

A *Mülâzemet* Memorandum (*inhā*) by Zekeriyazade Yahya Efendi, Kazasker of Rumelia

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Context

The memorandum (*inhā*) presented here is from a manuscript entitled *Mecmū 'atū'l-Fetāvāü'l-Müteferrika* (No. 2865). This manuscript is housed within the Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Şehid Ali Paşa Collection, and although officially cataloged as a compilation of fatwas, closer examination reveals it to have a rich spectrum of content. Beyond the fatwas, it contains an array of letters, receipts, prayers, maps, fiscal entries, genealogies, and related material reminiscent of the diverse compilations characteristic of early modern Ottoman miscellanies.

The manuscript's most distinctive feature is evidence of the composition of letters directly by their senders or their scribes. Among them, certain letters emerge as preliminary drafts, anticipating later refinement before dispatch, while others stand as originals, encompassing responses sent to their writers. The scarcity of extant early modern Ottoman original letters renders this manuscript particularly authentic, providing a unique window into the practices of letter writing during the era.¹ The customary colophons or copy records are absent from this manuscript. However, given the content of the texts—originating from the Ottoman state elite and scholars from the first half of the 17th century—it is possible to surmise an approximate compilation date.

Zekeriyyade Yahya Efendi's (1561? – 1644) memorandum possesses inherent value as a tangible exemplar, illustrating the practical subtleties involved in the formulation of *mülāzemet* enrollment records—a materialization of theoretical knowledge. The signature of Yahya Efendi serves as a temporal marker, indicating the memorandum's origin during his tenure as the Kazasker of Rumelia.² These *inhā* letters, by their

¹ I am preparing a review of this manuscript and two similar copies, in which I will include lists of names and details of the content. For now, I will give a few of the names mentioned: Hoca Sadeddin Efendi, Hocaazade Mehmed Efendi, Hocaazade Abdülaziz Efendi, Hocaazade Esad Efendi, Zekeriyyade Yahya Efendi, Sunullah Efendi, Abdülhalim Efendi, Nevizade Atayi, Kafzade Faizi, Hafız Ahmed Paşa, Nasuh Paşa, Sultan Mehmed III, Sultan Osman II, etc.

² Unfortunately, it is not possible to know the exact year; Yahya fulfilled the duty of Kazasker of Rumelia three times between the following dates: 1605-1606, 1609-1611 and 1617-1619. The sources I consulted for these dates were: Uşşâkîzâde İbrâhîm Hasîb Efendi. *Zeyl-i Şakâ'ik, Uşşâkîzâde'nin Şakâ'ik Zeyli*, ed. Ramazan Ekinci, İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları,

nature, were intended for higher authorities than their authors, possibly finding their way to esteemed figures such as the grand vizier or the grand mufti of the period. The response from the recipient, inscribed in the margin, signals the letter's return to Yahya Efendi.

Transcription

[37b]³ *Meclis-i sāmī ve maḥfil-i kirāmīleri şavb-ı fazīlet-evbine mezīd-i muḥabbet ve ikrām birle aṭyeb-i taḥiyyāt u selām ve teslimāt-ı selāmet-i irtisām ithāfindan soñra // inhā-i muḥibb-i faḳīr budur ki eger bu taraḫa tevcīh-ı ḫāṭır buyurılırsa bi-ḫamdihī subhānehu ḫālā şıḫḫat u ‘āfiyet üzre olub bi-ḫasebi’l-miknet aḫvāl-i fuḫarā ile muḫayyedüz // ğıbbezā⁴ mektüb-ı şerīfleri vuşul bulub iltimās olunduğı üzre maḫdüm-ı mükerremiñüz mülāzım kayd olunub gendü mülāzımlarımız silkine mütesellik // olmuşdur ḫaḫ sübhānehu mübārek eyleye mütevaḫḫı’dur ḫayr-du ‘ādan ferāmüş buyurmayasız bāḳī ‘ömr ü devlet müstedām bād*

Mine’l-muḫliş Yahyā el-faḳīr el-ḳāḫı bi-‘asākiri Rümeli

Benüm efendüm allāhu te ‘ālā mübārek eyleye // ‘ilm-i nāfi’ ‘amel-i şāliḫ ile mu ‘ammer olasız // sizler de anlar da du ‘ādan ferāmüş // buyurmamaḫ mercüdür ed-du ‘ā

Translation

With abundant cordiality and reverence for your illustrious assembly and esteemed position, which leads towards goodness, and having paid the most beautiful salutations, homages, and prayers for well-being, my humble self's *inhā* (memorandum)

2017, 303-305; Şeyhi Mehmed Efendi, *Vekâyi’u’l-Fuzalâ I-IV*, İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu, 2018, 498; Kaya, Bayram Ali, “Yahya Efendi, Zekeriyâzâde”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/yahya-efendi-zekeriyazade> (28.11.2023); Andrews, W.G., and Kalpakli, Mehmet. ‘Yahyā’. In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, P.J. Bearman (Volumes X, XI, XII), Th. Bianquis (Volumes X, XI, XII), et al. Accessed October 5, 2023. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8934.

³ Since the page numbers of the manuscript are scattered, I have numbered them myself, as they should be, without relying on the numbers in the original.

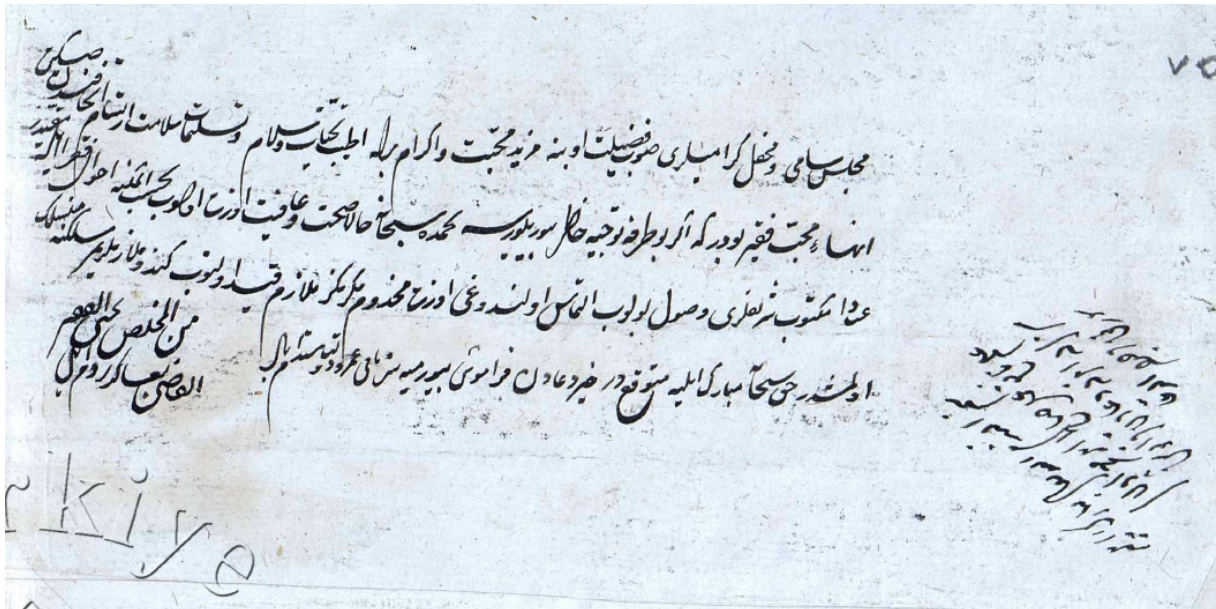
⁴ *ğıbbezā*: “Post hoc, post haec, deinde vero”, cf. Meninski’s dictionary, *Linguarum Orientalium Turcicae, Arabicae, Persicae*, 3376.

is the following: If you inquire about us, we are – praise be to God – in good health. We are diligently taking care of the people to the best of our abilities. Since your precious letter arrived and since we showed special favor (*iltimās*) to it, your venerable son has been registered as *mülāzım* (apprentice) and thus entered into our circle of *mülāzemet* (apprenticeship). Blessed be God! We hope that you do not withhold your auspicious prayers from us. May God perpetuate your life and fortune!

From your sincere friend and humble servant Yahya, *kādı*- ‘*asker*⁵ of Rumelia.

My sire, blessed be Allah! I wish you a long life with beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds! It is requested that you and he too should not forget to pray for us. God bless you!⁶

Facsimile



⁵ “Military judge, title for the supreme judge of the Ottoman Empire” (Bayerle, s. 95)

⁶ This paragraph could be the answer.

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