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*Ar-Riḥla in the service of An-Nahḍa.*

*Kitāb taḥlīs al-ibrīz fī talḥīs Bārīz Rifā‘a aṭ-Ṭaḥṭāwī*

*Kitāb taḥlīs al-ibrīz fī talḥīs Bārīz* by Rifā‘a aṭ-Ṭaḥṭāwī regarded as a hallmark work of Arab Renaissance (An-Nahḍa), was the only detailed description of a European country in Arabic until 1850 and, until World War One, was on the required reading list for all Egyptian clerks and officials.

In this work, the reformer describes the political, social, cultural and educational institutions that he encountered in Paris and regarded as a model worth replicating in his homeland, in accordance with the hadith “Seek knowledge even as far as China” and “Wisdom is the weapon of the faithful, search for it everywhere, even among the infidels”, and the key motto: “He who walks first takes priority.” The Egyptian was fully convinced that “knowledge is the greatest good, the most important of important things and the who has it reaps its fruits in both the earthly and eternal life”. Furthermore, the reformer did not doubt that his work, in which he characterized “the sciences and arts in the way that Europeans do and outlined what they think about them and how they create them”, “will rouse all the Muslim nations out of a deep sleep.” The renewal of their political, social, economic and educational institutions that he called for in his literary and other activity, in order to overcome the backwardness inherited from the Ottomans and Mamluks, could be effected only with the help of modern knowledge and science and, consequently, the opening up of the Orient to the achievements of Western culture and civilization. This conviction was the starting point for his deliberations, and he decided to express them in the form of *riḥla* in which he describes his travel to the West, not an interesting destination for Arab travelers in the preceding centuries. He thus employs *riḥla*, it in the service of an-nahḍa.