

An Imam In Paris: Al-Tahtawi's Visit To France 1826-1831 (Saqi Essentials)

Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi



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"*An Imam in Paris* lets us share the responses of a highly intelligent scholar ... Daniel L. Newman is to be congratulated on making the first translation into English of this remarkable book, and on supporting the text with a first-class introduction and with footnotes that are as full as one could wish"—*Times Literary Supplement*

"A touchstone for thinking about the tangled relations between Islam and modernity ... the most amazing and entertaining curiosity"—Matthew J. Reisz, *Jewish Quarterly*

In the 1820s, Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, a young Muslim cleric, travelled to Paris as a leading member of the first Egyptian educational mission, where, during a stay of five years, he documented his observations on European culture.

His account, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz* (*The Quintessence of Paris*), is one of the earliest and most influential records of the Muslim encounter with Enlightenment-era's European ideas, introducing ideas of modernity to his native land. Al-Tahtawi's work offers invaluable insight into early conceptions of Europe and the "Other". His observations are as vibrant and palpable today as they were over one hundred and fifty years ago; informative and often acute, to very humorous effect.

An irrefutable classic, this new edition of the first English translation is of seminal value. It is introduced and carefully annotated by a scholar fluent in the life, times, and milieu of its narrator.

Daniel L. Newman is professor of Arabic and course director of the master's program in Arabic-English Translation and Interpreting at the University of Durham. His other works include *Modern Arabic Short Stories: A Bilingual Reader* (with Ronak Husni, Saqi Books, 2008).

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