

# Buddhism, Islam and Alienation of Religion

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## Part One:

When International organizations concerned with the preservation of old archeological sites kept sending one mission after another to Afghanistan, in late 1999 and early 2000, in order to dissuade the Taliban government from destroying the Bamiyan statues of Buddha, I came to realize that these old Buddhist relics had not only been a source of admiration to western archeologists and religious scientists--they had also, historically, won the admiration of Muslims. Yaqut al-Hawami (d. 626/1228) writes of the city of Bamiyan and its relics in his *Mu'jam al-buldan* (Encyclopedia of Countries):

It is a mountain town and village, between Balkh, Herat and Ghazna. It has an impenetrable fortress and a very high temple that bears the frescoes of all kinds of birds on earth, as well as two grand statues carved along the entire height of the mountain. The first is called Surkh Bud [the red Buddha] and the second Khank Bud [grey Buddha]. It is also said that they are unique...”(2).

Yaqut, having seen these statues with his own eyes, is nevertheless unaware that they are statues of the Buddha. Like other travelers, he confuses them either with Zoroastrism, or Manichaeism (Mani, killed in 274 CE), or even Hinduism.

He says of the temple that it is the refuge of outlaws. This means that by the time he went there, Buddhism had deserted Bamiyan, it also means that he does not know the origin of the word *bud*, and considers that

it is “Indian” for statue, even though it does refer to an “image or statue of the Buddha.”

Ibn al-Nadim (d. 377/987), wrote also of the *bud* (whose plural, in his opinion, was *badada*) 250 years before Yaqut, and he relied on one written reference, which made him neither entirely right nor entirely wrong.(3) Unlike Yaqut, however, he completely confuses geographical locations and fails to specify the location of the *bud* (or "*badada*" as he calls them). Ibn al-Nadim gives the following explanation for the *bud*:

Indians’ views on this differ. A group of them believe it is the image of God Almighty. Another group thinks it is the representation of a prophet he sent, who is either an angel or a human. Yet another group believes that it is the image of the sage Buddhasuf sent by God. Each group or community has a way to glorify and worship these statues.(4)

Ibn al-Nadim describes the Bamiyan sculptures in the following:

They have two statues, one of which is called Jankbud, and the other Inkbud. Their image was taken from the ends of a great valley, and carved into the mountainside. Each one towers up at eighty cubits and can be spotted from a distance. Indians have made of them a place of pilgrimage and bring with them all sorts of incense to light there.(5)

After these different representations of the *bud*, the temples in which it had established, and the locations to which it had spread, the images became, after the sixth/twelfth century, the symbol of a sculpture or a pagan statue that shaman worshipped. This is what is behind the use of the term "*bud*" in the Sufism that was associated with the Moroccan sage and sufi Abd al-Haqq b. Sab'in (d. 667/1268 AD) in the title of his main book on Sufism *The*

*Enlightened's Bud*, meaning the main guide or direction of worship used by the enlightened one.(6)

While the scarcity of resources and interaction between Muslims, on one hand, and the *bud*, or Buddha's followers, on the other have made it difficult to position the Buddha's stature in this unusual religious rite, the case was no different for the other key term: shamans, which was used as a reference to Buddhist monks.

The earliest mention of these monks is found in the most unexpected of places: Ahmad b. Hanbal's (d. 241/855) letter entitled *A Response to Jahmiyyah and Heretics*. Ibn Hanbal recounts:

We know of Jahm [b. Safwan] that he was originally from Tirmith. He brought many a discord and argument and much controversy. His most attacking arguments were of God Almighty. He met those infidels called shamans who

recognized him and told him: we shall debate with you and if our arguments are stronger then you follow our religion, if the opposite were to happen then we will follow yours.

A part of the conversation went as follows:

Shamans: do you not claim to have a God?

Jahm acquiesced.

Shamans: have you seen your God?

Jahm: I have not.

Shamans: have you smelt him?

Jahm: I have not.

Shamans: have you felt his presence physically?

Jahm: I have not.(7)

The story ends, according to Ibn Hanbal, with Jahm drowning in a state of confusion that lasted 40 days, after which he found the answer within himself.

He asked the Shamans: "Do you not claim to have a soul? It is one which you do not see, hear, nor feel. Such is God." The Shamans then went on a pilgrimage.

We are unsure of the authenticity and veracity of this account, although it does seem to contain authentic information. It seems that there were still some Buddhists in Balkh, Bamiyan and Tirmith during the first half of the eighth century CE. It would also seem that Buddhists still made the journey from the far ends of India and Turkmenistan to perform pilgrimage in the most important and historical temples of these cities. Muslims understood that these people believed in the eternity of the world and would not accept any knowledge unless it could be physically perceived. Most of them denied concepts of the hereafter and of resurrection, and some of them believed in reincarnation.(8)

Ibn al-Nadim tells us, through the information he had transmitted from an old book on Khurasan, that Shamans had a prophet called Buddhasuf, and that the majority of the

population beyond the river in pre-Islamic ancient times were followers of this faith.(9) This makes of the name the symbol of the religion or a cult linked to the Buddha. The initial impression we get is that this information is a sound starting place from which to explore Buddhism, although the acceptance or rejection of the concepts of the eternity of the world and the resurrection are not included in Buddhist thought or belief. In addition, it appears that the Muslim sources have been generous in their interpretation of the Buddhist methods for refuting earthly existence.

Ibn al-Nadim transmits from this "old" book on Khurasan's history that the Shamans' prophet, the Buddha, told them that the greatest unsolvable issue, which humanity can neither believe nor practice, is saying "no" in all things. They follow his words to the letter and saying "no" to them is thus a devilish act.(10)

This situation of a paucity of information and its poor interpretation, of



which we can only extract that Shamans follow the Buddha, remains unchanged in the work of al-Biruni (d. 440/1048), the writer of the most valuable book on India and Indian culture in medieval times. He justifies neglecting to talk of the Buddhists by the fact that he had not found a “Buddhist book, and there is no one of importance from whom I can understand their reality. I have mentioned them following the account of al-Iranshahri [he seems to have mentioned them when speaking of religions in Iran], although I do not believe that his story is backed by true evidence.”(11)

Al-Biruni was right in believing that al-Iranshahri did not have an accurate account of Buddhism which he thought had spread in Iran, Central Asia, the Turkish lands, and Afghanistan, even reaching Iraq, Musil and Syria.

Until Zarathustra came from Azerbaijan and called the people of Balkh to follow

Zoroastrism his message was widely spread. He built fire temples going from China to the Roman lands, and Zoroastrism reached all Balkh and its followers remain on the Indian soil to this day, and are called Hamak.(12)

The historical record does not, however, support the claim that Buddhism had spread in Iran before Christianity, nor after it. It was mainly present in Afghanistan and India, and only existed in Khurasan, as far as Iran is concerned.(13)

If al-Iranshahri and al-Biruni after him had not found information on Zoroastrism, it is not because of the religion itself but because Hinduism had supplanted it in the areas where they were collecting information. Besides, Zoroastrianism was absent from the regions familiar to Muslims who would then have had the opportunity to learn about it. Islam emerged and spread to Afghanistan and Iran after Buddhism had started to fade. Still, it

would seem that three temples were left, and the remaining Buddhists gathered around them, just as they were centers of pilgrimage. These temples are as we mentioned above, those of Balkh, Bamiyan and Tirmith, all of them extant Afghan cities today.(14)

Muslims admired the greatness of the Buddhist temple, the Nubhar or new temple in Balkh. It was said to hold around a thousand monks inside of it, and had annexed territories for thousands of leagues. Because of its proximity to some Zoroastrian temples, some Muslim observers confused the Buddhist temple with Zoroastrianism and took it to be a Zoroastrian fire temple.(15) It might also be that Zoroastrians had taken the temple before this time because Buddhism had started to fade from these places.

In his *Conquests of Countries* al-Baladhuri went further in saying that the Muslims conquerors of the area destroyed the Nubhar temple, and that the monks deserted it because of both Zoroastrian and Muslim pursuits.(16) This was the original home of the

Barmak family which worked in the Abbasid administration since the days of the caliph al-Mansur, many members of which were ministers under the caliph al-Rashid. Their great ancestor, Barmak, a Buddhist, was reported to be the custodian of Nubhar.(17)

It is known that Balkh was ceded, after the tenth century CE, to what is now called Mazar-i-Sharif.(18) It may be that Buddhism lingered in Bamiyan because it had a political entity in that area. Effectively, the ruling family there was a Buddhist one known as the "Shirians," meaning "king" or "chief" but not "lion" as Muslims had understood from the singular form of the word. The family converted to Islam in the ninth century CE and stayed in power for a short time until it was finally removed from power by the constant pressure of the Saffarid and Ghaznavid conquests. Ya'qub b. Layth al-Safar pillaged and destroyed the big Buddhist temple in the area which is reported to have contained great riches.(19)

The first source to introduce Muslims to Buddhist culture was, then, a misleading one, represented by the spreading statues and sculptures of the Buddha whether standing in temples or open spaces, or carved in stone. The second source were the Shamans who were too few to be spotted in Afghanistan during the seventh and eighth centuries, but many more of them were seen in later times in Turkistan and along the Silk Road in the ninth and tenth centuries.(20) Shamans were linked to Buddhist statues early on, which may account for why Ibn Hanbal viewed the Shamans as “Mushrikeen”--i.e. those who associate other deities with the unique God.

In Josef Van Ess’s report of the same account, however, (where he mentions the triumph of the Mutakallima and rational theology) maintains that the Shamanism mentioned here does not believe in a God.(21) The American Orientalist Richard Frank believes that all ideas and concepts said to be those of Buddhists, in the debate opposing them to Jahm b. Safwan and in al-Shahristani’s

heresiography are, at best, derived from the ideas of Greek natural philosophers and contradicting what was known of the Buddhist concept of Nirvana.(22)

Thus, the many Buddha statues, which Muslims later came to realize were not the objects of worship, remained a controversial point among Shamanist tribes, causing them uncertainty and discomfort. Shamanists were, therefore, considered heretics, the most prominent of whom in the view of Muslims being the Manicheans. But Muslims could not place Buddhists in the same category as Manicheans because of their different practices, even though the Muslims' first impression of both Buddhists and Manicheans was that they were heretics. Many centuries passed before Muslims finally considered Buddhists as an entirely independent group, after they had already considered them to be somehow linked with Hindus, Zoroastrians and the star-worshipping Sabians.(23)

There is, yet, a third and more direct source to Muslim knowledge regarding

Buddhism that could have been found, had travelers such as Abu Zayd al-Balkhi and al-Biruni tried to examine the matter more closely. This direct source was represented by two beautiful texts from texts Muslims already knew. The first text is the chapter in *Kalila wa Dimna* translated from Pahlavai (to which it had been transmitted from Sanskrit in the sixth century CE) by Ibn al-Muqaffah (d. 139/756). The chapter in question is entitled “Iath, Plath, and Irakhit,” an independent whole chapter where a Buddhist monk explains the concepts of vice and virtue as seen by the Buddha through a lengthy conversation between a king and his Buddhist minister. In this dialogue, the monk clearly separates Hindu from Buddhist ideas.(24)

The same period that witnessed the translation of the astronomical and mathematical book “Sin Hind” from Sanskrit also saw the translation of a second text, a direct transmission of Buddhist ideas. It was the Buddha’s biography, as entitled “Balwahaar and Bodhisattva.”(25) It concerns the firstborn

deprived of a real father and refusing the earthly pleasures, who attained the supreme truth with self-discipline as his only real practice.

In the same period, the famous Sufi Ibrahim b. Adham (d. 161/777) first appeared. His biography is similar to the Buddha's: a king's son, or the Prince of Balkh who followed an internal call and renounced the principality and prestige to lead a life of wandering and pious poverty, seeking true knowledge.(26)

If we concede that the Buddhism-tinted chapter of *Kalila wa Dimna* may have been somewhat veiled (and projecting an image of conflict between Buddhism and Hinduism which led to the Buddhist retreat from India)--all of which are difficult elements to perceive even for the accurate al-Biruni--we must say that the text on Buddha and the ideas it contains are crystal clear. Its translator may have been a Buddhist, well versed in eloquent Arabic.(27) The main reason behind the attitude of mystery and repulsion on the part of



Muslim writers may have been the absence of divinity from the Buddha's life and ideas. They recognized this lack later, as we mentioned, and changed their view of Buddhists from "idolators" to "unbelievers."

The Buddha's biography was a strange one compared to the general values of the then-rising Islamic empire. While the Muslims were at their peak in prosperity and victory, Buddhism was retracting slowly in presence and philosophy, which made for less occasions of either positive or negative encounters. Muslims were in the habit of learning of a new religion through its sacred texts and writings, whether it be a religion mentioned in the Quran, like the Sabians, or not, like Hinduism and Buddhism. Muslims only saw contemplation and wandering searches in Buddhism but were not familiar with its texts. All the high temples and big statues were added to this impression and were perceived by the public as signs of paganism.

## **Part Two:**

Muhammad Tahir al-Tannir, from Beirut, published a book on pagan beliefs in other religions (1330/1911) which included a chapter on "Paganism in Buddhism." This publication coincided with a period of new and positive impressions of Asia and the Asian religions, replacing the older, mostly oblivious view.(28) At the beginning of the book, al-Tannir mentions his motives in writing it and revealing the pagan practices in religions other than Islam. He lists the names of roughly ten books and periodicals which he felt had attacked Islam. They were all written by Protestant missionaries, from Pfander to Muir. This is an entirely different context, related to Muslim-Christian debates, the new phase of which was inaugurated in the mid-nineteenth century, and it has no relation to Buddhism or Hinduism. The author, nevertheless, states that "the other reason behind this book is to reveal the truth and to accomplish the humane brotherly duty which our faith has imposed on us as an obligation. We have to call people to

the right and true and we should invite them to share our best possession, our faith.”(29)

Real change and interest, among Arab Muslims, in Buddhism did not start with curiosity about other religions. Rather, it was initiated by politics and world affairs. Muslims were greatly relieved at the Japanese rise in the end of the nineteenth century, up to the Russian defeat in 1905. The fighting elite at the time, combating European colonialism (including the Russians who battled the Ottomans and annexed Muslim territories in Central Asia and the Caucasus), perceived the Japanese rise as being driven by personal effort and removed from European aspirations for hegemony as a challenge to the West, a revenge of the vulnerable peoples of Asia and Africa and a hope that they can be inspired by it some time. Articles and poems written by Egyptians and Syrians praise the firmness of the Japanese nation and call upon Arabs to do the same as the Japanese have, either through standing up to the colonialists, or through progress.(30)

The 1911 Chinese revolution which abolished the Chinese empire and turned China into a republic whose symbol was Sun Yat Sen was also welcomed in all Arabic writings, which overlooked the Japanese incursion in China.(31) We can compare this mysterious hope in the political rise of Asia during the first quarter of the twentieth century to the general relief toward the political Asian rise in the last quarter of the same century. This second rise, in which China strongly participated along with other countries of Eastern Asia, was used in different forms according to social and political groups whose relation to this rise was linked to the conflict between the society and the state's identities, for internal reasons. Similarly, the Arabic reaction to the first rise was diverse and opposing arguments were formulated. Enthusiasts of nationalism used the first rise as proof that they were right in saying that colonialism can be fought and progress can be made either without it or while facing it. Those who were Islamic-oriented promoted, in either

case, extremely close relations between Japan and Islam.(32)

The delight Muslims took in both cases of the rise of Japan and Asian, is linked to the fact that Japan reached this stage through the preservation of its religious and national traditions. For Arabs, this rise showed that tradition is in no way a hindrance to progress, but rather it can be a motivation and element of progress.(33) This is the context in which Arab Muslims had renewed interest in Chinese Confucianism and Buddhism, and Japanese Buddhism and Shintoism, all religions that were at the heart of using tradition for liberation and progress. But even this generalized interest in major Asian religions, and Buddhism in particular, on the part of Islamists too, was still distorted when it was the matter of details. Liberals and reformists highlight the disciplinary ethical side of Buddhists while noting that Buddhism is not as much a religion as it is a profound ethical and disciplined belief, just like Confucianism.

In a small handbook on religions of the Far East, Omar Inayat writes that truth to Buddha has four foundations: unsatisfied desires hurt, desire is the source of pain, to remove pain one should remove desire, and to stop pain one should follow the moderate path.” He adds: “His teachings say nothing of God or giving sacrifices. His only concern was spreading love. He spoke of ten chains, five forbidden things and four desires that he asks his followers to leave because when man controls his self and leads it to the righteous path then he shall reach the high ideal.”(34)

Both Muhammad Abdallah Daraz and Muhammad Abd al-Minhim find it difficult to live the confused Buddhist identity, somewhere between religion and ethical philosophy. They return to the philosophy of religion (in Christian tradition), and argue that the absence of a divine presence deprives this ethical system of its soul and meaning. The proof of this lack, according to them, is the emergence of traditions of worship and

divination inside Buddhism itself or among some Buddhist schools.(35)

Amidst this confusion concerning the role Buddhism played by in the first Asian rise, Egyptian intellectual and politician Muhammad Hasanein Haykal reached a compromise that reconciled both parties. He considered the rise of East Asia as a general one which was on the verge of establishing a new "East." He starts his book, therefore, with the study of European-Ottoman relations and moves on to examine the impacts of movements of thought in shaping the Arab world. He then introduces a summary of Buddhism, transmitted from a German book, itself translated from French, and reaches Ghandi and his renewal of Hinduism through the path of non-violent action, only to get to the search of Islam and new Asian culture in his conclusion, wondering how Buddhist discipline could fuse with Islam's spiritual force.(36)

In July of 2001, the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Buddhist supreme spiritual authority,

spoke of the Buddhist religious revival, and the ways in which it differed from other Hindu, Muslim and Christian revival movements. He said that the Buddhist revival is more of a return to one's self. He did not wish to speak of Hindu revival, which is closer to a national movement than anything. He said that the problem is found in Christianity and Islam, since revival in these religions considers salvation to be an exclusive truth, and both of these religions tends to eliminate the other. That is why a complete reconsideration of the real roles these religions played throughout history and the present time seems necessary.(37)

The Dalai Lama gave this speech a short time before September 11th, and a year after Taliban had destroyed the two historical Buddhist statues in Afghanistan. Fundamentalism is raging in many religions today, including Protestantism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism and Islam. None of these religions attacked the home ground of the United States, however, except al-Qaeda



which did it in the name of Islam. The U.S. now leads several countries of the world in a war on Islamic terror, a war which has led to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and to tightening the grip on millions of Muslims in Europe and the U.S. Arabs and Muslims are haunted by the thought that they are victims while non-Muslims claim that they are the victims of Islamic racism: Is this violent-turning extremism a natural part of Islam or any other religion? If not, then since it also exists in Hinduism, which is independent of Islam, how can we deal with it, and is there a way out of it?

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[1] -Thinker and consulting editor at *al-Tasamoh* Magazine.

2 - YAQUT, *The Encyclopedia of Countries*, under Bamiyan.

3 - Ibn al-Nadim mentions in p. 409 of *al-Fihrist* that he has drawn his information on India from “Communities and Religions of India”, copied by the philosopher al-Kindi (252/ 863) from an unknown source. In page 411, he adds however that he has drawn his information on the Bod from a source “other than the copy al-Kindi made”. Ibn al-Nadim’s unknown source first related the interest in India to Yahya b. Khalid al-Barmaki, Harun al-Rashid’s minister who “dispatched a man to get him certain drugs from India and write of the country’s religions, thus this book came to be”. The Barmakia family is originally from Balkh. Their ancestor, “Barmak”, is said to have been a priest in Nubihar, a Buddhist temple which was a source of confusion to the enemies of the Barmakia, who considered it later on a Zoroastrian fire temple.

4 - Ibid, p.411.

5 - Ibid, p.410.

- 6 - IBN SAB'IN, *Bud al-aref*, compiled and introduced by Dr. George Kattoura, Dar Al Andalous and Dar al-Kindi, Beirut, first ed, 1978.
- 7 - IBN HANBAL Ahmad, *Response to Jahmism and Heretics*, published by Abdelrahman Omeira, Riyad, 1982, pp. 102-104. Al Jahm Bin Safwan was killed in the wake of his participation in a rebellion in Khurasan, in the last days of the Omayyad Empire. Other critical and detailed studies of this and other accounts on Shamanism can be found Joseph Van Ess's book. VAN ESS Joseph, *Die Erkenntnislehre des Abudaddin Al-Ici*, Wiesbade 1966, pp.257-265.
- 8 - AL SHAHRASTANI (548/1153 AD), *al-Milal wa al-nihal*, section of Fassel by Ibn Hazm, V.1 pp. 268-269.
- 9- IBN AL NADIM, *al-Fihrist*, p.408.
- 10 - Ibid, p.408.
- 11 - Al BIRUNI, *A Research on the rationally accepted or rejected Indian beliefs*, the

Ottoman department of sciences in Haydar Abad, 1958, p.206. look in another critical study of Al Bayrouni's view on India. OMLIL Ali, *Of the Legitimate Difference*, Dal Al Aman, 2001, pp. 34-93.

12 - Ibid, p.14; strangely enough, Al Bayrouni mentions in the references a letter called "the talk of Bamiyan's two statues."

13 - BARTHOLD, R.W, "Der Iranische Buddhismus und sein Verhaltnis zum Islam," in Pavry, J.D.C, [ed] *Oriental Studies in honor of Cursetji Erachnji*, London, 1933, pp. 112-136.

14 - WINK Arde, *Al Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, Brill 2002, V.1, pp. 42-43, 72-73, 226-228.

15 - AL MAS'UDI, *Muruj al-dhahab*, published by Charles Bella, Lebanese University, 1964-67, V.1 pp. 227-230. Yaqut, *Encyclopedia of Countries*, under Nubhar.

- 16 - AL BALADHURI, *The Conquests of Countries*, published by De Guillet, p.318-19.
- 17 - Islamic Knowledge Base, New Publication, under Baramika 1033/1. "Barmak" appears to be not a person's names but in fact is Sanskrit for Chief or Custodian.
- 18 - Ibid, under Mazar Charif.
- 19 - Ibid, under Bamiyan.
- 20 - WINK A. *Al-Hind*, Op. Cit II. pp.334-357.
- 21 - VAN ESS J. *Erkenntlislehre*, Op.Cit pp.257-58.
- 22 - FRANK Richard, "Several Fundamental Assumptions of the Mutazila," in *Studia Islamica*, 33 [1971] pp.9-13.
- 23 - AL BAGHDADI, *al-Farq bayn al-Farq*, p.268. Al SHAHRASTANI, *al-Milal wa al-nihal*, 227/1. Compare to: MONNOT Guy, *Islam et Religions*, Maisonneuve et Larose, Paris, p.42-46, 215.

- 24 - *Kalila wa Dimna*, published by Luis Chikho, pp. 247-259.
- 25 - *Plover and Bodhisattva*, published by Daniel Jimaret, Beirut 1986. Check the introduction by Jimaret pp.11-20.
- 26 -Al SALMI, *The Degrees of Sufism*, written by SHREIBA Nouredine, Cairo 1964, pp. 26-32. *The Kushran letter*, written by MAHMOUD Abdelhalim and BIN AL SHARIF Mahmoud, Cairo 1967, pp.36-41.
- 27 - Compare with *Plover and Bodhisattva*, pp. 39-40/ 70-73. look into the conditions and specifications of the Islamic vision of the Other in AFFAYA Mohammad Nouredine, *The Image of the Other in Medieval Arabic thought*, Arab Cultural Center, Beirut, 2000 pp. 74-99.
- 28 - Compare to BASHA Muhammad Ali, *The Japanese Trip*, 1909 and Kamel, Mustapha's book on Japan, two years earlier, as well as a report by Sheikh Ali Ahmad Al Jarjawi on a 1908 trip.

- 29 - Al TANNIR Muhammad Tahir, *Paganism in Religions*, Beirut, 1330 Hijri/1911 AD pp. 8-10.
- 30 - HOURANI Albert, *Arab Thought during the Nahda*, Beirut, 1972, translated by Karim Azkoul, pp. 178-190. and JEDEAN Fahmi, *The Bases of Progress to Modern Day Muslim Thinkers*, Al Dar al Arabiya for research and publication, Beirut, 1979 pp. 311-319.
- 31 - LASHIN, Muhammad Tahir, *New China and president Sun Yat-sen*, Cairo, 1916. AL RAFII, Abdil Rahman , *The 1919 Revolution*, Dar Anahda Al Masriyya, 1946, pp.38-9.
- 32 - SINNO Abdel Rauf, "Calling the Japanese to Islam in the early twentieth century," in *al-Ijtihad* magazine, 1987 V.36, pp. 158-186.
- 33 - Abdel Fadil Mahmoud, *Japan and the Asian Experiences*, Dar Al Shourouk, 2001, pp.186-211. and DAHER Massoud, *The Arabic Rise and the Japanese Rise*, Center

for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 2000, pp.211-214.

34 - INAYAT Omar, Al Akaed, and introduction- *Religions of the Far East*, a special author edition, Cairo, 1928, p.43-44.

35 - DARRAZ Muhammad Abdallah, *Religion, Ethics and the Great Event*, Cairo 1957, pp.115-122. AYSH Muhammad Abdel Minhim, *Religious and Ethical Schools of Thought*, the Anglo-Egyptian Library, 1969, pp. 46-52. Since the nineteen sixties, certain Arabic and Islamic universities like al-Azhar have given classes in religions. Many school textbooks were written on this subject, the most famous of which is the one by Ahmad Chalabi. One book which was widely distributed is Karl Jasper's *Humanist Philosophers: Socrates, Buddha, Confucius and Jesus*, translated by Adel Awa, 1975. Ahmad Al Shantashawi had issued under the Iqraa collection, issued by Dar al Maarif al Masriya his book, *The Three Sages: Zarathustra, Buddha and Confucius*, 1958



36 - HAIKAL Muhammad Hasanein, *The New East*, Al NAhda al Masriya Bookshop, 1962. This direction, especially pursued by Egyptians, can be also checked in ABDEL MALAK Anwar, *Eastern Winds*, Cairo, Dar Al Nahda, 1984.

37- Appeared in: *The International Herald Tribune*, July 18th, 2001.