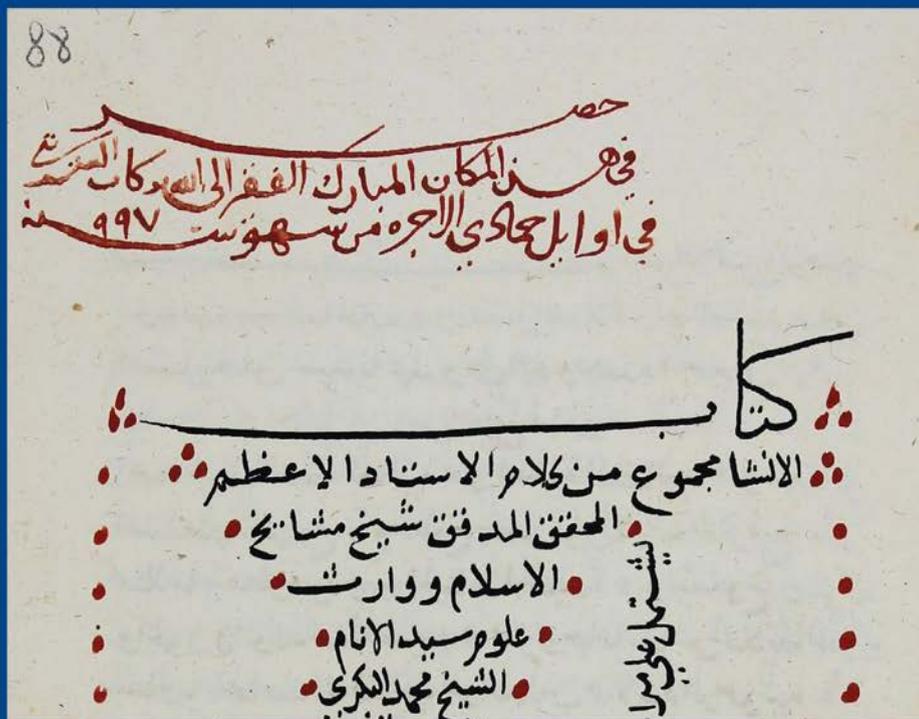


Kitāb Dustūr al-gharā'ib wa-ma'dan al-raghā'ib and Related Texts

The Correspondence (*Inshā'*) of Muḥammad ibn Abī
al-Ḥasan al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī (930-994/1524-1586)

Bonn University Press





unipress

Ottoman Studies / Osmanistische Studien

Band 9

Herausgegeben von

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Die Bände dieser Reihe sind peer-reviewed.

Mustafa Mughazy / Adam Sabra (eds.)

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Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
<https://dnb.de> abrufbar.

**Veröffentlichungen der Bonn University Press
erscheinen bei V&R unipress.**

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ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī. Escorial Library, Nr. Arabe 532. Reproduction courtesy of
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Druck und Bindung: CPI books GmbH, Birkstraße 10, D-25917 Leck
Printed in the EU.

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISSN 2366-3677

ISBN 978-3-8470-1113-2

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Introduction

The present work is a critical edition of the official correspondence (*inshā'*) of Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī al-Shāfi'ī Sibṭ Āl al-Ḥasan (henceforth Muḥammad al-Bakrī or al-Bakrī), (930–94/1524–86), a leading religious scholar and literary figure in sixteenth-century Egypt. Although Muḥammad al-Bakrī held an official position as a Shāfi'ī deputy judge in Maḥkamat al-Bāb al-'Āli (The Court of the Sublime Porte) in Cairo, the letters and excerpts of letters preserved in a number of manuscripts do not appear to have been products of his employment as a judge. Rather, Muḥammad al-Bakrī enjoyed a reputation as a leading Shāfi'ī jurist, Sufi, and poet, whose influence extended to Mecca, Medina, Yemen, Marrakech, and Istanbul. This collection of correspondence provides a window into the world of an influential religious scholar in sixteenth-century Cairo and his network of contacts in the Ottoman Empire and beyond. In particular, Muḥammad al-Bakrī frequently corresponded with Sultan Murad III, the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, and with various officials in Mecca, including the sharīfian ruler of Mecca, al-Ḥasan ibn Abī Numayy. The collection also contains two letters addressed to Sa'dī rulers of Morocco and one to the Mughal Emperor Akbar.

The late sixteenth century was an important period for the development of the art of correspondence (*inshā'*) in the Ottoman Empire. Feridun Ahmed Bey's *Münşeatü's-selatin* ("Correspondence of Sultans"), presented to Sultan Murad III (r. 982–1003/1574–95) in 982/1575, is the most famous collection of official correspondence from this period.¹ Feridun Bey was associated with the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and rose to hold the position of *ra'īs al-kuttāb* (*re'īs ül-küttāb*, chief scribe in the Imperial Council) in 978/1570 and later held the position of *nişancı* (chancellor) in 981–84/1573–76 and 989–91/1581–83. This work brought together correspondence from Ottoman sultans up to the reign of Murad III, although modern scholars question the authenticity of the documents

1 Nicolas Vatin, "Feridun Bey," in *EI3*. Consulted online on 10 January 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27102.

attributed to the early sultans. Muḥammad al-Bakrī addressed numerous letters to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (d. 987/1579) and at least two to Feridun Bey, as well as several to Sultan Murad III. Most likely, the majority of his letters were composed in the period 1574–79, although some clearly predate this period, such as the one addressed to Sultan Selim II (r. 974–82/1566–74).

It is unclear to what degree *Münşeatü's-selatin* may have influenced the collection of Muḥammad al-Bakrī's correspondence. The former is a collection of imperial correspondence, which is one genre of *inshā'*, but rather different from the letters by Muḥammad al-Bakrī that are edited here. Another genre of *inshā'* is private letters, and many examples of these survive from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. At least one such letter by Muḥammad al-Bakrī, which was not included in his canonical collection of correspondence, survives and will be mentioned below. It should be noted, however, that the distinction between private and public correspondence is nebulous when the letters in question are between state officials or aspirants to office. As is very clear from Muḥammad al-Bakrī's correspondence, one of the principal purposes of letter writing in this period was to petition for the patronage of an important official. Al-Bakrī made these petitions on behalf of third parties, not on his own behalf, although the latter is also known to be common. He served as a conduit for patronage between his own clients and important state officials in Cairo, Mecca, Istanbul, and elsewhere. In this sense, Muḥammad al-Bakrī played the role of a node between two networks. The first network was located in the Arabic-speaking provinces, especially Cairo and the Hijaz. It presumably focused on local religious scholars and Sufis, whose patron was Muḥammad al-Bakrī, but it also included the sharīfian rulers of Mecca and Medina. The second network involved imperial officials. These included officials stationed in Cairo, such as the governor and chief judge of Egypt, as well as those stationed in Istanbul, such as the grand vizier, chancellor, and chief judge of Anatolia. The latter appointed the chief judge of Egypt. Given that imperial officials often circulated through Cairo on their way to promotion to higher office in Istanbul, connections made in the provinces could lead sooner or later to influence in the imperial capital. Muḥammad al-Bakrī also made the pilgrimage to Mecca on a regular basis, and so he served as an intermediary between the rulers of Mecca, the commander of the Egyptian Ḥajj caravan, and imperial officials in Cairo and Istanbul.²

2 Many of his letters and poems are said to have been composed in Mecca and a few in Medina.

The Life of Muḥammad al-Bakrī

Muḥammad al-Bakrī was born on 13 *Dhū al-Ḥijja* 930/12 October 1524.³ His father was Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Bakrī (d. 13 *Rabī* I 952/25 May 1545),⁴ a respected religious scholar best known for his work of Qurānic exegesis *Tashīl al-sabīl ilā ma'ānī al-tanzīl* (“The Easy Path to the Meanings of the Revelation”).⁵ Abū al-Ḥasan was a poet, although only a few lines of his poetry are preserved in a biographical dictionary.⁶ Abū al-Ḥasan was also a Sufi and jurist who had connections to the Ottoman rulers of Egypt. His son was born into a household which specialized in religious learning and which was politically connected.⁷ This background, combined with his unusual talent for religious learning and his reputation for piety made Muḥammad al-Bakrī into the leading religious scholar in Egypt, and one of the most influential in the Ottoman Empire in the mid-sixteenth century. Muḥammad al-Bakrī left behind a large collection of poetry, a number of treatises on miscellaneous religious matters, in addition to his collection of correspondence.

The prominent Egyptian Sufi scholar ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī (1493–1565), was an admirer of Muḥammad al-Bakrī and his father Abū al-Ḥasan. Al-Sha‘rānī describes Muḥammad al-Bakrī as “too famous to require identification.”⁸ He was the most learned man in Egypt, whom al-Sha‘rānī met on numerous occasions. He even claims to have defended Muḥammad from enviers who questioned his descent from Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, the first caliph of Sunni Islam. This lineage was validated in a dream in which Abū Bakr appeared to al-Sha‘rānī and thanked him for defending his descendent.⁹ In the following cen-

3 Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-‘Ābidīn al-Bakrī, *Qalā'id al-minan wa farā'id al-zaman*, in *Manāqib al-Sāda al-Bakriya*, ed., Mustafa Mughazy and Adam Sabra (Beirut: Dār al-Machreq, 2015), p. 21; Ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī, *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī manāqib al-ustādh al-Bakrī* in *Manāqib*, ed. Mughazy and Sabra, p. 15.

4 Ibn Abī al-Surūr, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, p. 18 gives the exact date.

5 Published as Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣiddīqī al-Bakrī, *Tafsīr al-Bakrī*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 2010).

6 Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira bi-a'yān al-mī'a al-āshira* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, 1997), Vol 2, pp. 192–96. Al-Ghazzī lists his name as ‘Alī, no doubt because his *kunya* was Abū al-Ḥasan, but the hagiographical works produced for the Bakrī lineage say that his name was Muḥammad. See below.

7 For an introduction to the Bakrī lineage see Adam Sabra, “Household Sufism in Sixteenth-Century Egypt: The Rise of al-Sāda al-Bakriya,” in *Le soufisme a l'e'poque ottomane, XVIIe-XVIIIe sie'cle = Sufism in the Ottoman Era, 16th-18th Century*, ed. Rachida Chih and Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen (Cairo: Institut français d'arche'ologie orientale, 2010), pp. 101–13.

8 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣuḡhrā = Lawāqih al-anwār al-qudsiyya fī ṭabaqāt al-ulamā' wa al-Ṣūfiyya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 2003), p. 119.

9 al-Sha‘rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣuḡhrā*, p. 120.

tury, al-Sha'rānī's admiration for the Bakrīs was often cited as evidence for their sanctity.¹⁰

There is an extensive biographical entry by the Yemeni scholar 'Abd al-Qādir al-'Aydārūs, a significant part of which is devoted to Muḥammad's father Abū al-Ḥasan. 'Abd al-Qādir's grandfather knew Muḥammad al-Bakrī and seems to have been the source of some of his information. Al-'Aydārūs begins the entry by giving Muḥammad's lineage going back to Abū Bakr, as well as his lineage through a maternal line to the Prophet Muḥammad through his grandson al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.¹¹ He notes Muḥammad al-Bakrī's pride in his lineage, something that is certainly evident in his poetry, and to some degree in his correspondence. He goes on to describe his lessons, which he depicts as so unprecedented in their insights as to be almost prophetic.¹² Muḥammad al-Bakrī was a polymath, with unusual abilities in Sufism, Qurānic exegesis, prophetic tradition, and law. Al-'Aydārūs also notes Muḥammad al-Bakrī's skills as a poet and writer of epistolary prose (*inshā'*), and describes him as someone about whom poets composed poems of praise.¹³ His lessons were attended by huge crowds of people and whenever he taught at al-Azhar or elsewhere in public, crowds would approach him to kiss his hand to receive *baraka*. He had to be guarded by the sultan's soldiers and Rūmīs to prevent him from being trampled by the crowds.¹⁴ Al-'Aydārūs also notes that in spite of being designated by his father to succeed him in his teaching post at al-Azhar, one of his father's leading students challenged his right to teach in his father's place since he was only twenty-one years old. In the end, al-Bakrī was subjected to an examination in which he proved his capabilities.¹⁵

Muḥammad al-Bakrī is also the subject of an entry by Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, who notes his connection to the two holy cities in the Hijaz.¹⁶ He mentions that al-Bakrī owned a residence located at the Bāb Ibrāhīm in Mecca.¹⁷ This connection to the two holy cities, and to Mecca in particular, is also obvious from many of the introductions to his poems in his *dīwān*. They often specify the location where al-Bakrī recited a poem, and these locations are often in Mecca or Medina, particularly in the vicinity of the Kaaba and the Prophet's mosque. As we will see, the

10 See the hagiographical works cited below.

11 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Shaykh ibn 'Abd Allāh al-'Aydārūs, al-Ḥusaynī al-Ḥaḍramī al-Yamanī al-Hindī, *al-Nūr al-sāfir 'an akhbār al-qarn al-'āshir*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥālū, Maḥmūd al-Arnā'ūt, and Akram al-Būshī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2001), p. 534.

12 al-'Aydārūs, *al-Nūr al-sāfir*, p. 535. See also, Ibn al-'Imād al-Dimashqī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, Vol. 8 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n. d.), pp. 431–32.

13 al-'Aydārūs, *al-Nūr al-sāfir*, p. 535.

14 al-'Aydārūs, *al-Nūr al-sāfir*, p. 536.

15 al-'Aydārūs, *al-Nūr al-sāfir*, p. 537.

16 al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira*, Vol. 3, pp. 60–65.

17 al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira*, Vol. 3, p. 62.

same is true of his prose correspondence, much of which was either composed in Mecca or addressed to officials there.

According to al-Ghazzī, Muḥammad al-Bakrī died on 24 *Ṣafar* 994/14 February 1586.¹⁸ Ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī places his death on 14 *Ṣafar* 994/4 February 1586. He left behind five sons: Tāj al-‘Ārifīn (960–1008/1553–99), Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (965–1013/1558–1604), Muḥammad Abū al-Surūr (971–1007/1563–99), Muḥammad Abū al-Mawāhib (974–1037/1567–1628), and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 1007/1559).

A number of members of the Bakrī lineage and their disciples produced hagiographical accounts of Muḥammad al-Bakrī’s life in the first half of the seventeenth century. The two most important as historical sources are those authored by al-Bakrī’s grandsons, Aḥmad b. Zayn al-‘Ābidīn al-Bakrī (996–1049/1588–1639), *Qalā'id al-minan wa farā'id al-zaman*, and Ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī’s (d. 1078/1667) *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī manāqib al-ustādh al-Bakrī*.¹⁹ These works contain oral traditions from within the Bakrī lineage that allow us to fill in some important details on Muḥammad al-Bakrī’s life.

Ibn Abī al-Surūr quotes a letter from Muḥammad al-Bakrī to Sultan Aḥmad al-Manṣūr of Morocco (r. 986–1012/1578–1603) detailing his education. Muḥammad memorized the Qurān by age seven.²⁰ By age ten, he had memorized the *Tanbīh* on Shāfi‘ī law by Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī and received the approval of leading representatives of the four schools of law.²¹ He began to write at the age of sixteen, beginning with Shāfi‘ī law and Sufism. Muḥammad received his father’s permission to teach Qurānic exegesis, prophetic tradition, and Islamic law in late *Shawwāl* 951/January 1545, some months before Abū al-Hasan’s death. He did so in the White Mosque (al-Jāmi‘ al-Abyaḍ), which was controlled by the Bakrīs.²² After Abū al-Hasan’s death, he succeeded to his father’s teaching post at al-Azhar.²³ Both Aḥmad and Ibn Abī al-Surūr provide lineages establishing Muḥammad’s (and therefore their own) descent from Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and the Prophet Muḥammad.²⁴

18 al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira*, Vol. 3, p. 65.

19 Edited in Mughazy and Sabra, *Manāqib al-Sāda al-Bakrīya*, pp. 61–282 and 5–60, respectively.

20 Ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, p. 15. This letter does not appear in the collection of *inshā'*.

21 Ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, pp. 15–16.

22 Ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, p. 16; Aḥmad b. Zayn al-‘Ābidīn al-Bakrī, *Qalā'id al-minan*, p. 212. Ibn Abī al-Surūr (*al-Kawkab al-durrī*, p. 19) says that Muḥammad was eighteen when he taught Sufism at the White Mosque.

23 Ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, p. 213.

24 Ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, pp. 18–19; Aḥmad b. Zayn al-‘Ābidīn al-Bakrī, *Qalā'id al-minan*, pp. 129–30.

Muḥammad al-Bakrī's Works

1) *Turjumān al-asrār* or *Dīwān Muḥammad al-Bakrī*

This is the collected poetry of Muḥammad al-Bakrī. By a conservative count, more than a dozen manuscripts survive. A critical edition is forthcoming by the editors of this volume. The *Dīwān* has been used in this edition to check quotations of poetry from Muḥammad al-Bakrī's correspondence. References to the *Dīwān* in the notes are to this forthcoming edition.

2) The Correspondence (*Inshā'*) of Muḥammad al-Bakrī

The work edited here. The manuscripts are discussed below.

3) Short Treatises

Muḥammad al-Bakrī authored a number of treatises, most dealing with topics related to Sufism, that are preserved in a variety of manuscripts. Most of these can be consulted in Princeton Ms Garrett 253Y, 146 folios.

- 1) *Ma'āhid al-jam' fī mashāhid al-sam'.*
- 2) *al-Jawhara al-muḍī'a fī tajwīz iḍāfat al-jazm 'alā al-mashī'a.* Dated 977/1569–70 in Mecca.
- 3) *Tarkīb al-ṣuwar wa tartīb al-suwar.*
- 4) *Akhhār al-akhyār.* Dated 20–21 *Dhū al-Qa'da* 959/November 7–8, 1552 in Mecca.
- 5) *al-Jawāb al-ajall 'an ḥikmat karb al-Muṣṭafā 'inda ḥulūl al-ajal.*
- 6) *al-Fath al-mubīn bi-jawāb ba'd al-sā'ilīn.*
- 7) *'Aqīlat al-khidr wa 'aqīdat al-sirr.*
- 8) *Hidāyat al-murīd lil-sabil al-ḥamīd.*
- 9) *al-Risāla al-murshida.*
- 10) *al-Naṣīha.*
- 11) *al-Naṣīha al-mawḍū'a lil-shaykh Maṣṣūr.*
- 12) *Nubdha fī al-kalām 'alā āyat al-isrā'.*
- 13) *Nubdha fī al-kalām 'alā āyat al-dukhān.*
- 14) *Lawāmi' al-anwār wa jawāmi' al-asrār fī al-kalām 'alā al-du'ā' wa faḍlihi wa al-kalām 'alā al-ism al-a'zam.*
- 15) *Jawāb su'āl fī ma'nā lafz al-ridā' fī qaṣīdat 'Alī ibn Abī al-Wafā.*
- 16) *Tanbīh al-awwāh li-faḍl lā ilāha illā Allāh.*²⁵

25 For a published version of this work see, Muḥammad al-Bakrī, *Tanbīh al-awwāh li-faḍl lā ilāha illā Allāh*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Cairo: Dār al-Āfaq al-'Arabīya, 2010).

- 17) *al-Iqtisād fī bayān marātib al-ijtihād*. End of Shawwāl 971/June 11, 1564 in Mecca.²⁶
- 18) *Jawāb 'an su'āl hal atla'a Allāhu ḥabībahu Muḥammad 'alā sā'ir ma'lū-mātihi*.
- 19) *Ṣādīḥat al-azal wa-nāṭiqat al-abad*.
- 20) *Ta'bīd al-minna fī ta'yīd al-sunna*. Dated 25 Muḥarram 959/January 22, 1552.
- 21) *Jawāb su'āl 'an ma'nā qawlihi ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, innī aẓallu 'inda rabbī yuḥ'imunī wa yusqīnī*.
- 22) *al-Risāla al-nāfi'a*.
- 23) *Aysar maṭlūb fī ziyārat akbar maḥbūb*.
- 24) *al-Nuṣra al-ilāhīya lil-ṭā'ifa al-Sa'dīya*.
- 25) *al-Sirr al-maktūm wa al-durr al-manẓūm*.
- 26) *Ijāza lahu*. Dated 7 Jumādā I, 988.
- 27) *Ṣiḡhat ṣalā waradat 'alā al-muṣṭafā*.
- 28) *Tasbīḥāt muwazza'a 'alā ayyām al-usbū'*.
- 29) *Tuḥfat al-sālik li-ashraf al-masālik*. Dated 1 Dhū al-Qa'da, 951/January 14, 1545.
- 30) *Nubdha fī aqsām al-bida' wa al-kalām 'alayhā*.
- 31) *Risāla murattaba fī bayān al-uslūb al-ḥakīm*.
- 32) *al-Mudhakkira*.

4. Various Prayers and Aphorisms

These appear in many collections of prose and verse, as well as in a number of hagiographic works. They have yet to be edited.

Manuscripts of Muḥammad al-Bakrī's Correspondence

Four manuscripts of Muḥammad al-Bakrī's correspondence are known. All date from the end of his life or from the period shortly after his death. Two are known to have been copied on behalf of elite patrons.

26 For a published version of this work see, Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī al-Shāfi'ī al-Ash'arī al-Miṣrī, *al-Ijtihād al-muṭlaq*, ed. Salīm Fahd Shab'āniya (Damascus: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1992).

Escorial 532 (I)

This is the most complete manuscript of Muḥammad al-Bakrī's correspondence. It contains three works. The first, entitled *Kitāb ṣūrat ru'ūs mukātabāt wa murāsālāt li-quṭb al-wujūd wa insān 'ayn al-shuhūd al-wāhid fī maqāmihi wa al-fard alladhī laysa [lahu] nazīr fī fitāḥ al-dahr wa khitāmihi al-shaykh Muḥammad al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī qaḍḍasa Allāhu rūḥahu*, contains poems that were placed at the beginning of some of al-Bakrī's letters. It comprises folios 1b–11b. The second part is untitled and occupies folios 15a–85a. Its introduction states, *fa-hādhīhi nubdha min zawāhir jawāhir ghurar durar mukātabāt [wa] murāsālāt ustādhinā wa malādhinā khaṭīb khuṭabā' manābir al-balāgha bi-lisān al-fayḍ al-raḥmānī imām a'immat maḥārīb al-wuṣūl al-'irfānī sayyidinā wa mawlānā shams āfāq al-wujūd al-kamālī quṭb dā'irat al-'arīfin billāh al-karīm al-muta'ālī al-shaykh Muḥammad al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī al-Shāfi'ī al-Ash'arī, raḍīya Allāhu 'anhu wa arḍāhu wa ja'ala al-firdaws al-a'lā mutaqaḷlabahu wa ma'wāhu*. Folio 88b begins with the following notation: *ḥaḍara fī hādhā al-makān al-mubārak al-faqīr ilā Allāh Barakāt al-Ṣiddīqī fī awā'il Jumādā al-ākḥira min shuhūr sanat 997 [mid to late April 1587]*. The third and final part is entitled *Kitāb al-inshā' majmū' min kalām al-ustādh al-a'zam al-muḥaqqiq al-mudaqqiq shaykh ma-shāyikh al-Islām wārith 'ulūm sayyid al-ānām al-shaykh Muḥammad al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī al-Shāfi'ī raḥimahu Allāh wa-nafa'anā bi-barakātihi wa-barakāt 'ulūmihi fī al-dunyā wal-ākḥira, āmīn*. On the side, the copyist has written vertically, "yashtamilu 'alā murāsālāt lil-salāṭīn wa al-wuzarā' wa al-bāshāwāt wa-ghayrihim." It occupies folios 88b–213b. The copyist, who identifies himself as Aḥmad ibn Mūsā al-Jumay'ī al-Ghamrī al-Shāfi'ī, gives the date of completion as *awā'il shahr Jumādā al-Ākhira min shuhūr sanat 995 (mid-May 1587)*. The hand in which parts one and two are copied differ from the hand in which part three is copied. The copyist of part three also writes smaller words and fits more words on each line and page.

Based on these facts, it is possible to draw the following conclusions. Part three, which in manuscript (↔) is entitled *Dustur al-gharā'ib wa ma'dan al-raghā'ib*, was copied first. Space was left for the addition of more items, and this was completed two years later. Part three was copied quite soon after Muḥammad al-Bakrī's death. The copyist of part three was an Egyptian, and there is no reason to believe that the manuscript as a whole was copied elsewhere, although this cannot be confirmed with certainty. Since many of the Arabic manuscripts in the Escorial collection were originally the property of a Sa'dī prince, it seems likely that this manuscript belonged to that collection, especially as it contains at least

two letters sent to Sa'dī rulers.²⁷ One possibility is that this copy was made in Cairo to be sent to the Sa'dī ruler Aḥmad al-Manṣūr, who was in correspondence with Muḥammad al-Bakrī. Parts one and two are unique to this manuscript. The verse in part one overlaps to some degree with the poems collected in Muḥammad al-Bakrī's dīwān, but not all of the poems in this manuscript appear in the *Dīwān*. The letters in part two overlap with the letters in part three, but there are significant differences and some of the letters in part two are complete versions of letters included in part three. In the interest of giving the reader the most complete picture possible of Muḥammad al-Bakrī's correspondence, we have edited all three parts in the order they appear in Escorial 532, with marginal notes indicating difference between the different versions of the letters and between the poems in these manuscripts and those in the *Dīwān*.

Suhāj 227 Adab (ب)

This manuscript, a copy of which we obtained from Ma'had al-Makhṭūṭāt al-'Arabīya/The Institute for Arabic Manuscripts of the League of Arab States in Cairo, is composed of 202 pages. The quality of the handwriting is inferior to that of the other copies. It is the only manuscript to be given the title *Dustūr al-gharā'ib wa ma'dan al-raghā'ib*. The copyist identifies himself (on page 202) as 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Mallāḥ, and dates his copy on Wednesday 19 *Jumādā* II 1003/1 March 1595, "the year in which Sultan Mehmed acceded to the throne." The reference is to Sultan Mehmed III, who reigned from 1595 to 1603. On the first page, there is a note indicating ownership by a scholar known as Manṣūr al-Azharī.

Bibliothèque nationale de France arabe 4443 (ج)

This manuscript contains 234 folios and is entitled, *Kitāb al-inshā' yashtamilu 'alā murāsālāt lil-salāṭīn wa al-wuzarā' wa al-bāshāwāt wa ghayrihim min kalām al-ustādh al-a'zam wa al-muḥaqqiq al-mudaqqiq shaykh mashāyikh al-Islām wa wārith 'ulūm sayyid al-ānām al-shaykh Muḥammad al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī al-Shāfi'ī*. The copy is undated, but the copyist adds the formula *raḥimahu Allāh*, indicating that it was copied after al-Bakrī's death. There are two notes in a different hand at the beginning and end of the manuscript indicating that it was owned by Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī al-Shāfi'ī sibṭ Āl al-Ṣiddīq. This figure appears to

27 Daniel Hershenzon, "Traveling Libraries: The Arabic Manuscripts of Muley Zidan and the Escorial Library," *Journal of Early Modern History* 18 (2014), pp. 535–58.

have been a nephew of Muḥammad al-Bakrī, and was active in the early seventeenth century.²⁸

University of Leiden Or 717 (Δ)

This manuscript, which contains 439 folios, contains the title, *fa-hādhihi ru'ūs mukātabāt wa murāsālāt inshā' ustād[h] al-wujūd wa malādh a'immat al-shu-hūd wa insān 'ayn al-ustādhīn wa lisān al-malakūt al-qudsī fī 'ālam al-tamkīn turjumān ḥadrat sayyid al-mursalīn zill Allāh 'alā al-'ālamīn sulṭān al-'arīfīn wa al-wārithīn wa al-wāsilīn quṭb al-dawā'ir wa imām ḥadratay al-bāḥīn wa al-zāhir mawlānā shams al-milla wa al-dīn al-shaykh Muḥammad al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī al-Ash'arī sibṭ Āl al-Ḥasan* on folio 2a. On folio 438b, the copyist identifies himself as 'Abd al-Mu'ṭī ibn Sa'd al-Dīn, giving the date as *awā'il Jumādā II 987*/late July or early August 1579, which places it in the lifetime of al-Bakrī. On folio 439b, there is a note indicating that this copy was made on behalf of (*bi-rasm*) mawlānā al-qāḍī Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn mawlānā al-qāḍī 'Abd al-Jawwād, *al-kātib bil-khizāna al-sharīfa bi-Miṣr al-maḥrūsa*. This patron was employed as a scribe working for the sultan's treasury in Cairo. On folio 1b, there are two notes. The first indicates that the manuscript was owned by mawlānā al-qāḍī Aḥmad 'ayn a'yān *muwaqqi'in* [unreadable word] *bi-Miṣr*, the chief notary ... of Egypt. The second note indicates that the manuscript was consulted by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf sibṭ Āl al-Ṣiddīq on 10 *Rabī I 1000*/26 December 1591. There were a number of lineages in seventeenth century Egypt that claimed to be maternal descendants from the Bakrī lineage, and it is difficult to determine to which of these 'Abd al-Ra'ūf belonged. What can be said with certainty is that the earliest manuscript of the canonical collection of Muḥammad al-Bakrī's correspondence was made within Muḥammad al-Bakrī's lifetime, and copied soon afterwards at the instruction of an important functionary in the financial administration of Egypt. It was also owned or consulted by religious scholars in the late sixteenth century, and possibly later.

28 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī al-Anṣārī, *Tuḥfat ahl al-taṣdīq bi-ba'd faḍā'il al-imām Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq* (Bombay: al-Dār al-Salafiya, 1983), pp. 181–87. The author appears to be the son of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī mentioned above. The work in question was completed on 19 *Ṣafar* 1033/December 12, 1623.

The Historical Context and Content of Muḥammad al-Bakrī's *Inshā'*

Muḥammad al-Bakrī wrote his letters to a wide variety of correspondents, many of whom were high-ranking Ottoman officials. Most of his letters are redacted and so contain no name of the addressee or date. Often, when al-Bakrī was writing on behalf of a third party, that person's name is also redacted. Clearly, the purpose in collecting these letters was to inform other people, including members of his household such as his sons, how to correctly address letters to important people. The collection was not intended to preserve information about specific people or requests that Muḥammad al-Bakrī had made, although in some cases it is possible to reconstruct that information from the material in the letters. Of particular importance is the titlature used to address the recipient, which is indicative of the office the recipient held. In many cases, however, the exact nature of the person's official position is unclear. For example, the term *shaykh mashāyikh al-Islām* is used to address persons holding the position of chief judge (*qāḍī al-askar*) as well as the *nāzir al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, who was responsible for the Kaaba in Mecca. In some cases, it is clear which official is intended, but in other cases it is not clear. The term "pasha" could be used for a number of different officials, including the governor of Egypt, or of other provinces. The following table indicates the distribution of letters by official addressee in *Dustūr al-gharā'ib wa ma'dan al-raghā'ib*. To avoid duplication, the other texts are excluded, except for purposes of clarification. It should be noted that Muḥammad al-Bakrī also wrote a number of letters to religious scholars and Sufis who held no official post. These letters are not included in this table.

Table. Official Addressees of Letters in *Dustūr al-gharā'ib wa ma'dan al-raghā'ib*

Official title of the recipients	Number of letters
Sultan	6
Son of sultan	1
Grand vizier	30
<i>Ra'īs al-kuttāb</i>	4
Chief judge of Anatolia	3
Sultan of Morocco	2
Mughal Emperor	1
Governor of Egypt	8
Pasha (unidentified)	6
Agha	1
<i>Sharīf</i> of Mecca	13
<i>Amīr al-Ḥajj</i>	4
<i>Amīr liwā' or kabīr</i>	11

(Continued)

Official title of the recipients	Number of letters
<i>Amīr</i>	11
<i>Amīr</i> of Jerusalem	1
<i>Amīr</i> of Yanbu'	1
Treasurer (<i>daftardār</i>) of Egypt	2
Chief judge of Egypt	11
<i>Shaykh mashāyikh al-Islām</i>	8
<i>Nāẓir al-Masjid al-Ḥarām</i>	6
Judge of Mecca	2
<i>Muftī</i> of Mecca	1
<i>Shaykh al-Islām</i>	7
Local judge (<i>qāḍī iqlīm</i>)	1
Granary official (<i>amīn</i>) in Egypt	2
Administrator (<i>nāẓir</i>) of madrasa	1

One question that immediately poses itself is in what capacity Muḥammad al-Bakrī wrote these letters. We know from archival sources that Muḥammad al-Bakrī served as a Shāfi'ī deputy judge on Maḥkamat al-Bāb al-'Āli (The Court of the Sublime Porte) in Cairo.²⁹ This court was officiated by the chief judge of Egypt, a Ḥanafī, who appointed deputy judges from each of the four Sunnī schools of law. The court's primary focus was on cases involving waqf and appointments to administer waqfs. We do not know how long Muḥammad al-Bakrī served as a deputy judge on this court. It is unlikely that he was able to address such important persons as the sultan, the grand vizier, and other high-ranking officials in his capacity as a deputy judge.

The biographical sources of the period identify Muḥammad al-Bakrī as a leading jurist, teacher, and Sufi. His influence appears to be derived less from whatever official posts he held than from his reputation for religious learning and sanctity. In his letters to officials within and outside the Ottoman Empire, he insists that he continues to pray on the officials' behalf. Although it was customary to begin a formal letter with a prayer (*du'ā'*) for the addressee, a prayer made by a religious scholar with a reputation for sanctity would have been of particular value. From a more practical point of view, Muḥammad al-Bakrī regularly accompanied the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan to Mecca and Medina and was intimately familiar with all of the officials and local grandees who resided in the Hijaz, especially in Mecca, where the Bakrīs maintained a resi-

²⁹ Egyptian National Archives (Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiya), Sijillāt Maḥkamat al-Bāb al-'Āli, sijill 21, page 69, entry 182.

dence. Al-Bakrī was well positioned to act as an intermediary between Istanbul, Cairo and Mecca. To a lesser degree, he also was in contact with officials in Medina, Jerusalem, and Yemen, including at the time of the Ottoman expedition to Yemen of 1569–71.

Prominent Recipients of Muḥammad al-Bakrī's Correspondence

Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95).

Sultan Selim II (r. 1566–74).

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (grand vizier, 1565–79).

Feridun Aḥmed Bey (*ra'is al-kuttāb*, 1570–73, *munshī*, 1573–76, 1581–83).

al-Sayyid al-Ḥasan ibn Abī Numayy (*amīr* or *sultān* of Mecca, 1553–1601, until 1584 he co-ruled with his father Abū Numayy ibn Barakāt (r. 1512–84).

Muḥammad (Mehmed) Efendi, *qāḍī al-'askar* of Egypt (?).

al-Amīr Ḥasan, *amīr liwā' sharīf* and *nāzīr al-dashā'ish al-sharīfa*, during the reign of Sultan Murad III.

Mulla Çelebi, *qāḍī al-'askar* of Anatolia (?).

Masiḥ Pasha, governor of Egypt (1574–80).

Shaykh mashāyikh al-Islam Zakariyā, chief judge of Egypt (?).

Mawlāy 'Abdallāh al-Ghālīb, Sa'dī sultan of Morocco (r. 1557–74).

Mawlāy Aḥmad al-Manṣūr, Sa'dī sultan of Morocco (r. 1578–1603).

Jalāl al-Dīn Akbar, Mughal Emperor (r. 1556–1605).

Abū al-Wafā ibn Sayyidī 'Alwān (active in the late sixteenth century).

Muḥibb al-Din al-Ḥamawī (visited Egypt, 1575).

Sinan Pasha (leader of Yemen expedition, 1569–71, referred to in the third person in a letter to al-Ḥasan ibn Abī Numayy).

As we can see from the above list, Muḥammad al-Bakrī's "circle of correspondence" included some of the leading political figures of his day, including five Muslim sovereigns.³⁰ Al-Bakrī identifies the Ottoman sultan using titulature that indicates his preeminent status among Muslim rulers, but nonetheless treats the Sa'dī and Mughal rulers as sovereigns in their own right. A large number of al-Bakrī's letters appear to be letters of introduction aimed at obtaining an official post for the bearer. Since some of the bearers are identified as religious scholars, it seems likely that al-Bakrī hoped to get his protégés appointed to one of the royal medreses in Istanbul or to a provincial judgeship, or more likely deputy

30 The term is borrowed from Christine Woodhead, "Circles of Correspondence: Ottoman Letter-Writing in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Journal of Turkish Literature* 4 (2007), pp. 53–68.

judgeship. Other letters are reports to the grand vizier about the conduct of the commander of the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan (*amīr al-Ḥajj*). One letter to the administrators of the sultan's granaries asks that a certain person's grain ships be immune from seizure.

Muḥammad al-Bakrī's *Inshā'* in Later Collections of Correspondence

As we have seen, the period of greatest interest in Muḥammad al-Bakrī's *inshā'* seems to have been in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The first copy was made in the lifetime of the author and additional copies seem to have been intended for use by financial officials and religious scholars in Cairo, as well as for export to the Sa'dī ruler of Morocco. Given the amount of correspondence that al-Bakrī had with officials in Istanbul and Mecca, one has to wonder if additional copies were not made for patrons in those places, but to date none have materialized. In addition to the letters preserved in (1), at least two other letters by Muḥammad al-Bakrī are preserved in later sources.

One exchange of letters involved Muḥammad al-Bakrī and al-Qādī Taqī al-Dīn ibn al-Qādī Ma'rūf, and is preserved in an anthology (*majmū'*) apparently in the hand of the great Ottoman prose writer Nergisi (994–1044/1586–1635).³¹ This anthology is believed to have been written between 1616 and 1620 and contains a number of examples of Arabic *inshā'* among other items. Nergesi was an important contributor to the Ottoman Turkish art of *inshā'*, so it is unsurprising that he would have collected examples of Arabic *inshā'* to use as models.³² The letters in question (folios 19b–20a) were written when al-Bakrī was returning to Cairo from Jerusalem. He was in Bilbays at the time, while Taqī al-Dīn was presumably in Jerusalem. The letters are of interest primarily because they demonstrate that there were other letters written by Muḥammad al-Bakrī circulating in the early seventeenth century that were not included in the “canonical” collection, perhaps because al-Bakrī did not preserve a copy, and because they raise the possibility that al-Bakrī's style of composition influenced Ottoman Turkish *inshā'* at that time. A comparison of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish *inshā'* from this period is beyond the scope of this introduction and the capabilities of

31 The manuscript is described in Efraim Wust, *Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian and Turkish Manuscripts of the Yehuda Collection of the National Library of Israel*, ed. Raquel Ukeles with Sagit Bulbul, Khader Salama, and Yusuf al-Uzbeki (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), pp 158–67. We would like to thank Björn Bentlage for bringing this exchange of letters to our attention.

32 On Nergisi, see Woodhead, Christine, “Nergisi,” in *EI2*. Consulted online on 13 June 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0860. Süleyman Çaldak, “Nergisi,” *Diyanet İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 32 (2006), pp. 560–62.

its authors, but al-Bakrī's *inshā'* may have had a wider range of influence than Arabic letters.

A second letter is preserved in part by Ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī in a number of works, including his hagiographical work on Muḥammad al-Bakrī and his father Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bakrī. Originally contained in a letter addressed to the Sa'dī Sultan Aḥmad al-Manṣūr, the excerpt constitutes a *tarjama*, summarizing Muḥammad al-Bakrī's life and career.³³ Since it preserves al-Bakrī's view of his own life, including his date of birth and early education, it is of considerable importance in establishing his biography. It is also evidence of how scholars attempted to shape their own image in the eyes of prominent potential benefactors. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine the source that Ibn Abī al-Surūr used for his grandfather's *tarjama*, but he must have had access to a copy of the original letter. It is also interesting that this letter was not collected with Muḥammad al-Bakrī's other correspondence and only appears in the works of Ibn Abī al-Surūr. It should be noted that the correspondence between the al-Bakrīs and the Sa'dīs continued after Muḥammad's death, and that Sa'dī sources preserve correspondence between Muḥammad's son Zayn al-Ābidīn and Aḥmad al-Manṣūr.³⁴

There is also reason to believe that Muḥammad al-Bakrī's *inshā'* continued to serve as a model for later authors of Arabic letters, especially letters sent to Ottoman officials. In particular, Mar'ī ibn Yūsuf al-Karmī al-Maqdisī (d. 1033/1624) copies excerpts from six of al-Bakrī's letters in his own compilation of *inshā'*, *Badī' al-inshā' wa al-ṣifāt wa al-mukātabāt wa al-murāsalāt*, one for each chapter in his book.³⁵ Al-Karmī was a Palestinian Ḥanbalī scholar who spent much of his life in Cairo where he taught at al-Azhar.³⁶ Part of one of al-Bakrī's letters is copied without attribution by Ḥasan al-Āṭṭār (1766–1835), who served as shaykh al-Azhar from 1830 until his death.³⁷ Among his writings is a treatise on *inshā'* dedicated to the Ottoman governor of Egypt, Mehmed 'Alī. First published in 1250/1834, al-Āṭṭār's *Kitāb al-inshā'* was reprinted several times in the nineteenth century.³⁸ Given that this period saw the increased popularization of

33 Ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, pp. 15–18.

34 'Abdallāh Gannūn, *Rasā'il Sa'diya* (Tiṭwān: Ma'had Mūlayi al-Ḥasan, 1954), pp. 33–65.

35 Mar'ī ibn Yūsuf al-Karmī al-Maqdisī, *Badī' al-inshā' wa al-ṣifāt wa al-mukātabāt wa al-murāsalāt* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Maymaniya, A. H. 1309), pp. 6, 7, 20, 33, 41, 60.

36 Muḥammad Amin ibn Faḍl Allāh al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-athar fī a'yān al-qarn al-hādī 'ashar* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1966), Vol. 4, pp. 358–60.

37 Ḥasan al-Āṭṭār, *Kitāb inshā' al-shaykh al-'allāma Ḥasan al-Āṭṭār fī murāsalāt wa mukhāṭabāt wa kitāb al-ṣukūk wa al-shurūṭ mimmā yaḥtāju ilayhi al-khawāṣ wa al-awām bil-kamāl wa al-tamām* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭībā 'a al-Bahīya, A. H. 1266), pp. 33–34.

38 Yuval Ben-Bassat and Fruma Zachs, "Correspondence manuals in nineteenth-century Greater Syria: between the arzuhalci and the advent of popular letter writing," *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013), pp. 1–25, especially pp. 5–8.

letter writing, Muḥammad al-Bakrī's highly ornate style seems like an odd choice for emulation. One must remember that nineteenth-century Egypt was very much part of the Ottoman Empire, and that Ottoman cultural norms were of particular importance in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Egypt.³⁹ Muḥammad al-Bakrī's sixteenth century letters thus had a lot to offer to Egyptian officials who wanted to write in a neo-classical style.

The Form of Muḥammad al-Bakrī's *Inshā'*

Typically, the letters of educated correspondents in this period began with verse.⁴⁰ The verse collected at the beginning of (l) constitutes a selection of the verse Muḥammad al-Bakrī composed to begin his letters. Some of the letters cited in full in the collection also contain verse. The prose portion of the letter then begins with a salutation (*du'ā'*), containing the honorifics appropriate to the addressee.⁴¹ The term *du'ā'* can also be understood to mean prayer, and Muḥammad al-Bakrī often assures the addressee that he never ceases to pray for him. In letters of introduction or requests made on behalf of third parties, al-Bakrī often presents the third party as someone who prays on behalf of his potential patron. He also describes the client as a disciple or lover (*muḥibb*) of the patron, combining the rhetoric of patronage with that of religious discipleship and personal affection.

The second part of Muḥammad al-Bakrī's letters usually begins with the formula *al-mar'ūd 'alā masāmi'ikum*, "it is presented to your hearing that..." followed by the statement of the request, usually including an identification of the person on whose behalf the petition is being made and a statement of the person's relationship to al-Bakrī and to the addressee. The petitioner is al-Bakrī himself, who is requesting patronage (*ināya*) on behalf of the third party. The addressee is often asked to direct his gaze (*nazar*) at the client or to offer him

39 On this point, see Adam Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism: The Ideology and Culture of Power in Late Ottoman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

40 For introductions to the genre of *inshā'* in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, see the following articles: Roemer, H. R., "Inshā'," in *EI2*. Consulted online on 21 June 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3577; Jürgen Paul, "Enshā'," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. VIII, 1998, Fasc. 5, pp. 455–57; Aḥmad Tafazzolī, Fath-Allāh Mojtabā'ī, Hashem Rajabzadeh, and Momin Mohiuddin, "Correspondence," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. VI, 1993, Fasc. 3, pp. 287–300; İsmail Durmuş, Mehmet Kanar, Rıza Kurtuluş, Mustafa Uzun, and Tahsin Görgün, "İnşâ", *Diyanet İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 22 (2000), pp. 338–42, with accompanying bibliographies. Adrian Gully, *The Culture of Letter-Writing in Pre-Modern Islamic Society* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), provides the best introduction to Arabic-language *inshā'*.

41 Gully, *The Culture of Letter-Writing*, pp. 166–74.

charity (*ṣadaqa*). In a few cases, al-Bakrī emphasizes that the client is a pious man who is impoverished and has a family for whom to provide. In these cases, it appears that al-Bakrī hopes to obtain a stipend for the client. He also requests stipends for his own children.

Other letters indicate the safe arrival of Muḥammad al-Bakrī and his family in Mecca, or acknowledge the receipt of a gift. Some are connected with the Ottoman campaign to re-conquer Yemen in 1569–71. In this case, Muḥammad al-Bakrī's familiarity with the Sharīfian ruler of Mecca and with other officials there made him a useful intermediary between figures such as Masīḥ Pasha and Sinan Pasha. Other letters are addressed to fellow religious scholars and deal with a variety of personal topics, including expressing condolences on the loss of a child.

Muḥammad al-Bakrī's Contribution to the Literature of *Inshā'*

Muḥammad al-Bakrī's collection of *inshā'*, while not unprecedented or unique, is nonetheless an important addition to the literature of letter-writing in the pre-modern Islamic world, as well as an important source for the history of the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the sixteenth century. Unlike some collections, such as the Egyptian scholar al-Qalqashandī's (756–821/ 1355–1418) famous *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā'* (*Daybreak for the Night-Blind: The Art of Correspondence*),⁴² al-Bakrī's collection was not intended primarily as a manual for bureaucrats in the chancery. The Ottomans had a well-developed chancery that issued official letters, diplomas, and other official correspondence on behalf of the sultan. Although the chancellor Feridun Ahmed was among Muḥammad al-Bakrī's correspondents, al-Bakrī's letters had different functions. Many were petitions on behalf of persons seeking the patronage of a powerful person. These letters give a sense of what a request for an official post or stipend might have looked like, especially if the petitioner depended on an influential religious scholar to put forward his request. In this sense, al-Bakrī's letters provide us with the other side of the story from what one finds in official documents. The fact that he could repeatedly petition the grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire, write to the sultan himself, and correspond with other Muslim sovereigns, suggests that al-Bakrī was a remarkably influential person.

Muḥammad al-Bakrī's correspondence is also important in that it provides us with insight into the relations between imperial officials in Cairo, Mecca, and Istanbul. Scholars have made extensive use of archival sources such as the *Mü-*

42 On al-Qalqashandī and his manual see C. E. Bosworth. "al-Ḳalkaṣhandī", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Consulted online on 10 January 2020, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3832.

himme Defterleri to reconstruct communications between the capital in Istanbul and the provinces. Relations between Cairo and Mecca are also documented in archival collections in the Egyptian Ministry of Awqāf. Al-Bakrī's letters are another important source, one which places a leading Egyptian religious scholar at the center of a triangular relationship between these three cities. Given that Cairo was the departure point for one of the two largest pilgrimage caravans, that many of the endowments benefiting the Ḥaramayn held lands in Egypt, and that the governor of Egypt was responsible for providing the additional provisions needed to feed the pilgrims during their sojourn on the pilgrimage, it is not surprising that Cairo was at the center of this triangle. Although ultimate authority lay with the sultan and his court in Istanbul, much of the local decision-making and implementation took place in Cairo. Since Muḥammad al-Bakrī traveled to Mecca regularly, something that was impossible for most Ottoman officials stationed in Cairo, he had face-to-face meetings with many of the relevant parties. His relations with officials in Istanbul, however, were carried out entirely through correspondence, often in letters carried by protégés.

Finally, Muḥammad al-Bakrī's *inshā'* tells us a lot about the political rhetoric of his day. Al-Bakrī never failed to recognize the dominant political and ideological significance of the Ottoman sultan. When addressing the sultan or grand vizier, al-Bakrī used titles that indicated the Ottoman dynast's preeminent position, including that of caliph. Nonetheless, al-Bakrī also corresponded with Muslim sovereigns in Morocco and India who were anxious to patronize such a prestigious religious figure due to his authority as a teacher at al-Azhar and his influence in Mecca. Although al-Bakrī did not hesitate to address these potentates with titles such as caliph and sultan, he does not seem to have considered them to be the equal of the Ottoman ruler whom he refers to as the universal ruler over Muslims. Al-Bakrī accepted the gifts he received from foreign potentates but never ceased to be a loyal Ottoman subject. In studying Muḥammad al-Bakrī's *inshā'*, we can learn a lot about how Ottoman political rhetoric was received in the provinces, especially in the milieu of elite lineages of religious scholars.

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