

AHMED b. İBRĀHĪM

Resmī, Girīdī

(b. 1694 or 1695, d. 1783)

LIFE

A.R. was born in Réthymnon (Resmo), Crete (Girīd), in 1106-07/1694-95. According to Muḥammad Murādī (d. 1206/1791-92), our source for the little we know concerning A.R.'s early life, A.R. arrived in Istanbul in 1147-48/1734-35, where he continued his studies under °Abdullāh al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Başrī (d. ?) and Abū al-Tijah Aḥmad b. °Alī al-Manīnī al-Dimashqī (d. ?). Even though A.R. is sometimes referred to as a teacher (*mūderris*), and occasionally has the honorific title *ḥācī* attached to his name, neither attest to his early training or later experiences. Most sources credit him with expertise in the calligraphic and epistolary arts, typically evoked of those who were life-long members of the *ḥ^vācegān*, the senior ranks of Ottoman bureaucracy. A.R. was such a figure. It also seems to be more than simply a matter of professional convenience that A.R. allied himself with an intellectual circle of reformers, who transformed diplomatic relations of the Ottomans with Europe in the eighteenth century and established some of the first privately-endowed public libraries of Istanbul. His patrons were among the most distinguished statesmen and literati of the eighteenth century. Most of our knowledge of his palace career is drawn from scattered references in his own works, especially those in dedicatory prefaces to patrons, and scanty records of employment from archival documents.

A.R. began his civil service as chief tax farmer (*baş muqāta^cacı*) in 1160/1747. When his father-in-law and first patron Ṭavuqçubaşı Muṣṭafā, a diplomat and one of the prominent figures in grand vizier Qoca Rāğīb Meḥmed's (1110-77/1698-1763) entourage, died in 1162/1749, A.R. began the compilation of *Sefīnetü'r-rü'esā*, not only to honor him but also to find a new patron. It was in this period that A.R. wrote *İstinās fī aḥvālī'l-efrās*, a standard show piece demonstrating his scribal and literary skills.¹ The work celebrated the spring ritual of releasing the royal horses for grazing and served as an encomium to his master Sulṭān Maḥmūd I (r. 1143-67/1730-54). Judging from the number of presentation copies among the extant manuscripts, it must have served also as a means of introduction to potential patrons, such as grand vizier Köse Bāhir Muṣṭafā (first vizierate: 1165-68/1752-55).

After having demonstrated his literary skills and serving in numerous lesser offices including the office of the junior endowments accountant (*küçük evqāf muḥāsebecisi*), probably because of his attachment to the household of Qoca Rāğīb Meḥmed, A.R. was appointed in late 1118/1757 to an embassy to Vienna to announce the accession of Muṣṭafā III (1171-88/1757-74). This is also the period when A.R. composed *Hamīletü'l-küberā* (1163/1749), a biographical list of the chief black eunuchs (*qızlar ağaları*) of the Palace, of which one copy is dedicated to Qoca Rāğīb.²

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The embassy to Vienna (1171-72/1757-58) was followed by a similar appointment, namely the first ever embassy to the court of Frederick the Great in Berlin (1177-78/ 1763-64). In both cases A. R. submitted detailed reports on the geography of passage and the politics of the courts he encountered. In the case of the Berlin embassy, he left behind not just an account of diplomatic niceties but also a portrayal of Frederick and the description of the Seven Years' War then winding down. His observations, however tentative, inaugurated a new emphasis on the need to study European politics, decades prior to Selīm III's (r. 1203-23/1789-1808) initiative to send diplomats to permanent posts abroad in 1207/1793.

Upon his return from Berlin, A.R. was appointed chief correspondence officer (*mektūbcu*) to the grand vizier. In 1179/1765 he became chief serjeant-at-arms (*çavuşbaşı*) and began his long connection to Muhsinzāde Meḥmed Paşa (d. 1188/1774), who was appointed grand vizier first between 1179-82/1765-68 and then between 1185-88/1771-74 during the Ottoman-Russian war (1182-88/1768-74). Among A.R.'s other appointments to the highest offices was his brief posting as second-in-command (*şadāret ketḥudāsı*) to grand vizier Moldovanī °Alī Paşa on the Bulgarian battlefield in 1183/1769. He served in this capacity again with Muhsinzāde from 1185/1771 until the grand vizier's death at the end of the war in 1188/1774. A.R. was present at many of the war councils on the battlefield and is noted for his largesse toward wounded soldiers.

Even though the abovementioned three posts were considered stepping-stones to the office of the grand vizier, A.R. never achieved that status. The reason for this could have been incompetence or rivalries. Yet it is more than likely that A.R.'s regular and scathing criticism of the state of Ottoman military organization played a major role in this turn of events.

A.R. acted as first plenipotentiary (*muraḥḥaş-ı evvel*) to the hastily convened Küçük Qaynarca peace negotiations in 1188/1774 and became one of the signatories of the resulting treaty. It is therefore small wonder that he disappeared from the appointment rolls for some time after 1189/1775. A.R. resurfaced one last time as chief of the palace cavalry bureau (*süvārī muqābelecisi*), likely as a sinecure, under grand vizier Ḥalīl Ḥamīd (1197-99/1782-85), probably in recognition of his continuous service behind the scenes in difficult negotiations with Russia over the future of the Crimea and the Tatars. He died in Şevval 1197/August 1783, shortly before the Aynalıqavaq convention ceding the Crimea to Catherine II was signed in early 1198/1784. One son is said to have preceded A. R. to the grave; no other information has been discovered to date concerning his family life.

WORKS

① *Ḥamīletü'l-küberā*

In 1163/1749 A.R. composed *Ḥamīletü'l-küberā*, a biographical list of the chief black eunuchs (*qızlar ağaları*) of the Palace until Beşir Ağa II, mid-18th cen. A copy

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was dedicated to Qoca Rāgıb Meḥmed.³ *Ḥamīletü'l-küberā* and *Sefīnetü'r-rü'esā* (see below) are unique to A.R.'s age as career profiles of two of the most influential offices of the Ottoman court. In both cases, they were composed to celebrate the patrons and mentors of A.R.⁴

The book begins with Meḥmed Ağa (981-998/1574-90) and ends with Moralı Beşir Ağa (the second eunuch with the same name, who served between 1160-66/1746-52). It includes brief biographies of thirty-eight eunuchs, focusing on their origins and professional careers. A *tekmile* addresses the history of the downfall and execution of Moralı Beşir Ağa and provides as much justification for, as explication of, the events.

② *Ḥulāṣatü'l-i'tibār*

Critical and satirical history of the Russo-Ottoman War 1182-88/1768-74, composed in 1195/1781, which is also date of the earliest manuscript copy (no. 19 below). A. R. was on the battlefield from 1771 till 1774, and acutely aware of the failings of the janissary army. The writing is accessible, indignant, sometimes comic, but sincere and passionate. Not by any means a well-composed or highly stylized piece, it nonetheless circulated in multiple editions well into the nineteenth century.

③ *Lāyiḥa*

A memorandum presented to grand vizier Ḥalīl Paşa in 1183/1769 concerning the need for reorganization and control of military headquarters. Simply entitled *Lāyiḥa*, this was A.R.'s first analysis of the state of military affairs, which he presented to the newly appointed grand vizier °İvāzpaşazāde Ḥalīl (1183-84/1769-70). The only extant copy of the work includes the discussion of thirteen topics of concern about the 1182/1769 campaign, including: 1) The protection of campaign routes from rapacious soldiers; 2) The supply of horses at waystations; 3) How to control rabble troops from Anatolia; 4) The uselessness of the soldiers from the military fiefs (*tumarlı*); 5) The problem of camp followers; 6) The abuse of pack animals; 7) The uselessness of janissary palace cavalry and guards units (*sipāḥī* and *silāḥdār*); 8) The excessive retainers for the men of state; 9-10) Biscuit and bread, and their adulteration by corrupt bakers; 11-13) The matters of supplying the army, purchasing supplies at current market value, and preventing hoarding.⁵

④ *Lāyiḥa*

A political memoir on the Russians during temporary truce and negotiations to end the 1182-88/1768-74 war presented to Muḥsinzāde and °Abdürrezzāq Efendi, chief negotiator on the battlefield in 1186/1772. That so many copies are bound together with *Ḥulāṣāt* suggests that the two texts became a primer on foreign affairs and reform.

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A.R. presented this *Lāyiḥa* to Muḥsinzāde as the Ottomans undertook ultimately abortive negotiations with the Russians between 1186-87/1772-73, in which he pressed for peace, arguing that the Russians were badly overextended, and that both sides should recognize their military and territorial limitations. Such language was still novel in Ottoman negotiations. A.R.'s view in this last work as well as in *Ḥulāṣātü'l-i'tibār* represents an understanding of the balance of power diplomacy he observed in the courts of Vienna and Berlin.

⑤ *Sefāretnāme-i Ahmed Resmī* or *Sefāretnāme-i Prusya*

Report of A.R.'s embassy to Berlin in 1177-78/1763-64 containing a logbook for the journey, reflections on the cities of passage, as well as a record of the official meetings with Frederick the Great (1153-1200/1740-86), and many reflections on the rise of Frederick, his kind of rule, and his parsimony. Both this and the Vienna embassy report have been edited and transcribed numerous times, and discussed at length in English and Turkish.

⑥ *Sefīnetü'r-rü'esā* or *Ḥalīfetü'r-rü'esā*

Also known as *Ḥalīfetü'l-rü'esā*, *Sefīnetü'r-rü'esā* is the only biographical compilation of Ottoman chief scribes (*re'isü'l-küttāb*) until 1157/1744, written ca. 1162/1749, continued by Süleymān Fā'iq until 1218/1804. The work ends with the entries on A.R.'s patrons Tavuḳcubaşı Muṣtafā and Rāḡīb Meḥmed, mainly known to us through *Sefīnetü'r-rü'esā*. A.R.'s probable autograph copy of the work refers to the sending of the manuscript to Qoca Rāḡīb Meḥmed while he was governor of Raqqa in 1163/1750.⁶

⑦ *Viyana Sefāretnāmesi*

Report of A.R.'s embassy to Vienna in 1170-71/1757-58, written immediately upon his return.

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Manuscripts: (1) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 1210; 1167/1753, 13 fol., 23 lines, talik, presentation copy to Qoca Rāḡīb. (2) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 2423; n.d., 28 fol., 23 lines, talik. (3) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 4371; 1185/1771, fol. 78-112, 19 lines, talik, with *Sefīnet*. (4) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 9721; n.d., 16 fol. 21 lines, rıka. (5) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Atuf Efendi 1881; 1199/1784, fol. 34b-38, various scripts, fragment with *Ḥulāṣāt*; (6) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 2258/1; n.d., fol. 1-13a, 35 lines, various scripts, with other works. (7) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 3378/2; 1178/1764, fol. 36-52a, 16 lines, various scripts, with two other works by A.R. 8) Istanbul, Süley-

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maniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 3876/2; 1197/1782, fol. 33a-51a, 19 lines, rıka. (9) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Halet Efendi 597/2; n.d., fol. 69-101b, 29 lines, nesih, with *Sefînet*. (10) Istanbul, Millet Kütüphanesi, Ali Emiri 274; 1192/1778, 22 fol., 25 lines, rıka. 11) Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Emanet Hazinesi 1403; 1163/1749, 27 fol., 23 lines, nesih. 12) London, British Library, Or 10897; 1268/1851, fol. 39b-46b, fragment with *Hulâşât*.

Editions: Hamiletü'l-küberâ. Ed. Ahmet Nezih Turan (Istanbul, 2000). Facsimile of (1) above.

Secondary work: Jane Hathaway. el-Hajj Beshir Agha (Oxford, 2005) (on the first eunuch to bear that name).

② *Hulâşatü'l-i'tibâr*

Manuscripts: (1) Cairo, Cairo University Library, 6548T; copied 18th c., 52 fol., 17 lines, nesih. (2) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 92; n.d., fol. 406ff., 25 lines, nesih. (3) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 93; n.d., fol. 406ff., 25 lines, nesih. (4) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 237; 1257/ 1841, fol. 1-34, 21 lines, talik, with other works; (5) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 627; 1246/1830, 48 fol., 21 lines, talik, with *Lâyiha* (Muhsinzâde). (6) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 2441; 1265/1848, 42 fol., 17 lines, rıka. (7) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 2458; 1254/1838, 29 fol., 29 lines, rıka. (8) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 2583; 1284/ 1867, fol. 1-136, 13 lines, nesih, with *Lâyiha* (Muhsinzâde). (9) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 3311; 1210/1795, fol. 1-20a, 29 lines, talik, with misc. other works. (10) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 3440; n.d., 44 fol., 21 lines, nesih. (11) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 6057; 1226/1811, 50 fol. 17 lines, nesih. (12) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 6095; n.d., fol. 291-340, 19 lines, nesih, with numerous other works. (13) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 6113; n.d., 32 fol. 25 lines, talik. (14) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 6168; 1210/1795, 53 fol., 17 lines, rıka. (15) Istanbul, Köprülü Kütüphanesi 384; ca. 1200/1785, fol. 1-10, 16 lines, nesih. (16) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Atıf Efendi 1881; 1199/1784, fol. 1-34a, 23 lines, talik, with *Hamilet*. (17) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 2256; 1195/1781, 45 fol., 23 lines, nesih, an undistinguished copy of (19) below. (18) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hacı Mahmud 4859/3; n.d., fol. 44b-74a, 21 lines, rıka, with misc. other political advice manuscripts. (19) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hüsrev Paşa 387/1; 1195/1781, fol. 1-28a, [TBC], with *Lâyiha* (Muhsinzâde). (20) Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Hazine 375; ownership date 1206/1791, fol. 15b-55, 21 lines, rıka, with anonymous *Risâle* on Europe. (21) London, British Library, Or 10897; 1268/ 1851, fol. 1b-38a, 21 lines, rıka, with two other works by A.R. (22) London, British Library, Or 7306; various lines and scripts, catalogued as *Mir'âtü'l-*

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Secondary sources: G. V. “De la guerre des russes contre les turcs de 1768 à 1774.” *Journal des science militaires*, 15 (1829), 205-39. B. Ercilasun. “Ahmed Resmî Efendi’nin Türk Yenileşme Tarihindeki Yeri.” *Atsız Armağanı* (Istanbul, 1976), 127-46 (summary of contents of *Hulāşāt* and the two embassies).

③ *Lāyiha*

Manuscript: (1) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 419; n.d., 11 fol, 19 lines, talik, with Kâtib Çelebî’s *Düstürü’l-‘Amel*, marginal note by Ahmed Resmî’s son, who is not further identified.

④ *Lāyiha*

Manuscripts: (1) Cairo, Cairo University Library, 6796T; fol. 32-4, 18th c., various lines and scripts, included in Qoca Râğıb’s *Mecmū‘a-i Münşe‘ât* ascribed to A.R. (2) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 237; 1257/1841, fol. 26b-40, 21 lines, talik, with *Hulāşāt*. (3) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 627; 1246/ 1830, fol. 43-48, 21 lines, talik, with *Hulāşāt*. (4) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 2583; 1284/1867, fol. 137-54, 13 lines, nesih, with *Hulāşāt*. (5) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 6065; n.d., fol. 404-410, 19 lines, nesih, with numerous other works. (6) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hüsrev Paşa 387/1; 1186/1772, fol. 28b-31b, [TBC], with *Hulāşāt*. (7) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hüsrev Paşa 886; n.d., 6 fol. 17 lines, rıka. (8) Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, S 1251; mid-19th c., fol. 60-67, 17 lines, talik, with *Hulāşāt*.

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⑤ *Sefāretnāme-i Ahmed Resmî* or *Sefāretnāme-i Prusya*

Manuscripts: (1) Cairo, Cairo University Library, 6438T; mid-18th c.?, 28 fol., 19 lines, talik. 2) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 1246; n.d., 12 fol., 21 lines, talik. 3) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 6095; n.d., fol. 37b-62a, 19 lines, nesih, with numerous other works. 4) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 9941; n.d., 18 fol., no. of lines varies, nesih. 5) Istanbul, Istanbul

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© *Sefinetü'r-rü'esā* or *Ḥalīfetü'r-rü'esā*

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⑦ *Viyana Sefāretnāmesi*

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¹ Virginia H. Aksan. *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700-1780* (Leiden, 1995), 11, 28-29.

² Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 3378/2; 1166/1753.

³ Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 3378/2; dated 1166/1753.

⁴ The facsimile edition of the work by Ahmed Nezhî Turan includes a lengthy discussion of A.R.'s motives.

⁵ Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, TY 419 (Aksan, 188-95).

⁶ Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Reisülküttab 639.

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