A Handbook and Reader of Ottoman Arabic

EDITED BY ESTHER-MIRIAM WAGNER
الحمد لله وحده وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد واله وسلم.

حضرت السعد الأسعد الامجد المحمد الفانداني أحمد عزيمى دفترى دار أكرمها الله امين.

السلام الأتم الاطب الأعم عليه ورحمة الله وبركاته ولا زيادة سوى الخير ويليه. أعلامكم

هذه الرسالة تمثلت في راحة الضعفاء والمساكين واعتدال الحق وكسب الباطل الحمد لله على

ذلك وهذا ما كنا نريدونا، ونتحقق عندننا أنك واسطة خير وصالح عرض السلطان ولاك

ربع في أعمال الناس تحققنا منك تحقيقًا. فمما نحن صاحب بإذن الله على العمل، واللهم

باستعداد لهنالك ونتوجه في أن يكون لنا بذلك حماية. السبب Así السبب لاجتنبنا نحن راجول

ولا يرغب في أعمال الناس تحققنا منك تحقيقًا، وما وقع بنا من زمان أحمد رافع

باشا إلى سعيه التاريخ ولن ما كنت نستوصف في أن نخرج ونهزب قدام الأعمال من

غير سبب ولا ثبوت غيره فعلنا معي أكبر من ذلك. هذة أسباب السبب كأن نحن راجون

صاحب خدمك وطريق ما نستحقل أيقونون. حكم الحاصل هنا أن نحن قدم أن

شاء الله بالله مآله على الأعمال وانت هنالك وانتشار أبا قيسوني وجريوبي بشرط الخدمه ال

نقدرهم. فإنهم أولاً بانتفصلكي على المعهد وامرأر العمل أولاً، نحن محمل الإيباغتي علي قدر

عوRELY وثانياً، انتفضوني لاختيار نفسك لما يلي: صفا ورد بل انذا. وما قولك أننا لم نکتب لكم

جواب غير هذا المراسلة. علق عليه الله مفاتيح الصدور ونثبت الله سبحانه أن يجعل على

قدمكم راحة المسلمين وتلقوا على اقوال أهل الحسد والمفسدين والله يجعل واصطناك.
Translation

God be praised, only Him, and let Him bless our sayyid Muḥammad and his family and grant them salvation.

Excellency, felicitous, well-guided, glorious, protected and supported, our ṣafandi ṬAḥmad ʿAzmī, daftardār (director of the financial administration of the province)—may God confer honours upon him. Amen—My fullest, best and most complete greetings to you, may the mercy of God and His blessings be upon you. Nothing is to be added, except [wishes for] the very best. Now, let me inform you that I received your precious letter, that I read it and understood its form and content, as well as what you said about what you did, with our Lord the protected by God—may his noble actions endure—for the comfort of the weak and the poor, and to raise truth and make falsehood vanish. God be praised for that, this is what I wanted. I am assured that your mediation is for the best, that you are the guardian of the Sultan’s honor, and that you are not coveting the properties of the people. Of this I have become truly convinced myself from what has happened between us since the time of Muḥammad Rāyif Bāšā until this very day, even if you were not mediating for me [at that time, when] I was put on the spot and put to shame in front of the Administration of Finance without any reason. And those who took charge after him did even worse to me. That is why I was blamed [for a crime I had not committed], whereas I am a
devoted and upright servant, and I don’t need to be guided in the performance of my duties. In short, here is our Sovereign who came—let’s hope—for the good of the ʿamāla (governorate) and here you are, [his] nāḏir (superintendent). As for me, evaluate me and test me, on one condition: if it appears that, among all the tasks I can accomplish, I have failed to achieve the assigned one, and if I am summoned, first, it will be by our eminent Sovereign and he will treat me according to my abilities; second, let me choose by myself and, if it appears evident to me that he is sincere [in blaming me], I will start again without being asked to. And when you say that I did not write any letter to you except this correspondence... God’s human creatures have the key of hearts. We ask God—be He praised—to bring ease to the Muslims with your arrival, to allow you to ignore what the enviers and those who spread disturbance say, and may He make your mediation good and successful. Here we are, we informed our Sovereign about how things appear to us. The bearer of this letter, Mīlād son of the ḥājj Saʿīd, will inform you [in more detail] verbally about what I think. Farewell.

The servant of the Porte Ġūma b. Ḥalifa

N.B. The translation of the passage from ‘As for...’ until ‘...the key of hearts’ is purely tentative.

Commentary

1. In this Turkish term, the suffix  لي (-li) must initially have been written by mistake, and then left uncrossed out.

2. is an equivalent of  أما بعد.
Notice the very unusual word order. The elegant turn of phrase ارفع جوابكم was likely meant here.

MA qara / colloquial qre (cf. Classical qara‘a), a C₃ = Y verb.

Colloquial form of the 1pl imperfect. Notice also the ʾalif al-wiqāya.

Colloquial negative turn (lā + bound 2ms pronoun) ‘you are not...’. The negation is probably stronger than mā-k; for Takrūna in Tunisia, see Marçais and Guîga (1958–1961, 3571).

This turn of phrase is not frequently used in MA. Another example is ا يقولون فيهم.

Two ʾalifs (ا) denoting ʾa (as well as ʾa and ʾā) is common in late MA orthography; see examples in Lentin (1997, 111–12), e.g., لانهم liʾannahum.

The initial prosthetic ʾalif indicates here that the initial syllable begins CC- (Mḥammad). Cf. text II.19, no. 15.


The form ال is a form of the relative (cf. the two other examples ال نقدرهم كلهم and ال اجنيت انا به). Colloquial short form of the demonstrative.

بيه. Colloquial (prep. bi- + bound 3ms pronoun).

Colloquial rāžel ‘man’.

Colloquial 1s imperfect and colloquial ‘discontinuous’ (dimorphematic) negation ma...š.

Colloquial yqūdūni (cf. note to ln. 6 above); cf. also مابلاخيي.

Colloquial deictic particle hā- + bound 3ms pronoun -hu.
The plural agreement of the pronouns (هم) with the feminine singular noun خدمه is rather uncommon.

Colloquial conditional conjunction ‘if’.

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The mascudemonstrative هذا with the feminine noun مراسلة is quite unexpected. But one should note that هذا is written here with ‘alif after the hāʾ, whereas its other occurrences in the text read هذا. Hence one could think here of another example of اليا noting ‘a (see note to ln. 8 above) and read هاذ المراسلة (with the short form of the demonstrative, cf. note to ln. 12). This hypothesis cannot be verified since there is no facsimile reproduction of the manuscript in the edition.

Probably تلقوا, with ǧ > q, as is common in several Maghrebi Bedouin dialects. For the meaning, cf. Boris (1958, 557): l轻轻地‘ala ‘to abandon, not take care of anymore, to give up, to stop talking to’.

With s > ŋ (in the vicinity of t); but see above.

Colloquial هوین ha/āwēn is a kind of presentative particle. The variant هوینه occurs in another letter of غم al-Maḥmūdī (Waṭṭāʾiq ʿan tārīḥ Libiyā... p. 244): ‘هوینه قادم الیک ‘Here he is coming to you’. Nowadays in Tripoli, hāwēn- is used only with a suffixed 3rd-person pronoun (-a, -ha, -hum) or with the frozen 3ms pronoun -a: hāwēna.1

1 I am indebted to Christophe Pereira for this information.