

## ***Al Thaqafa* Periodical 1939 – 1971: The Rise and Fall of the Egyptian Nahda from a Historical and Cultural Perspective**

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### **Introduction**

The mid-20th century in Egypt marked a period of intense intellectual and cultural revival, often referred to as the Nahda, or Renaissance. Central to this movement was the periodical *Al Thaqafa* (1939-1971), a platform that fostered a unique blend of tradition and modernity. This paper explores the rise and fall of this Egyptian Nahda through a representative sample of *Al Thaqafa* periodical examining its origins, contributions, and eventual decline. The sample consists of the issues of a single volume of *Al Thaqafa* (July – December 1945) as representative of the peak of the periodical life in troubled times both nationally and internationally. A new world was in the making after the end of World War II and Egypt was teeming with conflicting ideologies then. It investigates how the periodical embodied the hopes and aspirations of a generation of intellectuals seeking to reconcile their cultural heritage with the challenges and opportunities of the modern world. It also sheds light on factors, both local and foreign, that snuffed out its role.

### **The Genesis of an Intellectual Renaissance**

A group of Egyptian intellectuals, led by Ahmed Amin (1894-1954), Egyptian historian, university professor and writer, sought in 1913 to lay the foundation for an Egyptian intellectual renaissance. Their efforts began with the establishment of the Committee of Authorship, Publishing, and Translation, a civil society body tasked with promoting cultural and intellectual development in Egypt. Amin recorded the genesis of the Committee in one of the issues of “*Al Risala*,” a beacon of enlightened Arabic thought in the first half of the twentieth century.

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## ***Al Thaqa*: A Beacon of Enlightenment**

*Al Thaqa* served as a platform for a wide range of topics, reflecting the diverse interests and concerns of Egyptian society during that period. Its table of contents in 1945 revealed a fascinating blend of tradition and modernity. Articles on politics, international relations, science, and technology showcased a keen interest in global affairs and advancements. At the same time, the magazine featured pieces on literature, arts, history, and heritage, demonstrating a deep appreciation for Egypt's cultural roots.

Ahmed Amin, a prominent intellectual and one of the founders of *Al Thaqa*, played a crucial role in shaping the magazine's content and direction. He wrote extensively on Islamic history and thought, advocating a rational and enlightened interpretation of Islam (4). Amin's work exemplified the magazine's mission to reconcile tradition with modernity, seeking to reinterpret and revitalize Islamic heritage in the light of contemporary challenges (9).

### **Table of Contents of *Al Thaqa* in July – December 1945**

The table of contents of the Egyptian periodical *Al Thaqa* from 1945 reveals a diverse range of topics reflecting the intellectual and social currents of the time. The magazine's content can be broadly categorized into the following themes:

#### **1. Politics and International Relations:**

اهتمت مجلة "الثقافة" اهتمامًا كبيرًا بتغطية المشهد السياسي في أعقاب الحرب العالمية الثانية؛ حيث سلطت الضوء على الأحداث والتطورات المحلية والعالمية في الفترة التي أعقبت الحرب، وتناولت في أعدادها (340-361) الصادرة بين 3 يوليو و6 نوفمبر 1945 قضايا سياسية متنوعة كان من أبرزها: كيف نصل إلى سلم دائم؟ (3 يوليو 1945)، ناقشت هذه المقالة سبل تحقيق السلام الدائم في العالم، وأهمية التعاون الدولي، وأسباب عدم تمتع العالم بسلام دائم. تناولت مقالة "داء الشرق" (10 و24 يوليو 1945) الصراع بين الصحافة الحكومية والمعارضة، وأشارت إلى "داء الشرق" المتمثل في حب الرياسة والتنافس على السلطة، وعواقبه الوخيمة على المجتمعات العربية والشرق أوسطية. غطت مقالة "الموقف الدولي" (17 يوليو و7 أغسطس 1945) اجتماع "الأقطاب الثلاثة" (تشرشل، ستالين، ترومان)، وأشارت إلى أهميته وتداعياته على مستقبل العالم. وتناولت مقالة "الزحف الروسي نحو الشرق الأوسط" (31 يوليو 1945) المطالب الروسية بشأن المضائق التركية، وتداعيات ذلك على تركيا والعالم العربي. أما مقالة "نتائج الانتخابات البريطانية" (28 أغسطس 1945) فناقشت فوز حزب العمال في بريطانيا وتداعيات هذا الفوز على السياسة الداخلية والخارجية. وتناولت مقالة "عصر الديمقراطية" (4 سبتمبر 1945) صعود الديمقراطية كنظام سياسي عالمي، وسيطرة الدول المنتصرة في الحرب على المشهد السياسي العالمي. في حين ناقشت مقالة "في صحيفة واحدة" (18 سبتمبر 1945) الأحداث والتطورات السياسية في العالم بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية، وأشارت إلى استمرار الصراع بين الدول الكبرى، وتأثير ذلك على العالم. وتطرقت مقالة "أمور الأمم المغلوبة وكيف تعالج"

(25 سبتمبر 1945) إلى كيفية معاملة الأمم المغلوبة بعد الحرب، وأهمية تحقيق العدالة والمساواة بين الدول. وتساءلت مقالة "حكومة العلماء" (2 أكتوبر 1945): هل يتولى العلماء زمام الحكم في الدول؟ وعرضت آراء المؤيدين والمعارضين لهذه الفكرة. وتناولت مقالة "القنبلة الذرية" (9 و23 أكتوبر 1945) الآثار المترتبة على اختراع القنبلة الذرية على مستقبل الحروب والسياسة الدولية. وناقشت سلسلة مقالات "عراقيل في سبيل النهضة العربية" (30 أكتوبر و6 و13 و20 و27 نوفمبر 1945) العقبات التي تواجه النهضة العربية، والتي تمثلت في اللغة والثقافة والسياسة والاقتصاد. وأخيرًا، تناولت مقالة "الأمان القومي" (6 نوفمبر 1945) الأهداف القومية للدول العربية، وأهمية تحقيق الوحدة العربية والاستقلال التام.

[*Al Thaqafa* showed great interest in covering the political scene in the aftermath of World War II, highlighting local and global events and developments in the post-war period. In its issues (340-361) published between July 3 and November 6, 1945, it addressed various political issues, most notably: "How to Reach a Lasting Peace?" (July 3, 1945), which discussed ways to achieve lasting peace in the world, the importance of international cooperation, and the reasons why the world does not enjoy lasting peace; "The Disease of the East" (July 10 and 24, 1945), which addressed the conflict between the government and opposition press and pointed to the "Disease of the East," the love of leadership and competition for power, and its dire consequences for Arab and Middle Eastern societies; "The International Situation" (July 17 and August 7, 1945), which covered the meeting of the "Big Three" (Churchill, Stalin, Truman) and pointed to its importance and repercussions for the future of the world; "The Russian Creep towards the Middle East" (July 31, 1945), which addressed Russian demands regarding the Turkish straits and the repercussions of this on Turkey and the Arab world; "Results of the British Elections" (August 28, 1945), which discussed the victory of the Labour Party in Britain and the repercussions of this victory on domestic and foreign policy; "The Age of Democracy" (September 4, 1945), which addressed the rise of democracy as a global political system and the dominance of the victorious countries in the war over the global political scene; "In One Newspaper" (September 18, 1945), which discussed political events and developments in the world after World War II and pointed to the continued conflict between the major powers and its impact on the world.]

### **Social and Cultural Issues:**

في عددها الصادر في 8 شعبان 1364 (17 يوليو 1945)، ناقشت "الموقف الدولي" (صفحة 1). وفي 15 شعبان 1364 (24 يوليو 1945)، تناولت "الزحف الروسي نحو الشرق الأوسط" (صفحة 1). وفي عدد 13 رمضان 1364 (21 أغسطس 1945)، تطرقت إلى "انتهاء الحرب في الشرق الأقصى" (صفحة 1). وفي 12 شوال 1364

(18 سبتمبر 1945)، تناولت "التعويضات ومصير المستعمرات الإيطالية" (صفحة 1). وفي عددها الصادر في 19 شوال 1364 (25 سبتمبر 1945)، نشرت مقالاً بعنوان "في صحيفة واحدة" (صفحة 1) تناولت فيه الأوضاع الدولية الراهنة. وفي 26 شوال 1364 (2 أكتوبر 1945)، نشرت مقالاً بعنوان "خيبة أمل" (صفحة 1) تناول خيبة الأمل من مخرجات اجتماع وزراء خارجية الدول الخمس الكبرى. وتطرقت المجلة في عددها الصادر في 29 شعبان 1364 (7 أغسطس 1945) إلى "نتائج الانتخابات البريطانية" (صفحة 1). وفي 27 رمضان 1364 (4 سبتمبر 1945) نشرت مقالاً بعنوان "عصر الديمقراطية" (صفحة 1). وفي 5 شوال 1364 (11 سبتمبر 1945)، تناولت "بداية السلام" (صفحة 1). وفي 8 ذي الحجة 1364 (13 نوفمبر 1945)، تطرقت إلى موضوع "حكومة العلماء" (صفحة 1)، وفي 15 ذي الحجة 1364 (20 نوفمبر 1945)، تناولت قضيتي "إندونيسيا وفلسطين" (صفحة 1). وفي عدد 22 ذي الحجة 1364 (27 نوفمبر 1945)، أما في 29 ذي الحجة 1364 (4 ديسمبر 1945)، فكان المقال حول "السياسة الروسية بعد الحرب" (صفحة 1). وفي 13 محرم 1365 (18 ديسمبر 1945)، كان المقال عن "العالم العربي والسياسة الدولية" (صفحة 1).

[The magazine *Al Thaqafa* addressed international affairs in several issues. In its issue dated 8 Shaban 1364 (July 17, 1945), it discussed "The International Situation" (page 1). On 15 Shaban 1364 (July 24, 1945), it addressed "The Russian Creep Towards the Middle East" (page 1). In the issue of 13 Ramadan 1364 (August 21, 1945), it tackled "The End of the War in the Far East" (page 1). On 12 Shawwal 1364 (September 18, 1945), it discussed "Reparations and the Fate of the Italian Colonies" (page 1). In its issue dated 19 Shawwal 1364 (September 25, 1945), it published an article titled "In One Newspaper" (page 1) addressing the current international situation. On 26 Shawwal 1364 (October 2, 1945), it published an article titled "Disappointment" (page 1) addressing the disappointment over the outcomes of the meeting of foreign ministers of the five major powers. The magazine, in its issue dated 29 Shaban 1364 (August 7, 1945), addressed the "Results of the British Elections" (page 1). On 27 Ramadan 1364 (September 4, 1945), it published an article titled "The Age of Democracy" (page 1). On 5 Shawwal 1364 (September 11, 1945), it addressed "The Beginning of Peace" (page 1). On 8 Dhu al-Hijjah 1364 (November 13, 1945), it tackled the topic of "Government of Scholars" (page 1), and on 15 Dhu al-Hijjah 1364 (November 20, 1945), it addressed the issues of "Indonesia and Palestine" (page 1). As for 29 Dhu al-Hijjah 1364 (December 4, 1945), the article was about "Russian Policy After the War" (page 1). And on 13 Muharram 1365 (December 18, 1945), the article was about "The Arab World and International Politics" (page 1).

### Science and Technology:

تناولت مجلة "الثقافة" في عدة أعدادٍ متفرقة موضوعاتٍ علمية وتكنولوجية. ففي عددها الصادر في 22 شعبان 1364 (1 أغسطس 1945)، ناقشت "زيت البترول من وراء الستار" (صفحة 1). وفي 29 شعبان 1364 (7 أغسطس 1945)، تناولت "مولد المجموعة الشمسية" (صفحة 20) و"فيتامين (د)" (صفحة 23). وفي عدد 6 رمضان 1364 (14 أغسطس 1945)، تطرقت إلى "من وحى السجارة" (صفحة 14). وفي 12 شوال 1364 (18 سبتمبر 1945)، تناولت موضوعًا حول "حول البحث العلمي" (صفحة 10). وفي عددها الصادر في 19 شوال 1364 (25 سبتمبر 1945)، نشرت مقالاً بعنوان "الوراثة كوسيلة لمقاومة الأمراض النباتية" (صفحة 10). وفي 26 شوال 1364 (2 أكتوبر 1945)، نشرت مقالاً بعنوان "لين العظام" (صفحة 11). وفي 10 ذو القعدة 1364 (16 أكتوبر 1945)، تناولت "الطب قديماً وحديثاً" (صفحة 11). وفي 24 ذو القعدة 1364 (30 أكتوبر 1945)، كان المقال عن "القنبلة الذرية" (صفحة 1)، وفي 8 ذو الحجة 1364 (13 نوفمبر 1945)، تطرقت إلى موضوع "الإنتاج بالجملة" (صفحة 9). وفي 15 ذي الحجة 1364 (20 نوفمبر 1945)، تناولت "التلفزة" (صفحة 16).

[*Al Thaqafa* addressed scientific and technological topics in several issues. In its issue dated 22 Shaban 1364 (August 1, 1945), it discussed "Petroleum Behind the Scenes" (page 1). On 29 Shaban 1364 (August 7, 1945), it addressed "The Birth of the Solar System" (page 20) and "Vitamin D" (page 23). In the issue of 6 Ramadan 1364 (August 14, 1945), it touched on "From the Inspiration of Cigarettes" (page 14). On 12 Shawwal 1364 (September 18, 1945), it discussed the topic of "Around Scientific Research" (page 10). In its issue dated 19 Shawwal 1364 (September 25, 1945), it published an article titled "Heredity as a Means of Resisting Plant Diseases" (page 10). On 26 Shawwal 1364 (October 2, 1945), it published an article titled "Osteomalacia" (page 11). On 10 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1364 (October 16, 1945), it addressed "Medicine in Ancient and Modern Times" (page 11). On 24 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1364 (October 30, 1945), the article was about "The Atomic Bomb" (page 1), and in 8 Dhu al-Hijjah 1364 (November 13, 1945), it touched on the topic of "Mass Production" (page 9). On 15 Dhu al-Hijjah 1364 (November 20, 1945), it addressed "Television" (page 16).]

### Literature and the Arts:

تناولت مجلة "الثقافة" في أعدادها المتنوعة موضوعاتٍ متنوعة في الأدب والفنون، ونشرت قصائد بعضها مؤلف والبعض الآخر مترجم. ففي عدد 8 شعبان 1364 (17 يوليو 1945) ناقشت مقالة "أدب القصة في خدمة التاريخ" (صفحة 19)، كما تضمن العدد قصيدة بعنوان "حنين وأنين" (صفحة 28). وفي 15 شعبان 1364 (24 يوليو 1945)، نشرت قصيدتين هما "أيها الليل" (صفحة 25) و"أشواق" (صفحة 25). وفي عدد 22

شعبان 1364 (1 أغسطس 1945)، تناولت مقالة "الناطور" (صفحة 12)، وقصيدة "سحر" (صفحة 18)، وفي 29 شعبان 1364 (7 أغسطس 1945)، تناولت مقالات "المتناقضات" (صفحة 2) و"الذوق الأدبي" (صفحة 3) و"بطلان المجد" (صفحة 4) و"الحب بين الخير والشر" (صفحة 10). وفي 6 رمضان 1364 (14 أغسطس 1945)، تناولت "الحظ العاثر" (صفحة 2)، و"الشيء الصغير" (صفحة 12)، و"ظل رجل" (صفحة 16)، بالإضافة إلى قصائد "شقيقي" (صفحة 26)، و"أهواك" (صفحة 27)، و"من أنت" (صفحة 28). وفي 13 رمضان 1364 (21 أغسطس 1945)، نشرت قصيدة "عالم الأشباح" (صفحة 12). وفي 20 رمضان 1364 (28 أغسطس 1945)، تناولت مقالة "حنين إلى منبع الإلهام" (صفحة 20) وقصيدة "لو كنت تدرى" (صفحة 28). وفي 27 رمضان 1364 (4 سبتمبر 1945)، نشرت مقالة "الحياة الروحية" (صفحة 2) وقصائد "تعالى" (صفحة 20) و"صوتها" (صفحة 21) وقصة قصيرة بعنوان "المغنية" (صفحة 22). وفي 5 شوال 1364 (11 سبتمبر 1945)، تناولت قصيدتين هما "أنا هناك كما هنا" (صفحة 2) و"حيرة قلب" (صفحة 3)، وقصة قصيرة بعنوان "فايد" (صفحة 20). وفي 12 شوال 1364 (18 سبتمبر 1945)، تناولت مقالة "الشعراني" (صفحة 2) وقصة "قصة لعمر الحكيم" (صفحة 13). وفي 19 شوال 1364 (25 سبتمبر 1945) نشرت قصيدة "في سكون الروضة" (صفحة 28). وفي 26 شوال 1364 (2 أكتوبر 1945)، تناولت مقالات "الشاعر المحتضر" (صفحة 3) و"من الأدب العربي" (صفحة 4)، بالإضافة إلى قصيدة "البحر الفاتن" (صفحة 28). وفي 3 ذو القعدة 1364 (9 أكتوبر 1945)، تناولت "غفلة مزمنة" (صفحة 1)، و"حديث الزائدة الدودية" (صفحة 2)، وقصيدة "في العربية" (صفحة 23). أما في 10 ذو القعدة 1364 (16 أكتوبر 1945)، فتطرق إلى مقالة "من الأدب العربي" (صفحة 2) ومقالة "مقتطفات من كتاب الذوق الأدبي" (صفحة 22)، وقصائد "سلمى في جمال الطبيعة" (صفحة 27)، و"ساجعة الفجر" (صفحة 28)، و"أحلام وأوهام" (صفحة 28). وفي 17 ذو القعدة 1364 (23 أكتوبر 1945)، تناولت مقالات "العيد المثنوى" (صفحة 3) و"حيرة شديدة" (صفحة 4) وقصيدة "يا فتاتي أين أنت؟" (صفحة 28). وفي 24 ذو القعدة 1364 (30 أكتوبر 1945)، نشرت مقالة بعنوان "من الأدب العربي" (صفحة 4) وقصيدة "من وراء الضباب" (صفحة 27). وأخيراً، في 1 ذو الحجة 1364 (6 نوفمبر 1945)، تناولت مقالة "من الأدب العربي" (صفحة 4). وفي 8 ذو الحجة 1364 (13 نوفمبر 1945)، نشرت قصيدة "العدراء" (صفحة 2) ومقالة بعنوان "من الأدب العربي" (صفحة 4).

[*Al Thaqaafa* magazine, in its various issues, covered diverse topics in literature and the arts, and published poems, some of which were original and others translated. In the issue of 8 Shaban 1364 (17 July 1945), it discussed the article "The Literature of the Story in the Service of History" (page 19), and also included a poem titled "Longing and Moaning" (page 28). On 15 Shaban 1364 (24 July 1945), it published two poems: "O Night" (page 25) and "Longings" (page 25). In the issue of 22 Shaban 1364 (1 August 1945), it covered the article "The Guard" (page 12), and the poem "Magic" (page 18). On 29 Shaban 1364 (7 August 1945), it dealt with the articles "Contradictions" (page 2), "Literary Taste" (page 3), "The Invalidity of Glory" (page

4), and "Love Between Good and Evil" (page 10). On 6 Ramadan 1364 (14 August 1945), it covered "Bad Luck" (page 2), "The Little Thing" (page 12), and "Shadow of a Man" (page 16), in addition to the poems "My Sister" (page 26), "I Adore You" (page 27), and "Who Are You?" (page 28). On 13 Ramadan 1364 (21 August 1945), it published the poem "World of Ghosts" (page 12). On 20 Ramadan 1364 (28 August 1945), it covered the article "Longing for the Source of Inspiration" (page 20) and the poem "If You Only Knew" (page 28). On 27 Ramadan 1364 (4 September 1945), it published the article "Spiritual Life" (page 2), the poems "Exalted" (page 20) and "Her Voice" (page 21), and a short story titled "The Singer" (page 22). On 5 Shawwal 1364 (11 September 1945), it covered two poems: "I Am There As I Am Here" (page 2) and "Heart's Confusion" (page 3), and a short story titled "Fayed" (page 20). On 12 Shawwal 1364 (18 September 1945), it covered the article "Al-Sha'rani" (page 2) and the story "A Story for Omar Hakim" (page 13). On 19 Shawwal 1364 (25 September 1945), it published the poem "In the Stillness of the Garden" (page 28). On 26 Shawwal 1364 (2 October 1945), it covered the articles "The Dying Poet" (page 3) and "From Arabic Literature" (page 4), in addition to the poem "The Charming Sea" (page 28). On 3 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1364 (9 October 1945), it covered "Chronic Negligence" (page 1), "Talk of Appendicitis" (page 2), and the poem "In the Carriage" (page 23). On 10 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1364 (16 October 1945), it addressed the article "From Arabic Literature" (page 2), the article "Excerpts from the Book of Literary Taste" (page 22), and the poems "Salma in the Beauty of Nature" (page 27), "The Wind of Dawn" (page 28), and "Dreams and Illusions" (page 28). On 17 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1364 (23 October 1945), it covered the articles "The Blessed Eid" (page 3) and "Great Confusion" (page 4), and the poem "O My Girl, Where Are You?" (page 28). On 24 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1364 (30 October 1945), it published an article titled "From Arabic Literature" (page 4) and the poem "From Behind the Fog" (page 27). Finally, on 1 Dhu al-Hijjah 1364 (6 November 1945), it covered the article "From Arabic Literature" (page 4). On 8 Dhu al-Hijjah 1364 (13 November 1945), it published the poem "The Virgin" (page 2) and an article titled "From Arabic Literature" (page 4).]

### History and Heritage:

تناولت مجلة "الثقافة" في أعدادها المتنوعة موضوعات متنوعة في التراث العربي والتاريخ الإسلامي. ففي عدد 15 شعبان 1364 (24 يوليو 1945)، تناولت مقالة "رفاعة في السودان" (ص16) الذي كان رائداً من رواد النهضة الحديثة في مصر. وفي عدد 22 شعبان 1364 (1 أغسطس 1945)، تناولت مقالة "الشيخ غالب"

(ص14) الذي كان من كبار رجال العلم والأدب في الشام، ومقالة "مذاهب الفلسفة الرواقية" (ص22) التي تتناول إحدى مذاهب الفلسفة اليونانية وتأثيرها في الفكر الإسلامي. وفي عدد 13 رمضان 1364 (21 أغسطس 1945)، تناولت موضوع "اللهو والطرب عند قدماء المصريين" (ص15) وتطرقت إلى "من صور الماضي" (ص18). وفي 20 رمضان 1364 (28 أغسطس 1945)، نشرت في زاوية "بين المسموع والمقروء" (ص25) مقالة عن كتاب "تاريخ الأدب العربي" للأستاذ أحمد حسن الزيات الذي كان من كبار الكتاب والمؤرخين في مصر، والذي تناول فيه قضايا الأدب العربي وتاريخه. وفي 5 شوال 1364 (11 سبتمبر 1945)، نشرت مقالة عن "حقائق عن البرامكة" (ص6)، وهم أسرة عربية اشتهرت بالعلم والأدب والفكر في العصر العباسي، ومقالة "رفاعة الطهطاوي ومنتسكيو" (ص19) التي تناولت جهود رفاعة الطهطاوي في تحديث مصر، وتأثره بكتابات المفكر الفرنسي مونتسكيو. وفي 12 شوال 1364 (18 سبتمبر 1945)، تناولت "نشأة تدوين العلم في الإسلام" (ص22). وفي 19 شوال 1364 (25 سبتمبر 1945)، تناولت الموضوع نفسه (ص3)، وفي 26 شوال 1364 (2 أكتوبر 1945) تابعت الحديث عنه (ص9). وفي هذا العدد الأخير، تناولت أيضاً "النيل في الأدب التركي" (ص14)، و"رفاعة يطلب العلم في باريس" (ص18) الذي يقدم لمحة عن رحلة رفاعة الطهطاوي إلى باريس ودراسته هناك. وفي 3 ذي القعدة 1364 (9 أكتوبر 1945)، تناولت مقالة "عودة السفينة" (ص17) التي تتحدث عن عودة سفينة مصرية من رحلة إلى الخارج، وفي 20 ذي القعدة 1364 (25 ديسمبر 1945)، نشرت مقالاً عن "خليفة أدركته حرفة الأدب" (ص24) الذي تناول الخليفة العباسي هارون الرشيد.

أما بالنسبة للتراث العربي الإسلامي وتفاعله مع الغرب، فقد تناولت المجلة في عدد 3 ذي القعدة 1364 (9 أكتوبر 1945) مقالة "رفاعة يطلب العلم في باريس" (ص20)، وفي عدد 17 ذي القعدة 1364 (23 أكتوبر 1945) مقالة "على هامش قصة الموريسكيين" (ص28) التي تناولت قصة المسلمين في الأندلس وتفاعلهم مع الغرب. وفي عدد 1 ذي الحجة 1364 (6 نوفمبر 1945)، تناولت مقالة "الإقطاع والعصور الوسطى" (ص15)، وفي عدد 8 ذي الحجة 1364 (13 نوفمبر 1945) تناولت المقالة نفسها (ص16)، وفي عدد 15 ذي الحجة 1364 (20 نوفمبر 1945) تابعت الحديث عنها (ص18). وتطرقت المجلة في عدد 6 محرم 1365 (11 ديسمبر 1945) إلى مقالة "الغزالي وعمر الخيام" (ص24)، وفي عدد 13 محرم 1365 (18 ديسمبر 1945) نشرت مقالاً عن "الأشعار الأندلسية" (ص18).

[*Al Thaqafa*, in its various issues, covered diverse topics in Arab heritage and Islamic history . In the issue of 15 Shaban 1364 (July 24, 1945), it discussed the article "Refaa in Sudan" (p. 16), who was a pioneer of the modern renaissance in Egypt . In the issue of 22 Shaban 1364 (August 1, 1945), it covered the article "Sheikh Ghalib" (p. 14), who was one of the great men of science and literature in the Levant, and the article "Schools of Stoic Philosophy" (p. 22), which deals with one of the schools of Greek philosophy and its influence on Islamic thought . In the issue of 13 Ramadan 1364 (August 21, 1945), it addressed the topic of "Entertainment and Music Among the Ancient Egyptians" (p. 15) and touched on "From Pictures of the Past" (p. 18) . On 20 Ramadan



1364 (August 28, 1945), it published an article in the "Between the Heard and the Read" section (p. 25) about the book "History of Arabic Literature" by Professor Ahmed Hassan Al-Zayat, who was one of the great writers and historians in Egypt, and who addressed issues of Arabic literature and its history . On 5 Shawwal 1364 (September 11, 1945), it published an article about "Facts about the Barmakids" (p. 6), an Arab family famous for science, literature, and thought in the Abbasid era, and the article "Rifa'a al-Tahtawi and Montesquieu" (p. 19), which dealt with Rifa'a al-Tahtawi's efforts to modernize Egypt and his influence by the writings of the French thinker Montesquieu . On 12 Shawwal 1364 (September 18, 1945), it discussed "The Emergence of Codifying Science in Islam" (p. 22) . On 19 Shawwal 1364 (September 25, 1945), it addressed the same topic (p. 3), and on 26 Shawwal 1364 (October 2) it continued the discussion (p. 9) . In the latter issue, it also covered "The Nile in Turkish Literature" (p. 14), and "Refaa Seeks Knowledge in Paris" (p. 18), which provides a glimpse into Rifa'a al-Tahtawi's trip to Paris and his studies there. On 3 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1364 (October 9, 1945), it dealt with the article "The Return of the Ship" (p. 17), which talks about the return of an Egyptian ship from a trip abroad. On 20 Muharram 1365 (December 25, 1945), it published an article about "A Caliph Overtaken by the Profession of Literature," which dealt with the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (p. 24).

As for Arab and Islamic heritage and its interaction with the West, the magazine addressed in the issue of 3 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1364 (October 9, 1945) the article "Refaa Seeks Knowledge in Paris" (p. 20). In the issue of 17 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1364 (October 23, 1945), it discussed the article "On the Margin of the Story of the Moriscos" (p. 28), which dealt with the story of Muslims in Andalusia and their interaction with the West . In the issue of 1 Dhu al-Hijjah 1364 (November 6, 1945), it addressed the article "Feudalism and the Middle Ages" (p. 15), and in the issue of 8 Dhu al-Hijjah 1364 (November 13, 1945), it addressed the same article (p. 16), and in the issue of 15 Dhu al-Hijjah 1364 (November 20, 1945), it continued the discussion (p. 18) . The magazine also addressed the article "Al-Ghazali and Omar Khayyam" (p. 24) in the issue of 6 Muharram 1365 (December 11, 1945), and in the issue of 13 Muharram 1365 (December 18, 1945), it published an article about "Andalusian Poetry" (p. 18).]

Overall, the table of contents of *Al Thaqaafa* paints a picture of a vibrant intellectual landscape in Egypt during the mid-20th century. The magazine's diverse range of topics reflects a society grappling with political change, social transformation, and technological advancement. By

engaging with these issues, *Al Thaqafa* played a crucial role in shaping public discourse and fostering intellectual debate in Egypt during a pivotal period in its history. Furthermore, *Al Thaqafa* played a pivotal role in fostering an intellectual renaissance among Egyptians. It provided a forum for critical debate and discussion, encouraging readers to engage with a wide range of ideas and perspectives.

- The magazine's content reflects a commitment to several key ideals. These include:
  - **Nationalism and Independence:** Articles on Egyptian politics and international relations emphasize the importance of national sovereignty and self-determination. The periodical advocates for Egypt's independence from foreign influence and control.
  - **Social Justice and Reform:** Pieces on social and cultural issues highlight the need for social justice, equality, and progress. The magazine calls for reforms to address poverty, illiteracy, and other societal problems.
  - **Modernization and Progress:** The coverage of science and technology reflects a belief in the importance of modernization and progress for Egypt's development. The periodical promotes scientific literacy and technological advancement as essential for the nation's future.
  - **Cultural Preservation and Appreciation:** The magazine's focus on literature, the arts, history, and heritage demonstrate a deep appreciation for Egyptian culture and a commitment to preserving its rich traditions. The periodical celebrates creative expression and fosters a sense of cultural identity.

The magazine's diverse content, spanning various disciplines and topics, exposed Egyptians to new knowledge and ideas from both the East and the West. Through its articles, essays, and literary works, *Al Thaqafa* challenged traditional norms and encouraged critical thinking. It promoted social reform and advocated for the emancipation of women, education reform, and democratic value. The magazine's contributors, many of whom were leading intellectuals and scholars, played a crucial role in shaping public discourse and fostering a culture of intellectual curiosity and debate.

The 1930s and 1940s in Egypt were a time of significant cultural and intellectual ferment, characterized by a complex interplay between tradition, westernization, and the search for a new, distinctly Egyptian identity. This dynamic is reflected in the periodical literature of the time, particularly in titles such as *Al Risala*, *Al Thaqafa*, and *Al Katib Al Masri*. These

publications served as platforms for writers, intellectuals, and artists to grapple with the challenges and opportunities of modernity, often through lively debates and discussions.

### **Forces of Tradition and Westernization**

Traditionalists, such as Sheikh Muhammad Mahmud Shaker, emphasized the importance of preserving Egypt's Arabo-Islamic rich cultural heritage, including its language, literature, and religious values. They saw westernization as a threat to this heritage, potentially leading to cultural alienation and moral decline. On the other hand, proponents of westernization, such as Taha Hussein, saw it as a necessary step towards modernization and progress. They admired Western science, technology, and political systems, and believed that Egypt needed to adopt these in order to catch up with the rest of the world.

### **The Search for Balance**

The tension between tradition and westernization led many intellectuals to search for a middle ground, a way to reconcile the two seemingly opposing forces. This often involved adapting Western ideas and practices to the Egyptian context, rather than simply adopting them wholesale. For example, some writers advocated for a modernized form of Islam that would be compatible with modern science and social values. Others sought to create a new, distinctly Egyptian literature that would draw on both traditional Arabic forms and Western literary techniques.

Hussein Fawzi, another Nahda pioneer, held that civilization is a living organism that evolves and accumulates over time. It is not merely a fixed heritage but a continuous journey of interaction and exchange between generations and nations. Each historical stage adds to and enriches civilization, and each generation contributes to its shaping and development. In his book, *Sindibad Masri* [An Egyptian Sinbad], Fawzi likens civilization to a traveler who gains new experiences and knowledge at each stop of his journey, integrating them with what he already has and developing them. Similarly, civilization interacts with and benefits from other cultures, adding to and developing its heritage.

This dynamic vision of civilization emphasizes the importance of interaction and communication between cultures, and the role of each generation in building and developing civilization.

## **The Rise of Identity Politics and the Decline of *Al Thaqa***

However, the intellectual movement that flourished in the 1930s and 1940s began to decline in the 1970s due to a confluence of political, social, and cultural factors. The rise of identity politics, both in Egypt and globally, played a significant role in this decline. In Egypt, the disillusionment with Nasserism and the perceived failures of secular nationalism led to a resurgence of Islamic identity politics (12).

The intellectual movement in Egypt, which once seamlessly integrated traditional Islamic heritage with Western modernity, began to decline in the 1970s due to a combination of political and socio-religious factors.

### **Political Suppression:**

Under President Anwar Sadat's regime, the political climate shifted towards greater conservatism and authoritarianism. The government became increasingly intolerant of dissenting voices and critical thought, leading to the suppression of intellectual freedom. Intellectuals who dared to challenge the government's policies or express alternative viewpoints faced censorship, imprisonment, and exile. This created an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship, stifling intellectual discourse and creativity.

### **Rise of Religious Fundamentalism:**

The 1970s also witnessed a significant rise in religious fundamentalism in Egypt. The socio-economic challenges faced by the country, coupled with the disillusionment with Western ideologies, led to a resurgence of conservative religious values. This trend was further amplified by the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which inspired Islamist movements across the region. Religious fundamentalists often viewed intellectualism as a threat to their traditional beliefs and values. They promoted a more rigid interpretation of Islam, rejecting the synthesis of tradition and modernity that characterized the earlier intellectual movement. This led to a polarization of society, with intellectuals finding themselves increasingly marginalized and alienated.

### **Economic Factors:**

The economic policies adopted by the Egyptian government in the 1970s, known as the "Open Door Policy," also played a role in the decline of the intellectual movement. These policies favored economic liberalization and privatization, leading to increased inequality and social unrest. Many intellectuals, who were often associated with leftist ideologies, criticized these

policies and the growing socioeconomic disparities. This further strained their relationship with the government and contributed to their marginalization.

### **Impact on Intellectual Life:**

The combined effect of these factors led to a significant decline in intellectual life in Egypt. The once vibrant intellectual scene, which had produced renowned thinkers, writers, and artists, became increasingly fragmented and subdued. Intellectuals lost their influential role in shaping public discourse and social change. This decline had a lasting impact on Egyptian society, hindering its ability to engage with contemporary challenges in a critical and innovative way.

On the global stage, the rise of poststructuralism and postcolonial critiques of Western universalism led some intellectuals to question the relevance of Enlightenment ideals for non-Western societies. This contributed to a broader reevaluation of the relationship between tradition and modernity, with some advocating for a return to indigenous cultural and religious values.

By the late 20th century, a new generation of Egyptian intellectuals began to challenge the dominance of Enlightenment thought. This shift was partly influenced by the rise of poststructuralism in Europe, a philosophical movement that questioned the universal validity of Enlightenment ideals.

Poststructuralist thinkers like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida argued that concepts like reason, truth, and progress were not objective and universal but rather products of specific historical and cultural contexts. They questioned the Enlightenment's emphasis on individualism, arguing that individual identity was not fixed but rather constructed through language and social relations.

Egyptian intellectuals like Hassan Hanafi, Tariq Al Bishri, Fahmi Huweidi and Muhammad Emara, migrated from the left and drew upon poststructuralist ideas to critique the Nahda's uncritical embrace of Western values. They argued that the Nahda had alienated Egyptians from their own cultural and religious traditions, leading to a loss of identity and social cohesion.

These intellectuals called for a return to Islamic values and principles, advocating for an "Islamic Enlightenment" that would reconcile faith and reason. They argued that Islam was not incompatible with modernity but rather offered a unique perspective on issues like social justice, human rights, and cultural diversity.

This shift away from Enlightenment ideals was also fueled by political and social factors. The failure of secular nationalist movements to achieve social and economic progress, coupled with the rise of populist Islamist movements, led many Egyptians to question the relevance of Western models of development.

While efforts of these intellectuals might have been well meaning, yet the final outcome fostered the divisions that the colonial and neo-colonial west was keen to force upon this area that represents major interests for it. Unfortunately, the reversion to tradition brought back all the animosities and inter-Islamic clashes and divisions on the official level, and created a layman faith that rested content with simplistic and formal vestiges of religion.

### **The demise of *Al Thaqa***

These trends had a profound impact on *Al Thaqa*. The magazine's emphasis on integrating tradition and modernity became increasingly untenable in a climate of growing polarization and identity politics. The government's suppression of dissenting voices and the rise of religious fundamentalism further stifled intellectual debate and creativity (12). In 1971, *Al Thaqa* was shut down, marking the end of an era in Egyptian intellectual history.

### **A Historical Precedent**

Two periods in Arabo-Islamic heritage showcase a similar trajectory of decline from vibrant, cosmopolitan societies to more insular, religiously conservative ones. The Abbasid civilization in Baghdad, flourishing from the 8th to 12th centuries, was a beacon of intellectual and cultural exchange, enriched by diverse influences. However, the Mongol invasion in 1258 and internal instability led to its downfall, paving the way for a more austere interpretation of Islam. Similarly, in 1970s Egypt, the promising Nahda period, characterized by secular nationalism and modernization, was shattered by the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and subsequent disillusionment. This led to the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, rejecting Western influence and emphasizing religious identity. While differing in scale and specific causes, both periods highlight the complex interplay of factors that can shift a civilization's course, demonstrating the fragility of cultural openness and the enduring appeal of traditional values in times of crisis.

It is interesting that in both cases, western powers played a role in distancing the Arabo-Islamic area from world, rather, than western culture. Such a division is already explained by Edward Said, in his book "Culture and Imperialism," where he reveals the Western colonial plan to divide the world into an advanced West and a backward East. To solidify this division, Western thinkers monopolized Greek civilization as the exclusive source of Western culture and

civilization. This Orientalist myth ignores the fact that the flourishing of Islamic civilization in the Abbasid and Andalusian eras was largely due to the translation of Greek knowledge. During its peak, Islamic civilization was not merely a passive recipient of Greek knowledge, but a vibrant center of innovation and creativity where Greek science, philosophy, and arts were translated, transmitted, and developed, greatly contributing to the advancement of human knowledge. It is ironic that this very heritage reignited the European Renaissance. Jerry Brotton, a British scholar, challenges the idea of a distinct pre-colonial divide between the West and the Orient. He emphasizes their interconnectedness through trade, cultural exchange, and shared knowledge. This approach offers a more nuanced understanding of global history before the sharp divisions imposed by colonialism.

Similarly, in post-WWI, European powers, notably Britain, fostered conservative political Islam in the Middle East to counter rising nationalism. This was evident in Egypt, where British support for the Muslim Brotherhood, as detailed in "Secret Affairs", undermined nationalist movements. Similarly, the US later backed the fundamentalist Taliban in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. Both instances reveal a pattern of Western powers instrumentalizing religious groups for geopolitical ends, often at the expense of secular, nationalist aspiration, as well as the emergence of enlightened schools of religious thought. This approach has had lasting consequences, shaping the political landscape of the region and contributing to ongoing conflicts.

## **Conclusion**

The trajectory of *Al Thaqaqa* magazine, from its inception in 1939 to its closure in 1971, mirrors the rise and fall of the Egyptian Nahda. It began as a beacon of enlightenment, fostering intellectual debate and promoting a synthesis of tradition and modernity. The magazine's diverse content, spanning politics, science, literature, and heritage, reflected the aspirations of a generation seeking to reconcile their cultural identity with the challenges of the modern world. However, the rise of identity politics, political suppression, and the resurgence of religious fundamentalism in the 1970s led to the magazine's decline and eventual closure. This marked a significant shift in Egyptian intellectual life, from a period of vibrant debate and cultural openness to one of increasing conservatism and conformity.

The story of *Al Thaqaqa* offers valuable insights into the complex interplay of political, social, and intellectual forces that shape cultural movements. It highlights the fragility of intellectual freedom and the challenges of maintaining a balance between tradition and modernity in a

rapidly changing world. Furthermore, it raises important questions about the role of intellectuals in society and the impact of political and ideological shifts on cultural production.

Further research could delve deeper into the specific factors that contributed to the decline of *Al Thaqaifa* and the broader Nahda movement. This could include a more detailed analysis of the political and social context of the 1970s, as well as an examination of the changing dynamics within the Egyptian intellectual community. Additionally, a comparative study of similar intellectual movements in other parts of the Arab world could shed light on the broader trends and challenges facing cultural and intellectual production in the region.

By exploring these questions, we can gain a deeper understanding of the historical and contemporary challenges facing intellectual and cultural movements in Egypt and the broader Arab world. This understanding is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and dynamic intellectual landscape that can effectively address the complex issues facing the region today.

### **Suggested Bibliography**

This reading list provides a diverse range of sources that can help readers understand the complex historical, political, and intellectual context of *Al Thaqaifa* magazine and the Egyptian Nahda, as well as the reasons both local and foreign for its demise together with almost all aspects of liberal thought in Egypt. It includes both classic and contemporary works, offering a balanced perspective on this important period in Egyptian history.

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