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Between the East and the West
Aqwam al-masālik fī ma'rifat al-ḥwāl al-mamālik Ḥayr of
ad-Dīn at-Tūnusī (1822-1890)

“Wisdom is the weapon of a faithful one, he should gather it wherever it can be found” (*Al-ḥikma dālat al-mu'min, ya'ḥuduhā haytu waḡadahā*)¹

The influence of the West on the world of Islam began at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, when the English appeared in India and in the Near East, the French in North Africa, the Russians in the Middle Asia and in the Caucasus, or even earlier when the Portuguese weakened the power of the Ottoman Turkey, depriving them of the monopoly on the Indian Ocean and crossing the Persian Gulf in the 17th century. At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, the expansion of the industrial Europe in the Near East was significant. It is believed that the key event which influenced the contemporary Arab World was Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798². On one hand, the Muslim society was forced to accept the European achievements and, on the other hand, to express its own identity in the face of the foreign influence. After the initial period of simply following the European achievements which conduced to the military, technical, educational, administrative and legal reforms, a new view on matters appeared - the Western influence in all domains of life eventually raised the resistance of the traditional Muslim community against the westernisation, and above all, against the colonial aspirations of the West to subdue the Arab and Muslim world in terms of economy and politics³.

1 Ḥayr ad-Dīn at-Tūnusī, *Aqwam al-masālik fī ma'rifat al-ḥwāl al-mamālik*, Tunis, 2000, p. 98. The author quotes a sentence known in Muslim tradition.

2 Napoleon's expedition to Egypt is described, among others, in the monograph by P. Strathern, *Napoleon w Egipcie*, Poznań 2009.

3 The political and economic expansion of France in Maghreb is discussed in the work of A. Dziubiński *Podbój Magrebu przez Francję 1830-1934*, Wrocław 1984.

The reforms of sultans Maḥmūd II⁴ and al-Mağīda I⁵ in the Ottoman Empire and of the “viceroy” of Egypt, Muḥammada ‘Alī⁶On, resulted from the confrontation with the technological, economic and ideological expansion of the West. It was under the reign of the latter that Egypt started to play the main role in the Arab civilisational revival known as *An-Nahḍa*. The aim of these concepts was to find mechanisms for solving problems brought about by the power and the supremacy of the West in terms of science, technology, political and state institutions and modern morality. Thus, they were aimed at finding the answer to the fundamental question of how the Arab and Muslim civilisation could strengthen itself in order to face the European civilisation and become a part of the modern world.

The partisans of modernization argued that Islam is able to face the contemporary world and that not only can it be reconciled with reason, progress and social solidarity, but the roots of these values can also be found in the teachings of Islam. Such views were represented by the creator of pan-Muslim idea, Ğamāl ad-Dīn Al-Afġānī⁷, who postulated the synthesis of

4 Maḥmūd II (1785-1839) was the Turkish sultan in 1808-1839. He introduced reforms by establishing the rules of wielding power, reorganized the army following the European patterns and dissolved the janissaries corps in 1826.

5 ‘Abd al-Mağīd (1823-1861) was the Turkish sultan in 1839-1861. He initiated *tanzīmāt* („cleansing”) by proclaiming the *Hatt-i şerif* edict in 1839, on the basis of which a legislative council, a ministry of foreign affairs, a ministry of internal affairs and a ministry of trade were formed. On the basis of another edict, *Hatt-i Hümayun* of 1856, he reformed the system of the province administration and the tax system. In 1850, he introduced the first trade code and in 1869 he initiated the work on the civil conduct code (See: R.H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876*, Princeton 1963).

6 Muḥammad ‘Alī (1805-1848) was the „viceroy” of Egypt in 1805-1848 and 1848-1849. Historians call him the originator of the power of this country. Thanks to the centralization of power he conducted agricultural, economic and educational reforms based on the European patterns. In Polish literature, the activities of Muḥammad ‘Alī are discussed in B. Stępniewska-Holzer’s work, *Muhammad Ali*, Wrocław 1978.

7 Ğamāl ad-Dīn Al-Afġānī (1838-1897) was perceived as the originator of the idea of pan-Islamism. His reformatory thoughts were a particular combination of modernism and traditionalism as he postulated the necessity of following European patterns in the development of Islam and drawing on the Muslim rationalism (mainly Mutazilah) by proposing the concept of imitating the West and returning to the original values of Islam. He participated in the Salafi movement that proclaimed the return to the tradition of the noble ancestors – *as-salaf aṣ-ṣāliḥ*. His main work is *Ar-Radd ‘alā ād-dahriyyīn (Reply to the materialists)* (See: J. Danecki, *Podstawowe wiadomości o islamie*, Warszawa 2007, p. 449-45, H.A. Jamsheer, *Historia powstania islamu jako doktryny społeczno-politycznej*, Warszawa 2009, p. 110-121; H.A. Jamsheer, *Reforma władzy i społeczeństwa w arabsko-*

reformed and modernised values of the Islamic culture with the values adopted from the West, believing that it is possible to adapt Islam for the needs of the modern world. His conceptions were developed in practice by one of his apprentices and co-workers, the partisan of pan-Arabism, Muḥammad ‘Abduh⁸, and were continued by other representatives of the Arab-Muslim world such as, among others, a Tunisian, Ḥayr ad-Dīn at-Tūnusī⁹. His socio-political thought, which clearly combined the admiration for the European achievements with the faith in the power of Islam, was presented in his work *Aqwam al-masālik fī ma‘rifat al-ḥwāl al-mamālik* (*The simplest way to recognise the situation in the kingdoms*), which aim, according to the author, was : “First of all: to encourage the people of politics and science, who are characterised by honesty and firmness, to, as long as they can, search for the means leading to the improvement of the situation of the Muslim community and its development by widening the range of knowledge and science, to pave the ways leading to the

muzułmańskiej myśli politycznej wieków XIX i XX, Łódź 2008, p. 37-49.

⁸ Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) was the most distinguished representative of the Arab reformism, the follower and the close associate of Ġamāl ad-Dīn Al-Afġānī. He aspired to modernize the Arab and Islam world and Egypt by harmonizing the Muslim tradition with the European achievements, on the basis of the presupposed rationalism of Islam. His concepts in this matter were presented in *Risālat at-tawḥīd* (*Letter of monotheism*). He deduced the idea of pan-Arabism from the idea of pan-Islamism, which was later on developed by other thinkers in accordance with his concepts. Thus, accordingly, the identity of Egyptians would be composed of three elements: Egyptian nationality, Arabic culture and the religion of Islam. Refer to: J. Danecki, op.cit. p. 451-452; H.A. Jamsheer, *Historia powstania islamu...*, p. 121-133; H.A. Jamsheer, *Reforma władzy...*, p. 51-66.

⁹ Ḥayr ad-Dīn at-Tūnusī (1822-1890) was called the „father of Tunisian revival” (Abū an-Naḥḍa at-Tūnisiyya). He was a distinguished politician and reformist of Circassian origin, Minister of the Navy (1857-1862), chairman of the Supreme Council (*Al-Maġlis al-Akbar*, 1860-1862), Prime Minister (1873-1877), member of the government committee preparing the preliminary constitution (*‘Ahd al-amān*, 1857) and the *Fundamental Law* (*Ad-Dustūr*, 1861), initiator of the first official government monitor “Ar-Rā’id at-Tūnusī” (from 1860), Minister of the State, and then Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Caliphate (1878-79). The author of *Aqwam al-masālik fī ma‘rifat al-ḥwāl al-mamālik* (*The simplest way to recognise the situation in the kingdoms*). His life and activity are described in detail in two monographs in French: G.S. Krieken, *Khayr al-Din et la Tunisie (1850 – 1881)*, Leiden 1976 i M. Smida, *Khereddine ministre reformateur*, Tunis 1970 and in works in Arabic - S. Abū Ḥamdān, *Ḥayr ad-Dīn at-Tūnusī*, Beirut 1993; A. Al-Ḥūsī, *Ḥayr ad-Dīn at-Tūnusī – Abū an-Naḥḍa*, Tunis 2004; M. Mazālī, *Ḥayr ad-Dīn raġul ad-dawla*, Tunis 1971; M. Aš-Šamlī, *Ḥayr ad-Dīn Bāšā*, Tunis 1973.

development of the agriculture, trade and stimulate all the sectors of the production and remove the causes of the unemployment. The base of it all is the properly exercised authority which results in security, which in turn breeds hope, and hope which leads to the high quality of work which is experienced by European kingdoms, which can be seen with a naked eye so there is no need to prove that. Secondly: cautioning the Muslims who disdain the matters of others which are praiseworthy and remain in accordance with our laws, because their minds are written with the conviction that it is necessary to avoid non-Muslim rules and non-Muslim activities of any kind”¹⁰.

At-Tūnusī distinguished himself from other initiators of changes in the world of Islam in the 19th century by the fact that he combined in a unique way two different kinds of activity – that of a reformer and that of a politician who realized in practice the ideas he had developed in theory. Having received a comprehensive traditional and modern education, he quickly made the subsequent steps of his professional career, first a military one¹¹ and then a political one. He fulfilled many important functions from the minister (*wazīr*) to the prime minister (*wazīr akbar*). He participated in preparations of the preliminary constitution named ‘*Ahd al-amān (Treaty of protection)*, and after the fundamental law was passed, he took the position of the chairman of the parliament (*kāhyat al-mağlis al-akbar*), which allowed him to introduce a series of reforms. Their outline – related not only to Tunisia but also to the whole world of Islam – was presented in *The simplest way to recognise the situation in the kingdoms*¹², where he considered the reasons of its backwardness and fall as well as the necessity to introduce changes using the experience of others, that is of the West. He pointed out that the first step leading to these changes should be to recognize the methods which gave Europeans their present power, and the

10 H. At-Tūnusī, op. cit., p. 98.

11 In 1840 he joined the cavalry, an elitist formation created by the Bey. It was formed exclusively of people of Mameluk origin. He quickly made a brilliant career, becoming first the leader of the troop (*banbāšī al-ḥayyāla*), the chief commander (*alāy amīr*) and the colonel (*amīr alāy*) and finally the general-commander of the division (*amīr liwā’ al-ḥayyāla*)

12 Among other commentary works of At-Tūnusī we can find the autobiography: *A mes enfants: memories de ma vie privée et politique* and the essay *Mon programme* published in 1930’s in „Revue Tunisienne” issued in Tunis by Institut de Carthage. These works, however, do not add anything new to his reformatory thoughts presented in detail in *Aqwam al-masālik fī ma’rifat al-ḥwāl al-mamālik*.

second one to accept those which are useful for the Muslim and Arab world without rejecting its own values. The starting point of political, social, economic and institutional reforms should be a meeting between the culture of the West and that of Islam. This is how At-Tūnusī introduced a new perspective on the reality of Arab and Muslim communities, including the people of Tunisia¹³. Although his reformist conceptions did not play a significant role outside his homeland, because he did not participate in the main current of reformism of the 19th century focused in the Ottoman Turkey, Egypt and India, the *Aqwam al-masālik fī maʿrifat aḥwāl al-mamālik* which presented the quintessence of his thoughts, is perceived as one of the most distinguished Arabic works dealing with politics and the leading work of the Arab revival.

The simplest way to recognise the situation in the kingdoms, published in 1868¹⁴ when At-Tūnusī was at the peak of his activity (after having spent 20 years in army and politics, he was 46 at that time), is a full and comprehensive presentation of his political thought. It consists of three chapters: *Prolegomena (Al-Muqaddima)*¹⁵, *History (At-Tārīḥ)*¹⁶ and *Review (Taḳārīz)*¹⁷. The first chapter, dedicated to the analysis of the Arab and Muslim world subjected politically and administratively to the Ottoman Empire, includes the presentation of his reformist concepts, the discussion of political, social and economic problems, and finally, the methods of

13 The history of Tunisia is the subject of the monograph in Polish: A. Dziubiński, *Historia Tunezji*, Wrocław 1993 and of many works in Arabic, among others: H. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Ḥulāṣa tāriḥ Tūnis*, Tunis 1966; A. Al-ʿUrwī, *Tārīḥ al-Maḡrib*, Beirut 1977 i A. Ibn Abī aḍ-Ḍayyāf, *Ittiḥāf ahl az-zamān bi-aḥbār Tūnis wa mulūk ʿahd al-amān*, Tunis 1963-1966. See also: A. Parzymies, *Tunezja*, Warszawa 1984, p. 31-54 i E. Szymański, *Tunezja*, Warszawa 1971, p. 26-102. Text of the constitution can be found in: Ibn Abī aḍ-Ḍayyāf, op. cit., chapter 5, p. 32-62 and Ganiage J., *Les origines du protectorat français et Tunisie 1861-1881*, Tunis 1968, p. 76-88.

14 At-Tūnusī finished writing *Aqwam al-masālik fī maʿrifat aḥwāl al-mamālik* on September 9, 1867. Four months later, on January 14, 1868, he obtained the bey's consent to publish the work officially. It was printed in the form of brochures and the last one was published in August 1868. Since then, the book was published three times in its entirety in 1990, 2000 and 2004 by the publishing house of the Ministry of Culture Al-Muḡammaʿ at-Tūnusī li-l-ʿUlūm wa-āl-Adāb wa-āl-Funūn "Bayt al-Ḥikma", with the analysis of the text and the commentary by Maṣṣaf aš-Šanūfī. The manuscript of this work is deposited in the National Library *Dār al-Kutub al-Waṭaniyya* in Tunis, catalogue number 110.

15 H. At-Tūnusī, op. cit., p. 93-208.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 219-809.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 813-909.

solving them proposed by At-Tūnusī on the basis of his experience and the extensive knowledge about the internal situation in Tunisia and in European countries. *Al-Muqaddima* is divided into three sub-chapters: *Reforms (At-Tanzīmāt)*¹⁸, *European civilisation (At-Tamaddun al-Ūrubāwī)*¹⁹ and *Summary of the discoveries and inventions (Talḥīṣ al-muktašafāt wa-ālmuḥtara‘āt)*²⁰.

The second chapter, entitled *History (At-Tārīḥ)*, is the longest one and consists of two volumes. The first one contains twenty sub-chapters dedicated to the Ottoman Empire and European states visited by the author during his travels in diplomatic service (1853-1867)²¹. At-Tūnusī makes a characteristics of Turkey, France, England, Russia, Prussia, German Confederation, Italy, Spain, Sweden and Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Bavaria, Belgium, Portugal, Switzerland, Holy See, the Duchy of Württemberg, Grand Duchy of Baden and Greece, starting from their history and rulers, through political and administrative systems and particular fields of economy to the system of education. The second volume of *History* contains six sub-chapters describing Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Australia and Oceania and containing information of geographical character.

The third and the last chapter is entitled *the Review (Taqārīz)* and contains a collection of twenty-four reviews – full of praise and recognition – written by the distinguished representatives of the scientific and political community in Tunisia²². The great majority of them graduated from the Az-

18 *Ibid.*, p. 93-158.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 159-174.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 175-208.

21 The journeys of Ḥayr ad-Dīna at-Tūnusī include France (1846 and 1853-1857), England (1857), Turkey (1859), France (1861), Sweden, Prussia, Grand Duchy of Baden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, France, Austria, Prussia (1863), France, Italy, Prussia and Turkey (1864), France (1865 and 1867).

22 Authors of the reviews include, among others: Aḥmad Ibn Abī aḍ-Ḍayyāf (1804-1874) – writer, politician and counsel of the Husainids, author of a renowned work on the history of Tunisia: *Ittiḥāf ahl az-zamān bi-aḥbār Tūnis wa-mulūk ‘ahd al-amān*; Muḥammad al-Bāḡī al-Mas‘ūdī (1811-1880) – one of the most famous writers of this time, author of the numerous works, treaties and reviews, his best known publications include *Al-Ḥulāṣat an-naqiyya fī umarā’ Ifriqiyya (Clear summary of the rulers of Ifriqiyya)* and a collection of poems *Al-Bāḡī al-Mas‘ūdī*; Aḥmad Kurayyim (1826-1897) – theologian of the Hanafī school, active participant of the reformatory movement, author of the collection of poems *As-Siḥr al-ḥalāl (Allowed magic)* and a collection of sermons, treaties and literary works dedicated to the Muslim law; Sālim Bū Ḥāḡīb (1828-1925) – lecturer at Az-Zaytūna University, active reformist and politician, member of the editorial board of “Al-Ḥāḡira”

Zaytūna University, and almost one-third belongs to the *'ulamā'*, which is particularly meaningful, because the circles of Tunisian Muslim scholars did not support the reformatory aspirations of At-Tūnusī. Two of the them, namely Aḥmad Ibn Abī aḍ-Ḍayyāf and Muḥammad al-Bāḡī al-Mas'ūdī contributed to the book in a double way. First of all, by choosing examples and quotations from classical works – both of them being experts in legal matters and in Muslim tradition – and, secondly, by furnishing guidelines concerning the Arabic language. This contribution was explained by the author with the following words: “I ask some of my fellow citizens for help in the matters regarding the culture of the word”²³.

(“Current affairs”) newspaper (1888-1912); Muḥammad Bayram (1840-1889) – politician and reformist, editor-in-chief of “Ar-Rā'id at-Tūnusī”, author of the work *Ṣafwat al-i'tibār (In one word)*, at the end of his life he settled down in Egypt where since 1884 he published the “Al-I'lām” (“News”) magazine; Muḥammad al-'Arabī Zarrūq (dates of birth and death unknown) – chairman of the Supreme Council, first headmaster of the middle school *Al-Ma'had aṣ-Ṣādiqī* created in 1857, which was modelled on similar European schools; Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣādiq Tābit (1800-1866) – lecturer of literature and Muslim law at Az-Zaytūna university; Yūnis al-'Arūsī Ibn 'Iyyād (dates of birth and death unknown) – one of the greatest writers of Tunisian *dīwāns* (collections of poems) in 1873-1877, chairman of *Al-Ma'had aṣ-Ṣādiqī* (1886-1888); Muṣṭafā Raḍwān (1826-1905) – professor at Az-Zaytūna University, close associate of Ḥayr ad-Dīn at-Tūnusī; Aḥmad al-Wartatānī (date of birth unknown - 1885) – distinguished lecturer, assistant to Muḥammad Bayram V, editor-in-chief of “Ar-Rā'id at-Tūnusī” magazine (1880-1883); Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad al-Aṣram (dates of birth and death unknown) – grandson of a distinguished writer Muḥammad al-Aṣrama who died 1861); Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan at-Taṭāwunī (1787-1878) – one of the greatest writers of the time, author of numerous stanzaic works, called *muwašṣaḥa* and *qasida* which collection was gathered in the work entitled *Al-Aḡānī at-tūnisiyya (Tunisian songs)*; Muḥammad ar-Riyāḥī (1834-1904) – politician and writer, author of numerous *qasida*, some of them were published in “Ar-Rā'id at-Tūnusī”; Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣarīf (? – 1889) – one of the most distinguished military leaders of Tunisia, he held the post of *naqīb al-iṣrāfī*; Ḥalīl al-Ḥūrī (1836-1907) – Lebanese writer and journalist, since 1858 he published “Ḥadiqat al-Aḥbār” (“Garden of information”), the first Arabic newspaper published with the acceptance of the Ottoman Porte, since 1865 he supervised the publishing and distribution of the press in the province of Syria; Aḥmad Ḡamāl ad-Dīn (1846-1924) – lecturer at Az-Zaytūna University, counsel of sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II; Aḥmad Ibn al-Hūḡa (1830-1896) – Hanafī sheikh, one of the greatest teachers of his time and one of the most famous supporters of Ḥayr ad-Dīn at-Tūnusī, co-originator of the program of reforms of Az-Zaytūna University, one of the founding fathers of *Al-Ma'had aṣ-Ṣādiqī*, author of numerous poems, treaties and theses on Muslim law and religion; Maḥmūd Qābādū (1813-1871) – lecturer at the Military School in Bardo, author of many publications on military issues.

23 Ḥ. At-Tūnusī, op. cit., p. 93.

At-Tūnusī opens his work with the preface (*Ḥuṭbat al-kitāb*)²⁴ where he informs the reader that his book contains the quintessence of his knowledge and summarizes his views concerning birth, development and decline of states: “Truly, after long deliberations on the causes of the development of the societies and their backwardness, generation after generation – on the basis of the available sources on the issues of Muslim and European civilisations written by the authors representing both sides including what was achieved by the Muslim *umma*, and where will it be lead in the future, on the basis of the anticipation based on the experience, I decided to relate to the opinion of the Muslims, which to all extent, I cannot presume as just”²⁵. Throughout his work, the reformist warns Muslims and shows them the means of leaving the backwardness in the sake of progress by taking advantage of the Western knowledge while still respecting the laws and rules of Islam, hence “choosing what is proper for our situation and is in accordance with the letter of the Muslim laws”²⁶.

The Preface is followed by *Prolegomena (Al-Muqaddima)*²⁷ and covers the entirety of the reformist views of the author, making explicit the significance of this part of the work for the remaining content. He begins with the presentation of the two main reasons that induced him to write this work. Thus, the first aim of his book is to encourage people dealing with matters of state and society, the so called “people of politics and science” (*riḡāl as-siyāsa wa-āḷ-‘ilm*) to follow the western civilisation and to use the same means in order to gain power and strength. The second aim is to oppose to those who believe that the western civilisation is contradictory with the Muslim law, those called “the people of religion” (*riḡāl ad-dīn*), whose opinions should be rejected and forgotten, because they block all progress and development. The *Prolegomena* consists of the series of postulates formulated by At-Tūnusī. First of all, he writes about the necessity of imitating the West and accepting the Muslims’ adaptation of science and knowledge, which he defines as “the actions reckoned to be good” (*al-af‘āl al-mustaḥsina*), undertook by others, even if they are not Muslims. He argues that the fact of borrowing ideas from the western civilisation does not have to be perceived as wrong, as long as it belongs to “*al-af‘āl al-mustaḥsina*” category and as long as it leads to the Muslim

24 *Ibid.*, p. 93-98.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 93-94.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 98-208

revival. Secondly, he points to the necessity of eliminating the absolute power. Here At-Tūnusī proves that the political absolutism leads to the disintegration of the states and to the ruin of the societies. Finally, he stresses the necessity of appointing political institutions, hence he presents the western concept of democracy, but based on the Muslim consultation council. He also includes many other postulates in an attempt to solve the problems of the Arab-Muslim state and society.

After having presented his reformist concepts, he moves on to *History*, which is the second chapter of the book. In this part, he describes several European states, their political, administrative and economic systems, and others issues connected with revival and social development. At-Tūnusī plays the role of a doctor whose task is to "diagnose the disease" which, according to the description in *Prolegomena*, debilitates social, economic and political lives of Muslims, and to "find the cure", in this case, "the European cure" that would heal all the ailments afflicting the Arab and Muslim world presented in *History*. This is where the strong and uncontested connection between both parts of the work appears. This connection is not visible at first sight, but becomes obvious and clear after a careful study of *Prolegomena* and *History*. The aspiration of the author is to confront both parts. While in the first part, he tries to explain the factors which contributed to the fall of Muslims, in the second part, he presents different "European possibilities" of overcoming the decay which led the western countries to the top of the civilisational ladder. The author expresses his concern about his motherland and the dismay about the whole world of Islam. A Tunisian experience led him to the conviction (which he shared with other reformers of the second half of the 19th century) that the cause of the "disease" laid not only in the climate or outbreaks which troubled the country, but also in the system of absolute power which "opened the door" to the western economic penetration in his adopted motherland. He perceived Tunisia as a smaller copy of the Ottoman Empire, with which it was directly connected and which was fully engaged in curing the "disease". He was convinced that changes are possible: "Even if the situation of the Ottoman caliphate is not good, we should not despair, for its remedy is possible and solely depends on the will of the rulers subject to the caliphate"²⁸. This is what made At-Tūnusī include in *Aqwam al-masālik fī ma'rifat al-ḥwāl al-mamālik*, or to be more precise in *Al-Muqaddima*, a wide program of reforms. These reforms were designed not only for Tunisia,

28 M. Mazālī, *Ḥayr ad-Dīn raḡul ad-dawla*, Tunis 1971, p. 160.

which in the middle of the 19th century was, according to Ibn Abī aḍ-Ḍayyāfa, “poverty-stricken in the full meaning of this word”²⁹, but also for the whole Ottoman Empire – “the sick man” as it was called by the European politicians – which oscillated between two political paths: introducing *tanẓīmāts*” which would protect the trails to the colonies in India and guarantee an excellent trade market, or accelerating the division of the Empire due to the raise of nationalisms in the countries remaining under its authority. At-Tūnusi was aware that the “matter of the East” reached its climax and that after such events as the battle of Navarino in 1827, when the allied naval forces of France, England and Russia destroyed the Turkish and Egyptian fleet, the Crimean War (1854-1856), which was the utter defeat of Turkey or the readiness of France to start the construction of the Suez Canal (opened in 1869), England began to consider the change of her policy towards Turkey and to prepare the conquest of Egypt. These events were accompanied by other circumstances of historical and political nature, including debts incurred by the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, the French military intervention in Lebanon in 1860³⁰ and the appearance of Young Turks³¹ in 1865.

These are the reasons why we see *The simplest way...* mainly in the light of the situation in Tunisia, so as a product of a purely Tunisian experience of a prominent Tunisian politician living in a country engulfed in crisis, where an attempt to introduce the constitutional system was made in 1857 with the proclamation of the *‘Ahd al-amān (Treaty of protection)* and

29 Ibn Abī aḍ-Ḍayyāf, op.cit.

30 In 1516 the territory of Lebanon was incorporated in the Ottoman Empire. In 1831-40 it was controlled by the army of Muḥammad‘ Ali, the pasha of Egypt and it became the arena of the rivalry for the influence between France and Great Britain (since the 16th century France was protecting the Maronites and Great Britain was connected to the Druze, which caused the increase of the antagonism between these groups). In 1841 the government of the sultan established the new administrative division of the mountains in Lebanon: two areas governed by separate governors have been established – the northern part was administered by a Christian, and the southern part by a Druze. In 1860 a local mutiny of the Druze turned into a massacre of Christians. Military intervention of France in 1861 put an end to the establishment of the autonomous *sanjak* of Lebanon governed by a Christian (non-Lebanese) who was appointed by the sultan.

31 Young Turks was a nationalistic and modernist political movement in Turkey at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Among Young Turks one can distinguish Muṣṭafā Kamāl, also known as Atatürk, who after the successful defence of the Gallipoli peninsula and the war between Greece and Turkey (1921-1922) eventually overthrew the sultanate and became the first president of the secular republic of Turkey.

in 1861 with the proclamation of the *Constitution*, suspended after the peasant uprising of Ali Ibn Ğađāham in 1864. Observing these events, At-Tūnusī gathered a number of significant ideas, guidelines and warnings, which allowed him to form a theoretical project of reforms, and then to realize them when he was appointed to the state positions of the chairman of the Finance Committee (*ra'īs li-al-Kūmisyūn al-Mālī*) in 1869, the minister of the internal affairs, finance and foreign affairs (*wazīr mubāšīr*) in 1870, and finally the prime minister (*wazīr akbar*) in 1873. However, one can also analyze *Aqwam al-masālik...* in the context of the whole Ottoman Empire and its connections with Europe, so as a work of a much wider significance that was published in a decaying, large Muslim country deeply marked by the crisis after the conflict of Muḥammad 'Ali with Turkey and the *tanẓīmāts* declared in 1839, as well as the appearance of the Young Turks. Therefore, it is easy to understand that this work played the role of a significant sign-post in the "eastern matter"³².

The key reason why the *Aqwam al-masālik...* was in fact written was the will of its author to gain support for demanding reforms. In order to achieve this objective, he presented the European civilisation putting emphasis on the reasons of its supremacy. He was convinced about the necessity of imitating the West, of borrowing the whole range of elements appropriate for the Arab and Muslim world and of reforming the system of power. By describing the situation in Europe, At-Tūnusī tried to show Muslims that they can overcome their drawbacks only by following the path of the European countries, which in his understanding, meant the eventual approval of the western knowledge and the modern science. He wanted to shape the awareness that, firstly, not everything that comes from Europe is forbidden and inconsistent with the law of Islam – as religious circles stubbornly claimed – and secondly, that one epoch passed and another one began. In other words, Muslims should accept the fact that they lost the position they had had in the Middle Ages and which was due the development of their knowledge and science, since these conditions

32 „Eastern matter” is a common name of international communities which were rising from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century, due to the disintegration of Turkey and the rivalry among Russia, England, Austria and Germany for territory and influence. These questions became one of the causes of World War I. On the basis of the Sèvres treaty (1920), the Ottoman Empire was liquidated, which intensified the fight for the Turkish independence and resulted in the revision of this treaty in Lausanne (1923).

changed provoking the transformation of the whole societies and nations. He emphasized that joining rivalry and reaching the finish line is possible only by adopting and accepting the achievements of Europe, or in other words: “through getting to know the situation of the others, who do not belong to our group”. Thus, the author writes on the first pages of *Prolegomena*: “I have reassured myself in conviction against which the people of religion wrongly raise their objections. Namely, that – considering the rivalry of the nations in the field of civilisation and the necessity of supporting the decision of undertaking the actions bringing about more benefits and being more helpful – we will be ready to distinguish the things which are proper for us, on the base of the principle of the constructive build, only and exclusively by getting to know the situation of the others, and in particular those who surround us and live in our vicinity”³³.

As we said, according to At-Tūnusī, the essential condition of the revival is to get to know the “situation of others”, that is the situation of Europe, which is the only region to currently follow the path of progress and development. However, the transmission of knowledge should be based on a careful plan so that we can distinguish matters appropriate for Muslims from those which are contradictory to the Muslim identity and morals. The transmission of modern European knowledge, or what he calls “the reasons of the European progress” should be carried out accordingly to the “principles of constructive build”, that is with the requirements of the time and with those of the Muslim law. In a significant way, At-Tūnusī does abandon his roots, but analyzes the European civilisation as a Muslim. The starting point of his analysis is the very awareness of his own identity, and, above all, the respect for the religious law, which the “reasons of the European progress” cannot contradict.

In this way, he found himself in the opposition to all those who in the 19th century claimed that none of the elements of the western civilisation can be recognised by the Muslim law nor by religion, which is why one should oppose to everything that originates from the European culture. In his opinion, this erroneous view of the modern civilisation where the significant role was played by ‘*ulamā*’, was the reason why Muslims persisted in backwardness while Christian societies achieved much greater progress and development. “Unfortunately, such a way of looking at western civilisation still greatly influences some societies among Muslims, even if part of them is not prone to their opinion such as warning against the education of

33 H. At-Tūnusī, op.cit., p. 94.

women and taking over the modern legislation. (...) These are the reasons why if the Christians and Muslims were to meet in a single country, the former would beat them in adaptation of the western civilisation and using it to their advantage. Some people attribute it to the nature of Islam, and yet Islam does not forbid the adaptation of matters bringing about benefits no matter where and whom it comes from³⁴.

At-Tūnūsī assigned himself a mission which goal was to criticise these opinions and to stand up to those who oppose the modernisation and reforms in Tunisia, mostly by proving that there is no contradiction between the European concepts and those of the Arab and Muslim society. He brought up arguments in favor of the opinion that the law of Islam cannot be contradictory with the development and progress, on the contrary – it encourages both as they are believed to be the incarnation of the Muslim concept of *jihad*. The *jihad* does not only mean spreading the faith by the sword, but also it implies the incessant fight for the power of Muslims, their development and civilizational progress. His reforms were focused on the essential issue, namely, the necessity of imitating the West (*al-iqtibās min āl-Ġarb*), which is on top of the civilizational ladder, and – what is directly derived from the former – of legitimizing this process by the Muslim law. His concepts were dominated by the problem of internal reforms and of the revival of Muslim values such as consultation (*ṣūrā*), freedom (*ḥurriya*), justice (*‘adl*) and the system of power which was unfortunately transformed into a despotic absolute power (*ḥukm muṭlaq istibdādī*), leading the Arab and Muslim world to the crisis and fall. His postulates were mostly addressed to the leaders of the Arab and Muslim nations, and, in particular, to the “people of religion” (*riġāl ad-dīn*) who, together with the “people of the politics” (*riġāl as-siyāsa*), contributed to establishing the absolute power, but also to Europeans who questioned the readiness of the Arab and Muslim world to introduce reforms and bring about the revival. His work was supposed to be a reply to western doubts and the argument in itself confirming the determination of the Arab society to enter the path of progress, and this is why it was so important for the author to see his work translated into French and English³⁵.

34 Quoted by: A. Amīn, *Zu ‘amā’ al-iṣlāḥ fi āl-‘aṣr al-ḥadīṭ*, Cairo 1965, p. 160.

35 French translation *Réformes nécessaires aux états musulmans* was published in Paris in 1868 while English translation *Necessary Reforms of the Muslim states...* The essay which forms the first part of the political and statistical work entitled “The surest way to know the state of the nations” was published in Athens in 1874. Polish translation by

Thus, the work of At-Tūnusi resulted from the Tunisian experience within the Ottoman Empire and was supposed to explain his reformatory thoughts on the political and social situation of his motherland and the whole world of Islam, based on the conviction that the system of power indeed offers a key to solve its main problems. Therefore, the solution consists in imitating the West while simultaneously protecting the roots and the national values of Arab and Muslim states. At the end of *Al-Muqaddima* At-Tūnusi summarizes his work with these words: “In *Prolegomena* I have put forward the obvious and irrefutable proofs confirmed by the achievements of the European countries, of the benefits for both individuals and the whole societies that result from the power based on the proper political institutions, and also the proofs of the serious damages resulting from the lack of support of the power”³⁶. He also adds: “I still believe that introduction of the political reforms is the duty of our times”³⁷.

Prolegomena can be treated as a separate work, independent of other parts of *The simplest way...* which is confirmed by numerous reprints in Arab and Muslim countries, where *Al-Muqaddima* was published separately, becoming an inspiration and the subject of analysis for intellectuals, scholars and politicians. This work was highly appreciated by the renowned Muslim reformists: the Egyptian Rifā‘a Aṭ-Ṭaḥṭāwī³⁸ and the Syrian Abd ar-Raḥmān Al-Kawākibī³⁹. The latter perceived At-Tūnusi as one of the few notable contemporary Arab political writers.

Magdalena Lewicka is in pre-press preparation.

36 Ḥ. At-Tūnusi, *op. cit.*, s. 207.

37 *Ibid.*, s. 208.

38 Rifā‘a aṭ-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801-1873) is often called the originator of the Egyptian modernism. He postulated the necessity of the introduction of social, economic and political reforms, and the reinterpretation of *ṣarī‘a* for the needs of the modern world of Islam. He developed the concept of patriotism (*ḥubb al-waṭan*) and the theory of the cultural heritage and regaining according to which the backwarded West had been civilized due to the knowledge taken from the Arabs, and that the same knowledge should be used to revive the world of Islam. Author of *Taḥlīṣ al-ibrīz fī taḥlīṣ barīz* (*Mining for pure gold, or a short description of Paris*), see: J. Danecki, *op.cit.*, p. 433-434; H.A. Jamsheer, *Historia powstania islamu...*, p. 89-110, H.A. Jamsheer, *Reforma władzy...*, p. 13-36.

39 ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (1855-1902) was a Syrian scholar who developed the concepts of the Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism. His key works include: *Ṭabā‘i‘ al-istiḥdād wa-maṣāri‘ al-isti‘bād* (*Nature of despotism and features of oppression*) and *Umm al-Qurā* (*Mother of the Cities*). See: J. Danecki, *op.cit.*, p. 452-453; H.A. Jamsheer, *Historia powstania islamu...*, p. 134-152; H.A. Jamsheer, *Reforma władzy...*, p. 67-88.

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