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Preface
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PRECIOUS BOOKS AND MOMENTS OF FRIENDSHIP IN 17th-CENTURY ISTANBUL

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On October 4, 1657, the life of Mustafa b. 'Abdallah, a learned army administrator known to his contemporaries as Haggi Khalifa and also as Katib Chelebi, but now known to us as the greatest Ottoman polyhistor and bibliographer, came to an untimely end. An unfortunate accident cut short Haggi Khalifa's life who had by then not yet reached the age of 49 years.¹ His main claim to fame is his enormous work, *Kashf al-Zunun*, which contained 14,501 bibliographical references, and which till today stands at the basis of Arabic bibliography. For the compilation of this book he must have had access to the numerous public and private libraries which Istanbul counted in the first half of the 17th century, as is evident from his numerous quotations of *incipits* and chapter titles. Not surprisingly, he must have possessed a library of his own, and that was sold after his demise.

We know about the existence of this library for sure, because there exists a modest correspondence, in Arabic, between the Muslim scholar and poet from Aleppo, Muhammad al-'Urdu (d. 1660), and the Dutch envoy to the Sublime Porte, Levinus Warner (d. 1665), which treats the fate of a few manuscripts from Haggi Khalifa's library. The addressee of the correspondence is Levinus Warner, whose name is still attached to the Oriental collections in the Library of Leiden University. When he died, his testament revealed that he had bequeathed his entire collection of books and manuscripts to Leiden University. Either part consisted of some one thousand volumes. The name of the Leiden Oriental collections is nowadays 'Legatum Warnerianum', Warner's Legacy, and since 1729 the special care of these collections was entrusted by the University to a specially appointed curator with the arcane title of 'Interpres Legati Warneriani', the interpreter of Warner's Legacy.² The manuscripts had all been expertly collected in Istanbul as Warner was a real connoisseur. They represent a selection of the finest rarities, of which several are, till today, bibliographically speaking unique copies of important works of Arabic, Persian and Turkish literatures, and the few items from Haggi Khalifa's library that Warner could lay hands on are now in Leiden as well. Warner could in fact procure these and many other manuscripts in the flourishing antiquarian book market of Istanbul, where the 16th-century influx of bibliographical spoils from the conquered

¹ Prof. of Paleography and Codicology of the Islamic World, University of Leiden.

² Franz Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*, Leipzig, 1927, 196.

³ A honorific title now held by the present author.

territories was now being recycled to new collectors. At the time there existed, on the same spot as nowadays, a book market, next to the Bayezit mosque, and Warner must have made useful acquaintances there. He may also have sounded for rare manuscripts in private collections and made himself known to owners of private collections as a possibly interested party.

The sender of the letters was the Aleppine *littérateur* and jurist Muhammad b. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-'Urđi al-Halabi who died in his sixties in Safar 1071 (1660). His life is described, with extensive quotations from his poetical production, in the biographical dictionary by his younger contemporary and friend Muhammad al-Muhibbi (d. 1111/1699).³ The latter was very fond of al-'Urđi, to such an extent even that he declares himself excused for extolling al-'Urđi, precisely because of that fondness.⁴ Al-'Urđi was a literate and a jurist of Aleppo, where at first he taught at several schools and where he supervised for many years the issuing of *Fatwa's* according to the rules of Hanafi school of Islamic law. Then he traveled to al-Rum, European Turkey, where he taught literary subjects to many students. His name became connected with his long-standing relationship with a slave boy employed in a wine bar, with whom he had a protracted affair of *amour fou*.⁵ Later he returned to Aleppo, to succeed his brother Abu al-Wafa' as a *Mufti* of the Shafi'ite school there. He preached in Aleppo's Friday mosque, where he spoke on intricate subjects in a simple language, as al-Muhibbi tells us. Later in life he became an ascetic and a religious person.

When Levinus Warner and Muhammad al-'Urđi met, the latter was well in his middle age. His profession and activities must have brought him in contact with many other literary luminaries in Istanbul and he must have been a useful contact to Warner. From what al-Muhibbi mentions in his biographical note, we may induce that Muhammad al-'Urđi was a frequenter of places where alcoholic drinks were served and where moments of love could be bought. It is unthinkable that he could have indulged in such pleasures – especially the alcoholic ones – except in Galata and on both shores of the Golden Horn.⁶ He made no secret of this when he composed the line: 'People have reproached me for my wine drinking, but they forget

³ Al-Muhibbi, *Tarikh Khulasat al-Athar fi A`yan al-Qarn al-Hadi `Ashar*, 4 vols., Bulaq 1284/1867, vol. 4, 89-103.

⁴ Al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, vol. 4, p. 89: انى عاشق له والعاشق معذور فيما يقول.

⁵ *Khulasa*, vol. 4, p. 89: وقصة توليه بغلام خمار ولزومه له مدة طويلة وهيمانه به وشغفه مما شاع واشتهر.

⁶ See Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle. Essai d'histoire institutionnelle, économique et sociale*, Paris 1962, carte 12, where No. 15 refers to the location of 'cabaretiers', wine-bars, *khammar* in Arabic, *meyhane* in Turkish.

that reproaching is in itself the source of reproach.⁷ For Levinus Warner he must have been an interesting relation, and more particular because of Warner's extreme bibliophily. Hereafter two letters by Muhammad al-'Urđi are presented, one to Levinus Warner, the other to Warner's teacher, the learned Leiden professor Jacobus Golius. They for part of a small correspondence kept in the Library of Leiden University.⁸

1. Letter from Muhammad al-'Urđi to Levinus Warner, both in Istanbul, in or after 1068 (1657), the year of demise of Haggi Khalifa, who is mentioned in the letter as the former owner of manuscripts, now in Warner's collection. One sheet of paper, measuring 20.5 x 9.5 cm, text on one side only.⁹

Arabic text:

باسمه سبحانه

حضرة بكر عطارد وواحد الفراقد ايلجى بيبك المكرم | لا زال مدعى العلم له مسلم نفاوض جنابه الترحاب | هو ان الواصل اليكم من كتب المرحوم كاتب جلبي | سنة كتب نزهة خاطر للكاشي وهو كتاب جليل | مشتمل على اشعار عربية وفارسية وثمانه اثنا عشر غروش | والمجلد الاول من تذكرة ابن حمدون وثمانه ستة عشر غروش | وشرح شواهد التلخيص وثمانه اربعة غروش ونصف وشرح | مقامات الحريري المتوسط للشريشي وثمانه ثلثمائة | عثمانى وجزء من العقد لابن عبد ربه وثمانه غرش واحد | وشرح العبدونية وثمانه غرشان فالمجموع خمسة | وثلاثون غروشا وثلثمائة عثمانى واما تاريخ البناكتي | ورسائل الخوارزمي فوعدنا الدالون بهما يكون معلوما | لكم والفتوى ان شا الله نصرتها والسلام من الحقير | محمد العرضي

ولا توأخذونا باخلاف الوعد بالمجى اليكم | يوم الاحد الماضى فانه صار لنا مانع بل موانع | ونبلغ شوقنا الى المربوط فى الدار | بمقتضى تسميتكم نقولا والسلام | وقد اشترينا نحن لانفسنا تاليفا | لجدنا ابن الحنبلى بمائتين عثمانى ففضلوا | بها لنا والسلام وان شا الله عن قريب | ناتيكم

Translation:

'In the name of Him, who is the Praised One
To His Excellency the first-born of Mercury, the one of the two Farqad-stars, the honoured Envoy, may he always remain a devotee of science. We congratulate His Excellency with the arrival of the six books coming from the late Katib Chelebi (God have mercy upon him), namely the *Nuzhat al-Khatir* by al-Kashi, an excellent work containing Arabic and Persian poetry, for the price of twelve piaster; then the first volume of the *Tadhkira* by Ibn

⁷ *Khulasat al-Athar*, vol. 4, p. 101: رون أن التعيب عين العيوب.

⁸ The present selection forms part of a larger project on the provenances of the Leiden Oriental manuscript collection.

⁹ MS Leiden, Or. 1122 (9). Earlier published and analyzed by M.Th. Houtsma, *Uit de oostersche correspondentie van Th. Erpenius, Jac. Golius en Lev. Warner. Eene bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de beoefening der Oostersche letteren in Nederland*, Amsterdam, 1887. The letter has been reproduced in *Levinus Warner and his legacy. Three centuries Legatum Warnerianum in the Leiden University Library*, Leiden, 1970, No. 12, and the illustration. Warner's importance for Dutch Oriental scholarship has been described by W.M.C. Juynboll, *Zeventiende-eeuwsche Beoefenaars van het Arabisch in Nederland*, Utrecht 1931, 222-234.

Hamdun, for the price of sixteen piaster; then the *Sharh Shawahid al-Talkhis*, for the price of fourteen and a half piaster; the middle commentary on the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri by al-Sharishi, for threehundred 'Uthmani; a part of *al-'Iqd* by Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, for one piaster; the commentary on the Poem by Ibn 'Abdun, for two piaster. In all thirty-five piaster and threehundred 'Uthmani. The History of al-Banakiti and the Letters of al-Khwarizmi have been promised to us by the auctioneers, be this known to you. We will procure the *Fatwa*, God willing. Greetings from the humble Muhammad al-'Urdu.

P.S. Please, be not angry at us, because we failed our promise to visit you last Sunday, since there was an impediment, even more than one. We herewith convey our desire towards the person connected with the house, Nicholas as you call him. Greetings.

For ourselves we have purchased a work by our grandfather, Ibn al-Hanbali, for two hundred 'Uthmani. Please, be so kind as to provide us with these. Greetings.

God willing, we will visit you in the near future.'

Commentary:

'The first born of Mercury' refers to the Planet 'Utarid, which is in the traditional view after the moon, the second-nearest planet to the earth, but the astronomical or astrological connotation of this honorific title for the moment escapes me. J. Samsó, in the article 'Utarid in the *EI*, quotes al-Biruni and al-Qazwini, who mention as 'Utarid's astrological nature certain duplicity or ambiguity, even hypocrisy. Would this mention of Mercury refer to Warner's unwillingness to convert to Islam, or would al-'Urdu refer instead to the western connotation of Mercury as god of the traders, to which category Warner no doubt belonged?

The two Farqad-stars are bright stars in the constellation Ursa Minor. The compliment is in the lofty position, and the guiding properties for travelers, of these two stars. There is also a simple, more down to earth explanation for al-'Urdu's use of these two stars. Levinus Warner's brother Frederick lived also in Istanbul.¹⁰ The word Frederick may have had for Muhammad al-'Urdu an assonance with the word Farqad, and if Frederick was one of the two Farqad's, Levinus was the other. So, it may have been a sort of nickname.

¹⁰ A.H. de Groot, 'Old Dutch graves at Istanbul', in *Archivum Ottomanicum* 5 (1973), 5-16, mentions him, and illustrates his tombstone. See on Frederick Warner also K. Heeringa, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel* (The Hague 1910-1966), esp. vol. 1 (covering 1590-1660) and vol. 2 (covering 1661-1726).

Three of the manuscripts mentioned in the letter are now in the Leiden Library:

- *Sharh Shawahid al-Talkhis* (now MS Leiden Or. 695). It is the revision by Muhammad b. Ahmad al-'Amir (937/1530) of the *Ma'ahid al-Tansis 'ala Shawahid al-Talkhis*, by 'Abd al-Rahim b. 'Abd al-Rahman al-'Abbasi (d. 963/1556), which is a commentary on the verses in *Talkhis al-Miftah*, an abridgment by Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Qazwini Khatib Dimashq (d. 739/1338) of Book 3 of *Miftah al-'Ulum*, by Yusuf b. Abi Bakr al-Sakkaki (d. 626/1229), GAL G I, 294. CCO 249 (I, pp. 136-137).¹¹

- The middle commentary on the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri by al-Sharishi (now MS Leiden Or. 470). It is *Al-Sharh al-Mutawassit*, the medium commentary by Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Mu'min al-Sharishi (d. 619/1222) on *al-Maqamat* by al-Qasim b. 'Ali al-Hariri (d. 516/1122), GAL G I, 276.¹²

- The commentary on the Poem by Ibn 'Abdun (now MS Leiden Or. 733). It is the *Sharh Qasidat Ibn 'Abdun*, or *Kimamat al-Zahr*, the commentary by 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abdallah Ibn Badrun al-Hadrami (c. 560/1164) on *al-Qasida al-Bassama* by Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Magid Ibn 'Abdun (d. 529/1134), GAL G I, 271.¹³

The other titles mentioned in the letter did not come into the Warner collection which is now in Leiden. It is even doubtful whether Warner could have obtained them at all.

The postscript to the letter adds several other elements to our knowledge of the nature of the friendship between Warner and al-'Urdu. Evidently the latter visited Warner, and he was apparently in the position to ask for payment by Warner for a manuscript destined for his own collection. It may have been a commission, or just a present given in order to maintain the friendship.

2. Letter from Muhammad al-'Urdu in Istanbul to Jacobus Golius (1596-1167) in Leiden. The letter is undated, but it may be assumed that it is of approximately the same period as al-'Urdu's letter to Warner, that is in the late 1650's. One sheet of paper, measuring 21 x 19.5 cm, text on one side only:¹⁴

¹¹ See P. Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic manuscripts [...]*, Leiden 1957, pp. 210-212. The title-page of the manuscript shows the price, $4\frac{1}{2}$ ghurush. See the reproduction in *Warner and his legacy*, ad. No. 12.

¹² See P. Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic manuscripts [...]*, Leiden 1957, pp. 189-190. The title-page of the manuscript shows the price, 300 uthmani.

¹³ See P. Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic manuscripts [...]*, Leiden 1957, pp. 267-268. The title-page of the manuscript shows the price, 2 piaster.

¹⁴ Leiden Or. 1228 (65).

Arabic text:

كاتبتمك والحسا فيها محبتكم * حقا بلوها بتمثال ومكتوب
هذا كتابي اليكم والنبى حكي * قميص يوسف فى جفان يعقوب

الفاضل النقاب والبدر اخو السحاب من كلماته تحاكي حبات القلوب او الحباب | من هو لدقائق العلوم
كاليعسوب سمى صفى الله تعالى يعقوب نهدي له سلاما يسلب | النسيم رفته والنحل ريقته اعطر من ريح
الصبا وابهج من رونق ايام الصبا مقرونا بالوداد | المقيم الذى يحل من القلب محل الصميم
هذا وان لم نلتقى بالاجسام والاشباح فقد التقينا بالقلوب | والارواح ومما هو متواتر ومركز فى الطباع ان
الجنات تعشق بالسماع قال الشاعر بشار بن برد |

يا قوم اذنى لبعض الحى عاشقة * والاذن تعشق قبل العين احيانا

ونحن ايضا عشقناكم | بسماع اوصافكم الكامله ومزاياكم الفاضله التى اقتبسناها من لسان حبيبنا الفاضل
الكامل | سنو ورنه فانا متحدون به اتحاد الالف مع اللام بدار السلطنة قسطنطينيه داره الاسلام | ودايما نطرب
بذكر اخباركم ونشرب على نوار اثاركم وما اكثر ما يتحفنا حبيبنا المذكور | بسرد مناقبكم الجميله التى عند
شرحها اضحت سيوف الاقلام كليله من اقبالكم على تكميل النفس الناطقه | لتعود فى حديقه الكمال دوحه
باسقة وصرف اوقاتكم الى تحصيل العلوم وتتبع المنثور منها والمنظوم | فاعانكم الله تعالى على هذه الخصال
والاثار ولا يزال لكم مدد من المبداء الفياض طرفى الليل | والنهار ولا بد ما تقابلون مكتوبنا بمكتوب يستحل
منا محل قميص يوسف من اجفان يعقوب | ونقول اذ ذاك للعين اذا المها قلق البين ان لم تريه فهذه آثاره
او السلام من الفقير اليه سبحانه محمد بن عمر العرضى الحلبي |

Translation:

'I have written to you, while the contents of it consist of my love for you

Counter therefore it with an image and a written text.

This is my letter to you, while the Prophets tells us about

The shirt of Joseph in the eyes of Jacob.

To the eminent investigator, to the full moon who is the brother of the rain-clouds, to him whose words imitate the dearest ones and loved ones, to the man who is for the intricacies of the sciences as the leader, to the man who is called the pure one of God Almighty, Jacob, we send you a greeting which takes away from the spring breeze its elegance, and from the bee its saliva, which is more fragrant than the eastern wind and which is more resplendent than the days of youth, joined with love from who is here, who takes the place in stead of the bottom of the heart.

Thus, and if we do not meet in the flesh or in person, then at least we meet with the hearts and spirits. And from what is successive and central in the character, is that paradise gardens are loved because of being heard of. The poet Bashshar b. Burd has said:

'O people, my ear has fallen in love with a living person, since the ear sometimes becomes enamored before the eye.'

Thus we too have fallen in love with you because we heard about your perfect qualities and your eminent properties, about which we learned from the tongue of our eminent and perfect friend, Seigneur Warner. We are united with him in the same way as the union between *alif* and *lam*, in the Abode of the Sultanate, Constantinople, and the abode of Islam. Always we

are delighted by the mention of your news, and we sip from the wine of your books. How great is what our aforementioned friend has presented us with the enumeration of your beautiful exploits, by the explanation of which our pen knives have become blunt, about your success in perfection the reasoning soul so that it can become again in the Garden of Perfection a lofty tree, and about the way you spend your time in the acquisition of the sciences, and how you practice both prose and poetry. May God Almighty help you in these qualities and works, and may the help from the Emanating Principle never fail you, nor in the night, nor in the daytime. It is imperative that you counter our letter with a letter, which will take for us the place of the shirt of Joseph in the eyes of Jacob. And we say if that is in the eye, then the worry about separation hurts it. If the eye does not show it, these are the effects.

Greetings the servant who is in need of God, may He be praised, Muhammad b. 'Umar al-'Urdu al-Halabi.

Commentary:

It is evident that this extremely eloquent letter was meant by al-'Urdu to provoke an answer by Jacobus Golius, possibly as eloquent, as Golius was known to be able to. al-'Urdu may have heard a lot from Levinus Warner about Golius, and therefore he may have wished to set up and maintain a correspondence. The reference to Golius' namesake, the Prophet Jacob, brings in a scala of similes, which provoke more eloquence. Starting the letter by a piece of poetry, no doubt by al-'Urdu himself, immediately sets the tone. The bloody shirt of Joseph, which was shown by Joseph's brothers (after they had left their brother) here serves as an object which elicits strong emotions. Would al-'Urdu's letter be the comparison with Joseph's shirt. The 'wine of your books' may refer to Golius' Arabic-Latin dictionary, of which Warner must have possessed a copy.¹⁵ It is not known whether there was any response to the letter.

Conclusion:

It is clear that Muhammad al-'Urdu, for at least a few years, must have been a regular visitor to the Dutch establishment in Pera, the place where now still is the Consulate-General of The Netherlands.¹⁶ The few strips of paper, preserved in Warner's and Golius' archives which are still kept in the Legatum Warnerianum in Leiden University Library, and two of which are presented here, are eloquent witness to a friendship, that may have involved the drinking of wine and the discussing of rare books.

¹⁵ Jacobus Golius, *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum, contextum ex probatoribus Orientis lexicographis*. Leiden 1653.

¹⁶ See Marlies Hoenkamp-Mazgon, *Palais de Hollande in Istanbul. The Embassy and Envoys of the Netherlands since 1612*, Amsterdam, 2002, 35-38, on Levinus Warner's activities.

