the Sudan, the religious reform movement, and the comparison of Oriental and Western customs. Muḥammad also caused a considerable furor in the literary world of Cairo by publishing a series of articles in which he subjected

the *Dīwān* of the famous Egyptian poet, Aḥmad Shawqī (1868–1932), together with its introduction, to some exacting but constructive criticism.<sup>17</sup> Such material as this was rarely found in newspapers of the time, and many writers have acknowledged the effect which its contents and style had on them; Muḥammad Kurd ‘Alī says that “*Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* was the best weekly,” while Salāmah Mūsā tells in his autobiography how he acquired “a taste for artistic beauty” by reading the articles it contained.<sup>18</sup>

In November 1898, Muḥammad began to publish under the title *Fatrah min al-Zaman* the lengthy series of articles that form the text of these volumes; later, after much editing, these articles became the book *Ḥadīth ‘Isā ibn Hishām* (their precise history is discussed in the section “A History of the Text” below). They appeared each week on the front page of the newspaper. At first they were unsigned, but, when Ibrāhīm began to publish his own story in a series of articles entitled “Mir’āt al-‘Ālam,” Muḥammad signed his name with the letter *mīm* and Ibrahim used an *alif*. Muḥammad continued to publish these articles until June 1900, when he went to London to cover the state visit of the Khedive to the homeland of Queen Victoria (in whose honor Ibrāhīm composed an ode which was printed in the newspaper). Muḥammad sent back an article describing this visit,<sup>19</sup> and then went to Paris to visit the Great Exhibition (*Exposition universelle*), which he described for the readers of *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* in a series of episodes entitled “Paris.”<sup>20</sup> In describing his visit to the French capital, al-Muwayliḥī was following the precedents set by such figures as al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, al-Shidyāq, and ‘Alī Mubārak. Unlike these writers, however, he confined most of his descriptions to the Paris Exhibition of 1900.

Although *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* was officially owned and edited by Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī, Muḥammad gradually took over the management of the newspaper, and Ibrāhīm became a political adviser of the Khedive. In 1902, Muḥammad found himself at the center of a social scandal. While sitting in a café, he appears to have insulted a young nobleman, Muḥammad Bey Nash’at (whom ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bishrī—a friend and young protégé of Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī—describes as “a frivolous fool”). Apparently the whole thing was intended to be a joke, but it seems to have been misinterpreted because the irate young man slapped al-Muwayliḥī on the face.<sup>21</sup> ‘Alī Yūsuf, the editor of the newspaper *Al-Mu’ayyad*, then published a series of reports of the incident which considerably dramatized the whole affair and cast a slur on Muḥammad. Muḥammad wrote a rather stupid and vitriolic reply in *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* called “Al-Jaridah al-‘Āmmiyah” (“The Plebeian Newspaper”) in which he declared that *Al-Mu’ayyad* represented

the gutter press and was read only by the lower classes of society.<sup>22</sup> ‘Alī Yūsuf countered his attack with a regular column in his newspaper called “‘Ām al-kaff” (“The Year of the Slap”). Al-Bishrī points out that many people in Cairo had suffered from the barbed pens of the Muwayliḥīs and thus there was no shortage of material with which ‘Alī Yūsuf could fill his column. Indeed, the poet Ismā‘īl Ṣabrī (1854–1923) was among those who composed poems for this purpose.<sup>23</sup> ‘Alī Yūsuf kept the column going for twelve consecutive daily issues of the newspaper and continued to taunt Muḥammad for not replying to his critics.<sup>24</sup> Eventually however, the common friends of both men including, no doubt, many members of the Nāzli circle which both men attended, appear to have arranged a cease-fire, and no more was heard of the subject—for a while at least.

According to his closest friends, Muḥammad was deeply affected by this campaign against him; based on descriptions of his retiring nature and hatred of crowded places, this seems very likely. To some degree, his generally unsociable temperament can be attributed to the chronic stammer from which he suffered; apparently it was so bad that he would often be unable to finish a sentence at all and would have to resort to an embarrassed silence. This fact may not only explain why he preferred to be educated at home as a boy, but also may provide a clue to the drastic effect which this incident in the café had on him. It is certainly true that the gradual decline of *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* and *Abū Zayd* (a satirical magazine started by his father) can be traced to this period. The articles on topical subjects written by the editor, which had been a hallmark of the earlier issues and had accounted for much of the paper’s popularity, became less frequent and were replaced by long extracts from French newspapers, some of which extended over several issues. Advertisements and announcements were allowed to take an ever-increasing amount of space in a paper which had only four pages to fill. It may have been at this time that Muḥammad decided (or perhaps it was suggested to him) to collect the episodes of *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman* into book form, so he closed down the newspapers to allow himself more time to concentrate on his revision of the text. Whatever the cause of closure may have been, *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* ceased publication on August 15, 1903.<sup>25</sup>

The Muwayliḥīs continued to write for other newspapers. Ibrāhīm sent articles to *Al-Mu’ayyad* and *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, and in 1905 even founded a new newspaper called *Al-Mishkāt* in the name of his son Khalīl and Ḥamdī Bey Yakan.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, Muḥammad saw revenge taken on ‘Alī Yūsuf. In 1904 the latter was involved in a scandal when he proposed to Ṣafīyyah al-Sādāt, a woman of high birth, and was refused by her father, although the woman herself had consented

to marry him and seemed to want to do so. The woman's father based his refusal on the fact that 'Alī Yūsuf was an Upper Egyptian (Ṣa'īdī) and was not worthy of his daughter because he was not a *sharīf*. The case was taken to court, and 'Alī Yūsuf lost both the initial case and the subsequent appeal.<sup>27</sup> During all this, the daily newspaper *Al-Zāhir* printed a column with the title “‘Ām al-Kuf” (“The Year of Equality”)—an obvious echo of the series of articles against Muḥammad mentioned above, except that this series continued for thirty-four consecutive issues.<sup>28</sup> In poems that appeared in the column, 'Alī Yūsuf's suitability for such a marriage was questioned, his claims to be a *sharīf* were ridiculed, and he was made out to be a person totally unsuitable to take over the supervision of the Ṣūfī *waqf* properties, a post for which his name had been put forward.

Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī fell ill in December 1905 and died on January 29, 1906. It was also in that year that 'Abbās the Second decorated Muḥammad with the order of Bey second class (Mutamayyiz), but Muḥammad now appears to have preferred to remain at home as he had done as a boy, reading and holding discussions with his friends. Among the people who used to frequent his house during this period were 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Bishrī and 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, both of whom have left descriptions of the friends who used to come to these discussions—Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm, 'Abd al-Salām al-Muwayliḥī, Muḥammad Tawfiq al-Bakrī, Muḥammad Bey Rashād, and 'Alī Yūsuf (with whom Muḥammad appears finally to have been reconciled).<sup>29</sup> Muḥammad left his house rarely and wrote very little. The series of articles *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman* appeared in book form as *Ḥadīth 'Isā ibn Hishām* in 1907. On February 9, 1908, an article entitled “Kalimah Mafrūdah” (“An Obligatory Word”) appeared under his name in *Al-Mu'ayyad*. The occasion of this article's appearance is described by Sir Ronald Storrs:

The Italians of Alexandria have chosen this juncture for proposing that the Municipality should erect a large statue to Dante, which plan, seeing that Dante placed Muhammad and Ali in hell with the other Schismatics, cleft from chin to tank with their insides hanging out, is meeting with frantic opposition from united Islam.<sup>30</sup>

Muḥammad's article was an important contribution to this united Islamic front. He began by quoting in Arabic for the readers of the newspaper exactly what Dante does say about Muḥammad in the *Divine Comedy*, and from there went on to demand that all Muslims should rally to the cause of their religion instead of sitting back lethargically and watching while it suffered such a gross insult. It is almost certainly significant that a few pages later Storrs records the

disgust of Princess Nāzli herself with what Dante had written. In the following year, Muḥammad allowed himself to be drawn even further out of his seclusion and retirement when he accepted an invitation to attend the opening of the Ḥijāz railway, traveled to Medina and is said to have been one of the anonymous contributors to the series of articles on the railway which appeared in *Al-Mu'ayyad* at the time.<sup>31</sup>

On May 15, 1910, he was appointed Director of the Waqf Administration. Al-ʿAqqād records that al-Muwayliḥī found the work very tedious, and so it is hardly surprising that he resigned from the position four years later, and retired to his home again. He apparently felt that his talents were being wasted and that a man of his standing should not have to work in such a fashion.<sup>32</sup>

From now on, he seems to have lived a modest life which at times descended to poverty, but the pride which had prompted him to leave his post in the Waqf Administration apparently helped him to live through such trials with dignity.<sup>33</sup> He ventured into print only once more before his death in 1930. On December 30, 1921, an article of his appeared in the newspaper *Al-Ahrām* under the title “*Ṣawt min al-ʿUzlah*” (“Voice from Retirement”) in which he began by giving his reasons for retiring from a life of journalism and then proceeded to express his feelings about the second expulsion of Saʿd Zaghlūl from Egypt. He pointed out that the situation was one which could bring Egyptians together as one nation and that Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī would rejoice at the thought. Apart from this article, Muḥammad divided his time during the remaining years of his life between his home and Alexandria with occasional visits to sporting events such as horse racing. In 1925, “the owner of a well-known newspaper” (unfortunately anonymous) is said to have asked him to write two articles expressing a certain point of view on a subject for the sum of eighty pounds, but Muḥammad’s alleged reply sounds typical enough: “Al-Muwayliḥī’s pen is not for sale.”<sup>34</sup>

In 1927, *Ḥadīth ʿĪsā ibn Hishām* was published as a textbook by the Ministry of Education for use in secondary schools. Muḥammad undertook an extensive revision of the work before its publication (see more details in the following section). In this process, he excluded many of the book’s most controversial pages and included the episodes from Paris mentioned above as “*Al-Riḥlah al-thānīyah*” (“The Second Journey”). He also began to work on the production in book form of a set of essays on various philosophical topics, most of which had also appeared on the pages of *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq*. A few weeks after finishing work on these essays, on February 28, 1930, he died in Ḥulwān, and it was left to his brother Khalīl and his friend Salīm Abū Ḥājib, Princess Nāzli’s husband, to

prepare the book for publication. It appeared as *ʿIlāj al-naḥs* (*Cure for the Soul*)—also a school text—in 1932.<sup>35</sup>

### A History of the Text

*Ḥadīth ʿĪsā ibn Hishām*, Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī's famous turn-of-the-century narrative, was an instant success when it appeared as a series of articles under the title *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman* between 1898 and 1902 in the family's Cairo newspaper, *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq*. It became even more successful when it appeared as a book in 1907, now under the title *Ḥadīth ʿĪsā ibn Hishām*. Multiple editions of the work have been published in the century or so since that first edition—the most recent of which is edited by me—appeared as part of a collection of the author's complete works in 2002.<sup>36</sup> While all these editions of the work may be considered as versions of the text, they are by no means all the same. Behind that fact lies a tale that I would like to relate in this section of the Introduction.<sup>37</sup>

As noted in the previous section, the Muwayliḥīs—father Ibrāhīm and son Muḥammad—had been vigorous participants in Egyptian political and cultural life beginning in the reign of the Khedive Ismāʿīl (r. 1863–79). The father had held prominent positions, and his son often joined his father in such activities. Both men were acquainted, for example, with the renowned Islamic activist, Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī, and his colleague, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, who was to become a major figure in the Islamic reform movement in Egypt.<sup>38</sup> As a direct result of the Muwayliḥīs' involvement in such controversial debates, activities, and intrigues, Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī clearly felt it wise to accept the Khedive Ismāʿīl's invitation to travel with him when he was exiled in 1879, and Muḥammad was also compelled to leave the country when he was arrested for distributing leaflets written by his father during the 1882 ʿUrābī Revolt, a direct consequence of which had been the British occupation of Egypt. Thereafter father and son traveled widely, to Italy, to Paris, to London, and finally to Istanbul when, as noted earlier, Ibrāhīm received an “invitation” from the Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd to come to the Ottoman capital—an invitation, one suspects, it would have been unwise to turn down. Both Egyptians spent a number of years in Istanbul, and Ibrāhīm wrote a famous account of his time there (*Mā Hunālik*) which was published in Cairo following his return in 1896 and immediately banned. Now that father and son had returned to their homeland, their broad acquaintance with the intricacies of Egyptian political and intellectual life, their wide experience of European culture, their exposure to life in the Ottoman capital, and, in the

case of Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī, long hours spent reading texts and manuscripts in Istanbul's Fātiḥ Library, were all qualities that made them ideal candidates for the foundation of a new weekly newspaper, one that would join an already crowded field that included, besides *Al-Muqattam*, the long-established *Al-Ahrām* (founded in Alexandria in 1875 by the Syrian Taqlā brothers) and the more populist *Al-Mu'ayyad* (founded in 1889 and edited by 'Alī Yūsuf).

The al-Muwayliḥī newspaper, *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq*, soon established a wide reputation, not only for its trenchant commentary on current events and political developments, but also for its elevated style.<sup>39</sup> As if to emphasize the erudition of the composers of the articles (which were not initially signed), readers may have been somewhat surprised when issue number 21 of the 8th of September 1898 contained an article—published as section 0.1.1 in this edition—that begins with a line of poetry and then introduces the name of 'Īsā ibn Hishām as the narrator of a sarcastic piece in the form of a fictional conversation between three well-known Egyptian political figures and holders of Egyptian ministerial office, Fakhri Pāshā, Buṭrus Pāshā, and Mazlūm Pāshā, about the latest developments in the Sudanese War. Quite apart from the obviously critical posture that the article adopts, of interest here is the process of fictionalizing the commentary and also the invocation of an illustrious name from the heritage of Arabic pre-modern narrative, 'Īsā ibn Hishām, the narrator of and often participant in the famous collection of *maqāmāt* composed centuries earlier by Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (358–98/969–1007). Given that the contents of newspapers usually brought (and indeed bring) almost instantaneous reactions from their readerships, we have to assume that the initial foray into this type of composition was well received, in that it was followed in quick succession by three others, all of them relating to the Sudanese War and the involvement (or rather non-involvement) of the Egyptian government and its ministers in what was projected as a joint enterprise (the so-called Anglo-Egyptian Sudan). The significance of these four initial articles introduced by 'Īsā ibn Hishām is firstly that they are directly concerned with one particular aspect of Egyptian political life in the final years of the nineteenth century—the Sudanese war—which is completely missing from the published book text of *Ḥadīth 'Īsā ibn Hishām* to appear later (1907). In addition, the final article of the four appears just one week before the first “episode” of *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman*, the series that, in heavily edited and rewritten form, was later to become the text of *Ḥadīth 'Īsā ibn Hishām*. One is left to wonder whether this initial set of four articles (*Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* 21, 23, 24, and 30) was a kind of “dry run” for what was to become a much longer project—

even though it is almost certain that, at this initial stage, Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī himself could have had no idea of the runaway success that was to greet his work nor the length of time that weekly publication of episodes would involve.

The first episode of the series of articles entitled *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman* appeared in issue 31 of *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* (November 17, 1898). The new title and the fact that ʿĪsā ibn Hishām, the narrator who is wandering in a graveyard, encounters a Pāshā from the era of Muḥammad ʿAlī, clearly implies that something new and different is intended, although the existence of the four previous articles also implies a clear and continuing linkage to current events. Another feature that marks this episode as being something different is the author’s virtuoso use of the traditional style known as *sajʿ*, literally the cooing of a dove, but used to represent the ancient style of cadenced and rhyming prose that is first encountered in the pre-Islamic era in the utterances of preachers and soothsayers, then found as the primary stylistic feature of the Qurʾānic revelations, and later adopted by Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī in his innovative narrative genre, the *maqāmah*. Over the course of the series—spread out over four years in total—almost every original episode begins with an extended passage of *sajʿ*, more often than not setting the scene and establishing the context.

The initial four episodes of *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman* were published in a flurry, one week after another, suggesting that their author had a basic “plot” in mind for at least the initial encounter of his Egyptian narrator and the resurrected Pāshā with the complexities of Egyptian law—a French-based system being applied to Egyptians during a British occupation. At the same time however, he clearly needed to assess the reaction of the continually growing readership of the newspaper to this new experiment, one that combined astute observation of late nineteenth-century occupied Cairo with a style redolent of the most famous of pre-modern Arabic narratives.<sup>40</sup> Bearing in mind the reaction to both the original episodes and the subsequent book, one has to assume that the response was extremely positive. The episodes therefore continued after a five-week gap. The trials and tribulations of the Pāshā following his arrest for assault—his court case and eventual acquittal, and his quest for the misappropriated endowment that he had bequeathed to future generations—were recounted in a series of articles that take us to March 1899. What is significant in view of our current concern with the textual history of the narrative is that the publication sequence is interrupted with an episode in *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* 40 (January 19, 1899) which is entitled “The Sudanese Government Monopoly” and involves yet another conversation between a newspaper reporter and a minister in the Egyptian government

about events in the Sudan; in other words, we see a return to the topic dealt with in the four episodes preceding the opening episode of *Fatrah min al-Zaman*. Here is how this intrusion is justified by the author:

‘Īsā ibn Hishām told us: I heard a story about a minister concerned with that topic which is on everyone’s mind at the moment. This happened when a newspaper reporter came to see him to try to get the benefit of his enlightened views and learn some accurate information about the new government in the Sudan. Because it seems to me so remarkable, I have decided to relay it to our readers immediately before we go back to the story of the Pāshā and his trial.

The insertion of this article into the sequence of episodes involving ‘Īsā ibn Hishām’s narration of the Pāshā’s encounter with the Egyptian legal system is certainly a symptom of the vagaries of serialized publication—as the careers of earlier generations of novelists in Europe can readily illustrate. But the insertion also shows that the situation in the Sudan was a preoccupation of the Egyptian press at the time when Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī began to publish his narrative, and that it is clearly reflected in the original sequence of articles.

This concern with the Sudan is also responsible for another break in the publication sequence, but this time for a different reason. In ‘Īsā ibn Hishām’s *Fatrah min al-Zaman* narrative, the Pāshā is both emotionally and physically exhausted after his experiences with the law. A period of rest and contemplation is recommended, and it coincides with an actual occurrence of the plague in Egypt. Several episodes are thus concerned with medicine, the plague, and a resort to literature as a source of relaxation and contemplation. This brings the publication sequence of episodes to June 1899, at which point Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī pauses. The gap is filled by his father, Ibrāhīm, who publishes three episodes of a narrative of his own, *Mir’āt al-‘Ālam* (*Mirror of the World*), where there is also an intense focus on the poor conditions under which the Egyptian army is laboring in the Sudan and, as experienced by Ibrāhīm directly, on the perils of speculation on the Stock Exchange.<sup>41</sup>

When Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī resumes his narrative (*Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* 63, July 13, 1899), it is with a visit to a wedding hall, as part of which there is a section devoted to a lengthy history of singing. At the conclusion of an episode, the protagonists encounter a number of different social groups who have gathered at the wedding celebration—al-Azhar shaykhs, merchants, royal princes, and civil servants. Each of these categories subsequently becomes the topic of a later episode in *Fatrah min al-Zaman*. These shifts in narrative focus, each

one involving a gap of varying duration in the publication of the articles, give us a hint as to how al-Muwayliḥī's responded to reader interest in the way he composed and sequenced episodes, again a replication of the circumstances under which novelists like Charles Dickens frequently functioned in composing and publishing novels. It is in the episodes that follow the description of these "meetings" (*majālis*) that al-Muwayliḥī comes up with his most inspired creation, the provincial 'umdah (village headman) who comes to the rapidly Westernizing capital city from the countryside in search of fun and is mercilessly exploited by a duly Westernized fop (*Khalī'*, which I have translated as "Playboy") and his accomplice, a Merchant. The juxtaposition and confrontation of traditional mores and Western fashions is explored through a number of different venues and situations: restaurants and food, bars, tourism, money borrowing, and the theater. After a visit to the Pyramids, 'Īsā ibn Hishām, the Pāshā, and their "Friend" (*ṣadīq*) leave the other group to their own devices and return home (*Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* 107, June 8, 1900). Given that Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī was leaving almost immediately for Paris and the *Exposition universelle*, it is not surprising that, in what was at the time a final episode in the series, the Pāshā expresses to 'Īsā his desire to see Western civilization firsthand. Plans are made to travel to France.

As already noted, Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī made use of his son's journey to France to publish further episodes of his own narrative. Not only that, but *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* 107 also contains the following announcement:

'Īsā ibn Hishām: Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī is traveling to the Paris Exposition this coming Sunday. Once he has gathered his impressions of the entire scenario and its details, *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* will be publishing his description of its marvels and curiosities.

Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī traveled first to London in order to write about the Khedive's visit to England,<sup>42</sup> but he then traveled to Paris. The first Parisian episode of *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman* was published in *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* 116, August 17, 1900, with the following preface:

This is the first episode of *Ḥadīth 'Īsā ibn Hishām* concerning the visit to the Paris Exhibition. It has been sent to us by Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī following his previous report on the visit of the Khedive of Egypt to Her Majesty the Queen of England.

Among the things to note from this introduction is that the series of episodes, originally (and still) called *Fatrah min al-Zaman*, has now acquired another title, *Ḥadīth ‘Isā ibn Hishām*, which had been used on a few occasions in announcements before, but seems to have become the preferred title—indeed the one under which the eventual book was to be published in 1907. This trend is further emphasized by the fact that Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī’s narrative is assigned the subtitle *Ḥadīth Mūsā ibn ‘Iṣām*, invoking the name of his own narrator and at the same time echoing in the clearest possible way the emerging title of his son’s work.

Eight episodes describing (and, more often than not, harshly criticizing) the *Exposition universelle* in Paris were published between August and December 1900.<sup>43</sup> The last of them finishes with the usual statement, “To be continued,” followed by the letter “M.” Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī had used this formula at the end of his articles ever since his father had begun publishing them. And yet the articles didn’t continue. Or, at least, nothing followed until February 1902 (in other words, long after his return to Cairo) when, without any further explanation, three further episodes of *Fatrah min al-Zaman* were added. The first simply opens with the following statement:

‘Isa ibn Hisham said: Our coverage of the visit we paid to the mother of all European capitals and our stay in the hub of civilization finished with a description of the Great Exhibition: the different people we met there, the strange happenings day and night, the variety of exotic items, the precious and creative objects of every conceivable kind of craft that were on display, the nightclubs and music halls scattered across the grounds, the splendid views it afforded visitors, and the undesirable subtext out of sight. The Pasha, our Friend, and I had emerged from it with a mixture of feelings: praise, criticism, and outright condemnation. We were still in the company of the sage Frenchman, his temples whitened by his willingness to share with us his culture and learning.<sup>44</sup>

These three articles, which form an uninterrupted continuum and only the first of which contains an example of their author’s virtuoso use of *saj’*, offer a detailed description of the French system of government—its presidency, election processes, senate, and chamber of deputies. The third of these episodes ends again with the usual “To be continued,” and yet nothing followed. And this time it was indeed the end of the *Fatrah min al-Zaman* series the author had initiated four years earlier.

For whatever combination of reasons, al-Muwayliḥī was to take his time in converting his series of newspaper articles into book form. It seems clear that he had already been receiving encouragement to do so from the enthusiastic response of readers of the newspaper, not to mention many of his literary colleagues, including the renowned nationalist poet, Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1871–1932). Indeed the latter’s own contribution to the neoclassical revival of the *maqāmah* narrative *Layālī Saṭīḥ*, first published in 1906, contains an extract from al-Muwayliḥī’s as yet unpublished book (and incidentally concentrates heavily on the situation in the Sudan, not surprising in view of the fact that the poet served as an Egyptian army officer there).<sup>45</sup>

The first edition of *Ḥadīth ‘Īsā ibn Hishām* was published in 1907, *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman* becoming its subtitle. In the introduction to this (and only this) edition, al-Muwayliḥī explains his method and rationale:

After reviewing the articles carefully—a process that has demanded revisions and corrections, as well as alterations, substitutions, omissions and additions, I have now converted the story into book form. After all, the contents of newspapers are by definition ephemeral, mere thoughts of the day. They cannot claim a place in a book that will move with the times and be read over and over again.<sup>46</sup>

A comparison of the text of the 1907 edition of *Ḥadīth ‘Īsā ibn Hishām* with articles in the series *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman* does indeed corroborate the author’s description of the conversion process. The wording of individual phrases is changed, and clarifying detail is often added; the major emphasis is on expansion and clarification rather than contraction. For the second edition of 1912, the author adds a glossary at the end of the text. However, what is most striking about the first edition of the book is that it does not include any of the material in which the Sudan situation is the primary topic; secondly, the original sequence of episodes is altered, requiring a good deal of rewriting and reorganization. In the original articles the visit to the wedding hall comes much earlier in the sequence and is followed by visits to the series of assemblies (*majālis*), whereas in the book version the assemblies come first in the ordering of episodes. Furthermore, completely new material is included about the plague, derived from a factual article, “Al-Akhlāq fī l-Wabā” (“Ethics During the Epidemic”) that was published in *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* 221, September 13, 1902. The first edition (and the two subsequent ones, 1912 and 1923) all finish with the expressed desire to add “the second journey” (*al-riḥlah al-thāniyah*)—the episodes describing the visit to Paris—to the first (*al-riḥlah al-ūlā*) at some point in the future. Meanwhile the

first three editions of *Ḥadīth ‘Īsā ibn Hishām* were and are only concerned with the Egyptian context. A further addition to the third edition (1923) was that of titles to the newly established “chapters” created either from the contents of the original articles or, more often, by consolidation of articles into larger units.<sup>47</sup>

At some point in the 1920s, *Ḥadīth ‘Īsā ibn Hishām* was adopted as a text for secondary school, and al-Muwayliḥī was invited to prepare a new fourth edition, which was published in 1927. I have not thus far found any specific evidence as to instructions that the author may have received regarding expectations for such a school text, but it is clear that the revision process he undertook before publication of this fourth edition radically altered the critical tone of the work—one that had already been somewhat muted by the process of converting the newspaper articles into a book. His now twenty-year-old wish to include the Paris episodes (*al-riḥlah al-thāniyah*) to the book was also finally fulfilled. Thus the second part of post-4th edition versions of *Ḥadīth ‘Īsā ibn Hishām* was added to the list of several previously published contributions by Arab visitors to the analysis of European civilization—in the case of Egypt a trend initiated in the nineteenth century by Rifā‘ah Rāfi‘ al-Ṭaḥṭawī (1801–71) with his *Takhliṣ al-Ibrīz fī Talkhiṣ Bārīz* (*The Purification of Gold Concerning the Summary of Paris*), originally published in 1834. However, along with this addition to the text, some extremely significant omissions were made. Two complete “assemblies,” one devoted to the shaykhs of al-Azhar discussing the heretical sciences of philosophy and geography and the other to the princes of the royal family who were squabbling with each other over expensive racing stallions, were completely omitted, along with a number of uncomplimentary anecdotes about Muḥammad ‘Alī, founder of the dynasty to which the current Egyptian ruler—now called “king”—belonged. One can only surmise about the decision-making process involved in these omissions, and whether they were made on the author’s own initiative or as the result of a “recommendation” from some official channel, possibly because it was now almost thirty years after the time when the original articles had been composed. Indeed the none too subtle criticism in these episodes may have been reckoned inappropriate for the Egyptian teenage minds who would be studying *Ḥadīth ‘Īsā ibn Hishām* for the secondary-school examinations known as the *thānawiyah ‘āmmah*.<sup>48</sup>

Whatever the case may be, the book version of Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī’s narrative *Ḥadīth ‘Īsā ibn Hishām*, originally published in 1907 and the one that has become the best known through a number of subsequent editions and reprints, already differs considerably from the original newspaper articles, and

its fourth edition of 1927 takes the process of change still further. When I was asked by Professors Gaber Asfour and Sabry Hafez in the 1990s to prepare a new edition of the author's complete works (and those of his father) for a new series, *Ruwwād al-Fann al-Qaṣaṣī* (*Pioneers of the Narrative Art*) to be published by al-Majlis al-A'lā li-l-Thaqāfah (Supreme Council for Culture) in Cairo, I was already aware of the differences between the various editions of this work which had long since come to be regarded as a foundational contribution to the development of modern Arabic narrative—looking both forward and backward in time, a genuine “bridge-work.” It was on that basis that I prepared the text for publication, using the resources that I had myself collected—in handwritten form—as part of my Oxford doctoral research in 1966. That work was published in two volumes in 2002. However, with advancements in computer technology and research methods, I have now been able to access the complete archive of the al-Muwayliḥī newspaper, *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq*, and have discovered that even what I thought was a “complete” edition of the text is in fact not entirely complete.

It is in that context that the invitation from the Library of Arabic Literature (LAL) to prepare a parallel-text version of what I have titled *What 'Īsā ibn Hishām Told Us* is so welcome, in that it gives me the opportunity to produce for the first time in book form an Arabic and English version of the sequence of all the episodes of the original series of articles al-Muwayliḥī wrote and published that are introduced by a narrator named 'Īsā ibn Hishām, whether or not they are part of the series called *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman*. That decision on my part, of course, raises some significant questions. Al-Muwayliḥī's description of his own revision process in converting the original articles into book form clearly indicates an aspiration on his part to turn something that was published in a context that he describes as “ephemeral” into a more permanent form. However the notion of ephemerality that he associates with newspaper publication and invokes to explain his rationale for revision is only part of the story. If we examine the sequence of the original articles closely and follow his lead in omitting entirely the “dry run” set of four articles devoted to the Sudan (and the somewhat curious return to the topic inserted in the initial sequence of *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman*), then the series seems to fall into four subseries: the Pāshā's initial encounter with the Egyptian legal system in which both he and 'Īsā ibn Hishām are centrally involved in the action; the period spent away so as to avoid the plague and allow the Pāshā to recover, in which there is considerably less action; the series of “assemblies”; and finally the episodes involving the 'Umdah and his two colleagues—in both these last two sequences 'Īsā and the Pāshā fade almost

completely into the background once the context has been established. Thus, if one is to apply some notions of Western narratological analysis to the resulting book text, one can say that al-Muwayliḥī's careful reworking of the newspaper articles does provide for a more convincing sequence of "events," but does little or nothing to affect the varying roles of two of the principal "characters."

Several Egyptian critics have tried to make of *Ḥadīth 'Īsā ibn Hishām* an incipient novel, but I would suggest that an investigation of the work's origins ties it as closely, if not more so, to the more episodic model of the classical *maqāmah* genre that is deliberately being invoked by the use of 'Īsā ibn Hishām as a participant narrator, duly derived from al-Hamadhānī's tenth-century model. To the episodic nature of the individual articles can be added yet another feature of al-Hamadhānī's creations, namely their resort to "prosimetrum," the regular inclusion of lines of poetry within a cursive prose narrative. One might even go on to suggest that, if al-Muwayliḥī's attempt at producing a more logically sequenced narrative out of the original article series *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman* was a reflection of his acquaintance with and understanding of fictional models of that era, then the episodic and even fragmented nature of the story in its article format is a much closer reflection of his "classical" model in al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt* and may indeed emerge therefrom as almost postmodern.

This edition, the first ever in book form to include all the original articles narrated by a nineteenth-century Egyptian called 'Īsā ibn Hishām and published in *Miṣbāḥ al-sharq* at the turn of the nineteenth century, will thus re-establish their author's text firmly within the political and cultural context within which they were conceived and on which they regularly commented. The availability of different versions of this famous narrative—the original articles of *Fatraḥ min al-Zaman*, the collected works of Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī, and the various editions of *Ḥadīth 'Īsā ibn Hishām*—will make it possible to examine in detail the role that this "bridge-work" played in linking the pre-modern heritage of Arabic narrative to his lively portrait of a tumultuous and changing present in nineteenth-century Egypt and the ways in which the story has been transformed during a timeframe that now exceeds a century.