

16. A CLERICAL LETTER BY RAFAEL AL-ṬŪKĪ FROM THE PRIZE PAPERS COLLECTIONS (1758)¹

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Transcription

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1. بعونه تعالى
2. يصل الى ناحية دجرجة بصعيد مصر ويسلم
3. بلتم القس روکس قدسي امانه مرسله
4. بالخير

Recto

5. الي جناب حضرة اخينا وحبينا بالرب القس المكرم روکس قدسي دام الله بقاءه
6. بعد تقبيل الايادي نعرض على حضرتكم بان وصلت لعندنا مشرفتم
7. العزيزه في اليوم 20 من شهر او طبره اعني به شهر بابه سنه 1758
8. وفيها اعلمتمونا عن وصول الكتب التي ارسلتها لعندكم وعن
9. سلامتكم وصار عندنا فرح جزيل من اجل ذلك لكن من جهة اخري

¹ The letter is part of the box HCA 32/212 in the National Archives. Analyses of this letter were previously included in the linguistic description in Wagner and Ahmed (2017). At the time, the authors gave this letter the siglum NAL 46.5, as the letters had not yet been catalogued by the National Archives.

10. صعب علينا موت اخينا المرحوم القس عوض رحمة الله وعزاكم فيه
11. ويكون فيكم العوض لاننا ما نقدر نفعل شيئاً الا الدعا اليه بالخير
12. من الباري وتنيح نفسه تم نرجوكم بان تعرفونا عن الصور
13. الكبار امتعتنا التي كانتن² عنده وعن بعض كتب اعطيتهم
14. له في روميه لبيعهم لنا فاذا تعرفونا عن الجميع وبالخصوص
15. عن الصور لانها وقف للكنيسة ولا احد يقدر يتصرف فيها
16. اخيراً نرجوكم بان تواصلونا باخباركم ولا يكون عندكم تقصير
17. في ذلك كمثلاً سابقاً لان من مدة طويلة لم وصلنا من عندكم
18. خبر الا هذا المكتوب الذي وصلنا هذه السنه بعد ما تعوق
19. في الطريق ثلاثة عشر اشهر فاذاً فيما بعد لا تنسونا هكذا
20. مده طويله كسابقاً واخيرا اهدوا منا السلام على كل الاخوه الذين
21. عندكم المحبوبين بالرب المعلم مشرقي الباسكي واهل
22. منزله وعلى اهاليها وكل من يلود بحضرتكم اهدوه السلام

Signature

23. المحب المخلص
24. رافاييل الطوخي
25. قس بنعمة الله

Date

26. سط في 22 هاتور (نوفمبر)
27. سنه 1758
28. مسيحية

Translation

[Written in the hand of Yūḥannā Marqūryūs al-Farārjī]

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1. With the help of God.

² Why the *nūn* was added to this form is not quite clear.

2. (The letter) should arrive to Girga in Upper Egypt, and be delivered
3. into the fingertips of the priest Rūks (?) Qudsī by care of the messenger.
4. In wellness.

Recto

(5) To the Excellency, our brother and beloved in God, the honourable priest Rūks Qudsī—may God prolong his life. (6) After kissing hands, we acknowledge to your respected self that your precious letter reached us (7) on the 20th of the month *Ottobre*, i.e., the month Baba, in the year 1758, (8) in which you inform us about the arrival of the books that I sent to you, and about (9) your safety, and we were greatly content to hear that. But on the other hand, (10) we were sorry about the death of our brother, the deceased priest ‘Awad—My God’s mercy be upon him, and may God give you consolation (11) and may there be recompense for you, because we cannot offer anything but prayers for him and his welfare (12) from the Creator and peace for his soul. Then we would like to ask you to inform us about the large (13) paintings that belong to us that were in his keeping and about some other books we gave to him (14) in Rome to sell on our behalf. So, please inform us about everything, especially (15) about the paintings, because they belong to the Church’s charitable organisation (*waqf*) and no one has the right to dispose of them. (16) Finally, we wish you to keep in touch and not delay in (17) doing as you did previously, because for a long time we have received nothing (18) from you but this letter, which reached us this year

after a thirteen-month (19) delay. From now on, please do not forget us for such a long period again. (20) Finally, send our greetings to all the brothers who (21) are with you, the beloved in God; the Master Mushraqī al-Bāskī and his family; (22) and to our relatives and to all who are under your protection send our greetings,

Signature

- 23. Your sincere friend
- 24. Rafael al-Ṭūkī
- 25. a priest by God's grace

Date

- 26. written on 22nd Hathor
- 27. of the year 1758
- 28. of the Lord

Commentary

There is a marked difference in register within the corpus of Arabic Prize Papers between letters written by merchants and those written by clerics. The clerical letters overall show more literary forms, such as the future particle *sa-* and much-increased use of the negation particle *lam*. These forms are used as stylistic markers of the clerical register and were probably introduced through exposure of the clerics to literary Arabic texts, which led to the development of a particular clerical register.

At the same time, vernacular, non-literary forms occur in particular sociolinguistic circumstances and we also find phonological and morphological Middle Arabic forms similar to those found in the traders' correspondence.

Line 7

الدعا 'prayer'. As in most Middle Arabic texts, *hamza* is not spelled.

Line 13

من مدة طويلة لم وصلنا من عندكم خبر 'for a long time, no news reached us from you'. The negation particle *lam* is a register marker in various Middle Arabic varieties.³ In the clerical Prize Paper letters, as in many other Middle Arabic texts, *lam* has considerably enlarged its functions, and occurs with the perfect, in contradiction to Classical Arabic grammar.

With the imperfect, *lam* negates the present and with the perfect, past tense forms. The use of *lam* appears to be related to register in the Prize papers, with clerical writers much more likely to use it than mercantile authors.

Line 15

ثلاثة عشر اشهر '13 months'. In most of the Arabic Prize papers under HCA 32/212, there is little marking of the Standard Arabic interdental fricatives /d/ and /t/, and they are usually spelled as *dāl* and *tā*. The writer of the letter, Rafael al-Ṭūkī, is an exception in his use of marking /t/ with three dots.

³ For an extensive discussion of *lam* in spoken and written varieties of Arabic, see Wagner (2010, 141–50).