

CHAPTER 2

Zakī al-Arsūzī

between the Philosophy of the Arab Tongue and the Philosophy of Arab Nationalism

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Introduction

I must confess at the outset that I have always been embarrassed to talk about Zakī al-Arsūzī. I must also confess that, right now, I have immense pity for this Arab thinker, mixed with immense self-pity, as I start writing about his views on the Arab tongue (*lisān*) and on Arab nationalism (*qawmīyah*). However, I have always consoled myself by wondering, would it possible for anyone to know al-Arsūzī personally and not be confused and embarrassed to address these two delicate issues?

When I first met him, I was still a philosophy undergraduate at Damascus University. I distinctly remember the first visit I made to his house, accompanied by two well-known poets. I had by then read two of his booklets, *Ṣawt al-‘Urūbah fī Liwā’ al-Iskandarūnah* (The Voice of Arabism in the Alexandretta Province), Damascus: Nādī Liwā’ al-Iskandarūnah, early 1961, and *Matā Yakūn al-Ḥukm Dīmuqrāṭīyan* (When Governance is Democratic), Damascus: Nādī Liwā’ al-Iskandarūnah, November 29, 1961.¹ Al-Arsūzī the legend, and he *was* a legend of some kind, was sitting there right in front of me. He was eating an orange, and he simply, almost unbelievably naively, offered some segments of it for us to eat! Still, manners aside, his presence instantly overwhelmed us. Somehow, I remember, he was always smiling – the same enigmatic smile that always baffled me, as it had baffled so many others. Not even now do I claim to understand it. It was the kind of

smile that goes right to the very heart of people – crystal clear but with something hidden, something secretive about it, or so it seemed to me in that first visit and on every other occasion I happened to meet with him. To reconcile myself to it, I called it the “the smile of surety”! He was in his sixty-fourth year, but his face was bright, calm, clear and composed. Al-Arsūzī the legend, once so distant and awesome, is now so close, so kind and courteous that I thought I knew this nice old man for a very long time. His human and personal presence was so disarmingly attractive and overpowering.

The thing that shocked me in that first visit, though, was discovering the absolute faith al-Arsūzī had in himself and in what he said and believed. No less shocking was the amount of reading and knowledge he lacked. He embarked on various discourses centering on the different Islamic “*bāṭinī*” groups.² Sometimes he said many incomplete things, or propounded many inaccurate and imprecise ideas. Other times he was plainly wrong. So youthful, I interrupted him more than once, correcting things here and there. I clearly remember that he never heeded any of my remarks. He never once paused or stopped his constant and endless digressions. “Yes, I know, I know” was his only comment.

It was in that first visit that I came to know I had to keep quiet, as the accompanying poets gesturingly informed me. Later, in our subsequent meetings, I understood two things about al-Arsūzī:

- (1) The “Teacher (*ustādh*),” and this was his nickname and the only title of honor he ever had, was not to be argued with. He tolerated no criticism of his ideas, for they were perfect and complete. Others only received them as they came – ready-made, faultless, almost infallible! The “Teacher” stooped to no intellectual debate with anyone. He merely expounded his ideas the way he liked – no objective standards, no rules barred; hence the various digressions into politics, linguistics, ethics and aesthetics in the same extended talking session. In fact, digression was the distinctive feature of all his writings, not only his endless “chats” as we called them.
- (2) Most of those who sat round the “Teacher’s” table at the “Café Havana” in Damascus had only one task – to flatter, praise and publicly glorify al-Arsūzī. They then said something else behind his back soon as he stepped outside the door of the café. I know nothing about the nature of his

relationship with his students and bosom friends; I am only talking about members of his café circle. With justification, however, I think I can categorically state that the elder generation in general maintained a thoroughly opportunistic attitude, cheating the “Teacher” and publicly collaborating in the game of phony, hypocritical silence. Mind you, I do not think al-Arsūzī was deceived by the people around him, but he went along with the role they made him play at the “Café Havana.”

Following my first frustrating visit, I frequently met al-Arsūzī, and he was incredibly kind and courteous to me. I claim that he even tolerated my youthful fervor and over-enthusiasm. Some said he took special interest in, and particular concern for, me; maybe because I was writing poetry and studying philosophy at one and the same time. In turn, I must admit that, like the others, I got to know how to listen in silence, with no interruptions and no comments this time!

In brief, I loved al-Arsūzī the man, from the very bottom of my heart. I could not but love him. Even more than that, I admired his simplicity, his openness and his intellectual integrity. Maybe that model integrity was what helped equip me with the kind of intellectual courage, even audacity, which was not lacking in me then. But, here I go again, I am so full of sorrow and self-pity, trying to argue with al-Arsūzī from the opposite side of the grave. Still, I have a final confession to make: for all my firm and unshakable belief in Arab nationalism, I have never once in the whole length of my life, embraced al-Arsūzī’s view of Arab nationalism or of the Arab tongue. Al-Arsūzī was so thoroughly absorbed with his own ideas that they became meshed in one, composite mold. He could impose his daunting presence on close associates; he could impress his unforgettable charm and dignity on friend and foe alike; but, ultimately, I think, the intellectual and personal amalgam had no power to convince.

The Factors which Triggered al-Arsūzī’s Intuitive View of the Arab Tongue

1. Al-Arsūzī’s Childhood

We have to bear in mind, first, that the Alexandretta Province in general and Antakia (Antioch) in particular are among the most beautiful and scenic spots in the Arab world – greenery everywhere, springs in every forest and bush, and colorful species

of birds all over the place. One would tend to think nature is conveying a direct message, encoded in silent, half-uttered sounds transmitted in every direction. Zakī al-Arsūzī was born and brought up in such a beautiful, romantic world, which charged him with a particular sensitivity for, and love of, nature. Nature, it seems, had taught him to listen attentively to decode its hidden messages. Second, we have to remember that the overwhelming majority of people in the Alexandretta Province were ‘Alawi Muslims. The ‘Alawis are a *ṣūfī* (mystical) sect, in the broadest sense of the term, claiming that things have two manifestations or meanings: the apparent and exterior surface, and the hidden and interior essence. For knowledge to be perfectly accomplished, both dimensions must be comprehended in unison. The apparent and exterior surface is nothing but the way, “the gateway,” to the hidden and essential interiority, just as the world of phenomena (our physical world) is the road and the gateway to the other, higher and sublime world. Third, we must recall that al-Arsūzī family itself enjoyed a distinct social status in the community. Al-Arsūzī’s father was a well-known lawyer who played a major role in leading the local nationalist movement. He was imprisoned and exiled for his “hostile activities” against both Turkish and French occupations.

In an interview with *Al-Uṣbū‘ Al-‘Arabī* (The Arab Weekly), entitled “Zakī al-Arsūzī, al-Rajul al-Madrasah (Zakī al-Arsūzī, the Man and the School),” al-Arsūzī told Zuhayr Mārdīnī:

I was born in Latakia and brought up in Antakia, where my parents lived. I went to the local elementary school, and I remember that I memorized the whole of the Koran in a few months. By the age of seven, my mind was preoccupied with “metaphysics.” My mother used to invite the local *shaykhs* to banquets so as to tell them about my dreams, and I used to have heated debates with them about problematic religious issues pertaining to the nature of Allah, destiny, death, eternity, etc. I was “cock-and-hoop” with my detractors, always baffling them with my speedy and graceful intellectual moves.³

All those who wrote about al-Arsūzī or came to know him intimately confirmed the truth and the validity of this confession. More important is that this genuine self-confession points strongly to the four factors which helped shape his forthcoming intuitive view (*ḥads*: intuition) of the Arab tongue:

- (1) Al-Arsūzī's own instinctive and innate intelligence. All those who came to know or write about al-Arsūzī testified to his superior intelligence, beginning with a great thinker like Anṭūn Maqdisī and ending with al-Arsūzī's own sister, Nabṭhah.
- (2) The vital role his mother played in his life. In fact, his mother's constant caring and total preoccupation with his dreams and personal problems have always kept a soft spot for her in al-Arsūzī's heart. He always talked lovingly about her and always praised her attributes. "Mother was such a sensitive, intuitive, compassionate, affable, loving and pious person, with calm and quiet disposition and behavior," he once wrote. "She outlived my father by a good number of years and was totally devoted to her children." Al-Arsūzī indeed never minced his words in showing the tremendous influence she had exerted on him. He always reiterated her sayings, including one he often repeated: "You haven't changed much, son, since you were a child in my arms, she used to say. You were just a budding rose that grew to full bloom."⁴
- (3) The referential omni-presence of *shaykhs* and religious clergy in the life of the family and its members. That those *shaykhs* were willing to debate delicate and problematic issues with a boy of seven is indicative of their popularity in and outside al-Arsūzī family. Perhaps it is needless to add that we must stress the paramount significance of the Koran as the basis for anyone seeking knowledge, *ṣūfī* or other, at that time.
- (4) The general social and intellectual climate dominating the life of Antakia and its countryside. Al-Arsūzī himself frequently said that life around him was totally engrossed in, almost obsessed with, metaphysical issues. The available information about the simplicity of that life, where agriculture was the only means of production, and where solitude and the beauty of nature reigned supreme, lead us to believe that it had had a great impact on the psychological genesis of individuals, al-Arsūzī included. Of course, we do not mean that these factors had automatically and mechanically turned individuals into some metaphysical, incurable romantics. It is a truism, however, that writers, artists and thinkers coming from the Alexandretta

Province, with no significant exceptions, have been romantic and a touch melodramatic, though it is beyond the scope of the present study to offer the needed proof and evidence for such a generalization.

The dreams al-Arsūzī used to have are indeed curious. He saw in them Allah, the prophets and Imām ‘Alī bn Abī Ṭālib himself, all dressed in white. Al-Arsūzī said in the above-mentioned interview:

When I was fourteen, I met a relative of mine coming from the Royal College in Beirut. He had heard about my dreams from my mother and he once told me, rather impatiently:

– You live in a totally different world! You preoccupy yourself with airy, metaphysical, godly things. Haven’t you heard of a man called “Darwin” who proved to the whole wide world that man descended from apes ...?

I could not deny that this had baffled me. So I went to “the shrine of the local holy man” of our village, al-Shakmajah, two kilometers away from Antakia. I wanted to test the validity of my relative’s claim I came close to the casket, tiptoeing in fear and anticipation. I thought the box was some vast reservoir of secret forces which “would surely strike me dead,” coming to it with such weird, impudent and atheistic ideas! I pushed the casket gently with my foot. Nothing moved. I pushed again and it remained put in its place. I mounted the box and started rocking myself violently to and fro; not a peep from inside the grave. Only then, I started to doubt my beliefs. I went back home as if in a trance. Exhaustion forced me to sleep, and in my dream I saw a cloud surrounding me from all sides, almost suffocating me. A voice then thundered from within the cloud:

– Do you or do you not believe I exist?!

It was a metaphysical voice asking, and I replied:

– Lord, *do you exist?*

When I woke up, I said to myself:

– You appear to me in sleepy dreams. Why not in clear wakefulness and broad daylight? I shall never believe you exist.

The next day, the dream recurred in a different form, and so did other dreams continue in their weird, fantastic, artistic formulae.⁵

There is nothing extraordinary in all this; Arab youths always face their crises of faith early in their teens. Al-Arsūzī’s experience and the intense suffering it entailed,

however, led him to extreme idealism. Like the influence exerted on him by the religious, almost theosophist intellectual climate, this idealism reflected itself in his writings and in his personal life. Al-Arsūzī, for instance, fell in love but never married, “for moral reasons.” He believed that the image of the beloved remains intact and perfect when love is not consummated but kept at a distance. Surely, if consulted, Freud would have attributed this to al-Arsūzī’s semi-Oedipal feelings for his mother. Another example is al-Arsūzī’s frequent use of the theological terminology characteristic of his own religious environment, such as the “dome (*qubbah*),” the “*mala’ a’lā* (the heavenly host, the divine and sublime substance),” the “meaning (*ma’nā*)” and the “image (*ṣūrah*),” etc. Al-Arsūzī did not limit these terms to their local connotative referentiality, of course, but he generalized them to include all time and space. Now add to this that, as a child, al-Arsūzī never played with other children and remained an avid lover of solitary walks, and you will have the full picture of the four principal factors which molded al-Arsūzī’s character. He was a meditative and introvert child, totally absorbed in an inner, magic world of exotic, weird and extraterrestrial dreams.

2. Al-Arsūzī’s Studies in France

In 1927, Zakī al-Arsūzī left for Paris to study philosophy and sociology. At the Sorbonne, he met and was directly influenced by such famous scholars and teachers as Georges Dumas, Léon Brunschvicg, Emile Bréhier, Paul Fauconnier, and others. Even more important was his admiration of the French philosopher Henri Bergson, who was at the apex of his popularity and fame. Bergson’s books were being published and republished, and his ideas were debated in and outside France, offering a severe critique of European materialism. Al-Arsūzī found in Bergson an intellectual authority and significant terms of reference for his personal inclination towards metaphysical world of visions and magic dreams. After all Bergson himself was an idealist *ṣūfī*, and the bulk of the Bergsonian philosophy rested on the inner, *ṣūfī* intuition, or what he called the “*élan vital*.” Kāzīm al-Dāghistānī, al-Arsūzī’s friend and fellow student in Paris, wrote about al-Arsūzī’s fervent admiration for Bergson in an article entitled “Rajul Yamḍī wa-Risālatu-hu Tabqā (A Man Passes Away and his Message Remains)”:

Al-Arsūzī so loved the philosopher of intuition and inspiration that he used to

memorize whole sections of Bergson's writings, then intone them as if reciting lines of poetry. He would then set out to explain them to us, using his usual hand gestures to describe that "élan vital" residing in all constituent elements – that inspirational force gushing out of the soul to be embodied in the genius characterizing all talented people.⁶

All those who wrote about al-Arsūzī commonly conceded the deep influence exerted by this idealist *ṣūfī* philosopher. One can only add that, in this respect, al-Arsūzī was not different from other leaders of the Arab nationalist movement in the first half of the twentieth century. They too were greatly influenced by Bergson in general, and by his *L'Evolution Créatrice* in particular.

In Paris, the German romantic thinkers, especially Fichte, the philosopher of German nationalism and his *Die Reden an die Deutsche Nation*, also influenced al-Arsūzī. Here, too, he was no exception, for Fichte was the spiritual father of most nationalist Arab thinkers in *Bilād al-Shām* (natural Syria). Sulaymān al-'Īsā, al-Arsūzī's disciple and the unchallenged poet of the *ba'th* (resurrection) movement for over half a century, wrote:

How we all admired the great German philosopher, Fichte, at that stage of our lives!

I still memorize whole sections of his famous book, *Die Reden an die Deutsche Nation*. One of our pioneering comrades even translated this book into Arabic, though the translation was never published.⁷

Al-Arsūzī himself pointed out the paramount significance of the period he had spent in Paris. He said in the same interview mentioned above:

In 1927, I went to Paris to study philosophy and there I underwent the first "metaphysical" experience. It was a self-metamorphosis cloaking my whole life with a new outfit. All my conceptions came to acquire new meanings transforming the old. My own personality was remolded, and my writings in philosophy, art and ethics embodied this new direction.⁸

The committee entrusted with compiling al-Arsūzī's *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah* (Complete Works) referred to this experience he underwent in Paris. The "Introduction" to the First Volume reads:

At times al-Arsūzī used to tell of some inspirational moments of complete clear-headedness. One such moment was when he was standing at the entrance of the Sorbonne University, beside the statue of Auguste Comte. He felt a strong shudder engulfing his whole being. The whole existence turned into an all-engrossing light enveloping him and all things around him, transforming them into some metaphysical and divine light. Joy ... sheer joy All things were vanishing in this divine revelation and divine presence.

No doubt, it was a *ṣūfī* experience he kept secret from everyone around him. It was a treasure nourishing his existence and teaching him that the world is a divine manifestation pointing to its Creator.⁹

We could only see this experience as a continuation of the dreams he used to have in his childhood and early teens. Only, this time, it took place in the realm of consciousness. The inner and vague experiences al-Arsūzī used to have in Antakia found their idealistic manifestations under the influence of, first, Bergson and, second, Bréhier, Fichte and other idealist German and Western philosophers. In other words, his experience in Paris was vital for his initial intuitive sense. It can be said to have matured the latent metaphysical orientations of a peculiar child – a child born and brought up in a religious *ṣūfī* environment, which firmly believed in the Plotinian theory of Emanation as the origin of man, the world, and the multiple relations they maintain to God, the sole Creator of all.

With such *ṣūfī*, metaphysical background and frame of mind, al-Arsūzī tried to look closely and realistically at the modern national state. This Arab state, we have to add in brief, was seen as the principle political body integrating all the Arab citizens of the one Arab nation. As we shall see, the product was a curious amalgam, buffeted by a firm, semi-religious conviction on al-Arsūzī's part : the Arabs are one nation; al-Arsūzī himself is destined to lead and resurrect this nation, being at once the national Arab messenger, the national Arab *za'im* (leader) and the national Arab philosopher.

3. Leading the Nationalist Struggle in the Alexandretta Province: 1930-1938

Zakī al-Arsūzī wrote:

I returned from Paris in 1930 and was appointed a teacher at the Antakia *tajhīz*

(secondary school). Soon however, I had a row with the French mandate delegate, and our subsequent disagreements gradually turned me away from my main interest in culture and philosophy to the world of politics.

On my way back from Paris to Antakia, I jotted down in my diary the following words in French:

Faire une nation ou créer “fantômes” etre prophète ou artiste, voilà le problème.

“To forge a nation or to create “images,” to be a prophet or an artist, that is the question.”¹⁰

In the period between 1930 and 1934, when al-Arsūzī was teaching at Aleppo and Deir al-Zur secondary schools, his conception of freedom and Arabism (*‘urūbah*) materialized and developed in a distinctly metaphysical, abstract way. Freedom, for instance, has its roots in the *mala’ a’lā*, the world diametrically opposite our own world of phenomena. Here on earth, however, freedom is the freedom of the sons of the nation (*ummah*) who still retain the natural and instinctive spontaneity Allah, of all the other peoples, had blessed them with. To achieve this freedom, it is imperative that the sons of Arabism are trained in political action so as to understand the meaning of current events. This would enable them to resist and remain steadfast in their struggle to achieve it. In fact, this was the reason behind founding the popular political front in the Alexandretta Province between 1934 and 1938. As the “Introduction” to his *Al-Mu’allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, clearly states:

The period between 1934 and 1938 was instrumental, because it gathered the scattered Arab sons together for the first time in modern Arab history. Having been different sects, groupings, families and classes, they melted together in the pot of Arabism to fight for the Alexandretta Province. They have become one nation again, resuming a new chapter in the glorious history of the Arab conquest of the world. Al-Arsūzī firmly believed that the movement he started in the Alexandretta Province would one day expand to include the whole of the Arab world. Although the movement failed, he kept faith to the last moment of his life that it will be resurrected, thereby resurrecting Pan-Arabism itself. Hence, he called it the *ba‘th* (...). Nevertheless, the sheer speed with which al-Arsūzī united the people of the Province around him (with the exception of a minority of collaborators), turning them into one, unified whole, was

indeed incredible and astounding by any standards. It puzzled friend and foe, and was greatly admired by the foreign and Arab press.¹¹

Very briefly, al-Arsūzī became the absolute leader of the nationalist movement in the Alexandretta Province. He was greatly loved and admired by all the people who nicknamed him the “Teacher,” a title he kept throughout his life. When eventually al-Arsūzī was given the choice of immigrating to a neighboring Arab region or staying in the Province, he opted for Syria, along with his family and best friends and students.

The introvert, nature-loving child who was obsessed with prophets, holy men of God and metaphysical dreams was soon to become the author of a distinctly *ṣūfī* theory of the Arab tongue and of Arab nationalism. He was to believe that he had solved the primeval problem of the beginning of things, so far left open. He also believed that his *ṣūfī* theory offered the way to salvation, not only for Arabs but for humanity at large!

Al-Arsūzī’s Theory of the Arab Tongue

Zakī Al-Arsūzī gave up his “literary” and artistic ambitions in order to be a political leader. He sought to achieve the *ba‘th* of the Arab nation so that it would, first, restore the past glory it had formerly attained and would, secondly, save the whole of humanity. He himself had achieved absolute personal success in the Alexandretta Province, going beyond all kinds of religious and sectarian clashes to unite all people under the banner of Pan-Arabism in a very short period. The Province, however, was finally annexed to Turkey in 1939, and al-Arsūzī had to leave to Damascus, where he founded the Arab Ba‘th Party (*ḥizb al-ba‘th al-‘arabī*), and issued a hand-written party paper. In Damascus, he felt that he had failed again and was deeply disappointed. The Syrians did not receive him as the “absolute” leader of the national struggle, and he himself came to realize that the odds were against him. The present ailments of the nation were far too great for him to solve by means of a small and recently founded political party. From then on, he turned his back on direct political action and dedicated his time to expound his theories of the Arab tongue, of Arab nationalism and of human existence at large.

The overriding concern that dominated al-Arsūzī’s thinking and personal

behavior was the Arab status quo and the Arab destiny. He was preoccupied by the search for a common denominator that would prove the unity of the Arab people – past, present and future. Yet, to do him justice, we must hasten to add that founding a comprehensive theory to resolve all dilemmas of human thought was also on his mind. As he wrote in the introduction to the second edition of his first and most important book, *Al-‘Abqarīyah al-‘Arabīyah fī Lisān-hā* (The Arab Genius in its Tongue), “this [Arab] mission (*risālah*) decisively resolves the problem of language, thereby answering one primal question so far left unresolved.”¹²

Although he knew well that those primal issues pertaining to the beginning of things have been problematic and insoluble throughout the history of human thought, al-Arsūzī had absolute faith in the authenticity of his theory. Before we start debating his ideas however, we may as well have a brief resume of his theory, stressing all along that he believed he had found in it the final solution to the three most problematic issues of human thought:

- (1) A final solution to the origin of things
- (2) A final solution to the origin of language
- (3) A final, decisive explanation for the origin of the nation (the Arab nation in particular, but also other nations in general)

At the outset, al-Arsūzī rejected the thesis that language is divinely inspired, for “attributing problems to metaphysics is not the proper way to solve them.”¹³ Nor did he accept the proposition that language is posited by the human mind, since that would lead us to an intellectual “closed circle.” The perfect sense of order and discipline embedded in language necessitates, ipso facto, a supreme and perfect mind. Al-Arsūzī, moreover, knew well that world linguists lacked a living example of word-root formation in early human languages. As he himself put it:

Linguists the world over were losing hope of finding a solution to the problems of language – the one, distinctive feature which sets human beings apart from other living species. A lucky chance (*ṣudfah*), however, made it possible for us to observe the method life itself followed in expressing itself through language. The much sought after living example is the Arab tongue. For, words in Arabic still retain their deep-rooted natural sounds, and the Arab tongue still keeps in the patterns of its development the complete expressive mechanism and tools man has been using ever since he appeared on

the face of the earth.¹⁴

Here al-Arsūzī determines, straightforwardly and without offering any proof, the following ideas which modern linguists would not even consider, let alone accept:

- (1) Arabic is a natural language, i.e., it is the original (*aṣīl*) human language. All other languages of the world are pale, deficient or, at best, imperfect copies of Arabic.
- (2) As a natural language, Arabic has existed ever since man appeared on the face of the earth.
- (3) The Arabic language is the perfectly eloquent and quintessentially expressive human mechanism.
- (4) In Arabic, the “thing” and the uttered word referring to it are one and the same. It is therefore enough to listen to the Arabic words to know their meaning.

I shall elaborate these points further, but I must presently point out that al-Arsūzī had often had to obliterate real and existing “things” in order to prove the reality of the Arabic words.

Al-Arsūzī offers the following examples of the ways in which Arabic words sprang from natural sounds, and of the patterns of development the Arab tongue had adopted to become such a perfect means of expression:

When *kharīr* (the gurgling sound of water) had first reached the Arab’s ears, he envisioned the water running in its stream. Such is the close interrelationship between the audible and visual in the Arab mind. Every time the water affected a change in its course, the Arab mind expressed the new state of things by adding a new letter or sound to the root-word “*kharr*,” having paid sufficient attention to the expressive value of the attached letter or sound. With the addition of the letter “*b*” to the original “*kharr*,” the new verb “*kharaba* (destroyed)” had thus appeared. Similarly, the added letter “*j*” resulted with the verb “*kharaja* (went out),” whereas the letter “*m*” gave “*kharama* (pierced).” Thus, the water affected a change in its course *kharban* (destructively),

kharman (piercingly) or *khurūjan* (simply flowing out).¹⁵

Here, al-Arsūzī admits a number of postulates on which the bulk of his theory is based:

- (1) The root of the Arabic verb is originally made of two letters.¹⁶
- (2) The root of the Arabic verb came initially from the correlation between the sound in nature and the Arab audio-visual faculties.
- (3) The natural sound turns into a two-letter verb in the imagination of the Arab.
- (4) The Arab mind follows more than one path in devising words out natural sounds. These are:
 - (i) Addition, as we have seen in “*kharr*,” yielding “*kharaba*,” “*kharaja*” and “*kharama*.”
 - (ii) The shift between “twin sounds” sharing the same place of articulation, as in the two dental sounds “*t*” and “*d*” for instance. The Arab mind evolved “*darr*” from “*tar*,” and “*dharr*” from “*darr*,” since “*d*” and “*dh*” are also similar in their place of articulation. “Visual variation,” al-Arsūzī tells us, “calls for acoustic variations.”
 - (iii) Coining words out of only one letter: From “*n*,” for instance, it created “*anā*,” “*anta*,” “*anti*,” “*uns*,” “*insān*,” etc. Addition and “twin shifting” then vastly expanded the number of invented words, whether by one or more letters.

The theoretically vital thing here, upholding whatever has been and will be said, is that “life (*ḥayāh*)” itself had adopted this method in devising its means of expression, language. For language, to al-Arsūzī, is life’s own means of expression, and life itself had made use of the following principles:

- (1) Sound, one of “nature’s expressions of agitation and disturbance,” is subject to human will.
- (2) The ability of sound to move across space, which turns it into the proper medium for communication, cooperation and understanding amongst national brethren.

- (3) The highly variable sense of sight, which establishes “a balance between audio-visual variations, turning the visual image into a means of clarifying the meaning.”
- (4) The stable and inherent relationship between sound and meaning. In Arabic the sound “*gh*” suggests absence, and we find this meaning in all words beginning with it, such as “*ghāba* (was absent, vanished),” “*ghāṣa* (dived, delved into),” “*gharaba* (set, especially sunset),” etc. “We also find this meaning in the diacritical mark *fathah* (the short vowel “*a*”), and all this, al-Arsūzī concludes, “suggests that the roots of language are deeply engrained in life and nature.”

The relationship between sound and meaning in the Arabic word is natural. It was like that when man first appeared on the face of the earth, and it has remained so till now. In other languages, this relationship is, and always has been, “based on conventional not natural connections.” The meaning of words in Arabic, therefore, has not changed throughout history, and the concrete proof is that the ordinary Arab can now understand old Arabic poetry in the same way that successive Arab generations have done, age after age. Even if the poem was written in the *jāhilīyah*, the time difference does not make it less easy to understand or appreciate. This is impossible for the ordinary Frenchman, or any other native European, because there is a big difference between the present and the original forms of the European national languages.

For al-Arsūzī, the Arab word is composed of a vocal construct, a visual image, and a meaning, which is the product of the harmonious correlation between the two.

The example al-Arsūzī offers here is the term “*fiqh* (jurisprudence).” The vocal construct is the sound “*faq*,” derived from the sound of water boiling, to which the letter “*h*” is added. The visual image is that of something opening up from within. This image is embedded in words sharing the same initial sound “*f*,” such as “*faqa’a* (burst open)” as in “*faqa’a al-dummal* (lancing an abscess);” “*fataha*” as in “*fataha al-kalb ‘aynay-hi* (the dog opened his eyes);” “*faqaṣa*” as in “*faqaṣa al-naqf* (eggs hatching);” “*faqa’a* (burst, cracked),” “*faqara* (impoverished),” ... etc. To al-Arsūzī, meaning is the truth revealed from within the self, illuminated by this self’s own inner enlightenment. This is why the Arabic word has specific features that can neither change nor be mixed up with other words.¹⁷ Still, the vocal construct is not limited to

the meanings derived from the outer world of nature. The Arab mind has also resorted to the ready-made vocal expressions of human nature itself. Speech, to al-Arsūzī, springs from within human nature through, first, the vocal constructs expressing man’s psychological state and, second, the vocal constructs emanating from the vocal organs as they “accommodate the vocal action which the physical movements trigger.”

Before we discuss this aspect further, we have to remember that al-Arsūzī considered the Arab tongue primal (*badī’*) and primitive (*bidā’ī*), which means that the vocal construct is itself primal and primitive too.

Al-Arsūzī exemplified this audio-visual construct coming of psychological origins by “*anna* (groaned, suffered inner pain),” from which the Arab mind formulated the following derivatives:

- (1) “*Anā* (I),” by adding the glottal stop “’ (*hamzah*)” to the beginning, and “*anta* (you – masculine) by adding the letter “*t*” to the end. Other personal pronouns are formed in the same way.
- (2) The Arab mind had also coined “*anna* (groaned, moaned)” and “*anīn* (groaning, moaning);” “*annaba* (reproached, blamed),” the opposite of “*annana-hu* (sought approval from).” Other derivatives are: “*anīs* (affable, friendly),” “*anf* (nose),” “*anām* (human beings),” “*anīy* (approached, drew nearer),” etc.
- (3) By moving from the glottal stop “’ (*hamzah*)” to its twin sounds in the place of articulation, such as the “‘ (‘*ayn*),” the “*h*” or the “*h*,” many verbs and other derivatives are coined, including: “‘*anna al-shay*’ (appeared before you, became clear),” “‘*anaba* (brewed, made wine of grapes),” “‘*anaja* (became arrogant),” “‘*anada* (opposed stubbornly),” “‘*anasa* (remained celibate, spinster),” “‘*anafa* (reprimanded),” “‘*anā* (meant),” all formed by turning the glottal stop “’ (*hamzah*)” into “‘ (‘*ayn*).”
- (4) By moving from the glottal stop “’ (*hamzah*)” to the “*h*,” it created “*hanna* (cried),” “*hana’a* (congratulated),” “*hanafa* (flirted, played with).”
- (5) By moving from the glottal stop “’ (*hamzah*)” to the “*h*,” it created “*ḥanna*

(longed for),” “*hanīn* (yearning),” “*hanā* (died with henna)” and “*hanatha* (broke his vows),” etc.¹⁸

The examples of the vocal construct accompanying the movement of the vocal organs are: “*aḍḍa* (bit),” “*qaḍḍa* (annoyed),” “*batta* (settled, resolved),” “*badda* (scattered),” etc.

In addition to these natural ways, the Arab mind also resorted to the conventional mechanisms. Here the more easily articulated and more prominent sound dominates the vocal utterance, which calls for attention and is referred to by one word. From such association of terms, the Arab mind formed such nouns and verbs as “*bābā* (papa),” “*ab* (father),” “*abba* (missed),” “*abiha* (alerted),” “*ubbahah* (grandeur, pomp),” and “*abā* (disdained),” all from the “*b*” sound. From the letter “*m*,” it formed the following nouns and verbs: “*māmā* (mama),” “*umm* (mother),” “*amma* (went to, resorted to),” “*ummah* (nation),” “*imām*,” “*amad* (time, period),” “*amal* (hope),” “*amr* (order),” etc.¹⁹

For al-Arsūzī, the primal and primitive is the exact opposite of the historical. Words are natural in the sense that they sprang out of nature and did not develop historically. With the exception of the primal and primitive Arabic, all other languages are conventional and historical.

1. The Arab Tongue is Primal: Tongue and Meaning

Zakī al-Arsūzī wrote in his first book, *Al-‘Abqarīyah al-‘Arabīyah fī-Lisān-hā*:

It is no wonder that the Arab tongue meets all the preconditions of originality. Arabic is primitive and primal because it is the language of Adam, in which meaning is revealed in life and existence.²⁰

In Islam and other divine religions that appeared in the Middle East, Adam is commonly held to be the father of all human beings. His native tongue was Arabic and, according to the Koran, Allah himself taught Adam all names, words and meanings. The “meaning” al-Arsūzī keeps referring to signifies:

- (1) The meaning of the word
- (2) The absolute meaning, i.e. Allah

(3) The meaning – intention or aim

Al-Arsūzī explained the divine origin of language by saying:

Man is semi-divine, semi-earthly. His body is earthly – in Arabic, Adam is derived from *adīm* (earth) and *idāmah* (nourishment, food), whilst spiritually he is made after God's image and his soul is part of God's own Holy Spirit. Body and soul are the two facets of existence, and they are distinct from each other only in human epistemology.

If the human self or soul reached out to its physical manifestations and perceived them through the senses, these become the world of man. However, if the soul turned inwardly, opening up to its internal essence, and reached “the meaning,” man becomes divine and an integral part of the *mala' a'lā*.

The world and the *mala' a'lā* are the two poles of life and existence. They are united together through insight, symbolized in life by eyesight, the sensual image the eye sees bright and clear (...). If the body, which to the universe is like the bud to its tree, grows by *idāmah*, the soul too is nourished by the truth in which the meaning is revealed.²¹

The meaning, therefore, is the idea of the self, and the body is the bases on which it evolves, “the prodigy which converts and is converted by it.” To fully understand what al-Arsūzī meant by this, we have to begin with the beginning – with Allah, the absolute Meaning who created man after his own image. The truth innate in man is always disposed to seek its idea. If it manages to sublimate itself high enough, it dissociates itself from the sensible world (the world of phenomena) and becomes part of the *mala' a'lā*, the intelligible world (the abstract world, detached from matter and the sensible existence). Now, where does the Arabic language stand in relation to this amalgam of Islam and Plotinism? We must hasten to add that al-Arsūzī had dropped the Plotonist doctrine of Emanation and replaced it with the doctrine of Issuance, thereby avoiding various epistemological problems. Of course, it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss these problems in detail, but we have to bear in mind the following crucial points:

- (1) The Arab tongue is etymological, and through its etymology appears the visual image embedded in the word. It thus shows “the two poles of the mind, the meaning through the image, the abstract through the sensible.” In a

revolutionary process, the sensible image leads to the abstract meaning, to the *mala' a'lā*, through the Arab tongue. The issuance of the image from the Arabic word is instantaneous, the very minute this word is heard. The sensible is thus the road to the abstract.

- (2) The meaning itself directs the mind towards the sensible so as to explore its reality and true essence. The Arab tongue accordingly springs out of the mutual influence of meaning and word. The word for the meaning is like the body for the soul, and the meaning for the word is like inspiration for the artistic masterpiece, or like the soul for the body.
- (3) The meaning is revealed in life through various forms, including tongue (language), because language is more able to express the meaning that had created it. "If the human cells create, by their specialized branching up, human membranes, motivated by the instinct and the will to live and by its rigorous growth inside the human being, so does the vocal construct open up by its own etymology. The boundaries of its growth are demarcated by the rules seeking to reach the meaning."²²

Perhaps now we can re-order the falling syntagmatic structure of al-Arsūzī's linguistic theory. Allah wished to reveal himself from the *mala' a'lā*, so he created life and made it a miracle directly and indirectly pointing to Him and to His existence. He created Adam (Man) after his image, and the genius (*'abqarīyah*) of Adam, a native speaker of Arabic, was manifest in his language. Life itself is thus revealed in the Arab tongue. Accordingly, the rising paradigmatic structure opens up to the meaning in the Arab tongue through life itself. Language reaches its source, the meaning, and becomes part of the *mala' a'lā*. This upward drive, al-Arsūzī firmly believed, is inbuilt within the etymological fabric of the Arabic language. It is the inner drive of the self to reach its meaning, its source, its Creator. The meaning, therefore, is the sap and the fabric of life through which it is revealed. The world of phenomena (life, nature, man, things), on the other hand, is indicative of the perfect and complete meaning of the *mala' a'lā*.

For thirty years, al-Arsūzī kept offering variations on this basic intellectual and linguistic pattern. He chose various artistic forms to exemplify it, and he picked from Arab dictionaries numerous modulates and anecdotes to vindicate it. This has come to

yield major variations on the primal, primitive Arab tongue, the first original language whose roots go deep in nature, not history. One of these variations is al-Arsūzī's view of the diacritical marks in Arabic.

2. The Diacritical Marks in the Arab Tongue

Under the title, “Qābilīyah al-Ḥarakat al-Bayānīyah (Flexibility of the Diacritical Marks in Arabic),” Zakī al-Arsūzī wrote:

In the Arabic word, the sound movement retains its original range thus expressing its primitive meaning.

The diacritical mark *fathah*, the short vowel “a,” for instance, by virtue of its place of articulation where the tongue is stationary as the sound is uttered, expresses silence or incorporation in space.

The diacritical mark *kasrah*, the short vowel “i,” uttered with the lips apart and drawn back, expresses relativity or the return to the self.

Similarly, the diacritical mark *ḍammah*, the short vowel “u,” a high back rounded phoneme, expresses constant and permanent vitality.²³

Al-Arsūzī went on to say:

Pending their shapes and ways of articulation, vowels are amplifications of their parallel diacritical marks. The “w” is an amplification of the phoneme “u”; the “y” of “i”; and the “a (*alif*)” of “a.” They too therefore express the same meaning in a more exaggerated, magnified way. For instance, *fahima* (understood): *fahīm* (smart understanding); *nabiha* (was alert to): *nabīh* (alert, intelligent, cautious); *mat'ama* (gave birth to twins): *mit'ām* (habitually giving birth to twins), ... etc.²⁴

Here al-Arsūzī contradicts all Arab linguists throughout history.²⁵ Most probably, he did not read what those specialists had written, but his contradictory views, including those concerning the diacritical marks and their significance, were by no means the product of his lack of knowledge. They were perfectly in line with his overall theory of the Arab tongue, which insists that words in their various forms retain their original structure, and all their formal and substantive manifestations testify to this originality. Even a single letter by itself can have an expressive value.

Although this value is often attached to the sound system of the whole word, some letters, usually the first, act as the notation specifying the meaning of the word. The “*gh*,” “*s*” and “*b*” sounds exemplify this, and we leave it to others to further investigate this point. Of all Arabic letters, the “*gh*” is the most expressive. Because of its place of articulation and the echo it leaves in the self when uttered, it expresses one meaning embedded in almost all words beginning with it – namely mystery, absence and mysterious vanishing away. As for the letter “*s*,” depending on the way it is uttered, it conveys the meaning of movement or demand. Further, since the letter “*b*” is so accessible, it enters the sound systems or words of many different meanings, but it predominantly gives the sense of “surfacing” and “clarity,” which is determined by its place of articulation.²⁶

In modern linguistics, it is taken for granted nowadays that the letter is an independent sound unit or an infinitesimal unit that signifies nothing on its own. For al-Arsūzī, however, it becomes a key to the meaning with its own expressive value, because it signifies a common meaning shared by all words that begin with it. What more could one say!

It will take us a very long time indeed to talk about al-Arsūzī’s detailed views on “pronouns,” “verbs,” “numbers,” “nouns,” “superlatives,” “plurality,” “gender,” “relationality,” etc.; i.e., the whole corpus of syntactical and morphological manifestations of the Arabic word. Suffice it to repeat at this stage, as is often repeated, that every word in Arabic is composed of a vocal construct and a visual image, harmonized together through meaning.

3. The Relationship between Arabic and other Semitic Languages, and between Arabic and Indo-European Languages

In his notes “*Mansha’ al-Lisān al-‘Arabī* (The Origin of the Arab Tongue),” Zakī al-Arsūzī wrote:

1. The Arab tongue is primitive and primal in both its origin (the vocal construct derived directly from nature), and artifact (the manifestation of genius in all its basic constituents, i.e. its sound system and its syntactic and morphological rules). Each word and each rule carrying the Arab stamp of genius is derived and taken from it.
2. The course of history has shown that whatever ideas, institutions or tools man has invented have been passed down from one nation to another and from one region to

the next. This creative invention would then become popular among all nations of the world which inhabit the same historical era.²⁷

According to al-Arsūzī, what happened in the linguistic field parallels that of the theological and sociological fields. Nations of the world are not equal in their respective abilities to find the vocal constructs and visual images that express their linguistic and religious instincts. The primal and primitive Arab tongue was the invention of the Arab nation “whose sons have always had creative linguistic talent and genius.” Sometime at the dawn of history, the Arab language spread, as did the Semitic religious and artistic creations. This is why Semitic and other nations owe and immense debt to the Arabs “for inventing the tool with which man distinguished himself from animals, and then used to erect his social, psychological and human edifice.”²⁸

All Semitic languages go back originally to Arabic. They gradually became colloquial dialects due to two factors:

- (1) The sudden movement of some Arab peoples to modern, more advanced stages of urbanization, which led to the break of etymological connections. Words began to deviate from the Semitic familial system, affecting most syntactical rules. Both words and sentences lost their structure and drew closer to colloquial dialects.²⁹
- (2) The increasing “mongrelization” of Arab blood, under the influence of foreign peoples.

Towards the end of his “Mulāḥazāt (Notes),” al-Arsūzī concluded:

The Arab has rightfully labeled his dialect “*lisān* (tongue),” using the three graceful and neat letters “*l*,” “*s*” and “*n*.” He called other Semitic dialects “*lughah* (language),” derived from “*laghā*,” “*yalghū*” (talk incomprehensibly, talk nonsense), using all the ambiguity and vagueness of the “*gh*” sound. Other foreign languages he called “*barbar* (babbling on, drivel, gibberish)” for the apparent weakness and nonsensicality he saw in them.

The word that cannot be attributed to a vocal construct derived from nature but is well within the framework of Arab linguistic craftsmanship is a hybrid and mongrel

word.³⁰

All non-Arab nations and languages, therefore, are neither primal nor primitive. If we find in them any symptom of genius, it must be attributed to its origins in the Arab tongue. For, all non-Arab languages are conventional, historical and hence liable to change. This is the reason for their “weakness” and lack of originality.

Now if we objected by saying that the world is full of languages, and that these languages have perfectly accommodated the new terms and idioms of modern science and technology, both theoretical and practical, al-Arsūzī would respond that this is a favor done to them by the Arab tongue. If we said that modern Arabic is deficient in various fields and aspects, he would reply it is due to the harmful influence exerted by other nations and other languages on the Arabic tongue. If we further asked, “how could Arabic have spread all over the world so as to influence all of its respective languages,” he would answer just as the Semitic religions and artistic creations have spread and affected all nations. If, finally, we told him that you have limited your terms of reference to Indo-European languages and totally ignored Chinese, other Asian and Far Eastern, African and American languages, he would say the same thing: “The rules do not change. Nations are not equally lucky in forging the one tool that distinguished man from animal. Arabic is the native tongue of Adam whom Allah himself taught all the words and names through divine inspiration.” In other words, we have to accept various contradictory theses, before we could concede the conclusions al-Arsūzī had reached, beginning with the myth of Adam and ending with his native Arab tongue. It is curious indeed that in all his writings about language and linguistics, al-Arsūzī never mentioned a single reference work. He did not even name the dictionary from which he derived his examples. It seems he, too, considered himself a primal and primitive source. Presumably, we only have to read him to awaken in us the meaning he wanted to convey, and instantly and automatically we ought to have believed him, thereby elevating ourselves to the realm of the *mala’ a’lā*, each according to his innate ability to awaken “the meaning” in himself.

* * * * *

Zakī Al-Arsūzī wrote three books on the linguistics of the Arabic language: *Al-‘Abqarīyah al-‘Arabīyah fī Lisān-hā* (1943), *Risālat al-Lughah* (Thesis on Language) (1952) and *Al-Lisān al-‘Arabī* (The Arab Tongue) (1963). The first was

not only the cornerstone for whatever al-Arsūzī had subsequently written about language but was also about nationalism, art, ethics, aesthetics, politics, etc. He did not add much to the basic intuitive impulse he registered in that first book, but he merely expanded it, adding more quotations from various dictionaries. He often repeated what he had stated earlier, and that is why it is not difficult to round up al-Arsūzī's theory of the Arab tongue. Any one of his books would do. The question that presents itself here is simply, was it a new linguistic theory? Did al-Arsūzī uphold the natural theory of language, which briefly states that the word and the thing it refers to are one and the same, because language itself sprang out of imitating the natural sounds?

Of course, no one disputes the fact that all languages contain words miming sounds in nature. These, however, are quite few, playing no major roles in the general fabric of the language structure. The objections linguists raise against this natural theory are well known and need not be reiterated here. Indeed the problem is as old as human thought itself. Aristotle himself had rejected the proposition that language is natural and that it is mimetic of the images of things, preferring the more logical conventional theory. In Arab history, there have been three major attitudes towards language:

- (1) Language is mimetic, which entails a close correlation between the word and its semantic significations.
- (2) Language is endowed, i.e., divinely inspired as Allah taught Adam all names and words.
- (3) Language is posited by the human mind which Allah blessed with this ability and talent.

Now we all know the kind of insurmountable pressures Islamic theology had exerted on Arab linguistic studies. We are also familiar with the severe battle that raged between the *mu'tazilah* (Reclusionists) and their adversaries during the reign of al-Ma'mūn, centering on the basic issue of whether the Koran was Allah's words or whether it was posited and man-made. The theoretical argument, we remember, had had a tragic and bloody resolution, leading to the total eradication of the *mu'tazilah*.

In the twentieth century, Arab linguistics made quantum leaps towards the

scientific approach to language. Saussure's theory in particular made a revolutionary upheaval in Arab linguistics, becoming well known even amongst non-specialists. Briefly put, modern linguistic studies aspire to have the kind of academic certitude science itself has. Saussure had denied any relation between the word (sign) and the thing it refers to (the signified), stressing the fact that language is arbitrary. The signification is not determined by the word itself but by the function it fulfills in the structure, and this is precisely what the structuralists have insisted upon and, later, expanded and applied to the whole spectrum of society and culture.

Where does al-Arsūzī stand in relation to all this?

In an interesting article, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān (On the Road to the Tongue)," the title of one of Heidegger's books, Anṭūn Maqdisī wrote:

When Al-Arsūzī published his book, *Al-'Abqarīyah al-'Arabīyah fī Lisān-hā* (1943), he did not know de Saussure (1857-1913). The founding father of modern linguistics was not yet famous, neither in his native Switzerland nor among the French people whose language he spoke and wrote in. Only a few of his best students knew him well and labored to publish the only book he cared to write, *Cours de Linguistique Générale*.³¹

Incidentally, I do believe that Maqdisī, who was closest to al-Arsūzī, is the most able to talk and write about him. He came to know al-Arsūzī for over thirty years as "Teacher" and friend. Maqdisī's creative abilities and wide-ranging knowledge, moreover, make it sufficient for me to mention some of his remarks on, and critique of, his "Teacher" and friend, al-Arsūzī:

Al-Arsūzī always wanted me to render some of his articles into French. He wanted to know what the Orientalists thought of the momentous discovery he thought he had made before anyone else.³²

Ricœur told me the following day: "It seems that your philosopher [al-Arsūzī] has locked himself in a self-enclosed circle of his own making" (...). "It is impossible to get him out of it, but isn't this the exact case with our Heidegger? Each one of them wants to devise a philosophy out of contemplating language."³³

There are fundamental differences between al-Arsūzī and modern linguistics,

summed up in two incumbent points:

The first is the linguistic stuff, so to speak, which for modern linguistics is the sound unit. Language is a distinctive group of differentiated sounds, i.e., we can clearly define it in its relational differences. Conversely, for al-Arsūzī, the linguistic raw material is the essential feature or the expressive density of the word.

The second is the methodology of modern linguistics, which moves from the upper to the lower, from the smallest sound unit to the meaning. Al-Arsūzī takes the opposite road, starting with the meaning itself. He tries to see how this meaning is realized in the area of varying sound units.

Briefly, modern linguistics is the referential analyses, attributing the higher to the lower, just like modern science. Conversely, (...) al-Arsūzī's analytical system approaches the whole universe and human existence as an open expressive unit.³⁴

“Life made the Arab tongue after its image and idea.” (...) Thus taught al-Arsūzī.³⁵

Is language the imitation of sounds in nature? Surely, that is an age-old hypothesis. Plato debated and rejected it, and it might have existed even before him. It was subsequently adopted by the nineteenth-century linguists in their desperate search for the origins of language. They thoroughly studied and researched every aspect of it, postulating many, many theories. The three most important residual theories are found in almost every language textbook, but all were then neglected and abandoned. Modern linguistics rejected the mimetic theory out of hand, because it considered the vocal relation consensual and conventional and therefore arbitrary, just arbitrary and nothing else, as I have said earlier.³⁶

Al-Arsūzī's imagination was as fertile as those of mythmakers.³⁷

His naïveté still embarrasses me; his genius still puzzles me.

And, if intelligence is this speed, light speed, in capturing the meaning in the image, then al-Arsūzī was quintessentially intelligent.

Yes, I can do nothing with a thinker who, when he talked or wrote, would want to put himself, Arabism and the Arab tongue all in one phrase, one image and, often, one legend.³⁸

What on earth can I do with a thinker who prefers the artistic to the analytical

scientific method, seeing in the former the genuine Arab intellectual method (and to a large extent he was right here), whilst seeing in the latter the Greco-Western mind, the methodology of science and philosophy.³⁹

Would I be depriving al-Arsūzī of originality by revealing his indebtedness to Plato, the German romantic philosophers, Fichte, Vendryes, and others?

Allah forbid!

Al-Arsūzī used to digest all that he had read, as perfectly as the body digests food, then assimilated it in his whole being. Suffice it an honor for my teacher friend that, as far as I know, he produced the first Arabic text that has the rigor, integrity, depth and originality of philosophical discourse.

Yes, he was the first to have made Arabic, the language from which philosophy had departed centuries ago, speak philosophy again.⁴⁰

After centuries of the intellectual break, al-Arsūzī was the first to initiate a debate with the Greco-Western mind, our first intellectual counterpart in history – not as a beginner, idiotically admiring or impulsively rejecting it, but from the most sublime of summits and the most ancient of the old.⁴¹

Al-Arsūzī's Theory of Arab Nationalism

From what has been said, it is evident that Zakī al-Arsūzī's starting point was contemplating the Arab diction and the Arab tongue, as he called it, out of which he formulated his theory of the origins of man, things, the nation, language and the universe at large. The Arab tongue is an integral part of the *mala' a'lā*, and it alone is the way to the meaning and to the evolution to this *mala' a'lā*. Once again, we can reorder his theory as follows:

- (1) Allah, the absolute meaning, wished to reveal himself, and he did so in life. Life issued out of him, not simply emanated, as Plato and all Arab philosophers had maintained.
- (2) Life, in turn, wished to reveal itself and it did so in the Arab nation. The conception of life to al-Arsūzī, we have to bear in mind, includes his

conception of existence, through the correlation of both, he harmonized between his own philosophy and the Western positivist and epistemological sources by which he was influenced.

- (3) The genius of the Arab nation was revealed in its tongue, the title of his first book, *Al-'Abqariyah al-'Arabiyah fi Lisān-hā*, which remained the most important reference source for his following works.

This brief resume sheds light on al-Arsūzī's concomitant conception of the Arab nation's eternal being, an important point we shall elaborate later as we discuss the meaning of his dictum "the Arab is the master of destiny (*al-'arab sayyid al-qadar*)."

It was one of the basic principles on which he founded the "Ba'th" Party in Damascus in the early 1940s.

1. Al-Arsūzī's Conception of the Nation

In "Al-Ummah al-'Arabiyah (The Arab Nation)," the eighth and final chapter of his famous book, *Al-'Abqariyah al-'Arabiyah fi Lisān-hā*, Zakī al-Arsūzī wrote:

From the national self issues the nation's view of life and existence, which comes to carry its stamp and reflect its characteristic features. It was not in vain that the Indians presupposed the essence of life to be ether, the Greeks the atom, the Semitic nations revolutionary evolution, and the English natural selection. Each of these nations has come to perceive life and existence through its own structure. In the same way, the Arabs have inspired the whole world with the notion of eternity, derived from their own eternal nature.

The Arab nation is the well from which all Semitic peoples sprang. It is a world unto itself, whose sun has never set ever since man appeared on the stage of history. With its successive emanations, the Arab nation periodically cleanses the other peoples and absolves them of their sins, always guiding them to achieve their ends.

The Arab nation is like the nebula, the "original substance of life and existence." Sometimes it is condensed, giving birth to cosmic suns; other times it is fragmented, scattering its suns into thin air.

So is the Arab nation. Ever shedding its light on humanity, it might at times seem fragmented and atomized, its sons secluded in a nutshell of egoism. Soon however, a

prophet or a *za'im* would rise and shine, resurrecting the Arab nation and spreading the light of its blazing glow as a new twilight and a new beacon guiding the other nations of the world to fulfill their respective national missions. It is then that the Arab nation challenges and defies the wildest expectations of those historians who dared write it off.⁴²

In this over extended quotation, we find the hypothetical bases for all the subsequent characteristic details al-Arsūzī later ascribes to the Arab nation:

- (1) Eternity is the exclusive characteristic and stamp of the Arab nation.
- (2) The Arab nation is the source and origin of all Semitic peoples (as opposed to the Aryan peoples), including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Pharaohs, etc. That is, all the Semitic peoples who managed to build a civilization, and the sum total of all these civilizations has an Arab root and origin!
- (3) The Arab nation is the origin of life and existence.
- (4) The life of the Arab nation is not subject to the laws of history.
- (5) A prophet or *za'im* periodically rises to resurrect (*ba'th*) the Arab nation and to convert the other nations to, and by means of, the eternal mission of Arabism. As we shall see, this *za'im* or prophet reveals and embodies the meaning incorporate in each larger historical cycle or “dome,” as al-Arsūzī called it, with direct reference to “the dome of heaven (*qubbat al-samā'*)” from which Arab ancestors derived the term.

In the same chapter, “Mā Hiya al-Ummah (What is the Nation),”⁴³ al-Arsūzī attaches a number of characteristic features to the Arab nation:

- (1) The Arab nation is not a general phenomenon that evolved in history but a “miracle whose origins are firmly rooted in the *mala' a'lā'*.” “Allah himself taught Adam the names, and names descended from heaven.”⁴⁴
- (2) In erecting the edifice of the Arab nation, “Providence and the human will acted jointly and in perfect harmony; hence the aura of sanctity enveloping this national edifice.”⁴⁵

- (3) What the Arab forefathers had woven in the fabric of the Arab nation realized what is deeply engrained in the hearts of the Arab grandsons.
- (4) The Arab nation is genuinely primitive, totally different from all other historical nations. The people of other nations are veiled away from its designer, Allah, with a set of consensual symbols. Only sons of the Arab nation retain in their souls an image of this first designer.

Two things, therefore, distinguish the Arab nation: first, the divine origin; and second, the eternal structure, due to its eternal origins in the *mala' a'lā*.

2. The Conception of Nationalism

Under the title “Al-Ummah wa-al-Waṭanīyah wa-al-Qawmīyah (The Nation, Patriotism and Nationalism),” Zakī al-Arsūzī wrote in his book, *Mashākil-nā al-Qawmīyah wa-Mawqif al-Aḥzāb min-hā* (Our National Problems and the Attitudes of the Political Parties):

The terms “*ummah* (nation)” and “*umm* (mother)” go back to the same origin and source. In the Arab intuitive sense, they seem to be an extension to the family, based on a joint compassionate (*rahmānī*) structure. From the mother descend the children and, at the same time, she is the object of their hopes and aspirations. From the nation too descend the brethren (*ikhwān*) of society, with the nation functioning as the well and the source of their culture.⁴⁶

In all his books, al-Arsūzī emphasized the parallel links between the “mother” and the “nation.” Not only to stress the common origin of all sons of the Arab nation, as is often thought, but also to emphasize their kinship (*qurbā*) and the purity of their blood. When contemplated, the nation appeared to him as a “‘*aqīdah* (creed).” In the etymological sense of the term, i.e., the meaning suggested by the sensual image of the word, it is derived from “‘*aqd al-janīn* (bearing the embryo)” and “‘*aqd al-zahr* (bearing the flower).” “As the embryo is impregnated with the life to become a living creature gradually transformed to complete the terms of its growth in maturity and old age, so the nation is the beginning of the new life which reveals its meaning by explanatory tool, its language, and by customs, arts, religions and others, which were

founded on the meanings contained in the words.”⁴⁷

This is another aspect of al-Arsūzī’s conception of the nation. It leads to his definition of nationalism, offered in the same book, under the title “Al-Ittijāh al-Qawmī (The Nationalist Direction)”:

According to the linguistic derivation, the word *qawmīyah* (nationalism) means the state of those who are related by *qurbā* (kinship) to defend their common reality, heritage and ideals. Thus, if the nation means the principle of *qarābah* (kinship) based on blood and culture, nationalism indicates the strong sentiment of this kinship and the practice entailed.⁴⁸

Here we must add that al-Arsūzī saw “the Arab feeling of kinship and blood relations as instinctive,” hence his constant reiteration of term “the nationalist instinct.” He cited numerous anecdotes to exemplify this “natural instinct,” most of which are as naïve as the following:

There is nothing more indicative of the sheer depth of the national instinct than the following incident.

Whilst some foreign tourists were sightseeing and inspecting various archeological sites in Jablah, they came across a local idiot of whom they took some photographs. The people of the town thought there was something fishy about the photograph-taking, so one of them went over to the idiot and whispered in his ear: “Hey, you, do you have any idea why they took those pictures of you? They want to defame and slander your people by taking you as a typical specimen.” The idiot instantly shot after them, filled with the nationalist zeal. He took the camera away, threw it on the floor and smashed it under his feet. Such was his direct response to others hurting the pride of the nation.⁴⁹

Perhaps it would be best not to comment on such a national anecdote!

Anyway, al-Arsūzī saw that the Arab nationalist feeling is by no means the product of the historical condition but is rather ancient, “reaching its apex in the *jāhilīyah*.”⁵⁰ It is also widespread amongst all sons of the Arab nation. Even the idiot carries within him this Arab nationalist fervor and Arab nationalist instinct.

On various occasions, al-Arsūzī reiterated this sentiment. In *Risālatā al-Ummah wa-al-Usrah* (Theses on the Nation and the Family) of “Ba‘th al-Ummah al-‘Arabīyah wa-Risālat-hā ilā al-‘Ālam (Resurrection of the Arab Nation and its

Mission to the World),” al-Arsūzī wrote:

Memory takes me back to the year 1934, when the French mandate authorities sacked me from my teaching post. I took refuge in the village where my mother lived, and we used to chat together in rainy nights. I was puzzled to find that my meditations on basic national issues were in harmony with her own intuitions. My long studies were nothing but an attempt to clarify those common intuitions, buried deep inside our respective selves. My mother had expressed this same sentiment by saying: “Hallelujah! You haven’t changed much, son, since you were a child in my arms (...). You were just budding rose that grew to full bloom.”⁵¹

Al-Arsūzī mentioned the same memory in his book *Al-Ummah al-‘Arabīyah* (The Arab Nation).⁵² Under the title, “Al-Ummah fī al-Ḥads al-‘Arabī (The Nation in the Arab Intuition),” he added, comparing his meditations to his mother’s intuitions:

I therefore believe that the difference between one individual son of the Arab nation and another is the difference in the level of clarity regarding the essentials. What is a vague intuitive sense for the public turns into a clear insight for the leaders?⁵³

3. The Conception of Patriotism

In his conception of nationalism, Zakī al-Arsūzī stressed the fact that the national feeling among the sons of the Arab nation is primal and instinctive, embedded in the psyche of forefathers and grandsons alike. This is a unique characteristic of the Arab nation, setting it apart from other nations whose nationalist feeling sprang out of specific historical conditions. This common national feeling is based on:

- (1) The bond of brotherhood (*ukhūwah*), i.e. the common origin in the one womb (*raḥm*).
- (2) The cultural bond manifest in such national institutions as language, ethics, religion, anatomy, traditions, theology, habits, legislature and philosophy – that is, all structures and regulations the nation builds to express itself and its existence.

- (3) The bond of divine origin and the issuance of the Arab nation, via Adam, from the *mala' a'lā*, Allah, who made the Arab nation after his image.
- (4) The bond of intuition latent in every Arab self, from creation until now. These intuitions are as eternal as the Arab man. Even eternity is itself a bond amongst the sons of the Arab nation.

In defining patriotism (*waṭanīyah*) and drawing the borders of the homeland (*waṭan*), al-Arsūzī said:

As for the term *waṭan* (homeland), it means the land (*mawṭi'*) of the forefathers and the living sphere of the group. *Waṭanīyah* (Patriotism) on the other hand is a feeling, and a longing for the place where one's character was formed. No wonder there is a strong link between history and geography in education, the linking of successive generations with the nation's *élan vital*.⁵⁴

Al-Arsūzī, however, does not tell us about the borders of this homeland to which the individual attaches the feeling for the place where his character was formed. He draws no map for the living sphere of the nation, although it had linked various Arab generations throughout history. As far as I know, al-Arsūzī had referred only once to the criterion upon which the borders of the homeland are specified, namely the area "where language has spread." Switzerland was the one honorable exception.

In the absence of such specific borders, the map of "the national homeland, any homeland, remains open and is directly linked to the power the sons of the nation have to spread their language through cultural, or military force." The Arab homeland is simply where native speakers of Arabic reside. Does this mean that native speakers of English belong to one nation and, therefore, one homeland?

No sensible man would contemplate such a proposition. Still, to be fair to him, al-Arsūzī does not limit the homeland to the individual's nostalgic longing to the place where his character was formed. He also says that the environment determines the destiny of species and nations. He exemplified the influence of the environment on people by Japan and Britain, without telling us how. He does say, however, that nations differ in their attitudes towards the environment. Some nations take the environmental influence for granted; others resist this influence. The Aryan and Semitic myths of creation symbolize this difference:

The Aryans believe that man is chthonic, the son of earth, thus expressing their belief in the impact the environment has on their being different people. Arabs, on the other hand, believe that Adam, derived from “*idāmah*” and “*adīm*,” as we have seen, was made after the image of God and sprang out of his emanations. According to the myth, this necessarily means that we are the sons of heaven, and that spiritualism is the distinctive stamp and rhythmic pattern of our destiny.⁵⁵

Once again, a-Arsūzī talks about the Aryan and Semitic nations, comparing between the Semitic (*sāmī*) nations of heavenly (*min al-samā’*) origin and the Aryan nations of earthly origin. Other nations are totally absent from his mind. If it happened that he mentioned some details here or there, he did so incidentally and often incompletely. Intellectually, therefore, a-Arsūzī was preoccupied with dualities, especially the historical rivalry between the Aryan and Semitic nations!

In brief, according to a-Arsūzī, the nation, like the family, is found on the principle of sympathy amongst brothers (*ikhwān, ikhwah*). “In the same way that the motherly instinct precedes the meditative and contemplative thinking about the wisdom of life and existence, so does the individual’s feeling for his nation precede any other philosophical thinking in this respect.”⁵⁶ “Social consciousness is thus the source of all sublime values.”⁵⁷ Al-Arsūzī however concedes the fact that humanity is “deeply-rooted in people’s souls, primarily through the educational process, direct and indirect.”⁵⁸ He exemplifies this human principle of neighborhood and reconciliation by the birth of “the French and, before that, the Roman national entities.” He also concedes the fact that culture contributes to the development of human feeling and human character at one and the same time.

4. What is Arabism and Who are the Arabs?

As always, Zakī al-Arsūzī goes back to the dictionary to define his terms and their significations, totally ignoring history and concrete reality. Arabism, to him, becomes equivalent to “clarity and eloquent expression,” nothing more, nothing less. Under the title, “Mā al-‘Urūbah wa-Man Hum al-‘Arab (What is Arabism and who are the Arabs),” al-Arsūzī wrote:

The two words “*urūbah* (Arabism)” and “*arab* (Arabs)” are the infinitive from which the verb “*araba*” is derived. The former connotes explanation and expression,

whilst the latter connotes the person who expresses and explains. The two meanings appear in “*a‘raba*” *‘an-hu lisānu-hu* (his language expressed what he meant, he expressed himself well), “*al-‘arab*” *al-‘urabā*’ (the honest and well-spoken Arabs), and “*a‘rab-hum*” *ḥasban* (most original of Arabs lineage and ancestry). The word “*‘arab*” is an infinitive signifying plurality when personalized.⁵⁹

Accordingly, al-Arsūzī distinguished between three levels of Arab lineage, since the verb “*‘araba*” itself “expresses various instinctive stages, depending on the level of expressiveness.” These are: “*al-‘arab al-‘āribah*,” the native Arabs who are disposed to express themselves naturally and spontaneously in Arabic; “*al-‘arab al-musta‘ribah*,” the Arabized Arabs, who express themselves artificially in Arabic; and “*al-‘arab al-musta‘jimah*,” the Semitic peoples whose means of expression deviated from the “healthy,” classical Arabic (*fuṣḥā*).⁶⁰

To understand “Arabism” in al-Arsūzī sense of the term, we would better elucidate its diametrically opposite conception of “*‘ajam* (foreigners, barbarians)”:

The term “*‘ajam*” is derived from the *‘ujmah*, meaning bestiality, considering the obscurity and inscrutability Arabs noted in the language of the non-Arabs. “*‘Ajam*,” in fact, denotes “*‘ajj* (clamor),” and “*‘ajāj* (dust)” kicked up by cattle passing.⁶¹

In this sense, to al-Arsūzī, the “*‘ajam*” are the non-Semitic peoples, principally the Aryans, since he does not talk about other peoples except in general terms. The Semitic peoples, on the other hand, are originally Arabs who, later, deviated from the Arab tongue for reasons mentioned above. They are sublime, like the Arabs, being sons of heaven, whereas other peoples are sons of earth:

When we use the word “*sāmī* (Semitic),” in the etymological sense of the term, we mean *sumūw* (sublimity). It correlates with the myth that we are the sons of *samā*’ (heaven), and heaven here means conscience and compassion. Sublimation and descent can only mean the level or the ratio of getting close to, or shrinking away from, the source of life. With the former sense go growth and blooming, and with the latter stagnation, drought and aridity.⁶²

In the light of his conception of “Pan-Arabism,” al-Arsūzī reclassified nations as follows:

[Primal nations] found their national entities on the principle of compassion and sympathy. Their level of development stops short at the point of forming primeval social groupings, as they are claustrophobically self-enclosed, limiting their realm of compassionate sympathy to the level of instinct. (...) [Nations] found on the principle of justice (...), and [nations] found on the principle of the eternal mission (...), where now and then a messenger arises to clear all the accidental, formalistic obscurities surrounding the conception of justice. It also organizes the relationships among nations in the light of the level of humanity renewed by the message of the new prophet.⁶³

Life still has aims in so far as the compassion, justice and the mission carried are concerned. Yet, “only through freedom does man become god-like,”⁶⁴ and the Arab in the *jāhilīyah* was the free man par excellence.

In “Al-Ummah al-‘Arabīyah wa-al-Insānīyah (The Arab Nation and Humanity),” an article published in *Al-Jundī* (The Soldier), No. 733, January 18, 1961, al-Arsūzī goes on to specify the meanings of “‘*arab*” and “‘*ajam*”:

The term “‘*arab*” is derived from “‘*arr al-ḡaby* (the deer expressing itself vocally).” The added “*b*” sound specifies the meaning of disclosure and expression, considering its place of articulation. Thus, the Arabs formulated their name from the distinctive characteristic of man – speech. In this, they agreed with Aristotle in defining man as a talking animal.⁶⁵

In the same article, al-Arsūzī explained the meaning of “‘*ajam*” as stated above, reiterating his view that the Arabs are the original, primal nation, whereas others are historical, derivative nations.⁶⁶

It is odd indeed that al-Arsūzī saw the relationship between nations as one of brotherhood, being descendants from the same origin, Adam, whilst at the same time he added:

The Arabs are the standard bearers in the family of nations, carrying the distinctive stamp of their fathers. They act as the first-born son, feeling responsible for his brothers (*ikhwah*) and for the whole family. What supports this intuitive sense the Arabs have of their reality and of their cultural position in the family of Adam’s sons is their primeval institutions and their antiquity.⁶⁷

The first born son, to al-Arsūzī, is “the nearest to the original well, the human perfection incarnate, and the sublime idea incorporate time after time in the eternal mission (*risālah khālidah*), stretching from Adam to Muḥammad, Allah’s first creature and last prophet.”⁶⁸

Any scholar would be at a loss with such nationalist views, because al-Arsūzī did not refer to any historical or cultural source in all he said. He offered only quotations from the Koran, from *jāhilīyah* poetry, or from Arab tales told in the books of antiquity. Worse still, he cited those quotations as absolute facts, always taken for granted. The only meaning they have is the one al-Arsūzī himself uses to support his theory which, to him, needs no proof or validation outside the Arab tongue as he understood it. Quite often, this runs contrary to the simplest rules of logic and contrary even to the simplest rules of the Arabic language.

5. The Arab *Jāhilīyah*: The Natural Age

Under the title, “Al-‘Ahd al-Jāhilī Huwa ‘Ahd-nā al-Dhahabī (The Era of *Jāhilīyah* is our Golden Age),” Zakī al-Arsūzī wrote in the introduction to his “Ba‘th al-Ummah al-‘Arabīyah wa-Risālat-hā ilā al-‘Ālam”:

The Arab *jāhilīyah* is the natural age (*‘ahd al-fiṭrah*), the age in which the Arab national entity spontaneously came into being. Our national institutions consequently were born perfect (...). In this natural age, moreover, our forefathers inspired their great works from whatever sublime ideals were innate in them, which made them undertake such works irrespective of their results.⁶⁹

There was thus a clear correlation between inclination and hope, a complete accord between intention and initiative. The self reached out to its inner potentials, with obligations issuing spontaneously out of it.” The Arabs in the *jāhilīyah* used to look at life from an exclusively aesthetic perspective, with their motive for action the sheer beauty of it and nothing else. The Arab, therefore, was always transcending the image to reach the divine meaning in heaven. He was gallant, generous, faithful and always characterized by his *jāhilīyah* chivalry and magnanimity. His Arab esprit de corps, in the widest sense possible, revealed itself in “the originality of his fanaticism for the family and the tribe. Our forefathers resorted to such fanaticism lest anyone of their sons would break away with the Arab national heritage.”⁷⁰ In brief, al-Arsūzī

adds, “in the *jāhilīyah* our forefathers met the twin preconditions of poetry and heroism.”⁷¹

How then did al-Arsūzī understand the term “*jāhilīyah*” in the light of his theory of the Arab tongue and of Arab nationalism?

The word “*jāhilīyah*” is derived from “*jahl*” and “*jihālah*.” The former is closer to the state opposed to knowledge, and the latter is much akin to the state of innocence, spontaneity, rashness and taking initiatives. Al-Arsūzī juxtaposes the meaning of “*jāhilīyah*” to “tolerance” and “forbearance” as well as “ignorance,” leaving the intuitive sense embedded to fluctuate between the two, as in the following line of poetry he often quoted: “If, I grant it, I do sometimes need tolerance and forbearance / I’m more often in need of rashness and ignorance.”⁷²

The Arab mind, al-Arsūzī tells us, has itself constantly fluctuated between the two poles – what is opposed to knowledge and what is opposed to tolerance and forbearance. This is directly related to deliberation: The spontaneous response could seem rash and lacking forethought and reflection. The “*jāhil* (ignorant)” then acts “with a kind of courage, irrespective of the results.”⁷³ It is in this sense that the *jāhilīyah* was as different from Islam as the world is from the sublime ideals. The *jāhilīyah* was the period of youth, whilst Islam was the period of stability and maturity. “Still,” to al-Arsūzī, “there was no schizophrenic split between the two: the *jāhilīyah* and the Islamic eras were two stages in the life of one nation.”⁷⁴

In “Dardashah ma‘a al-Ustādh Zakī al-Arsūzī (A Chat with the Teacher, Zakī Al-Arsūzī),” an interview with the well-known Syrian writer Kūlīt Khūrī (*Al-Muḍhik al-Mubkī*, No. 1152, 1966), the following conversation takes place:

– Our Teacher, we’ll have a little chat for the literary page

(The Teacher, al-Arsūzī, smiles)

– How interesting! A chat about literature? ... Mind you, I don’t really like modern literature Far too weak.

(Straight to the point)

– What don’t you like about modern literature?

– Its lack of depth. Its lack of freedom

(I asked)

– This lack of freedom you mentioned, is it due to outside influence or to reasons innate in the psyche of modern writers?

(Before I managed to finish my question, the Teacher al-Arsūzī answered)

– Both! Outside influences coalesce to create a kind of numbness inside On the other hand, contemporary writers do not have the originality which makes them, despite the ulterior influences, act freely ..., act with a freedom emanating from within

– And what do you think the reason for that is?

(The Teacher went on, oblivious to my question)

– For man to be free ... he has to rebel, despite everything. He must be original (...).

– In Arabic literature ... only the *jāhilīyah* expressed a genuine experience *Jāhilīyah* literature was original in dealing with the environment and in reflecting society (...).

– Life was spontaneous, open-ended People weren't shackled. They charged and loaded the idea with many, many feelings and images They transmitted the idea live to the souls of others

– And who do you like of the *jāhilīyah* poets?

– 'Umru' al-Qays in particular ..., but I like all *jāhilīyah* poetry in general (...).

– In Islam creativity dwindled ... because Islam called for balance and moderation ..., and there can be no real creativity with moderation.... That is why poetry, for instance, turned to sagacity and wisecracking. Al-Mutanabbī's poetry was beautiful but full of this sagacity.

– So you prefer 'Umru' al-Qays to al-Mutanabbī?

– Yes. 'Umru' al-Qays idolized beauty and reached out for it, whereas al-Mutanabbī was indignant, resentful of ugliness and always rebelling against it⁷⁵

I cited this long quotation on purpose, for it clearly shows that al-Arsūzī considered the *jāhilīyah* the supreme and sublime era, combining all virtues and ideals. It is the age of innocence and spontaneity, the age of heroism, freedom and quintessential creativity. The *jāhilīyah* age, to al-Arsūzī, is based on a youthful view of life – “just life for life's sake.”⁷⁶

I would like to conclude al-Arsūzī's view of the *jāhilīyah* era by a quotation from his “Bayna al-Jāhilīyah wa-al-Islām (Between the *Jāhilīyah* and Islam)”:

The spring evokes feelings of splendor as it issues from under the rocks. It gives the self a feeling of joy and pleasure as its zigzagging stream is crowned with greenery and flowers.

So is life. Its splendor is revealed in youth, when man shoots up to reach the sublime ideals. Its beauty is when life opens up to its full potential, to the ripe age of

maturity. (...) So, if the *jāhilīyah* was the age of youth in the life of our nation, then Islam was the age of stability, the age of maturity.⁷⁷

6. The *Ba'th* of the Arab Nation

In Arabic, “*ba'atha-hu min nawmi-hi*” is “*ayqaḥa-hu* (awakened him from his sleep),” and “*ba'atha al-mayyit*” is “*aqāma-hu* (resurrected the dead),” hence “*yawm al-kiyāmah* (Doomsday, the Day of Judgment),” when Allah, in Islam, resurrects all people.

The *ba'th*, therefore, is resurrecting what has already been there in the past and what has then died in the recent or far past. All fundamentalists call for the resurrection (*iḥyā'*) of the past and for bringing it to life again. Both religious and nationalist fundamentalists see in it the ideal of perfection, especially the era of the prophet Muḥammad and his orthodox Caliphs, the golden age of Arab history. Forthcoming generations of Arab grandsons, no matter how great, will never be able to reach it, or come anywhere near its level of perfection and greatness. The best later Arabs and Muslims can do is simply to imitate the prominent figures of that age.

To Zakī al-Arsūzī, the *jāhilīyah*, the pre-Islamic era, was the golden age of the whole length of Arab history. Its values were the original, genuine values firmly rooted in the souls of the Arab forefathers and in the souls of every Arab in every historical stage. The fact that it was fully realized only in that age, and in the early Islamic era, the age of stability and maturity, does not eclipse its beauty and grandeur. No wonder “the purpose behind establishing the *Ba'th* Party,” al-Arsūzī tells us, “was to achieve two things: the first was to revive the life of the Arabs; and the second was to gather them together in one Arab state.”⁷⁸

Renewing the life of the Arabs means, above all else, the return to the Arabic language and consciously to resurrect (*ba'th*) it. Only then could they achieve what their forefathers had attained. For, “our language, which is the most articulate manifestation of the genius of our [Arab] nation, is the reservoir of our cultural heritage, and we have no alternative but to consciously go back and live it so as to achieve the same dignity and supremacy our forefathers had attained in the past.”⁷⁹

Al-Arsūzī reiterated, over and over again that “the Arab tongue incorporates the national Arab institutions and remolds them by means of the original intellectual drives its words carry and point to.”⁸⁰ The whole edifice of the Arab culture had been erected on “the meanings embedded in words, because meanings themselves are

deeply rooted in life and are totally independent of the intellectual idle talk of diligent scholars.”⁸¹ The *ba‘th*, to Al-Arsūzī, meant “the return to the original spring, to the intuition embedded in words like justice, order, poetry and beauty.” The first step is to resurrect the Arab language, thereby resurrecting the genuine Arab culture in the souls of the Arab sons of the nation. Arab culture would then come back to life, palpitating with the light of conscience, elevating man, through this resurrection to the *mala’ a‘lā*.⁸²

Once again, al-Arsūzī states that the first and basic objective of the national *ba‘th* lies in “emphasizing the Arab nation’s independent destiny from any authority imposed on it.”⁸³ He means the freedom of the Arab nation from all kinds of foreign domination, foremost among which is Western domination. This objective is in line with reviving the Arab tongue and by no means contradicts it. For the Arab nation must be free from outside domination, and when the Arab language is revived in the souls of its sons, then it cooperates with Providence in determining its own destiny. By Providence, al-Arsūzī meant the divine will, no less, which is also what he meant by his famous dictum “The Arab is the master of destiny.” Al-Arsūzī adds:

Accordingly, what we seek to achieve from this mission is, first, to discover the miracle of our nation as a historical truth. Second, we seek to forge an Arab philosophy bringing to consciousness what life has instinctively woven, so that it would share with Providence the determination of our destiny. Only this time we enter such a joint venture as free partners.⁸⁴

In this process of the *ba‘th*, al-Arsūzī distinguishes between morals and traditions. Morals are original, innate in human nature; whilst traditions are incidental and subject to the laws of time and history. We must disregard manifestations of the past ages which block our acclimatization to the new environment, like the traditional trappings of the age of Hārūn al-Rashīd for instance. As al-Arsūzī put it:

When we adopted the term “*ba‘th*” as the motto for our party movement, we meant the *ba‘th* of those features which distinguish the Arab nation as a creative genius, capable of forging various aspects of our lives and acclimatizing them to the nature of the historical phase we inhabit. We proclaimed the eternity of the Arab nation, along with its everlasting historic mission, in order to keep intact the constituent elements of our nation. At the same time, we sought to retain the flexibility of the Arab nation and its ability to

adapt itself to the needs of the present historical era.⁸⁵

The distinctive features of the Arab nation are to be found in the youthful *jāhilīyah*, and in the age of stability and maturity – the early Islamic era fostered by “the Arab national hero, Muḥammad,”⁸⁶ who carried the message of Islam. This *ba‘th*, however, is by no means confined to the surface of life, as is the case with other nations “whose innate powers were unleashed under the influence of scientific and industrial progress.” The *ba‘th* of the Arab nation is an activity heading within towards the core, towards the extra-circumferential essence. If we could achieve such a rebirth, we would be able to create a whole new human culture “evolved on the broad base of our life in nature.” “It would be able to curb the encroachments of modern culture in its understanding of man, just as modern science had curbed our own accesses in understanding nature.”⁸⁷

The complete *ba‘th* of the Arab nation is conditional to the achievement of the three objectives he summarized as follows:

The first task of the *ba‘th* is thus to revive the genuine Arab cultural heritage, which is the distinctive feature our nation’s genius and the basic constituent of its historical character. The second is to free our Arab environment from those traditions and conservative views that prevent us from catching up with the modern civilizational caravan moving ahead of us. The third is to create a sense of harmony with modern civilization. And, as modern civilization is based on science and industry, it is the duty of everyone to devote himself unreservedly to science and industry.⁸⁸

We have to bear in mind, of course, that the Arab, according to al-Arsūzī, is not subject to the laws of natural necessity. Allah had created him after his image, and he is the center of the whole universe. His value is absolute, because he receives it directly from the *mala’ a‘lā*; hence the Arab’s eternal longing to return to his element, to his divine origin. Also, because Providence has acted jointly with the human will in the historical evolution of the Arab nation, the Arab is the master of destiny. The Arab prophet, the Arab national hero and the Arab leader, have the power to simply stop or change fate!

To further explain this image, we have to remember that al-Arsūzī saw all people as issuing from the *mala’ a‘lā*. All are the sons of Adam, and Adam was made of earth and of Allah’s holy spirit. Allah made him after his image and blew in him his

own holy ghost. Differences among people, however, are due to the variations in their longing to evolve to the *mala' a'lā*. The Arab, the first-born son, is, as we have seen, the closest to his Creator throughout time and history. The *ba'th* of the Arab nation can be achieved by reviving this longing to evolve to the *mala' a'lā*, primarily through the Arab language. In turn, the original morals and genuine values which characterized the Arab forefathers in the *jāhilīyah* can be revived in the Arab grandsons, provided they are up to the task of raising themselves to the level of the Arab language itself.

To al-Arsūzī, only the prophet and the hero can sublimate themselves to the original spring from which all miracles emanated or issued. The *ba'th* of the Arab nation, therefore, presupposes the existence of this prophet or heroic *za'im*. However, since Muḥammad, the Arab national hero, was the last prophet, the leadership of the Arab nation is exclusively confined to the realm of this heroic *za'im*. The question that raises itself here is simply who is this heroic *za'im*, and how did al-Arsūzī envision him to be? Al-Arsūzī wrote:

As with any other idea, we think that the success of the nationalist idea is subject to the firm belief in it, and to the ability to carry that belief through to others. This creed is rooted in the *mala' a'lā*, but its manifestations are states of agitation or arousal in nature, in our world The living image of the *za'im* is that of the ram who, at the sight of the approaching wolf, alerts the whole flock to the immanent danger. He creates a state of agitation and disturbance passed over and transmitted to others, through either emulation or infection. Similarly, the *za'im* transmits to others the feeling of splendor he himself had experienced at the perception of the nationalist miracle, the ideal manifestation of the national creed. The proverb “grapes ripen by infection” indicates this intuition embedded and the mutual relationship between the public and the *za'im*. If the forerunner foretells of the arrival of the procession, his announcement of the good tidings also becomes a spiritual source.⁸⁹

Al-Arsūzī never tired of returning to this charismatic “*za'im*” who plays a pivotal role in the great historical cycle or “dome.” The lights of meaning first dawn on him and he, in turn, passes them on to others, alerting them through emulation or infection. The *za'im* amongst the public is, to al-Arsūzī, like the mother amongst her children. Even in the depth of her sleep, the mother hears the cries of her children,⁹⁰ and so the *za'im* responds with his whole being to the needs of his public,

sympathizing with them and turning into the harbinger of “their good news.”⁹¹

In his first book *Al-‘Abqarīyah al-‘Arabīyah fī Lisān-hā* to which we have frequently referred, al-Arsūzī wrote:

If this potential was completely accessible to the prophet, the hero too has the will and the power to stop the unfolding progression of fate. He can awaken all these values in his soul, enlightened by its reaching out to such revelations.⁹²

In fact, al-Arsūzī always linked the image of the prophet to that of the heroic *za‘īm*. If prophecy, to him, is the originality of knowledge, then heroism is the originality of action. That is why al-Arsūzī “wonders how could we ever distinguish, in the character of Muḥammad, between the Arab hero and the prophet of Islam?” He saw that heroes embody the sublime values and ideals of the nation, hence heroism is the ultimate end all creatures seek and aspire to.

In the history of the Arab nation, al-Arsūzī tells us, each great historical cycle had had its prophet or hero – the charismatic *za‘īm* who incorporates in himself all the necessary characteristics of heroism and leadership in a specific historical phase. This leader is:

- (1) He whose inner longing to the *mala’ a‘lā* has been awakened since childhood. He should also have risen up to the level of the Arab tongue. His intuitive meanings should have dawned on his soul early on in life, for these are the solution to intractable problems and the liberation of humanity at large.
- (2) Al-Arsūzī himself sympathized with the public and passed down to people whatever the *mala’ a‘lā* has enlightened within him. He had been through a practical experience in the Alexandretta Province, and his ideas had been transmitted to the Arabs of the Province (though by emanation or infection we cannot tell!). He distinguished between the original values and the worn out traditions and conventions, and he continued preaching and struggling to realize the *ba‘th* of the Arab nation through heroism, the ultimate end of life.

In his booklet, *Ṣawt al-‘Urūbah fī Liwā’ al-Iskandarūnah*, al-Arsūzī offered an autobiographical picture of himself, carrying all the distinctive features of the *za‘īm*

he so often envisioned in his writings and conversations. When the Antakia's commissioner (*qā'imaqām*) sent him a letter asking him to leave the Province and save his life, al-Arsūzī gathered his students and friends and told them about it. Being so "noble and idealistic," he gave them all the money he had and asked them to leave to Syria "to preach the idea of Arabism" and struggle to realize the Arab nationalist aspirations. However, he notes:

I will stay put. I shall share with others the destiny awaiting them, withstanding whatever suffering and torture allotted to them. For, deserting the battlefield and hiding away would be giving people the impression that I have let them down, throwing them in between the jaws of the hyena and running away. That would be harmful both to Arabism and to morality.⁹³

He thus stayed on to help ease the suffering of people and make them remain steadfast to their sense of duty and principles. After his imprisonment, he renewed his "vow" as a child to dedicate his life to the cause of Arabism. He then immigrated to Syria and, as he put it:

Since then I never had the chance to get in direct contact with the public and realize my hope. I am like a ghost, I used to say to myself, a soul roaming about with no body. Even my acquaintances in Syria dispersed and left me alone one after the other, like rocks losing strength and rolling down to the bottom of the valley. Falling rocks, mind you, highlight the sheer splendor of the mountain.⁹⁴

Until 1961, when his *Ṣawt al-'Urūbah fī Liwā' al-Iskandarūnah* was published, the practical end to al-Arsūzī's experiment, as he himself confessed, was utter failure. Following the revolution and the accession to power of the Ba'ṯh Party on March 8, 1963, his hopes were revived. He voiced his optimism, which never faltered in the numerous articles he contributed regularly to the local press, particularly to *Al-Jundī*, issued by the Directorate of Morale Raising and National Guidance in the Syrian Armed Forces (*idārat al-tawjīh al-ma'nawī lil-jaysh wa-al-qūwāt al-musallahah*). He lectured frequently to soldiers and officers in their regiments, hoping that this army would do such a monumental act of heroism that would achieve the *ba'ṯh* of the Arab nation and unite the Arabs together in one state.

It seems, however, that our national problems proved too intractable for

al-Arsūzī's idealist philosophy. From the various articles he wrote and speeches he gave, these problems can briefly be summarized as follows:

- (1) Colonialism and division. The response al-Arsūzī prescribed to both was what the Ba'th Constitution has clearly stated: "the Arabs are one nation (...) and Arab country is (...) one indivisible homeland."⁹⁵
- (2) Conservatism, which feeds on the decrepit past. The response al-Arsūzī offered was launching forth into the world of the future. Freedom of all the citizens was an integral part of this answer, because freedom is "the key to all our problems," as al-Arsūzī himself put it.
- (3) Backwardness and the lack of social justice in the distribution of the national wealth. The answer to these was al-Arsūzī's brand of socialism, Communism being written off as a no starter because it calls for the abolition of private property.

Al-Arsūzī stressed the need for two things. The first was the founding of an educational system, which morally uplifts the people and steadily raises their consciousness. This would prepare Arab individuals to comprehend the Arab tongue and revive in them the longing to evolve to the *mala' a'lā*. The second was the need for Arabs to absorb the Aryan science and industry of the West. If both could be achieved under the leadership of a national hero, who is the pillar of our present "dome" or great historical cycle, then the national Arab *ba'th* would be accomplished and would fulfill the tasks al-Arsūzī had assigned to it. Al-Arsūzī himself had "made the miracle," uniting people round the love of Arabism,⁹⁶ but, alas, only in the Alexandretta Province!

Conclusion

"To forge a nation or to create images,
To be a prophet or an artist,
That is the question that determines the line and direction of my dreams."⁹⁷

Two options were open to Zakī al-Arsūzī: to be a creative writer of literature, or a prophet/*za'īm* laboring to resurrect (*ba'th*) his Arab nation. He opted for the latter, heroic role because, to him, heroism is the ultimate end of life. He even gave up his own, and his family, possessions to live an ascetic life of an impoverished vagabond, frequently imprisoned, for the sole sake of his philosophy of Arab nationalism.

Al-Arsūzī thought long and hard about the Arabic language and Arabic diction after his immigration to Syria. The lucky “*ṣudfah*” (a common mistake in Arabic. He should have used the term “*muṣādafah*,” but it seems the “mongrelization” and “adulteration” of the Arabic tongue has reached al-Arsūzī’s own pen!) was his discovery that language was the origin of things, not the other way round. Arabic was the original and primitive language and the Arabs are the original and primitive nation. Because Arabic is eternal, moreover, considering it originated in the *mala’ a’lā*, it follows that the Arab nation too is eternal and everlasting. Only the Arab tongue has divine roots, whereas other languages are conventional, evolving either through deviation from Arabic (Semitic languages) or in response to specific historical conditions (Aryan languages). He paid no attention whatsoever to the languages of the other nations, whether Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Malay, Indonesian, African, American or Australian. The Arab language is primitive and primal because it is etymological. Its diction is derived from the audio-visual images borrowed directly from outside nature, from man’s inner, psychological human feelings and/or from the biological movements of speech organs. The Arab nation, like the Arab tongue, is thus “the inspiration, the meaning, the genius and the miracle” of humanity. It goes back to Adam himself, created after the image of Allah, and it has remained alive throughout time and history. It has gone through various great historical cycles or “domes,” the axle of each is a prophet or *za'īm* who epitomizes Arab heroism, who fully comprehends the meaning revealed, and who spreads the mission of that “dome” to other nations so as to absolve them of their sins.

The Arab nation has reached its “golden age” in the *jāhilīyah* era, when heroism and beauty were ends in themselves. The Arab in the *jāhilīyah* sought the heroic act for its own sake and its own beauty, irrespective of results. He represented Arab spontaneity and the healthy Arab nationalist instinct in its youthful phase, gushing out in defiance of whatever is rationalistic and scientific. Islam subsequently followed as the age of maturity. It spread all over the world the message of Muḥammad, the national Arab hero, the most Arab of Arabs, the first of Allah’s creations and his last prophet.

Islam itself, however, was one reason for Arab divisions. It opened up so many

viable interpretations of the Islamic Koranic texts, followed by the inclusion in the Islamic body of non-Arab peoples who refused to concede the Arab privileged position. To al-Arsūzī, this “*shu‘ūbīyah* (fanaticism of non-Arab Islamic nations)” was not only a “mongrelization” of the Arab tongue but also of Arab morals and Arab blood, clashing with the true spirit of Arabism. This is the reason behind al-Arsūzī’s severe, often harsh, attacks against all non-Arab philosophers and theologians. The fundamental bonds uniting the Arabs are, first, blood ties and, second, cultural ties. He who does not have both is no Arab, because the Arab nation is an extended family living in one, big family house – the Arab homeland.

The Arab nation maybe backward at present, but at least it has survived. As such, it will surprise historians and the whole world by its self-revival. And, to al-Arsūzī, the secret behind the forthcoming self-renewal is the new mission it carries to solve all the henceforth insoluble problems of the human mind.

So, what went wrong, one may ask? Why didn’t al-Arsūzī find enough readers after his immigration to Syria? How come that even those few students he still had eventually left him (although his impact on them persisted, one way or another, especially the group headed by his disciple Wahīb Al-Ghānim which founded the Ba‘th Party in 1947!)?

How can any sensible man ever believe that all nationalist theories have evolved in response to the historical conditions of their respective nations with the honorable exception of al-Arsūzī’s nationalist theory? How could one ever believe that the Arab tongue and the Arab nation are divine, whilst all others are earthly? How can we accuse those who cherish and sanctify the past of being conservatives whilst we advocate the resurrection of this same past with all its values? How can we call for the revival of our *jāhilīyah* forefathers because whatever they instinctively had somehow still lives on in us? How can we resurrect in the twentieth century the instinctive freedom the *jāhilīyah* Arab had had in the desert? Where on earth is this claimed blood relationship and racial purity of the Arab blood? Where is this “one, first mother,” and that affable, romantic, charismatic *za‘īm* who will infect us, sheep-like, with “the meaning” awakened within him? Where would we ever find him?

So many rhetorical questions forcing us to concede two points: the first is that science and scientific thinking have turned their backs once and for all on the natural theory of language and on its derivatives; the second is that science and scientific thinking have wholly disregarded theories of blood and racial purity, simply because they contradict history, reality, commonsense and truth. Now, by conceding these two

points, we are obliged to reject al-Arsūzī's theory and the bulk of his philosophy.

A small margin however must be left to al-Arsūzī's etymological view of the Arabic language, because it is highly etymological indeed.

Beyond the broad parameters of this confusing and embarrassing resume of al-Arsūzī's theory, I must state that he was a great artist. This is manifest in the aesthetic content and in the exalted language of a number of his texts. Furthermore, because he was an artist, he was a dreamer par excellence, and because he was that much of a dreamer, his eternal optimism was shocking, though admirable.

Also beyond the scope of this study, I must add that he was a die hard liberal. One can only bow in respect to his constant celebration of freedom and brotherhood of nations, whilst severely attacking all kinds of dictatorship, backwardness and oppression. Contradiction? Well, that is al-Arsūzī in a nutshell. He borrowed from, and was highly influenced by, different contradictory sources. Then, suddenly, well into his forties, his intuition gushed out in one go, with only his inner belief as his philosophical proof and evidence. If this kind of idealist philosophizing is legitimate, then, in my estimate, al-Arsūzī was the quintessential Arab idealist philosopher. In fact, more than anything else, I wanted to approach this aspect of al-Arsūzī's writings and character, but I was asked to deal only with his theory of language and of Arab nationalism.

Under the title, "Al-Falsafah 'inda-nā wa-Ghayr-nā min al-Umam (Philosophy with us and with other Nations)," al-Arsūzī maintained that "the premises of Arab philosophy are sympathetic compassion, its methodology artistic, and its ultimate end is the self. It is a view derived from life."⁹⁸ The problem is not only to find common grounds between philosophy and this artistic method. It is also how to define the meaning of these "compassionate" premises extending from the "womb" to the "brotherhood" amongst nations and peoples. Nor can we agree on a common definition of the "self" with such a thinker whose naïveté embarrassed even his best disciple and friend, though his genius still puzzled him and us.

Before I conclude this humble study, I must recommend an exclusively aesthetic approach to al-Arsūzī's œuvre. It is a thoroughly pleasurable experience, revealing his resourceful and creative imagination. Only then would the reader come to appreciate the flow of images that color his lucid style, that literary touch of genius which elevates many of his texts to high-quality prose. We must also appreciate the sheer intellectual courage he always had in aspiring to find a final solution to all problematic human issues.

If Arab life has come to turn its back to al-Arsūzī and to simply ignore him, and if al-Arsūzī's theories flagrantly contradicted scientific and logical thinking, he himself, I must reiterate, was the ideal of honesty, asceticism and righteousness. In his personal behavior and in his absolute faith in his own ideas, he was the epitome of the great statesman and thinker who was high above the trivia and narrow-mindedness of his age. He simply dreamt, and went so deep in his dream that it came to haunt and overpower him in the end. His dream, one might say, eventually let him down, as did his friends, disciples and his own life.

Notes

1. As mentioned in the brief, uninitialed “Preface” to Zakī al-Arsūzī’s *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1 (Damascus: Al-Idārah al-Siyāsīyah lil-Jaysh wa-al-Qūwāt al-Musallaḡah, 1972), p. 6. In the “Introduction” to al-Arsūzī’s *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3 (Damascus: Al-Idārah al-Siyāsīyah lil-Jaysh wa-al-Qūwāt al-Musallaḡah, 1974), p. 5, it is also claimed that *Matā Yakūn al-Ḥukm Dīmuqrāḡīyan* was “published by the author in Damascus, November 29, 1969,” and that “it was distributed by al-Arsūzī’s students and admirers, as was the case with his other books.” It seems that the unknown editor had made two mistakes – the date of publication, because al-Arsūzī died in 1968, and the publishers. I have a copy of the first edition of the book, signed by al-Arsūzī himself and dedicated to Aḡmad al-Amīr, dated March 10, 1962.

2. The *bāḡinīyah* is a school of thought in Islam, characterized by divining a hidden, secret meaning in the revealed texts.

3. Zakī al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6 (Damascus: Al-Idārah al-Siyāsīyah lil-Jaysh wa-al-Qūwāt al-Musallaḡah, 1976), p. 487.

4. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 6.

5. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, pp. 487-489.

6. Kāzim al-Dāghistānī, “Rajul Yamḡī wa-Risālatu-hu Tabqā: Dhikrayāt,” *Al-Mawqif al-Adabī* (Damascus), Vol. 2, Nos. 3-4, Jul.-Aug. 1972, pp. 75-76.

7. Sulaymān al-‘Īsā, “Al-Bidāyāt,” *Al-Ma’rifah* (Damascus), No. 113, Jul. 1971, p. 29.

8. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, pp. 490-491.

9. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 8.

10. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, p. 491.

11. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 11.

12. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 45.

13. Al-Arsūzī always repeated his ideas, and subsequent examples in Arabic are quoted from his books and need not be documented, as they are well known.

14. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 46. “Ṣudḡah” is a common mistake in Arabic. Al-Arsūzī should have used the term “*muṣādāḡah* (chance).”

15. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 46.

16. Modern and old Arab linguists commonly agree that the root of the Arab verb is composed of three, not two, letters.

17. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu’allaḡāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 51.

18. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, pp. 75-76.
19. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 76.
20. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 219.
21. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, pp. 131-132.
22. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 217.
23. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 85.
24. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 86.
25. Arab linguists, from al-Khalīl bn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī until now, commonly agree that the diacritical marks in Arabic are the softening of vowels, rather than their amplification of them as al-Arsüzī claims.
26. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, pp. 86-88.
27. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 78.
28. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 80.
29. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 81.
30. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, pp. 81-82.
31. Anṭūn Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," *Al-Mawqif al-Adabī*, Vol. 2, Nos. 3-4, Jul.-Aug. 1972, p. 18.
32. Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," p. 16.
33. Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," p. 17.
34. Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," p. 21.
35. Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," p. 26.
36. Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," p. 27.
37. Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," p. 27.
38. Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," p. 29.
39. Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," p. 30.
40. Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," p. 47.
41. Maqdisī, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Lisān," p. 49.
42. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, pp. 221-222.
43. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 222.
44. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 222.
45. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 222.
46. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 250.
47. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, pp. 250-251.
48. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 107.
49. Al-Arsüzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 109.

50. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 110.
51. Zakī al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2 (Damascus, al-Idārah al-Siyāsīyah lil-Jaysh wa-al-Qūwāt al-Musallahah, 1973), pp. 232-233.
52. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 236.
53. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 236.
54. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 251.
55. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 252.
56. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 341.
57. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 325.
58. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 325.
59. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 265.
60. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 266.
61. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, p. 129.
62. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 266.
63. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, pp. 266-267.
64. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 267.
65. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, p. 129.
66. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, p. 129.
67. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, p. 132.
68. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 375.
69. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 81. I have already explained al-Arsūzī's understanding of the nation's institution.
70. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 84.
71. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 85.
72. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, pp. 96-97.
73. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 98.
74. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 102.
75. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, pp. 509-512.
76. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 98.
77. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 417.
78. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, p. 25.
79. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 297.
80. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 147.
81. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, pp. 297-298.
82. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 147.

83. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 296.
84. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 266.
85. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, p. 26.
86. See al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 117.
87. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 275.
88. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 6, p. 26.
89. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 360.
90. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 361.
91. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 361.
92. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 181.
93. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 361.
94. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 362.
95. *Dustūr Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī* (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-I'tidāl, 1947), p. 3.
96. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 3, p. 288.
97. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 1, p. 204.
98. Al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, Vol. 2, p. 155.

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