ASH-SHA'B IN ARABIC POLITICAL LITERATURE OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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In the article "The Language of the Muslim Reformers of the Late 19th Century," the writer pointed out the fact that the Muslim reformers of this period, at-Tahṭāwī (d. 1873), ‘Abduh (d. 1905), al-Kawākibī (d. 1902), either did not at all use ash-Sha'b in their writings, e.g. at-Tahṭāwī, or if it was used, it was used sparingly, and never in contexts dealing with sovereignty. In these contexts, one finds al-Ummah.

The point was also made that Muṣṭafā Kāmil (d. 1908) who had a more secular view of the Egyptian Ummah, appears to be the first Muslim reformer to use ash-Sha'b with the emotional tone which re-echoes today in the Arab world, as for example in such statements as:

"Do you not see that the great are as they are because the people (afrād ash-Sha'b) carry them on their heads and obey their commands? If the current of the people (tiyār ash-Sha'b) turned against them what would they do? Could they stand before it? No, indeed. The people (ash-Sha'b) are the sole true power and ruler to whose will the strongest must submit (inna ash-Sha'b huwa 'l-quwah al-wahidah al-ḥaqiqiyah wa huwa 's-sulṭān alladhi yakhdal li iradatihi akbar al-`azam al-aqwiya')."

In short, we are on the way to what Prof. Kerr in his article "The Emergence of a Socialist Ideology in Egypt" calls:

"...the great shapeless mass mystically known to the Arab Nationalist Press as al-Sha'b."

From the above, it is apparent that we are faced with the problems of (1) delineating the process for the introduction of ash-Sha'b into Arabic political literature of the 19th century—a literature in which al-Ahālī, al-Ummah, al-Jumhūr, Abnā' al-Watan, and
ar-Ra'tiyah predominate\(^1\) and (2) outlining the process for ash-
Sha'b's particularly significant association with sovereignty as evi-
denced in the above cited statement of Muṣṭāfa Kāmil.

An approach to these problems came to mind from the writer's sugges-
tion that the absence of \textit{ash-Sha'b} in the writings of at-
Ṭaḥṭāwī, for example, could perhaps be attributed to the separatist
and racial connotations of the root \textit{Sh'b}, and to his concern for the
unity of the \textit{Ummah}—both Islamic and Egyptian—whose basis and
organization was rooted in the \textit{Sharī'ah}.\(^2\) Thus, an examination of
the writings of Syrian-Christian authors of this period—authors
who would have a more secular viewpoint—would perhaps reveal
a more extensive usage of \textit{ash-Sha'b}.

The possible fruitfulness of this approach was strengthened by
the observation that in the major Arabic translations of the Bible,
i.e. the 1671 translation, the Van Dyke-Beirut translation of the
1860's and the Jesuit translation of 1878-1882, \textit{ash-Sha'b} predo-
minates rather than the expected \textit{al-Aḥālī}.\(^3\)

Turning to the writings of Niqūlā at-Turk (d. 1828), Ḥa'idar ash-
Shihābī (d. 1835), Ibrāhīm an-Najjār (d. 1864), and Tānnūs ash-
Shidyāq (d. 1859), one makes several interesting observations:

1. Though \textit{ash-Sha'b} is found in these works, it is used at times
most sparingly as in the case of ash-Shidyāq.\(^4\)

2. There seems to be no time factor for \textit{ash-Sha'b}'s usage, i.e., the
frequency of \textit{ash-Sha'b}'s occurrence in a work of 1859 can be no
greater than that of a work of 1828, and 1835.\(^5\)

\(^1\) The following major and interesting works are but a few examples wherein these terms
predominate to the almost complete exclusion of \textit{ash-Sha'b}: al-Jabarī's \textit{Ajā'ib al-Athār};
Khāīr ad-Dīn at-Tūnisī's \textit{Aqwa'am al-Masālik}; 'All Bāshā Mubārak's \textit{LĀm ad-Dīn} and \textit{Ta-
Ṣalīm an-Naqqāsh's \textit{Mīr lī l-Mīriyīn}; Muḥammad Bāshā Fāhmi's \textit{al-Bahr at-Zākhīr}; Aḥmad
156: "It should be noted that the term \textit{ash-Sha'b} in the sense of "the people" is not used in
the writings of the members of the School of Languages whose work at-Ṭaḥṭāwī supervised,
e.g. Abu Suʿūd, Khaḍīfah Maḥmūd and Aḥmad 'Ubaid at-Ṭaḥṭāwī". This observation is
also valid for the major newspapers of the period 1860-1890, e.g. \textit{al-Waṣṣāf} al-Misriyāh,

\(^2\) Zolondek, op. cit., p. 156.

\(^3\) See Post, pp. 332-334 for incidence of \textit{Sha'b}. Cf. Ibid., pp. 514,54 and 43-44 for incidence
of \textit{Qawm}, \textit{Ahl} and \textit{Ummah} respectively.

\(^4\) See Shidyāq, pp. 199, 617.

\(^5\) \textit{Ash-Sha'b} is used less frequently in Shidyāq's work than in the histories of Niqūlā at-
Turk and Ḥa'idar ash-Shihābī. Cf. Shidyāq, pp. 199, 617 with Niqūlā, pp. 3, 4, 11-12, 195-6
and Ḥa'idar, pp. 51, 73, 93, 105, 120 ff. Cf. however, \textit{Miṣbāḥ} pp. 7, 18, 23, 29, 86, 150-151,