

The Interest of Algerian Scholars in the Art of Letter Writing: A Statistical and Analytical Study

ARTICLE HISTORY:

Received: 30.04.2025

Revised: 26.06.2025

Accepted: 28.06.2025


Available online: 09.07.2025

<https://doi.org/10.56177/eon.6.2.2025.art.11>

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ABSTRACT: The art of letter writing, as it is known, is a form of prose that began in Arabic literature during the era of documentation, especially when official correspondence offices were established and the territory of the Arab Islamic Caliphate expanded. It became necessary to have writers who would convey the caliphs' orders to governors or explain political and social matters. From there, attention to letters began to grow. In addition to expressing their specific subject, the writer would strive to make their style beautiful, impactful, and coherent in both form and content, allowing their personality, originality, and unique method of expression and composition to shine through. Several Algerian scholars became well-known in this field. Letter writing also came to be characterized by specific features, including the harmony between subject and style, attention to composition, use of rhyme in particular, and observance of pauses to create pleasure or demonstrate verbal eloquence.

KEYWORDS: Letter writing; literature; subject; formality; artistry.

TITLU: „Interesul savanților algerieni pentru arta epistolară: un studiu statistic și analitic”

REZUMAT: Arta epistolară, așa cum este cunoscută, reprezintă o formă de proză care își are originile în literatura arabă în perioada de dezvoltare a documentării, mai ales odată cu înființarea cancelariilor oficiale și extinderea teritoriului Califatului Islamic Arab. A devenit necesară existența unor scribi care să transcrie și să transmită ordinele califilor către guvernatori sau să explice chestiuni politice și sociale. De aici a început să crească interesul pentru scrisori. Pe lângă exprimarea subiectului specific, autorul se străduia să-și îmbunătățească stilul, făcându-l frumos, atractiv și coerent atât în formă, cât și în conținut, permițând personalității, originalității și metodei unice de exprimare și compoziție să strălucească. Mai mulți savanți algerieni și-au câștigat un renume în acest domeniu. De asemenea, scrisoarea a ajuns să fie caracterizată prin trăsături specifice, precum armonia dintre subiect și stil, atenția acordată compoziției, utilizarea rimelor în special, precum și respectarea pauzelor pentru a crea plăcere sau a demonstra elocvență verbală.

CUVINTE-CHEIE: scrisoare; literatură; subiect; formalitate; măiestrie.

INTRODUCTION

The art of letter writing, as it is known, is a form of prose that began in Arabic literature during the era of documentation, particularly when official administrative correspondence offices were established and the Arab Islamic Caliphate expanded. This expansion made it necessary to have writers who would convey the caliphs' orders to governors or explain political and social matters. Thus began the growing attention to letters. The writer, in addition to expressing a specific subject, would strive to make their style beautiful, impactful, and coherent in both form and content, such that their personality, originality, and unique method of expression and composition would clearly emerge. Several Algerian scholars became renowned in this field. Letter writing came to be characterized by particular features, including harmony between subject and style, care in composition, a special emphasis on rhymed prose, and attention to pauses to create enjoyment or to showcase verbal eloquence.

Before delving into the interests of Algerian scholars in this art, it is important to first understand the linguistic meaning of the root *tarassul*. This word derives from the root r-s-l, which carries various meanings, such as: "Rasala" – *tarassul* is like a message, and *tarassul* in speech and matters denotes calmness and composure. To "arsala" speech is to let it flow freely without restriction, and to exchange letters or messages with someone in their work means to keep up correspondence or follow along in it (Manzur 2004).

In literary terminology, *tarassul* refers to the expression of thoughts and reflections on specific topics in the form of letters. These letters may be official, friendly, or literary, written by an author seeking to convey their ideas in a clear and sequential manner. These thoughts are translated into words, arranged in sentences, and sent from a sender to a recipient. A letter has also been defined as something a person writes to a friend or relative - usually brief, limited in subject matter, simple in style, and generally free of ornate language.

From this definition, we can conclude that the letter is a literary genre like other genres such as the *maqama* and oratory. It possesses artistic characteristics that distinguish it from other forms. Algerian scholars paid particular attention to this genre, as evidenced by the many letters we have found. In this article, we have attempted to collect all the letters written by Algerian scholars and conduct an analytical study of them.

The central issue lies in how this literary art influenced the writing style of Algerian scholars, who excelled in composing letters characterized by their unique literary and artistic style. Hence, the importance of understanding the concept of *tarassul* (correspondence), both linguistically and technically. The root "r-s-l" is associated with meanings such as deliberation, reverence, and the unrestrained flow of speech. In literary terminology, *tarassul* refers to the process of conveying the writer's thoughts into words through letters - whether formal, fraternal, or literary - that reflect communication between the sender and the recipient.

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Historical Arabic letters, regardless of their type - whether administrative, fraternal, or pleas for assistance - are marked by specific formal and rhetorical patterns. These patterns are not merely rigid templates but rather reflect the culture of the era in which they were written. They also highlight the writer's skill in using language and rhetorical techniques to express the purpose of the message. By analyzing these patterns, one can gain a deeper understanding of the literary values and traditions that prevailed during that period, and how writers interacted with their audience and society. Based on this, a central hypothesis can be formulated: that these letters, despite their varied purposes and contexts, adhere to certain distinctive features that reflect the writer's proficiency and mastery of the linguistic and rhetorical tools of their time.

Letter of 'Abd Al-Wahhāb Al-Rustamī

'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Rustamī sent a letter to Nafūsa in Tripoli of the West, which was under his authority. Its text reads:

"In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. May God's blessings and peace be upon our master Muḥammad, his family, and his companions. From the Commander of the Faithful, 'Abd al-Wahhāb, to the Muslim community of Tripoli: As for what follows, I command you to fear God (, *taqwā Allāh*), to follow what He has commanded you, and to avoid what He has forbidden you. It has reached me from your writings that you informed me of the death of al-Samaḥ (, *al-Samaḥ*), and that some people appointed a successor in his place, while the righteous rejected that decision. Indeed, whoever appoints a successor without the consent of his Imam has deviated from the path of the Muslims, and whoever refuses such an appointment has acted correctly. Therefore, when this letter of mine reaches you, every official whom al-Samaḥ had appointed should return to his former position, except for the successor of al-Samaḥ — he must wait until he receives my command. Repent to your Creator (, *Bārī'ikum*), and renew your repentance, that you may succeed"(Bounar 1968).

Administrative and fraternal letters are characterized by formal and artistic features related to the eloquence of their authors and the richness of the rhetorical styles deployed. Their letters are more than about communication; they are refined literary works created with care. In the specifics of artistic uses, for example, they use technical rhetorical devices such as *saj'* (rhymed prose), *taṣrī'* (rhymed openings), *ṭibāq* (antithesis), *taḍmīn* (inclusion), and *iqṭibās* (Qur'anic or poetic allusion). The effect aesthetically on the discourse is pleasing and interesting to the reader, while revealing the writer's cleverness in achieving quality discourse. Formally, these letters follow a well-known tripartite structure: introduction, body, and conclusion. Each section contains precise characteristics—for example, the elegant

opening that often includes the art of *taḥmīd* (praise of God), followed by mention of the recipient's status, a greeting of peace, an exchange of salutations, expressions of longing and affection, then the presentation of the letter's main purpose. The letter concludes with an eloquent ending that features refined phrases of farewell and supplication. All these elements make such letters a fully developed linguistic and literary model worthy of close study.

Ibn al-Athīr explained the principles of artistic writing and its powerful impact on the reader when he said: "If, for example, the introduction does not attract the reader, or is not written with elegance and good composition, the reader will turn away from it. This is unlike when the opening is graceful and immediately captures the reader's attention. The true writer is the one who excels in both openings and closings - what is known in the science of *badī'* (rhetorical embellishment) as the 'artful beginning' (*barrā'at al-istihlal*). As the saying goes, the beginning is the sign of the end. Likewise, if the writer is not skilled in transitioning from one idea to another and in connecting these elements with strong coherence - so that the reader finds no gap or deficiency, and the meanings follow one another seamlessly without abruptness - then, if the writer achieves this level of connection, his writing becomes eloquent" (al-Athir 1282, 45).

These are the pillars and structure of the administrative letter as crafted by the literary masters of Arabic in both the East and the West. Anyone who examines the letter of 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Rustamī, the Emir of Tāhart, will find that it includes:

An introduction, which begins with the phrase: "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful," followed by "As for what follows." This introduction is marked by several distinctive features that can be summarized as follows:

Graceful opening, represented by the basmala and the invocation of blessings and peace upon the Chosen Prophet and his family, as in his words: "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. May Allah send blessings upon our Master Muḥammad, his family, and his companions, and grant them peace." This is followed by the inclusion of the sender's title - "Commander of the Faithful, 'Abd al-Wahhāb" - and the name of the addressee - "the community of Muslims in Tripoli." He then moves on to the phrase that marks the end of the introduction: "As for what follows," transitioning immediately into the body of the letter.

Body: It begins with his words: "Indeed, I command you to fear Allah," and concludes with: "Repent to your Creator, and return to repentance, that you may prosper."

The body of the letter follows the pattern of a sermon, filled with themes of exhortation and guidance. It clearly employs an exhortative style, particularly the imperative form, as seen in his statement: "Indeed, I command you to fear Allah, to follow what He has commanded you, and to avoid what He has forbidden."

He also employs certain declarative informative styles, as in his statement: "I have received your letter informing me of the death of al-Samḥ," and likewise in his words: "Whoever appoints a successor without the consent of his leader has deviated from the conduct of the Muslims." (Bounar 1968. 45)

Conclusion

As for the conclusion, it appears to be integrated within the body of the message, making it difficult to distinguish it clearly from the main content presented by the sender, the Rustamid emir 'Abd al-Wahhāb.

ARTISTIC FEATURES OF THE LETTER:

The letter contains a set of artistic features, which are evident in:
Phonetic Beautification (Stylistic Enhancements):

Quotation: The sender has taken the Holy Qur'an as a vast sea from which he has extracted its pearls and jewels, and he has borrowed from it meanings and words that serve his purpose. This is evident in his phrase: "that you may prosper," which is a meaning borrowed from the Qur'anic verse: "O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful" (Surah Aal-e-Imran, 3:200).

Figurative Beautification (Stylistic Enhancements):

These are expressed in:

A. Antithesis:

We find this in the context of his words, "to follow what He commanded you, and to avoid what He forbade."

B. Antithesis (antithesis, opposition):

Antithesis is the contrast between command and prohibition, between follow and avoid, and can be seen clearly in the contrast between: "commanded you and forbidden you," and "to follow and avoid."

Letter of Aflah ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb

During this period, *Aflah ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb* also emerged, from whom we have received four letters. One of the notable excerpts from his letter reads:

"I command you to fear Allah and follow the example of your predecessors, for they have set the guidance for you and clarified the path of truth. They have guided you on the right path, and in following them lies salvation, while in deviating from them, you risk destruction. Beware of innovations, for innovations are a path to destruction and a bad way. Every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is disbelief, and every disbelief leads to the fire" (Mertad 2005, 94).

Formal Characteristics of the Letter

These are reflected in the following:

Introduction: As for the introduction, the letter we have does not include one, possibly because it is incomplete, as we have not found the full version.

Body: It begins with the words: "*I command you to fear Allah*" and ends with: "*and every disbelief leads to the fire*." In the subject of this letter, he commands them to fear Allah, encourages them to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), as in his Sunnah lies salvation and success, and warns them against innovations, which lead the innovator to the fire.

Conclusion: We find that *Aflah ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb* concludes his letter by quoting a hadith from the Prophet, using it to support the topic he presented. This conclusion is often observed in religious sermons, where the speaker uses such techniques to reinforce the subject, as hadiths and Qur'anic verses have a powerful effect on the hearts and minds.

Artistic Features of the Letter

Quotation: The letter contains a quotation from the noble hadith, which is evident in the phrase:

"Every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is disbelief, and every disbelief leads to the fire." This meaning is borrowed from the Prophet's saying: "Every innovation is an innovation, and every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the fire" (Mertad 2005).

It appears from the letter that *Aflah ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb* did not rely on rhetorical devices such as alliteration, punning, simile, and others. What stands out in his letter is his adoption of a sermon-like style, similar to that of his predecessor, *'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Rustami al-Ibadi*. This is evident in his direct approach to presenting the topic. We find that he quotes a hadith from the Prophet to support the subject he addresses. It is clear that he was deeply influenced by Arabic rhetoric, especially in the way he constructs sentences and chooses his vocabulary. His strong, impactful tone comes through in the threatening, warning, and admonishing language he uses. This leads us to conclude that he lacked familiarity with the artistic principles of letter writing, and that his main goal was not artistic enjoyment but rather communication and benefit, namely urging people to follow the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and adhere to his Sunnah.

Letter of Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Dafrir

Muhammad ibn Dafrir wrote a letter about the Sultan of the state, *Yahya ibn al-Aziz al-Hamadi*, who fled from the city of Bejaia, seeking assistance from some Arab princes in the region. This occurred after he sensed defeat at the hands of the army of *Abd al-Mu'min ibn Ali*¹ (d. 558 AH). The text of the letter is as follows:

"We have written this, praising Allah for what He wills and for His secret, content with His division and submission to His destiny, relying on the reward He grants to those who are thankful. And we send blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad, the best of mankind, and upon his family and companions, as long as the star shines at dawn."

And after that, when Allah willed what occurred, due to the wicked consequences of those who betrayed our state and its stability, the hostility of those loyal to us was provoked. Those whom we had favored and bestowed kindness upon turned to ingratitude, coming from places where they were not expected and attacking from where they were not defended. We were, in seeking help from them and relying on them, like one seeking healing from a sickness with another sickness or running from a wicked person to a deaf snake. Their deceitful actions became overwhelming, and the matter was hastened before we could remedy it. Their evil consequences returned to them. At that point, we withdrew from the place of fitna (temptation or discord) and turned to the place of safety. We sent messengers to the tribe of Hilal to seek their help, and we called upon those whom we believed to be capable in times of difficulty. And you, in this matter, are the first to consider them and commend them.

Formal and Artistic Characteristics of the Letter

One who examines the letter of "Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Dafrir" will find that it contains a number of formal and artistic characteristics, which can be summarized as follows:

Introduction: The letter begins with the phrase, "We have written this, praising Allah for what He wills and for His secret," and ends with, "And upon his family and companions, as long as the star shines at dawn." It is distinguished by several characteristics, which can

¹ He is Abd al-Mu'min bin Ali bin Makhlof bin Ya'li bin Marwan Abu Muhammad al-Kumi, named after Kuma, a Berber tribe. He was born in 446 AH in the city of Nedroma, near Tlemcen, where he grew up and studied. His father was a pottery maker. He studied under Ibn Tumart and his successor, who was the founder of the Almohad movement in the 6th century AH. He passed away in 558 AH – see: Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.

be summarized as: **Skillful Opening:** This is represented in the praise of Allah and the sending of blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad, as shown in the phrases "We praise Allah" and "We send blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad, the best of mankind, and upon his family and companions."

Good Use of Words Indicating Submission to Destiny. The writer skillfully uses words indicating submission to fate and divine will, preparing the reader for the topic at hand. This falls under the concept of "good opening," a characteristic confirmed by some scholars who state: "The skillful opening required in every art is for the writer to begin their correspondence with something that indicates the content of the letter. For instance, if the letter is about congratulation, it begins with words of congratulations, or if it's about condolences, it starts with words of sympathy, or any other meaning depending on the purpose of the letter" (Jibran 2004, 129).

What we observe in the letter of "Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Dafrir" is that it does not include the **Bismillah** (In the name of Allah), which is an essential component of letter writing, whether it is a personal or official letter. In contrast, the letter includes the **art of praise**, as reflected in the words and expressions related to the situation, which is his request for help and support from those he believes are worthy of it.

Body: We find that "Muhammad ibn Dafrir" presents his topic directly, before mentioning the name of the recipient and listing their qualities and attributes, which is the norm in the writing of official letters. His words are in line with the context of the situation, as he is in a state of despair following a defeat. In such a state, he has no time to recall formal greetings or expressions of longing. Instead, he directly conveys his purpose, which is to seek assistance and offer an apology for the defeat of the Hamadiyya dynasty at the hands of the Almohads, attributing it to betrayal by someone in whom trust was placed but who then turned against it.

He speaks about the minister of Prince Yahya ibn Abdul Aziz (d. 470 AH), **Maimun ibn Hamdun**, who failed to defend against the Almohads and later joined **Abd al-Mu'min ibn Ali**, the Almohad ruler (Bounar 1968, 131). He expresses this in eloquent style, describing the weakness of the prince in the face of the challenges he encountered and his plea for help from the Arab princes. His writing is carefully structured with beautiful, well-coordinated wording that is clear in intent and free of exaggeration or overstatement. He then proceeds to praise those to whom the letter is addressed, extolling their strength and valor.

Conclusion. As for the conclusion of his letter, it consists of a direct connection to the subject matter addressed. It does not include the usual closing phrases in letters such as prayers, greetings, or the date of the letter, nor does it include the personal seal or other traditional closings known to the Arabs.

As for the study of the letter in terms of its artistic features, we find that it contains a number of rhetorical devices, including alliteration, paronomasia, metaphor, quotation, and inclusion. The rhetorical devices in terms of meaning include antithesis and allusion. In general, they can be summarized as follows:

Rhetorical Devices in Language

A. Alliteration. Alliteration, in its simplest definition, is the agreement of the two parts of a phrase in prose on a single letter. This is what "al-Sakkaki" meant when he said, "Alliteration in prose is like rhyme in poetry, and it has three types: introductory, balanced, and embellished" (Al-Qazwini 2000, 235).

What stands out most in his letter is his use of alliteration and parallelism, and his skillful application of these rhetorical devices, recognizing the impact that alliteration and parallelism have on the context of prose and intonation, especially since he aims to influence the listener. As it has been said: "Prose does not sound good nor become pleasant unless it is doubled, and you will hardly find an eloquent speaker whose words do not contain

parallelism. If any speech were to be free of parallelism, it would be the Quran, for its structure is beyond that of ordinary speech." Furthermore, we find that he uses alliteration, where the phrases are balanced, which is considered one of the finest types of alliteration in rhetoric. For example, he says: "They came from where they were not expected, and they struck from where they were not supported," and "You are the first to whom the thought pertains, and they are praised by their actions."

B - Paronomasia (Jinas). We find that "Abd Allah Muhammad bin Dferir" made excellent use of paronomasia. Although it is rare in his letter, it adds a certain elegance and brilliance that attracts the attention of both the listener and the reader. This is not surprising, as he appreciates the art of embellishment in composition, being in a state influenced by Arabic styles, where paronomasia is considered one of the most prominent rhetorical devices. One definition of paronomasia is "the similarity of words in pronunciation while differing in meaning." Some examples of this are: *makr* (deceit) and *amar* (command), *khater* (thought) and *khansar* (praise), *yahdhirun* (to warn) and *yansurun* (to support), *da'* (disease) and *sama'* (deaf), (Jibran 2004, 274).

C – Simile. Simile, in its simplest definition, is representation. According to rhetorical scholars, it is the sharing of a meaning between two things with specific tools used for comparison. An example of this is saying: "Knowledge is like light in guiding," (Al-Hashimi 2006, 209) where *knowledge* is the object being compared, *light* is the comparison, and *guidance* is the basis of the comparison, with *like* being the simile tool.

And since simile enhances meanings with grandeur and clarity, and adds emphasis and distinction, we find that "Muhammad bin Dferir" benefited from it. This is evident in his statement: "We were in seeking their help and relying on them like someone seeking a cure for a disease with another disease, and fleeing from a venomous bite to a deaf snake."

D - Incorporation: We also find that he uses the same meanings that were used before, rephrasing them in a new context. This is clear from his statement: "We were in seeking their help and relying on them like someone seeking a cure for a disease with another disease, and fleeing from a venomous bite to a deaf snake." This meaning is taken from the words of "Abu Nuwas" (140–200 AH):

"Leave off blaming me, for blame is an invitation, And treat me with the very thing that was the disease."

E - Quotation: The correspondent has taken the Holy Quran as a solid foundation upon which he relied in writing his letter. This is evident from his effective use of the noble Quranic verse, which confirms his broad religious knowledge. An example of this is his statement: "And the consequences of their actions will return to them", which is quoted from the verse: "Like those before them, who tasted the consequences of their actions" (Ahmad bin Muhammad, 182)

We also find it in the verse: "Has the news not come to you of those who disbelieved before, and they tasted the consequences of their actions?"

Figurative Rhetorical Devices. "Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Dferir" used various rhetorical devices in his letter, such as eloquence, contrast (referred to by many rhetoricians as opposition and equivalence), in addition to hinting. An example of this is:

A - Contrast: "Bin Dferir" managed to use words effectively to reveal the depth of his suffering, as seen in his statement: "They provoked the people of our loyalty with hostility, and enticed those whom we had made and showered with kindness into ingratitude. They came from where they were not expected, and they attacked from where they would not be supported."

"Bin Dferir" was able, through these sentences, to guide the reader toward the beauty of this expression, in which he relied on contrast between consecutive sentences in the first instance, and then on the contrast of words in their sequence in the second instance. This

produced a special meaning for the text, which is evident in his statement: "We distanced ourselves from the place of fitna and leaned towards the place of safety."

B - Hinting (Implied Meaning): Hinting means that the poet or writer alludes to a well-known story, a famous saying, a well-remembered poem, or a popular proverb in a way that adds depth to the intended meaning. The best and most eloquent use of hinting enhances the meaning of the message, often taking the form of a riddle.

An example of this in his letter is his statement: "We were like someone seeking relief from a disease by using another disease and fleeing from a wicked thorn to a deaf serpent." Here, he refers to the traitorous minister of Sultan "Yahya bin Aziz al-Hammadi," "Maymun bin Hamdoun," who collaborated with the Almohads and helped them seize the fortress in 1253. This was because of his desire to become the chief representative of the Almohad ruler "Abd al-Mu'min bin Ali" (Bouhouch 2005, 38).

It seems that the writer is proficient in the language and skilled in rhetoric, and that he is knowledgeable about the principles of artistic writing.

Letter of Abu al-Qasim Abd al-Rahman al-Qalimi

"Abu al-Qasim" is from the city of Qalmah, which at that time was part of the Annaba province. In 1394 AH / 1974 AD, it became one of the provinces of eastern Algeria. "Al-Asfahani" mentioned that he was one of the scribes of the Hammadi state, though he did not specify the name of the prince who employed him. It is understood that it was "Yahya bin Aziz." The letter was addressed to one of the companions of the King of Bejaia, and it is a letter of gratitude and thanks. The text of the letter is as follows:

Text of the letter:

"Since you have followed in the footsteps of your predecessors, being loyal to us and proud in our obedience, we decided to strengthen your foundations, confirm your actions, and ensure for you and your successors what our predecessors had ensured for your predecessors, distinguishing them from their peers and rewarding them for their sincere loyalty and allegiance. So continue to cherish this great blessing by giving thanks, for you are worthy of it. 'And whoever performs a good deed, We will increase for him in it goodness. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Appreciative.'"

The Formal and Artistic Characteristics of the Letter

The first notable thing is that the letter lacks an introduction, such as the basmala (in the name of God), praise (hamdala), and the prayer upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his family, similar to the letter of "Ibn Dferir" mentioned earlier. This may require us to pause and consider the era of the "Banu Hammad," which leads the researcher to realize that it is unlikely that the letters of the Banu Hammad, or most of them, would deviate from the typical style of epistolary writing during the Islamic state and its rulers. This is because the Banu Hammad would select writers for the Diwan (state office) who were well-versed in the language. Moreover, "Abu al-Qasim Abd al-Rahman al-Qalimi" seems to be highly talented and experienced in the principles of artistic writing. This makes us suggest that it might have been omitted by the scribes or possibly lost due to the passage of time.

The Letter of Yusuf Pasha

Among the letters of the scholars of Algeria, we mention the letter of "Yusuf Pasha", which he sent to "Muhammad al-Buni" in 1050 AH during Dhu al-Hijjah. In this letter, he informed him of his decision to abandon the plan of fighting the Spanish in Oran and instead head to Constantine and Biskra to fight the rebels (the revolt of Ibn al-Sakhri). Yusuf Pasha asked the "Murabit" (religious scholar) to work on gaining the people's obedience and to

play the role of scholars in such circumstances, as he was the scholar of that city and the surrounding areas. The letter spans three pages, and among the contents, it includes the following:

Text of the Letter

"From Abdullah, the one granted success by Allah, the victorious by His might, Abu al-Jamal 'Yusuf Pasha,' may Allah grant him the power to achieve whatever He wills, to the esteemed and virtuous scholar, the sincere and devoted servant of Allah, the guide to Allah, the one who calls to Him with insight, our servant 'Sidi Muhammad Sassi,' may Allah strengthen his support and increase his followers and strength. Peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of Allah, the Most High, be upon you, with good health, prosperity, and a turning towards Allah in rectifying the flaws of this nation, with humble tongues and pure hearts, seeking the intercession of the Imam of the pure, the leader of the chosen, the one served by all in the heavens and the earth, the unique among those of great names, our Master Muhammad, may peace and blessings be upon him, then with the prayers of such as yourselves from the pure ones, and the words of your like among the righteous."

"As for your esteemed knowledge, we had initially resolved to engage in jihad for Oran (Abu al-Qasim 1983, 55-56), to reclaim it from the hands of the party of Satan, to rescue it from the abyss of disbelief and misguidance, and to enlighten it with the light of faith, Islam, and righteous deeds. However, we encountered an obstacle that stood between us and this goal, diverting our determination from removing this affliction. This obstacle, as you are well aware, is the disarray of Muslim affairs in that region, the widespread conflict and animosity, and other forms of corruption condemned by Sharia, repugnant by nature. The obedience to the authority of the ruler, which is obedience to Allah, has vanished, its symbols erased, and the foundations of tyranny have been erected, with devilish intercessions and their markers made clear. Knowledge has been distorted, and falsehoods have been promoted, with what is low raised and what is elevated lowered.

Thus, we abandoned our resolve for jihad for a while, postponing it until its appearance comes with the blessings of good fortune and honor. After careful consideration and based on the outcome of the situation, we determined that prioritizing what is most important is the course with the most favorable results, one that achieves all objectives and demands. We focused our determination according to what wisdom dictated, after employing the methods of seeking divine guidance (istikhara), consulting others, and contemplating the matters of leadership and governance..."(Abu al-Qasim 1983, 55-56).

"...and they returned their stray to Allah, the Almighty, with prayer and supplication. You have an example in your Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions. Abu 'Such-and-such' fought under the banner of Yazid and others like him among the notables, and Abdullah ibn Umar prayed behind al-Hajjaj, and pledged allegiance to Ibn Marwan. They did this not to withdraw from obedience or to deviate even a little from the Sunnah and the community, nor to defy Allah and His Messenger in order to oppose a ruler or assist in sin and transgression. May Allah be pleased with them and they be pleased with Him. These are the party of Allah. Indeed, the party of Allah are the successful ones... and praise be to Allah, the protector of the Muslims in those lands... May Allah preserve you as a blessing for the country and a mercy for the people" (Abu al-Qasim 1983, 55-56).

Study of Formal and Artistic Characteristics

In order to highlight the development in writing letters and the differences between them and other letters, it was necessary for us to study their formal and artistic characteristics.

The Formal and Artistic Characteristics of the Letter

Introduction: It begins with the words: "From Abdullah" and ends with: "and for the letters of your likes from the pious."

The introduction is distinguished by its length, with a well-crafted preamble and skillful elaboration, as demonstrated by the letter before us. The introduction includes the name of the sender and the name of the recipient. Before mentioning the recipient's name, the sender describes him with a series of attributes and qualities, such as: "To the honorable, pious, sincere, God-fearing scholar, the sincere servant of Allah, the one who guides to Allah with clear insight" (Abu al-Qasim 1983, 55-56).

After that, the sender invokes blessings upon the recipient, saying: "May Allah strengthen your aid and increase your supporters and followers" (Abu al-Qasim 1983, 56).

Then, the letter transitions to the phrase of peace, turning towards Allah with supplications, asking for the reform of the earth and all who dwell upon it, before directing his request for the recipient to pray for him.

Introduction: Yusuf Basha" dives directly into his topic without mentioning the transitional phrase "Amma ba'd" (meaning "Now, to continue"), as we find him immediately elaborating on the subject of his letter, which is the resolution to take action to purify the city of Oran from Spanish control, followed by purging Biskra and Constantine from the oppression and tyranny of the occupation.

Conclusion: The letter begins with: "And for you, in your Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions, an excellent example," and ends with: "And mercy upon the servants, Amen."

Here, we observe that his conclusion takes the form of a prayer, which is one of the known types of conclusions used in letter writing among Arabs. He employs several supplications, such as: "May Allah be pleased with you" and "May Allah keep you a blessing for the lands, and mercy for the people."

In addition, we find that he praises the recipient of the letter, highlighting his high status, describing him with the most beautiful attributes and qualities. Although there is some noticeable exaggeration in these descriptions, such as: "the only one among those of expertise," he prays for his continuous health, wellness, and blessings. He also documents the date of writing the letter, which is the beginning of Dhul-Hijjah in the year 1050 AH.

Artistic Features of the Letter

Rhetorical Devices: The sender employed a set of rhetorical devices that play a significant role in clarifying the meaning and adding more consistency and elegance to the letter. For example, we find him using:

A. Parallelism (Saj'): "Yūsuf Bāshā" used **parallelism**, which can be observed in our study of his letter, as seen in phrases like: *al-ṣāliḥ* (the righteous) and *al-nāṣiḥ* (the sincere advisor), *al-sarīra* (the inner conscience) and *al-baṣīra* (the insight), *madadahu* (his support) and *ʿadadahu* (his numbers), *al-ʿāfiya* (health) and *al-ṣāfiya* (purity), *al-sharʿ* (the law) and *al-ṭabʿ* (nature), and *al-ṣaqʿ* (the open land) and *al-istikḥāra* (seeking divine guidance).

B. Paronomasia (Jinas): The sender also employed **paronomasia**, the rhetorical use of words with similar sounds but different meanings. Examples of this can be found in various parts of the text, such as:

- **At the beginning:** *layl dāmīs* (a pitch-black night) and *ṭarīq ṭāmīs* (an obliterated path).
- **In the middle:** *wa-hum yanhawna ʿanhu wa-yanʿawna ʿanhu* ("they forbid it, yet they themselves withdraw from it").

• **At the end:** *al-khayl ma 'qūd fī nawāṣiṭhā al-khayr* ("goodness is tied to the forelocks of horses")(Al-Hashimi 2006, 319-320).

"In the first case, as his saying: 'its number and its duration.' In the middle, as his saying: 'the subjects and the calamities,' 'determination and resolution,' and 'guidance and misguidance' and 'the rational and the transmitted.'

C- The simile: The simile is embodied in his saying: 'and extracting it from the hands of the party of Satan,' where he compared the Spanish, in their occupation of Oran and their disgraceful actions, to devils."

D. Quotation: It is clearly evident in his saying: 'And do not oppose Allah and His Messenger', and this meaning is borrowed from the verse of Allah: That is because they opposed Allah and His Messenger, and whoever opposes Allah, then indeed Allah is severe in punishment

In this, he seeks to warn them of the consequences of disobeying Allah and His Messenger, so he conveyed the meaning, but in the form of a negation, to emphasize that those who oppose Allah and the Messenger—peace and blessings be upon him—will face severe consequences.

E. Implication: "Yusuf Pasha" found in the Book of Allah a source of support, from which he extracted various ways to strengthen his words, especially in some emotional and spiritual contexts. Among the most prominent of these is the context of admonition and guidance, where the speaker aims to purify the soul by alerting it to eternal truths."

"Additionally, he embedded in his speech events from our Islamic history, as we find him mentioning a historical incident and incorporating it into his words, without the reader feeling any disruption. This is clarified by what he said: 'And for you in your Prophet is an excellent example, and the parents of Abu Ayoub al-Ansari fought under the banner of Yazid and other notable figures' The content of the historical incident is that when Muawiyah entrusted his son Yazid with the leadership of the army and sent him on an expedition to Constantinople, Abu Ayoub al-Ansari went under his banner and said: 'What does it matter if a young man commands us?' Abu Ayoub fell ill and died in the year 50 AH and was buried near Constantinople (Abu al-Qasim 1983, 56). As for the second historical incident, we find it in his saying: 'Abdullah ibn Umar prayed behind al-Hajjaj and gave allegiance to Ibn Marwan.'"

"He is referring to the stance of the companion and scholar 'Abdullah ibn Umar ibn al-Khattab' (may Allah be pleased with him) when he refused to accept allegiance for himself and resist the rule of the Umayyads. He even accepted the leadership of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi, the governor of the Umayyads, by praying behind him, and he gave allegiance to Ibn Marwan for the caliphate, in order to preserve the blood of the Muslims and maintain the unity of the Ummah.

Then he moves on to the noble verse without explicitly stating that he will mention it, but rather incorporates it into his speech. For one who does not memorize the Qur'an, it may be unclear, as in his saying: 'And they did this to remove a hand from obedience, or to deviate even a little from the Sunnah and the Jama'ah, and to oppose Allah and His Messenger in a dispute over power, and to assist in sin and aggression. Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. They are the party of Allah. Indeed, the party of Allah are the successful ones'

"The noble verse came as a supplication for the recipient, which was a style commonly used in their letters.

Rhetorical devices: Rhetorical devices played a significant role in the message of 'Yusuf Pasha,' where we find it includes the following:

A- Antithesis: This is evident in his saying: 'reform and corruption,' 'earth and sky,' 'disbelief and Islam,' 'indefiniteness and definiteness,' 'raising and lowering,' 'truth and falsehood.'

B- Metaphor: In his saying: 'We stripped away resolve,' where resolve is compared to a physical object that can be stripped away. The metaphor omits the compared object ('the physical object') and leaves behind one of its characteristics, which is 'stripping,' in a figurative sense.

C- Euphemism: We see this in his saying: 'The calamity of disbelief and misguidance,' which is a euphemism for ignorance and injustice, and 'a blessing for the land,' which is a euphemism for his wisdom, knowledge, and sound judgment.

D- Exaggeration: This is evident in his saying: 'The saint who knows Allah and is sincere in his inner being,' as only Allah knows the inner secrets.

E- Contrast: Yusuf Pasha made frequent use of contrast, which is evident in his sayings:

- ✓ 'Indefiniteness of known things and definiteness of the unknown.'
- ✓ 'Raising the lowered and lowering the raised.'
- ✓ 'Displaying the truth and erasing falsehood.'
- ✓ 'Clarifying the signs of guidance and removing the signs of misguidance.'
- ✓ 'Respecting the scholar and guiding the ignorant.'

There is also another official letter from the year 1064 AH written by 'Mahjoub al-Hadari' on behalf of 'Pasha Osman'

Message of Hamdan ibn Osman Khawja

He says: "Praise be to Allah, and may Allah's blessings be upon our master Muhammad, his family, and companions. I rejoiced when the creation rejoiced with you, and I was enlightened when you became the manifestation of the lights of the Sharia and the truth. The time greeted you with good fortune, and the era was sealed with your virtues and perfections. You were met with the happiness of the fortunate, as you were crowned with the highest of honors, becoming the right hand of the right and a source of blessing, the model for both stillness and movement. You are the embodiment of rare knowledge, from which wisdom is drawn, and the seats of distinction belong to you, never to be surpassed or stolen. The worthy ones acknowledged that you are the center of honor, and even the enemies conceded to the happiness of your being, as you remain the guardian of the sacred trust, bearing the banner of leadership in the hidden knowledge, the crown of the true faith, its renewer, the result of lofty ambitions, and the source of its fruitful achievements."

"... If you have done some good, it is because of the generality of its virtues. And if you have expressed a beautiful meaning, it is from the crafting of its ideas. And if you return to the origin and settle in the seats of ignorance, at the very least, there will be a glimmer to recover, a longing to renew, an ambition to seek, and virtues that cannot be counted or enumerated. Is it strange to expect uprightness from a fall? Perhaps bodies are healed by ailments... the worst of enemies and the most evil of the wicked. It is narrated that he drank poison, but don't you see, may Allah grant you health, how Allah has afflicted him with grief... and forcing the arrogant and fighting the disbeliever is the way of Allah, which has passed before, and the virtue that is directed by both the law and reason."

The Formal Characteristics of the Message

Introduction. It begins with the words: "Praise be to Allah, and may Allah's blessings be upon our master Muhammad, his family, and companions," and ends with: "The crown of the true faith, its renewer, the result of lofty ambitions, and the source of its fruitful achievements."

The introduction contains several characteristics, which can be summarized as follows:

- The praise and blessings upon the chosen Prophet, peace be upon him, as he did not deviate from the usual styles in writing the message.

- The phrases of praise and flattery that the correspondent used to convey his purpose in writing the message. For instance, he praises the recipient for his knowledge, which is clearly evident in his words: "Bearer of the banner of leadership in hidden knowledge, the crown of the true faith, its renewer, the result of lofty ambitions, and the source of its fruitful achievements." He also praises him as a renovator of the true faith.

- He used phrases to express the peak of his happiness and admiration for him, such as describing him as a renewer of the religion and a keeper of its secrets, which is evident from his saying: "I rejoiced when the creation rejoiced with you, and I was enlightened when you became the manifestation of the lights of the Sharia." These are just a few of the flattering phrases.

Content. It begins with: "If you have done some good," and ends with: "Fighting the disbeliever is the way of Allah, which has passed before, and the virtue that is directed by both the law and reason."

We find that *Hamdan Khawja* expresses his overflowing emotions and longing in an elevated style, alluding to a figure whose identity remains unknown. What is even more striking is that he openly and fearlessly describes the one he called "the worst of enemies" as someone who "drinks poison." He delivers the phrase as if it were a proverb, with such beauty and eloquence that it captivates hearts and minds. Moreover, it serves as evidence of the truth of his claim and reinforces the condition he describes. He reminds him of his fate, which, judging by the context of the letter, the shaykh seems to know well. Still, Hamdan Khawja deliberately reminds him of it, hoping that the reminder may benefit the believers, as he says: "Don't you see, may Allah grant you health, how Allah has afflicted him with grief?" Then he advises him, calling him to righteousness, saying: "Is it strange to expect uprightness from a fall? Perhaps bodies are healed by ailments." He concludes by reminding him that fighting the disbeliever is a divine law and a divine command that must be followed.

Conclusion. At the end of the letter, he affirms that the struggle against disbelievers is a divine law that must be followed, a natural duty imposed by both reason and Sharia. This is evident in his statement: "*Fighting the disbeliever is the way of Allah that has passed before, and the virtue directed by both Sharia and reason.*"

Artistic Features of the Letter. Verbal Embellishments

A - Rhymed Prose (Saj')

Through our study of the letter, it is clear that *saj'* occupies the largest portion compared to other features. We find that he carefully chooses his language and balances his sentences and expressions. Examples include: "*creation and truth (al-khalīqa wa al-ḥaqīqa)*," "*his virtues and his auras (kamālātīhi wa ḥālātīhi)*," "*the preserved secret and the hidden knowledge (al-sirr al-maṣūn wa al-ilm al-maknūn)*," and many other forms of rhymed prose that added elegance and beauty to the letter.

B - Metonymy (Kināyah)

Metonymy is one of the elements of eloquence. Essentially, it is "a word used with the intention of implying a related meaning, with a context that does not exclude the original

meaning." An example from the letter is: "*he drinks poison*," which is a metonym for evil—that is, the person being referred to is extremely wicked.

C - Qur'anic Quotation

The letter includes a quotation from the Holy Qur'an, which we notice in the phrase: "*the way of Allah that has passed before*," a reference to the verse: "*the way of Allah that has passed before, and you will never find any change in the way of Allah.*"

D - Paronomasia (Jinās)

This appears in expressions such as: *al-maṣūn wa al-maknūn* (the preserved and the hidden), *zalaḥ wa 'ilal* (slips and ailments), *taqtabis wa takhtalis* (to borrow and to snatch), *yastarrid wa yastanjid* (to recover and to seek support).

E - Metaphor (Isti'ārah)

Metaphor appears in the phrase: "*Fortune met you in a time that sealed its virtues with your merits*," where *time* is metaphorically compared to a human being. The human element is omitted, leaving one of its characteristics—*meeting*—to imply it. This is a personification metaphor. The same applies to: "*Prosperity faced you*," where *luck*, an abstract concept, is metaphorically treated as a human being facing someone—again a personification metaphor.

Semantic Embellishments

A - Antithesis (Ṭibāq): This appears in pairs such as *stillness and motion*, *part and whole*, *health and ailments*.

B - Exaggeration (Mubālaghah): It is evident in phrases like: "*as you were the manifestation of the lights of the Sharia and the Truth*" and "*until the virtuous were convinced that you are the center of honor*."

C - Allusion (Talmīḥ): This is seen in the phrase: "*he drinks poison*," an allusion to the peak of evil carried by the character to whom Ḥamdan Khūja refers. He masterfully portrays this figure through vivid imagery, depicting him as one who swallows poison—symbolizing his cruelty and tyranny. Only one whose soul is dead, devoid of mercy or compassion, could do so, and such was this man.

The Letter of Emir Abdelkader (1807–1883) to Commander Bugeaud and Other Colonial Officials

During his negotiations with the French throughout the period he led the resistance against colonization, Emir Abdelkader sent the following message, among others:

"After the customary greetings, I have received your letter and understood its contents. You mentioned that the French government has instructed you to pursue peace if possible, otherwise to resort to the sword. France well knows that I am among the most eager for peace and the most averse to the shedding of blood without just cause. It is also aware of my desire to establish peace and build its foundations upon a firm and unshakable basis. This is evidenced by what I conveyed to it through its envoy in Tangier. If divine providence grants success to this endeavor through your hands, it will be proof of the purity of your intentions toward the servants of God and a sincere sign of your loyalty in serving both the state and the people."

Formal Characteristics of the Letter

Introduction. The Emir opens his letter with the phrase "*Amma ba'd*" ("As for what follows"), forgoing any lengthy or ornate preamble, as the situation is grave and urgent. He is in a state of war, and as the saying goes, "Every situation calls for its appropriate words."

Thus, he expresses his intent from the very beginning, since the moment does not allow for delay or hesitation.

Moreover, the recipient of the letter is Bugeaud—a man who would not, under any circumstances, be swayed by eloquent or embellished phrases. He came to Algeria with a single purpose: to destroy the nation and seize its wealth. The Emir is fully aware of this, which is why his response in the letter is direct and sincere, expressing his commitment to peace and his aversion to war.

Body. The main subject of the letter revolves around the issue of peace, which was Emir Abdelkader's primary concern. He expresses his deep attachment to peace and his aversion to war and bloodshed, as clearly shown in his words: *"Even though the French government knows that I am among the most eager people for well-being and among the most averse to bloodshed without legitimate cause."* (Al-Jilali and Muhammad, 145) The letter also reflects his awareness of the dangers and consequences of war, which in turn reveals his composure and political acumen.

Conclusion. As for the conclusion, it is not given much attention. It serves merely as a summary of the content and a statement of the possible outcomes if the peace process, which the Emir advocates for, is not pursued. In such a case, he implies that the sword would be the most truthful response to the situation—just as he said.

Stylistic Features of the Letter: A close reading of the letter reveals that Emir Abdelkader dives straight into the subject and clearly expresses his opinion without elaborate structure or rhetorical embellishment. This is evident in the letter addressed to General Bugeaud, in which he offers peace. Because his main concern was to make his message and intentions clear, he did not focus on literary craftsmanship or stylistic polish. Thus, he deviated from the usual formal conventions of letter writing.

This highlights Emir Abdelkader's particular style in correspondence: he did not concern himself with rhyme or ornate language but wrote almost as he spoke. Although he initially seems to follow traditional models in showing religious influence at the start, he neither strives for elegance in expression nor seeks out rare or difficult vocabulary. Instead, he uses simple, clear language and structures that convey his purpose with clarity.

The Letter of the Scholar Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis (1889–1940) to Sheikh Bachir Al-Ibrahimi (1889–1965)

We begin with the letter sent by Abdelhamid Ben Badis while he was under house arrest in Constantine, addressed to his companion on the path, Mohamed Bachir Al-Ibrahimi, who was at the time in prison. The text of the letter is as follows: (Al-Ibrahimi and Muhammad Al-Bashir 1995, 39).

"To the esteemed brother, Professor Bachir Al-Ibrahimi – may God protect him. Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you."

After that, I have learned of your noble, great, and just stance. So I say to you: Now, O Omar! You have safeguarded knowledge and religion – may God safeguard you and protect your legacy. You have honored them both – may God elevate your status in this life and the next. You have upheld their dignity – may God grant you honor before the truthful history. You have brightened their face – may God brighten your face on the Day of Judgment. May He keep you firm on the straight path.

You must inform me of your wishes. And God is the One sought for help."
From your brother, Abdelhamid Ben Badis.

The Formal Characteristics of the Letter

Introduction. It begins with the phrase: *"To the esteemed brother, Professor Bachir Al-Ibrahimi – may God protect him,"* and ends with: *"Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you. After that,"* What most distinguishes the introduction is its conciseness and its near-complete adherence to conventional requirements. It contains the key elements typically found in a formal opening—except for the praise of God and the basmala (invocation). Ben Badis begins by naming the recipient, *"Bachir Al-Ibrahimi,"* then proceeds with the greeting of peace: *"Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you,"* and concludes with the transitional phrase *"after that."*

Body. It starts with: *"I have learned of your noble, great, and just stance,"* and ends with: *"You must inform me of your wishes."* Ben Badis goes directly into the heart of his message, listing the honorable actions of Al-Ibrahimi and praying to God to reward him both spiritually and worldly, as he had worked to preserve both religion and knowledge.

Conclusion. The conclusion is brief. As previously mentioned, a conclusion may take the form of a prayer—which is a traditional style—and this is what Ben Badis adopts in his words: *"And God is the One sought for help,"* expressing his appeal for divine support.

Artistic Features

Verbal Embellishments:

A – Kenāya (Metonymy): Found in the phrase *"you honored them and elevated them,"* which is a metonymy referring to the esteemed status that religion and knowledge attained thanks to his service to them.

B – Istihāra (Metaphor): Appears in the phrase *"you whitened their face,"* (Al-Ibrahimi & Muhammad Al-Bashir, 1995, p. 39) where knowledge is metaphorically compared to something tangible, like a human being. The comparison (the human) is omitted, leaving only one of its attributes ("whitening the face")—a clear example of implied metaphor.

Tadmīn (Allusion): The letter includes an allusion to a saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as seen in the phrase *"Now, O Omar,"* which the Prophet addressed to Omar ibn Al-Khattab (may God be pleased with him) when Omar said to him, *"You are dearer to me than myself."* Ben Badis uses this same phrase—*"Now, O Omar"*—when he becomes certain that the homeland has become dearer to Al-Ibrahimi than his own life, and that he is ready to sacrifice himself for it.

Mental Enhancements:

C – Antithesis (Tābaq): We can observe it in the phrase *"this world and the Hereafter,"* where two contrasting ideas—this world and the afterlife—are presented together, highlighting their opposition.

After ten days of "Abdelhamid Ben Badis" being exiled to Aflo, and only four days after writing this immortal letter, the death of Sheikh President Imam "Abdelhamid Ben Badis" occurred. His passing came as a sudden loss, and the news was briefly published in *"La Dépêche Algérienne"* on the front page, April 17th, along with a photo of the Imam.

The esteemed professor *"Bachir El Ibrahimi"* was deeply grieved, shedding bitter tears, and his heart was heavy as he was unable to attend the funeral. He entrusted the matter to God and consoled himself, writing a letter of condolence to his brothers in Constantine, expressing his sorrow. The letter, in the form of a question-and-answer exchange, is as follows:

"And the soul asked her sister, 'Where?'... and the answer came back, 'No where.' Where, O sister, is the drawn sword,
 For the turns of fate on the difficult day?
 Where, O sister, is the chosen imam,
 The one with eloquent speech and sound judgment?
 Where is the one who took my thoughts as they passed,
 And washed away the void with fertile thoughts?
 He was met by the inevitable fate of destiny,
 And he passed, not desiring a share of this world.
 Where, O sister, is the crescent of the dark night,
 The knight of the arena, the one who reveals the distress?
 He was a light in the dark nights,
 Woe to my people if he vanished or turned away.
 Where, O sister, is the imam of salvation,
 The trustee of God from the Mosque of the Arabs?
 The souls longing for him were deprived,
 And they found their share in the dust.
 Where is the protector of the faith from the stain of delusion,
 And the defender of truth from the fabrications of desires?"
 "Until he says:
 Where is the lion who was here yesterday,
 Lying down, having filled the world with his roar?
 He was victorious, in two places we were entrapped,
 From the den of faith, he would strike and defend.
 He did not falter in the face of opportunity, nor did he weaken,
 Did you see the sharp, fierce spear?
 The elephant has abandoned, and the caravan moves on,
 While the sanctuary has become prey for the invaders.
 Where is he today, O sister of the chief,
 Who once raised the heads of the people so high?
 Why has he disappeared? Why is there no trace of him?
 Why is today so grim and sorrowful?
 Who threw the nation into the misery of distress,
 And gave it the bitter cup of sorrow?
 Until he said: 'Peace be upon you, united in truth and scattered in the service of truth, your brother, proud of your presence.'"

Muhammad al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi, *Aflo*, Saturday, 13th of Rajab al-Fard, 1359 AH

The Formal Characteristics of the Letter

Introduction: The letter is poetic, in which he expresses his sorrows. In this letter, al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi consoles the people of his town with verses of poetry that truly reflect the inner turmoil he felt. He questions himself about his companion in the journey and struggle, wondering why he could not attend his funeral. This was something that deeply saddened him, causing words to flow from his heart, expressing his anguish and burning emotion. After all, he combined within himself the spirit of a reformer, the imagination of a poet, and the strength of a revolutionary. Thus, his introduction consists of questions waiting for answers, such as his words: "Where, O sister, is the drawn sword, For the turns of fate on the difficult day?" (Al-Ibrahimi & Muhammad Al-Bashir, 1995, p. 281)

And other examples. In general, the letter is different from the usual, as it is not intended as a greeting. The letter lacks the basmala (the phrase "In the name of God"), the praise (al-hamdulillah), and words of farewell.

Presentation. With a broken spirit and sorrowful words, "al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi" expresses the internal volcano boiling within him due to the loss of his dearest friend. He raises questions for which he finds no answers, asking about the imam with sound judgment, who was a never-ending source of thought. Questions upon questions that remain unanswered. These were the consolation that soothed his pain and wounds after losing the most precious one.

Conclusion. The conclusion of the writer follows a consistent tone. Al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi consoles himself and his people, ending with a prayer for them to continue and stay on the path of truth. The conclusion is essentially a prayer.

Artistic Features

Verbal Rhetorical Devices:

A. **Rhymed Parallelism (Saj').** This appears in his words: *al-'aseeb* (difficult), *al-museeb* (calamity), *al-khaseeb* (fertile), *al-naseeb* (share). (Al-Ibrahimi & Muhammad Al-Bashir 1995, 281)

B. **Figurative Comparison (Metaphor):** Seen in his phrase, "The crescent of the dark night," where he compares *Abd al-Hamid bin Badis* to the crescent, omitting the comparison tool and leaving the metaphorical image of the "crescent" as the only point of reference.

Figurative Meaning Devices: A. **Antithesis:** The juxtaposition of *faith* (dīn) and *misguidance* (dalāl).

A. **Exaggeration:** Exaggeration is evident in his phrase, "The knight of the arena, the one who reveals the distress."

The Letter of Abu al-Abbas Fadl ibn Nasr al-Taherti, who passed away in the year 344 AH:

"Your letter has arrived, and it has renewed my longing to see you and stirred a passion to meet with you. It has made me imagine, despite the vast distance and the prolonged hardship, your presence. It has painted a picture for me of what separates us, and I have understood the advice you gave and the condolences you offered. You have awakened me from my slumber and shaken me from my forgetfulness. I remembered the words of Bakr ibn Hamad about his son:

*'And my grief is lightened by the thought that I will join you,
And that my life in this world is short.
For no lover remains with their beloved,
And no companion is forever a companion.'*

*And I have not found that the long sorrow has subsided,
For it persists in a grief that is long-lasting.
But surely, the heart suffers a longing,
Which is eased only by the patience it carries.'*

However, my brother, when I reflect on the beginning of this verse, I am unable to hold back tears, and I find no patience. It is his words:

*'What was once gathered from you has been scattered,
And the sand has gathered on you, a vast heap.
There is no knowledge to tell you where it is,
Nor a grave that can relieve your burning thirst.'*

*The greatest has been scattered, and the joints are shaken,
And the winds sway them wherever they wish' "* (Mertad 2005, 94).

Abu al-Abbas Fadl ibn Nasr al-Taherti, who passed away in the year 344 AH, wrote this letter as a response to a letter he had received from a friend or companion, as is evident. This was after Abu al-Abbas had lost sight of his friend under mysterious circumstances, which he did not understand. His friend had left and never returned to his family, homeland, or companions. He then received the news that his friend had died in one of the wars and campaigns he had taken part in in Andalusia. Abu al-Abbas continued to mourn him for the rest of his life, feeling sorrowful and heartbroken over his sudden departure, which only deepened his grief.

Artistic Features of al-Taherti's Letter (Omar Urwah) . The letter of al-Taherti is addressed to a dear friend and companion, which means it falls under the category of "brotherly letters." These letters are characterized by specific artistic traits, including:

The sender's emotions, which are expressed through his feelings, culture, mastery of the Arabic language, and his ability to use its vocabulary and styles. The spirit of the author comes through strongly, despite the spirit of the era and the weakness of Arabic literature in Algeria at the time. There is a richness in the style as it expresses his mourning for his friend, his attachment to him, and his longing for him. Al-Taherti's style is predominantly informative, suitable for narrating and affirming facts, as he lived the experience and felt it deeply. This is evident in his words: *"So it returns to him patience like a camel."* This does not mean he neglected the use of the imperative style, as seen in his commands: *"Wake up!"* and *"Did you?"*.

He used simple and clear words and phrases overall, such as *"I was with him"*, *"remaining"*, *"long"*, *"short"*, *"my life in this world is short."*

He also used suggestive and expressive words that reflect the sender's inner feelings, such as *"longing"*, *"desire"*, *"passion"*, and *"pain."* This does not imply that the text lacks some ambiguity, such as the word *"grave"* (jadath), which is likely due to the passage of time.

The letter is addressed to a close friend and does not require ambiguity or complexity. As for the literary imagery, we find several rhetorical figures and stylistic devices, including:

Metaphors

- *"A longing has turned around the heart"* – a metaphor in which the heart, something abstract, is compared to something material, with the "longing" revolving around it. The material thing is omitted and represented by its characteristic, which is the word *"turned."*
- *"The winds sway"* – another metaphor for the winds.

Figures of Speech

- *"What was once gathered from you has been scattered"* – an allusion to scattering, symbolizing disintegration.
- *"So I long for your sight, and desire to meet you"* – an allusion to intense yearning and longing to see his companion.

Rhetorical Devices

- **Pun:** In the use of *"the home"* (al-dār) and *"the visit"* (al-mazār).
- **Addressing:** We also find him using the vocative expression *"O my brother"* within the letter.

CONCLUSION

The letters that have been analyzed demonstrate the mastery of the art of oratory and writing in the Arab-Islamic heritage. They combine a meticulous formal style with eloquent rhetoric and religious references, reflecting the political, social, and religious contexts of each period. These letters are not merely a means of communication; they are comprehensive literary models that express the depth of Arab-Islamic culture, showcasing the writers' skill in employing rhetorical devices and oratorical techniques to achieve the intended purpose of the letter, whether it is directive, pleading, expressing gratitude, or making an official announcement. Through the study of these texts, it is clear that the art of writing letters was a distinct craft, requiring high skill in word choice, idea organization, and the connection of meanings. This makes it a valuable literary and historical heritage worthy of study and attention.

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