

CELIA J. KERSLAKE
(Cambridge)

THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SELİM I AND ẸĀNŞŪH
AL-ĜAWRĪ

ẸĀnşŪh¹ al-GawrĪ, the penultimate Mamlŭk sultan of Egypt, perished in Receb 922/August 1516 in the fateful confrontation between the Ottoman and Mamlŭk armies at Marj Dābiĸ, north of Aleppo, following Selim's invasion of Syria. The correspondence which passed between the two monarchs in the years and months preceding this confrontation has, despite its obvious historical interest, received scant attention.

The only original document to have come to light so far is a letter from ẸĀnşŪh to Selim, in Turkish, dated Şafer 922, which was published, from the Topkapı Sarayı Archives, by Halil Edhem in 1928.² The texts of six letters from Selim to ẸĀnşŪh (three in Arabic and three in Turkish) and of two more from ẸĀnşŪh to Selim (both in Arabic) are included in Aĥmed Feridŭn's *Münşe'ātu's-selātin* (compiled 1575). The problems of chronology which these Feridŭn letters pose were touched on by Herbert Jansky in 1926, in the footnotes to his article on Selim's conquest of Syria,³ but in most cases there has

¹ The correct reading of the name is a matter of controversy. The evidence cited by E. Denison Ross in *BSOAS*, ii (1922), 334, for the reading ẸĀnşawh (see also *EP*¹, ii, col. 721b), although accepted by P. M. Holt (*EP*², art. 'ẸĀnşawh al-ĜhawrĪ'), appears to have been disregarded by D. Ayalon (*Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamluk Kingdom*, London 1956) and J. Eckmann (*Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, ii, Wiesbaden 1964, p. 300). B. Flemming, in *Studies in memory of Gaston Wiet*, Jerusalem 1977, p. 257, presents the form Qanısawh, but on p. 260 of the same article (n. 71) she

reads QānşŪh. Being myself unqualified to make a judgement on the matter, I have adhered to the latter, conventional reading.

² 'Mıř fethi muĸaddematına 'ā'id mühimm bir veřika' in *TTEM*, 19/96, 30–36. The document, of which Halil Edhem has provided a facsimile, transcription and analysis, is now catalogued as E. 12282. No other letters between Selim and ẸĀnşŪh are recorded in the relevant (unpublished) sections of the Topkapı Sarayı Archives catalogue.

³ *MOG*, ii, p. 182, n. 3; p. 190, n. 1; pp. 203–4, n. 2; p. 205, n. 1; p. 211, n. 1.

not, as yet, been any detailed analysis and evaluation of their contents.⁴ 'Koca Nişancı' Celāl-zāde Muştafā includes in his *Selīm-nāme* (written *circa* 1560)⁵ the complete Arabic text of a further long letter from Selīm to Ḳānşūh.⁶

All ten of the texts mentioned above⁷ are examined in this paper, which aims at relating the individual letters to their historical contexts, at establishing the sequence and chronology of the whole body of correspondence, and at considering whether it had any influence on the actual course of events in this final phase of the history of Osmano-Mamlūk relations.

The accompanying diagram shows the probable sequence of the letters, as established on the basis of the evidence to be presented below. I have numbered the Feridūn letters F1–8, in the order in which they appear in the second printed edition.⁸ TS is the Topkapı Sarayı document published by Ḥalil Edhem, and C1 is the Arabic

⁴ All of Jansky's references to the letters are extremely brief. His supposition (p. 205, n. 1) that the letter on pp. 424–5 of Feridūn², i. (my F6) is the answer to that on pp. 423–4 of the same (my F5) suggests a less than adequate examination of their contents, even allowing for the fact that Jansky did not have available to him the document subsequently published by Ḥalil Edhem. S. Tansel, in his history of Selīm's reign (*Yavuz Sultan Selim*, Ankara 1969), cites only one of the Feridūn letters between Selīm and Ḳānşūh: my F6, my F6, which he paraphrases on pp. 131–3.

⁵ For Celāl-zāde Muştafā, see İ. H. Uzunçarşılı in *Belleten*, XXII/87 (1958), 391–441; *IA*, art. 'Celāl-zāde' (T. Gökbilgin); *EP*, art. 'Djalāl-zāde Muştafā Çelebi' (V. L. Ménage). I am preparing his *Selīm-nāme* for publication, in the form of a summary translation with commentary. For a description of the work, see my forthcoming article in *Turcica*, IX/2-X, 'The *Selīm-nāme* of Celāl-zāde Muştafā as a historical source'. To the list of MSS. there given must now be added an eighth, kindly brought to my attention by Professor Ménage: Edirne, İi Halk Kitaplığı, no. 2151. It has not yet been possible for me to undertake a detailed comparison of this with the other MSS.

⁶ Other narrative sources contain references to letters passing between Selīm and Ḳānşūh, but most of them are brief and vague, lacking dates and failing to

convince one that the authors, or their informants, have actually seen the documents of which they write. Many such references are cited by Tansel (*op. cit.*, 108–35), but no attempt has been made to incorporate them into the present paper. On the whole, they appear to bear little relation to the texts here described, and their thorough evaluation would require a separate study.

⁷ Further copies of some of these letters are to be found in other, unpublished *münşe'āt* compilations (see n. 10, below). It is, of course, quite possible that a more extensive investigation of the vast corpus of Ottoman *inşā*-literature will bring to light new letters between Selīm and Ḳānşūh. Ḥalil Edhem (*op. cit.*, p. 35–6, n. 2) apparently discovered an early letter from Selīm to Ḳānşūh, written in Arabic and dated »*awāḥir rabī'ayn*« 919, in a *mecmū'a* preserved in Miller Ktp. As the MS. number which he gives is wrong, however, it has unfortunately not been possible for me to trace this letter.

⁸ I have made only selective cross-checks with the first edition (Istanbul 1264–5), in which F1 and F7 are missing. The page references to Fefidūn² (Istanbul 1274–5), i, with those for Feridūn¹, i in parentheses, are as follows: F1:411–3; F2:419–21 (369–71); F3:421–2 (371–2); F4:422–3 (372–3); F5:423–4 (373–4); F6:424–5 (374–5); F7:425–6; F8:426–7 (375–6).

letter in Celāl-zāde's *Selīm-nāme*.⁹ The language in which each letter is written is indicated by (A) or (T) and where the date of dispatch is known, this also appears in the diagram. A date in square brackets is one which is not explicit in the text but may be derived from other sources. Along each arrow I have indicated, with a similar use of square brackets, the bearer of the letter if stated or deducible, and have also provided a very brief reference to the message contained.¹⁰

The order in which the letters will here be described depends more upon logical than on chronological sequence. The primary aim has been to make the argument clear to follow. Subject, however, to the problem of letters »crossing« en route over long distances, and also to a certain confusion in the material at one point, chronological sequence has been observed wherever possible.

F1 is a *feth-nāme* sent by Selīm to Kānş ūh, in which an account is given of the conquests of Kemāh and of the principality of the Zū'l-ḳadriyye. The text corroborates Ferīdūn's statement in the title that this letter was sent to the Sultan of Egypt together with the head of 'Alā'ü'-devle, the vanquished Zū'l-ḳadr ruler.¹¹ The date, 14 Cemāzī I 921/26 June 1515, and the place, Kayseri, which appear at the end of the letter are entirely plausible: according to the Ferīdūn anonymous *rüz-nāme*, this was the date on which Selīm, after the conclusion of

⁹ References to the two MSS. which I regard as closest to the original: Topkapı Sarayı Ktp., Hazine 1415 (hereafter »MS. H«), 125a–127b; Manchester, John Rylands University Library, Turkish MS. 158 (hereafter »MS. M«), 133a–135b.

¹⁰ The list of additional copies, known to me, of six of the ten letters (F2, F4, F6, F7, F8, C1) is as follows:

London, British Library, Or. 11194 (see V. L. Ménage in *WZKM*, LXVIII (1976), 33; F2 (41a–44b), F4 (44b–46b).

Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Ktp., İsmail Sâib Sencer 1/4504 (see H. İlaydın & A. Erzi in *Bellestin*, XXI/82 (1957), p. 232, nos. 37–41; pp. 251–2, no. 75; F2 (47b–49b), F4 (49b–51a), F6 (51a–52b), F7 (47a–b), F8 (52a–53a), C1 (133b–136a).

Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye Ktp., no. 4316; F6 (276b ff., see Tansel, *op. cit.*, p. 132, n. 161, and facsimile at end of book).

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ancien Fonds Turc 350 (see E. Blochet, *Catalogue des manuscrits turcs*, i, Paris 1932, 147); F7 (94a–95a).

Celāl-zāde Muştafâ, *Selīm-nāme*:

F7 (MS. H, 127b–128a; MS. M, 135b–136b).

Istanbul, Süleymaniye Ktp., Reisülküttap Mustafa Ef. 895 (*Nāmeḥā-yı mülūk ve vüzerā*): F7 (19a–b), C1 (19b–22a).

¹¹ The further assertion, in the title supplied by Ferīdūn, that Kānş ūh was too stunned to answer this letter, is belied by Ḥaydar Çelebi's *rüz-nāme* (Ferīdūn², i, 471). He records, on 3 Şevvāl 921, the arrival back from Egypt of Ḥasan Beg, who had vebeen sent to the Sultan of Egypt with the head of 'Alā'ü'd-devle. He has brought a letter from the Sultan of Egypt, which the Nişancı is ordered to translate, and it is read to Selīm the following day. The fact that the bearer of F1 is named in the text of the letter not as Ḥasan Beg but as Seyfū'd-din Beg does not necessarily mean that two individuals are involved; Seyfū'd-din may have been this Ḥasan's *lakab* (see *EF*², iv, 179–81, art. 'İsm'). Perhaps this is the Silāḥdār Ḥasan Beg who was sent to Kānş ūh (again) a few months later, with F2 and the head of Kara Hān (see below)?

the Zū'l-qaḍr campaign, left Kayseri to return to Istanbul.¹²

The sending of 'Alā'ü d-devle's head to Ḳānşūh was a menacing gesture, since the Mamlūk Sultan had long regarded 'Alā'ü d-devle as his vassal.¹³ Even had this not been so, the annexation by the Ottomans of this frontier principality lying between the two empires was bound to be regarded by the Mamlūks as a provocative act. During the following months, while the Ottomans were making preparations for another great expedition, ostensibly for a second invasion of Persia, Shah İsmā'il sent envoys to Ḳānşūh, warning him that, after Persia, Syria and Egypt would be the next object of Selim's expansionist ambitions.¹⁴ İsmā'il's proposal for a defensive alliance was favourably received by the Mamlūk Sultan,¹⁵ who began meanwhile to make his own military preparations.¹⁶

The letter from Ḳānşūh to Selim which is preserved in the Topkapı Sarayı Archives (TS)¹⁷ is dated the last decade of Şafer 922/end of March 1516. This is some six to seven weeks before Ḳānşūh left Cairo to lead his army towards the Ottoman frontier.¹⁸ In this letter, in which Selim is addressed affectionately (!) as »oğlum ḥazretleri«, the Mamlūk Sultan complains firstly about the obstruction of trade and traffic between their two countries,¹⁹ and secondly about

¹² Feridün², i, 409.

¹³ There seems to have been an implicit recognition of this relationship on the part of the Ottomans: when 'Alā'ü d-devle displayed hostility towards them during their Persian expedition of 920/1514, Selim, according to contemporary historians, both Ottoman and Egyptian, sent a letter of complaint to Ḳānşūh (Jansky, *MOG*, ii (1926), 180–2; Tansel, *op. cit.*, 110–1). A clear indication of how the Mamlūks regarded the Zū'l-qaḍr *beglik* is to be found in Ibn İyās's account of the dismayed reaction in Cairo to the arrival of 'Alā'ü d-devle's head (25, 26 Cemāzi II 921): his principality is seen to have »gone out of the hands of the [Mamlūk] Sultan«, and its loss is referred to as that of »the greater part of the province of Aleppo« (*Badā'i' al-zuhūr fi wakā'i' al-duḥūr*, iv², ed. M. Mostafa, Cairo 1960, 462–3; French trans. by G. Wiet, *Journal d'un bourgeois du Caire*, i, Paris 1955, 427).

¹⁴ Celāl-zāde, *Selīm-nāme*, MS. H, 120b–121a, MS. M, 128a–b; Sa'dü'd-din, *Tāci'ü'l-ievāriḥ*, ii (Istanbul 1280), 326–7; 'Āli, *Künhü'l-ahbār* (MS. Fatih 4225), 216a; Jansky, *op. cit.*, p. 182, n. 3,

pp. 183–4, 191; Tansel, *op. cit.*, 114–5.

¹⁵ As n. 14, above.

¹⁶ From the beginning of 922/February 1516. See Jansky, *op. cit.*, pp. 191–2, n. 4 (latter part).

¹⁷ See n. 2, above.

¹⁸ For the date of Ḳānşūh's departure from Cairo (c. 14 Rebi' II/17 May) see Jansky, *op. cit.*, p. 197, n. 4 (cf. p. 193, n. 2).

¹⁹ For Selim's embargo on trade with Persia, and its effect on traffic with the Mamlūk dominions, see J.—L. Bacqué—Grammont, 'Notes sur le blocus du commerce iranien par Selim I^{er}', in *Turcica*, vi (1975), 68–88, where, however (pp. 76–7, n. 19), this letter is referred to as addressed by Selim to Ḳānşūh! I am informed by Dr. Bacqué—Grammont that the various inaccuracies contained in this footnote (cf. nn. 21, 24, 28, below) have been rectified in a new version of the article to appear as a chapter of his forthcoming *Ottomans et Safavides au temps de Şāh İsmā'il*. For a further document relating to the embargo, see Tansel, *op. cit.*, 84.

the warlike preparations which he has heard that Selim is making against him, on land and sea.

F6, as Ḥalil Edhem convincingly demonstrated,²⁰ is Selim's reply to TS, and the date and place attached to it in Feridūn (the first decade of Muḥarrem 922, Edirne) are wrong.²¹ It is evident from the text that this letter was written *after* Selim had set out from Istanbul on the expedition of 922, i. e. after 4 Cemāzī I 922/5 June 1516.²² In answer to the Mamlūk Sultan's complaint about the disruption of trade, Selim insists that his measures are directed only at those merchants who are carrying goods to Persia.²³ Vehemently denying any hostile intent towards any of the »sultans of Islam«, he refers particularly to the inherited bond of love between himself and Kānšūh, which he, too, likens to a filial relationship. As proof of his goodwill he mentions that, on setting out on his new expedition against the »Kızıbaş«, he had sent »Mevlānā« Rūknū'd-din and the *emir* Aḥmed to ask for the prayers of Kānšūh and of the holy men of the Haremeyn for this campaign.²⁴ Selim's real attitude, however, is betrayed by the tersely-expressed threat towards the end of the letter, that he will not be responsible for the consequences if Kānšūh tries to thwart his expedition against the enemies of the faith.

The two envoys referred to in F6 as having been dispatched *before* the arrival of Kānšūh's letter (TS)²⁵ are Zeyrek-zāde Rūknū'd-din, the Kādī-asker of Rūmeli,²⁶ and Karca Aḥmed Paşa.²⁷ It is

²⁰ *op. cit.*, 32–4.

²¹ *ibid.*, 35; Tansel, *op. cit.*, p. 132, n. 161. For two further copies of this letter, see n. 10, above. The text in the Ankara MS. is not dated; to that in the Nuruosmaniye MS. are assigned the date Muḥarrem 922 and the place Edirne; an exactly similar attribution is to be found in yet another copy of this letter, which is included in the *first* printed edition of Feridūn, ii, 226–7. In the two last — mentioned copies, this letter is wrongly entitled, as having been sent to a certain **کتابی / کتابی** Ḥān (see Bacqué—Grammont, *op. et loc. cit.*, except that the letter with which »la date et la plus grande partie du texte coincident« is not »la lettre à Kansu publiée par Ḥalil Edhem« (cf. n. 19, above), but F6).

²² For the date of Selim's departure from Istanbul, see the anonymous *rūz-nāme*, Feridūn², i, 450; Jansky, *op. cit.*, 204; Tansel, *op. cit.*, 129.

²³ This section of the letter is quoted and translated by Bacqué-Grammont (*op. cit.*, p. 76 and n. 15).

²⁴ Ḥalil Edhem (*op. cit.*, 35) and Bacqué—Grammont (*op. cit.*, p. 77, n. 19) wrongly refer to these two ambassadors as the bearers of *this* letter (F6), although Ḥalil Edhem implicitly contradicts himself in his n. 1 on the same page, with his reference to the two texts in Celāl-zāde's *Selīm-nāme*.

²⁵ »henüz mektūb-ı şerifiniz vāşıl olmadıns«.

²⁶ For him, see Mecdī, *Ḥadā'īku'ş-şakā'ik*, Istanbul 1269, 326, where, however, the date of his departure on this mission is wrongly given as 921.

²⁷ This is presumably the Karaca Paşa who, on 16 Şevval 921, was dismissed from the *beglik* of Kırşehir for returning prematurely from the operations in Diyarbakır, and, together with other *begs* similarly disgraced, was imprisoned in Edirne from 14 Zi'l-ḥicce 921 until towards the end of Rebi' I 922 (Ḥaydar Çelebi *apud* Feridūn², i, 472, 474, 477). He later became the first Ottoman governor of Aleppo (anonymous *rūz-nāme*, Feridūn², i, 451; Celāl-zāde, MS. H, 132a, MS. M, 141a; Tansel, *op. cit.*, 146).

possible to follow their mission through from beginning to end in the narrative sources.²⁸ We see them leaving Istanbul on the eve of Selim's own departure, on 3 Cemāzī I,²⁹ being received by Kānšūh in Aleppo on his own arrival there on 9 Cemāzī II,³⁰ and eventually, after a period of captivity,³¹ returning to the Ottoman camp at Tūcān-dere on 11 Receb.³² Jansky correctly identified F7 as the letter carried by these two ambassadors.³³ Although it is not dated, and its bearers are not named in the text, its subject-matter tallies with the reference at the end of F6. In F7 Selim announces that, since it is the duty of monarchs to combat heresy, he will shortly (*'an karīb*) be setting out against the »Şūfi« who is ruling the *diyār-ı şark*. Reminding Kānšūh that it is an obligation on every Muslim to pray for the victory of those who seek to overthrow that band of apostates, he particularly requests the prayers of the Mamlūk Sultan himself and of the holy men in the sanctuaries of Islam.

A source not used by Jansky, the *Selīm-nāme* of Celāl-zāde Muştafā Çelebi, provides confirmation of the fact that this letter was carried by Mollā Rūknü'd-din and Karca Paşa. Celāl-zāde, when mentioning the setting out from Istanbul of this pair of ambassadors,³⁴

²⁸ I know of no evidence to support Bacqué-Grammont's assertion (*op. et loc. cit.*) that these two envoys were sent *several times* on missions to Kānšūh. Tansel, to whom he refers, relates only this one instance.

²⁹ Haydar Çelebi *apud* Feridūn², i, 477–8; Sa'dü'd-din, ii, 328 (no date).

³⁰ Ibn Iyās, *op. cit.*, v², ed. M. Mostafa, Cairo 1961, 60–1 (Wiet, ii, Paris 1960, 57–8); Ahmed Süheyli, *Ta'rih Mıṣrı'l-cedid*, Istanbul 1142, 10a (no date); Jansky, *op. cit.*, 201–2 (for his emendation of Ibn Iyās's date cf. p. 193, n. 2).

³¹ Jansky, *op. cit.*, pp. 201–2, n. 3; Tansel, *op. cit.*, 130–1.

³² The anonymous *rūz-nāme*, Feridūn², i, 451; Haydar Çelebi, *apud idem*, 478–9, does not name this *konak*, but his more detailed testimony, that Karca Paşa arrived at the Ottoman camp on 11 Receb, and that Zeyrek-zāde followed two days later at Kırk Geçid, is probably the more accurate. Tansel (*op. cit.*, 134, following Sa'dü'd-din and 'Alī, reads the name of the *konak* as Bucakdere. İ. H. Danişmend (*İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*², Istanbul 1971, ii, 26) does the same, and in his index (p. 494) identifies it with the present-

-day village of Bucak, in the *ilçe* of Siverek. This, however, is considerably too far east, and on the wrong side of the Euphrates!

The version **توجان دره** of the anonymous

ruz-name (which could easily be misread, or »rationalized« as **بوجاق دره**)

appears again, quite independently, in

the text of F8 (see below). Celāl-zāde's *Selīm-nāme* (MS. H, 129b, MS. M, 138a)

presents an intermediate form, **توجاق دره**

which is also to be seen on the map in F. Taeschner's *Das anatolische Wegenetz*, i, Leipzig 1924; here the *konak* is correctly placed just to the south of the village of Sürgü (S. W. of Malatya).

³³ *op. cit.*, p. 190, n. 1. For four further copies of this letter (none of them dated), see above, n. 10. Tansel's reference (*op. cit.*, p. 129, n. 138) to MS. Esat Ef. 3647, f. 160b is an error.

³⁴ MS. H, 124b–125a; MS. M, 132b–133a.

gives the full texts of *two* letters, one in Arabic and the other in Turkish, which he says they were given to take to the Sultan of Egypt. The Turkish one³⁵ is, with minor variations, the same as F7; it begins with an *'unvān*, missing in the Feridūn version, in which Kānšūh is addressee as »*karındaşım Sultān-ı Mısr*«. In the case of two of the other copies of this letter,³⁶ its composition is ascribed to Seydi Beg, who may confidently be identified as the *Dīvān kātibi* of that name, who was later to become Nişāncı.³⁷

The Arabic letter presented by Celāl-zāde (C1)³⁸ is three times as long as the Turkish one. Its basic message is much the same, but the language in which it is expressed is extravagantly ornate, full of abstruse, poetic imagery which has inevitably suffered at the hands of uncomprehending copyists. A tone of exalted piety pervades the entire text, and the love which is alleged to bind the two monarchs is elevated to the level of a mystical phenomenon. This letter offers an explanation of Selim's decision to direct his jihad against the heretics (*a-malāhida*) in the eastern land (*al-bilād al-sharqiyya*), i. e. Persia. They are worse than the other infidels (*sāyir al-kuffār*), it is argued, because of their greater stubbornness and their active efforts to destroy Islam. Selim has prepared an army for a renewed assault upon them, and requests the aid, in the form of prayer, of Kānšūh and of the *ahl al-Haramayn*. This letter is not dated, but its bearers are named in the text as »*al-mawlā Rukn al-Dīn al-kādī bi'l-asker al-manşūr*« and »*al-amīr . . . Şhams al-Dīn*³⁹ *Aḥmad*«. In one of the two other copies of this letter which I have come across,⁴⁰ its composition is ascribed to »*Mevlānā Sa'di Tāci-zāde*«. ⁴¹ This attribution is supported by 'Aşık Çelebi,⁴² and is given added credibility

³⁵ It actually appears after the Arabic one: MS. H, 127b–128a; MS. M, 135b–136b.

³⁶ Ankara and Paris (see n. 10, above).

³⁷ For Seydi Beg, see n. 17 of my forthcoming article in *Turcica* (n. 5, above). İlaydın-Erzi (*Belleten*, XXI/82, p. 232, no. 37), have copied the name incorrectly from the Ankara MS. as

³⁸ See n. 9, above. For two further copies of this letter, see n. 10.

³⁹ I have not come across any other references to Karaca Aḥmed Paşa with this *lakab*. But Şemsü'd-din Aḥmed is one of the *lakab-alem* combinations most frequently encountered among the Ottomans (see F. Babinger in *Der Islam*, XI (1921), 20–21, n. 3).

⁴⁰ Ankara (see n. 10, above).

⁴¹ For Tāci-zāde Sa'di Çelebi, see 'Aşık Çelebi, *Meşā'irü'ş-su'arā*, ed. G. M. Meredith—Owens, London 1971, 156a–157a; Mecdi, *op. cit.*, 337–8. Biographical details of Sa'di Çelebi are included in İ. Erünsal's study of Sa'di's more famous brother: *The Life and Works of Tāci-zāde Ca'fer Çelebi, with a critical edition of his Divān*, typewritten Ph. D. thesis, Edinburgh 1977, vol. i.

⁴² 'Aşık Çelebi devotes about half of his notice on Sa'di Çelebi (see n. 41, above) to relating how he was ordered by Selim to compose the letter which Zeyrek-zāde was to take to Kānšūh, the speed and artistry with which he accomplished the task, and the reward which he received for it. (Cited by Erünsal, *op. cit.*, 42.).

by the fact that Sa'di Çelebi was particularly noted for his proficiency in Arabic.⁴³

The group of letters F2, F3, F4 presents something of a problem. F2⁴⁴ is another letter from Selim to Kânşüh, reporting the victory of Bıyıklı Mehmed Paşa over Shah İsmâ'il's commander, Kara Hân. It relates how this news reached the Ottoman Sultan at Akşehir, through which he was passing on his way eastward for a second campaign against Persia. Mention is made of Kara Hân's head, which Selim is sending with the *emir* Hasan, the bearer of this letter.⁴⁵ The date given at the end of the letter, the last decade of Ramazân 921, is manifestly erroneous. Although we do not know the exact date of the battle between Bıyıklı Mehmed Paşa and Kara Hân, which took place in the vicinity of Mardin,⁴⁶ several of the Ottoman sources mention the receiving by Selim of the heads of Kara Hân and his *emirs*, and place the event at Akşehir or Konya, on 25 Cemâzi I 922.⁴⁷ The most accurate record is probably that of the anonymous *rûz-nâme*, which has the heads reaching Selim at Akşehir on 25 Cemâzi I and being dispatched to the Sultan of Egypt from Konya five days later.⁴⁸

F3 is undated, and is headed simply »*el-cevâb*«. It does indeed begin with acknowledgement of Selim's letter, naming its bearer as Hasan Beg Silâhdâr⁴⁹ and mentioning that he had brought with him Kara

⁴³ 'Aşık Çelebi, *op. et loc. cit.*; Mecdi, *op. et loc. cit.*; Erünsal, *op. cit.*, 43.

⁴⁴ For two other copies of this letter, see n. 10, above.

⁴⁵ Cf. n. 11, above. It is in F3 that he is identified as a *silâhdâr* (see below).

⁴⁶ Tansel, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–7 and n. 419. The present-day *ilçe* town of Kızıltepe/Koçhisar is some 20 km. S. W. of Mardin.

⁴⁷ Celâl-zâde, MS. H, 128a–b, MS. M, 136b–137a; Sa'dü'd-din, ii, 329. Of the sources cited by Tansel (*op. cit.*, p. 87, n. 430 and p. 129, nn. 144–5), the 'Feth-nâme-i Diyâr-ı Arab' (ed. S. Tansel in *Tarih Vesikaları*, new series, i/2 (17) (1958), pp. 294–320 and i/3 (18) (1961), pp. 430–54) is vague and confused as regards chronology. It has the heads reaching Selim at Akşehir (no date) (i/2 (17), p. 302), but only after an earlier messenger had already brought the news of the victory to him in Istanbul (p. 301). This same messenger is alleged to have encountered the Grand Vizier, Sinân Paşa (who had set out in advance of the Sultan) at Kayseri (p. 301). However, according to Haydar

Çelebi, who was with Sinân Paşa at the time (see Feridün², i, 477, entry for 20 Rebi' II), the Grand Vizier did not reach Kayseri until 12 Cemâzi I (*idem*, 478), i. e. eight days after Selim's departure from Istanbul. Haydar Çelebi has messengers bringing the news of Bıyıklı Mehmed Beg's (*sic*) victory to Sinân Paşa at Akşehir on 20 Rebi' II (*idem*, 477), and then going on to the court (»*kapuya gitdi*«), which they would, indeed, have found still in Istanbul. It seems, then, that Selim must have learnt of the victory about a month before receiving the heads and having this letter written; the gruesome cargo of heads and noses would inevitably have travelled more slowly than the news itself. The (undated) text of the »*feth arzı*« sent by Bıyıklı Mehmed Paşa to Selim with the heads of Kara Hân and others of the defeated enemy appears in Feridün², i, 418–9, just before F2.

⁴⁸ Feridün², i, 450.

⁴⁹ For the *silâhdârs*, one of the six divisions of the *kapukulu* cavalry, see İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları*, ii, Ankara 1944, 148–50.

Hān's head. Great joy is expressed (!) at this victory of Selim's over the enemies of the faith. In the remainder of the letter, Ḳānṣūh says he is sending back Selim's messenger, accompanied by an envoy of his own, Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Ḳabṭān.⁵⁰ This ambassador is bringing, along with certain Egyptian commodities, the special present of an elephant, one of a consignment of four which had been sent to Ḳānṣūh by »the King of India« (*malik al-bilād al-Hindiyya*), but of which only two had survived the journey.⁵¹ He is also bringing money to buy timber and craftsmen of which Ḳānṣūh has need in Cairo.⁵²

F4 is similarly headed »*el-cevāb*«, and its contents correspond closely with those of the latter part of F3. Selim acknowledges receipt of Ḳānṣūh's letter, naming its bearer as Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Ḳabṭān. He announces that, in response to Ḳānṣūh's request, he has given orders for large quantities of timber to be supplied to the Ḳabṭān from the residue of the previous year's stock. The relevant craftsmen, however, cannot be spared, since they are all fully employed on the building of a hundred large ships which Selim plans to use against the Christians. He asks that this failure to meet the Sultan of Egypt's wishes in full be not attributed to any cooling of amicable feeling. Meanwhile, the elephant has duly arrived, and occasioned wonder and admiration in those who have seen it. Selim is sending the Ḳabṭān back to Ḳānṣūh, bearing this letter.

In the relevant Hammer manuscript of Ferīdūn,⁵³ F4 is dated the first decade of Cemāzī II 922. The date given in the printed editions is the same, except that the year is not specified. The place of writing is named as Konya. It is, of course, out of the question that, within the space of ten days, Silaḥdār Ḥasan could have travelled all the way to the Sultan of Egypt, who by this time was somewhere between Damascus and Aleppo, and returned to the Ottoman camp

⁵⁰ For the use of the Italian-derived *ḳabṭān/ḳubṭān* in Arabic, with the meaning of »sea captain«, see H. & R. Kahane and A. Tietze, *The Lingua Franca in the Levant*, Urbana 1958, 143. In both printed editions of Ferīdūn, and the Hammer MS. (see n. 53. below), the word usually appears in these letters wrongly as

⁵¹ The arrival of these two elephants in Cairo, brought by an ambassador of »the King of India«, is recorded by Ibn Iyās on 2 Ramaḏān 918/11 November 1512 (*op. cit.*, iv², 284; Wiet, i, 266).

⁵² Presumably for the building of ships (see below). We know of another instance of a sea captain's being sent by Ḳānṣūh

to purchase naval supplies from the Ottoman Sultan: the return to Cairo, after the successful accomplishment of his mission, of »*al-ra'īs Ḥāmid al-Maḡribī*« is recorded by Ibn Iyās on 9 Ramaḏān 918 (*op. cit.*, iv², 285; Wiet, i, 267). There is a reference to this Ḥāmid in F4. See also S. Özbaran in *TD*, 31 (1978), p. 84, n. 12.

⁵³ Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. H. O. 158 (G. Flügel, *Die arabischen, persischen und türkischen Handschriften der kaiserlich-königlichen Hofbibliothek zu Wien*, i, Wien 1865, pp. 282–3, no. 312), 216 verso. Photocopies of a section of this MS. were kindly made available to me by Dr. Bacqué—Grammont.

with an answer and an elephant!⁵⁴ Not only, however, is the chronology of this sequence of letters (F2, F3, F4) as presented by Feridūn, impossible; the subject matter of the latter half of F3 and the whole of F4 is strikingly incongruous with the actual situation at the beginning of Cemāzī II 922. Although we know that the Ottomans had for some years been supplying the Mamlūks with shipbuilding materials, guns and ammunition for use in their struggle with the Portuguese,⁵⁵ it is hardly likely that a new request of this kind would have been made by Kānşūh at a moment of such tension between the two sultans, when both had been on the march for several weeks, bringing their armies progressively closer to their common frontier. That an elephant would have been sent as a present under such circumstances also seems highly improbable. Furthermore, Selim's answer (F4) contains not the slightest hint of his being in the course of an expedition; it gives every impression of having been dispatched, in leisured circumstances, from the capital.

The solution of the problem of these three letters is facilitated by the existence, in two other sixteenth-century *münşe'āt* compilations, of further copies of F4.⁵⁶ In both of these other works, the date of this letter is given as the first decade of Zī'l-ka'de 919/December 1513–January 1514. This date, two-and-a-half years earlier than that given by Feridūn, places the composition of F4 in the winter preceding the Çaldıran campaign, when Selim, from his newly-secured throne, had not yet proved his military ambition and power in any expedition outside Ottoman territory. If we adopt this earlier date as the correct one — and there is nothing in the text of F4 itself which argues against this — we then have to assume that F3 represents *either* a conflation by Feridūn of two letters from Kānşūh to Selim written at different times, *or* a skilfully-constructed forgery, designed to fill a gap in Feridūn's collection by providing both a flattering response to F2 and also the necessary precursor of F4. There is, it seems to me, no way of accepting F3 as an authentic *single* document. The first half of it, if genuine, could not have been written before Cemāzī II 922, whereas the latest possible date for the second half, again if genuine, would appear to be *circa* Ramażān 919.

F5 is an undated letter from Kānşūh to Selim, presented by Feridūn as the reply to F4. In fact, apart from beginning with an

⁵⁴ In the anonymous *rūz-nāme* (Feridūn², i, 450), the arrival back of »the person who had taken Kara Hān's head [to Kānşūh]« is recorded on 24 Cemāzī II, at Söğütlü Burnı, the first *konak* after Elbistan.

⁵⁵ See S. Özbaran in *TD*, 31 (1978), 83–4; S. N. Fisher, *The Foreign Rela-*

tions of Turkey, 1481–1512, Urbana 1948, 101–2.

⁵⁶ See n. 10, above. The London MS. has a long lacuna in this letter, equivalent to 17 lines in Feridūn², suggesting that a leaf may have been lost.

acknowledgement of Selim's letter as having been brought back by Ḳānşūh's own envoy, Yusuf al-Ḳabṭān, its contents have nothing whatsoever to do with F4. It refers to Selim's letter as having announced his setting out for Persia. After reading it, Ḳānşūh says, he had consulted the *emīrs* of his Divān in Cairo, and it had been decided to lead an army to the frontier, in order to mediate between the Ottoman Sultan and the Shah. He had himself set out, therefore, towards Damascus and Aleppo. (This piece of information places the composition of F5 after 14 Rebi' II 922.⁵⁷) He urges Selim to give up his expedition against Persia, justifying this request on various grounds, which space does not permit me to enumerate here. It seems to me likely that the letter from Selim which provoked this anxious response was F6. As we have seen, F6 was Selim's reply to Ḳānşūh's complaint about the interruption of (TS), and contained a reference to his having set out on a new Persian campaign. Although the fuller explanation of this move had been given earlier, in the letters carried by Mollā Rūknū'd-dīn and Karaca Paşa (F7 and C1), it seems that Yūsuf al-Ḳabṭān — who now appears, by implication, as the bearer of TS as well as of F6⁵⁸ — travelled faster than the Ottoman envoys, and was the first to bring the news of Selim's departure to the Mamlūk Sultan. However fast he travelled, though, Yūsuf could not possibly have brought this news to his master in Cairo, as Ḳānşūh claims, since Ḳānşūh had actually begun his northward march over a fortnight before Selim crossed into Anatolia!

F8⁵⁹ comprises, finally, Selim's declaration of war on Ḳānşūh. It contains within the text the information that it was written on 11 Receb⁶⁰/10 August 1516, at Tūcān-dere Boğazi. The date is just fourteen days before the battle of Marj Dābik, and the location is a mountain pass in the area between Malatya and Besni.⁶¹ The tone of this letter is markedly different from that of all those preceding it. Gone are the honorific *elkāb*, the allusions to a special relationship, the lofty expressions of love and unity. Ḳānşūh's name at the beginning of the letter is followed by the insulting *aşlahā 'llāh shānahu*, and this tone of contempt is maintained throughout. The message of the letter is that, through the capture of some people sent by Ḳānşūh as spies, his treachery has come to light,⁶² and he is seen to be even worse than the heretics with

⁵⁷ See n. 18, above.

⁵⁸ As on his earlier mission in 919, we observe that the Ḳabṭān had been chosen to take to the Ottoman Sultan a message to which his own professional interests and knowledge would have been relevant (cf. n. 52, above).

⁵⁹ For another copy of this letter, see n. 10, above.

⁶⁰ The year is not specified here, but the date given at the end of the letter is *awāsiṭ Rajab 922*.

⁶¹ See n. 32, above.

⁶² Cf. the following consecutive entries in the anonymous *rūz-nāme* (Feridūn², i, 450–1), pertaining to a few days before this letter: 3 Receb: *Sultān-ı Mısrın cāsūsın tutdılar, haberin alub katıl eylediler*; 4 Receb: *Sultān-ı Mısr Kızılbaşdan mu'āvetet taleb etdiği haberi geldi*.

whom he sought to cooperate. Selim has therefore invaded his territory and captured Malatya, Darende,⁶³ Divriği and Şarköy. He challenges Kānşüh, if he has a grain of manliness and pride in him, to come and give battle, wherever and in whatever manner he chooses.

Selim had actually known of the understanding between the Mam-lūk Sultan and Shah Īsma'īl for several months.⁶⁴ The matter had even been discussed in the Divān in Istanbul before the start of the expedition.⁶⁵ Why then had Selim maintained for so long, in his correspondence with the Sultan of Egypt, the fiction of a quasi-filial devotion, feigning ignorance of Kānşüh's dealings with the heretic? The question cannot be simply answered. One obvious explanation would be that he wanted to conceal from Kānşüh for as long as possible his real intention, in order to secure the advantage of a surprise attack. There is undoubtedly some truth in this, but there is also the very real possibility⁶⁶ that Selim himself, as he set out across Anatolia in 922, did not know what the final direction of the expedition would be. However much his own ambition may have been fixed upon conquering the Arab heartlands of Islam, and becoming the protector of the holy places,⁶⁷ he could not embark upon so daring an enterprise without the support of at least a majority of the Paşas and the *'ulemā*. This majority support appears not to have been forthcoming at the outset of the expedition.⁶⁸ The *'ulemā* were reluctant to sanction a campaign against a Sunnī monarch,⁶⁹ and some of the Paşas had doubts on practical grounds.⁷⁰ As the Ottoman forces marched south-eastward across Anatolia, however, re-

⁶³ Both the printed editions of Feri-dün have **لارند ه**, which must be an error. The Hammer MS. (see n. 53, above), 218 verso, and the Ankara *münşe'āt* (see n. 10, above) have **درند ه**.

⁶⁴ Celāl-zāde, MS. H, 121a, MS. M, 128b; Sa'dü'd-din, ii, 327; Jansky, *op. cit.*, p. 189, n. 1.

⁶⁵ Sa'dü'd-din, ii, 327–8; Jansky, *op. cit.*, 189.

⁶⁶ Cogently argued by Jansky, *op. cit.*, 189–91.

⁶⁷ Jansky, *op. cit.*, 226–8; for the perspicacious counsel of H'āce-oğlu Meḥmed Paşa, and Selim's eager acceptance of it (to which Jansky here refers), see Sa'dü'd-din, *loc. cit.*, also Tansel, *op. cit.*, 128. (Sa'dü'd-din and 'Ālī appear to be wrong in showing H'āce-oğlu Meḥmed as already a vizier at this point; earlier sources place his promotion from the Nişancı-

lık to the vizierate on 11 Muḥarrem 923 – see n. 17 of my forthcoming article in *Turcica*, referred to in n. 5, above). Further testimony to Selim's long-held aspiration to be the guardian of the Arab lands in general and of Mecca and Medina in particular is to be found in Celāl-zāde's *Selīm-nāme*, in speeches reported by Piri Paşa: MS. H, 26b–27b, MS. M, 27b–28b (translated in my *A critical edition and translation of the introductory sections and the first thirteen chapters of the 'Selīm-nāme' of Celāl-zāde Muştafa Çelebi*, typewritten D. Phil. thesis, Oxford 1975, 35b–37a).

⁶⁸ Some even thought that, in view of the Persian–Egyptian alliance and Kānşüh's moves, the whole expedition (ostensibly aimed at Persia) should now be cancelled (Sa'dü'd-din, ii, 327–8; 'Ālī, MS. Fatih 4225, 216b).

⁶⁹ Tansel, *op. cit.*, 128.

⁷⁰ Jansky, *op. cit.*, 185; Tansel, *op. cit.*, 119–20; Celāl-zāde, MS. H, 121b–122b, MS. M, 129a–130b.

ports of the steady northward advance of the Mamlūk army⁷¹ and the continuing refusal of the local Mamlūk *emīrs* to grant the Ottomans passage through to Persia⁷² provided ample evidence of the seriousness of Ẓānshūh's opposition. Not merely were his actions politically hostile and provocative; it was also an outrage to religion that a Sunnī monarch should be seeking forcibly to thwart another Sunnī monarch's attack on a heretical power. Another factor which, during the course of the march, must have helped to shift the balance of opinion among Selim's ministers in favour of an assault on the Mamlūks was the absence of any sign of a new initiative on the part of the Shah, in the wake of Kara Ḥān's defeat and death. By the late summer of 922, therefore, conditions were ripe for an Ottoman invasion of Syria, and the decision had finally been taken at a Divān held at Doḡıma Çayırı, in the vicinity of Malatya, on 5 Receb, six days before Selim dispatched this last letter to Ẓānshūh.⁷³

The answer to the question of whether the correspondence between the two monarchs in itself influenced the course of events must be, I think, only to a very limited extent. It is clear that both sides had their own sources of intelligence, and were not reliant on these letters for basic information about each other's moves.⁷⁴ Ultimately, what brought the two sultans to the confrontation at Marj Dābiḡ was their mutual actions, rather than the way in which they represented these actions in their letters. To the extent that this correspondence was aimed at averting a conflict — and this was only truly the case on Ẓānshūh's side — it may be said to have been abortive. Nevertheless, its study gives us an additional insight into the politico-psychological atmosphere on the eve of a great turning-point in the history of the Middle East.

⁷¹ These must have been received from a variety of sources: see, e. g., nn. 54, 62, above; also Ḥaydar Çelebi's entry for 3 Cemāzī II (Feridūn², i, 478).

⁷² Tansel, *op. cit.*, 127–8; Ḥaydar Çelebi, *loc. cit.*

⁷³ The anonymous *rūz-nāme*, Feridūn², i, 450–1; Jansky, *op. cit.*, p. 210 and n. 1. Ḥaydar Çelebi (Feridūn², i, 478) places the decision a few days earlier, at Elbistan

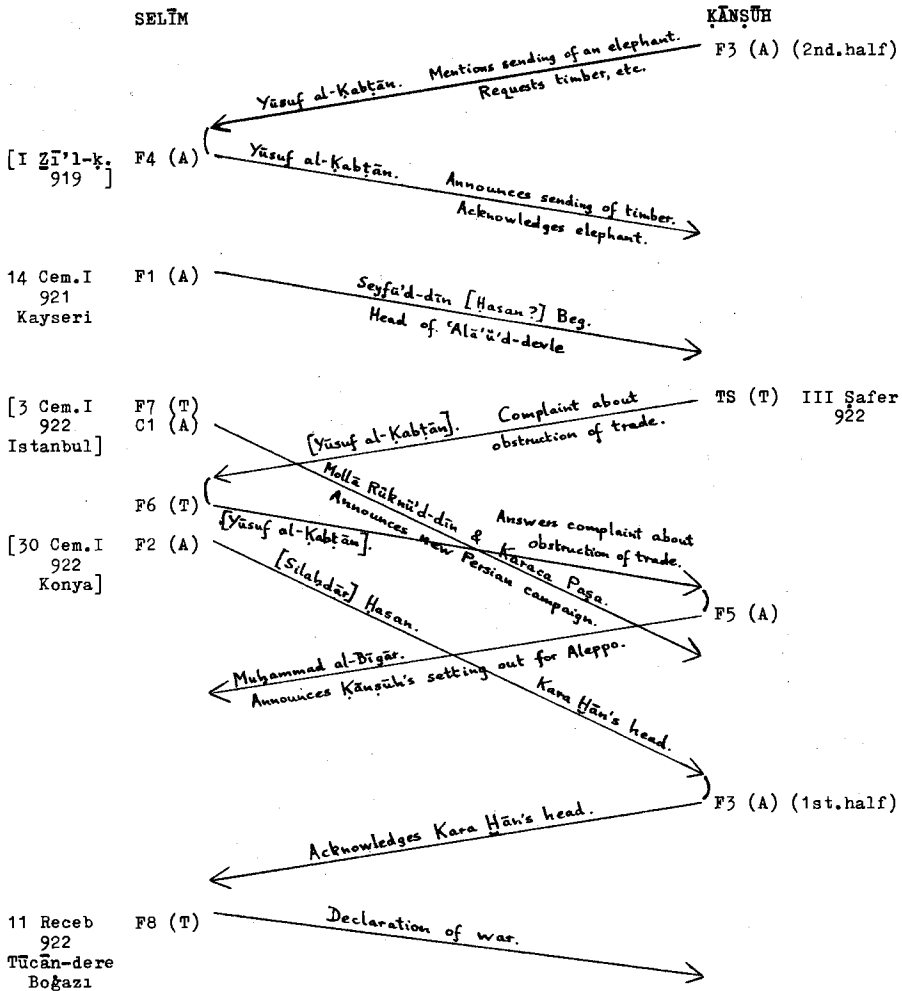
on 29 Cemāzī II. It is worth noting that the date of composition of F8 coincides with the date of Karaca Paşa's return to the Ottoman camp (see n. 32, above).

⁷⁴ Cf. nn. 62, 64, 71, above. For further references to spies, see Ḥaydar Çelebi's entry for 12 Cemāzī I 922 (Feridūn², i, 478); 'Feth-nāme-i Diyâr-ı Arab' (n. 47, above), p. 301.

SELİM

KÂNSŪH

Diagram of the correspondence between Selīm I and Kānsūh al-Ġawrī



S u m m a r y

THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SELİM I AND KĀNŞŪH AL-ĠAWRĪ

Kānşūh al-Ġawrī, the penultimate Mamluk Sultan of Egypt and Syria, perished in Receb 922/August 1516 in the fateful confrontation between the Ottoman and Mamluk armies at Marj Dābiḳ, north of Aleppo, following Selim I's invasion of Mamluk territory. In view of the immense significance of Marj Dābiḳ in opening the way to the Ottoman conquest of the entire Mamluk empire, the correspondence which passed between the two monarchs in the years preceding this confrontation is of particular historical interest.

So far, the only original document to have come to light is a letter from Kānşūh to Selim, in Turkish, dated Şafer 922, which was published by Ḥalil Edhem in *TTEM* in 1928. The texts of six letters from Selim to Kānşūh (three in Arabic and three in Turkish) and of two more from Kānşūh to Selim (both in Arabic) are included in Ferīdūn's *Münşe'āt-ı Selātin* (compiled 1575). The problems of chronology and sequence which these Ferīdūn letters pose were touched on by Jansky in 'Die Eroberung Syriens durch Sultan Selim I' (*MOG*, ii, 1926), but there has, as yet, been no detailed analysis and evaluation of their contents. In recent years, scholars who have explored other, unpublished, Ottoman *münşe'āt* collections have mentioned further copies of some of these letters, as well as some apparently additional material. And 'Koca Nişāncı' Celāl-zāde Muşafā includes in his *Selīm-nāme* (written c. 1560) the complete Arabic text of a further long letter from Selim to Kānşūh.

In this paper, I shall attempt to establish the sequence and chronology of this whole body of correspondence, on the basis of the material available to me so far, and to relate the individual letters to their historical contexts. I shall also consider what the content and tone of the letters suggest were the objectives that each monarch was pursuing through this correspondence, and whether it did, in fact, influence the course of events in this final phase of the history of Osmano-Mamluk relations.

R e z i m e

KORESPONDENCIJA IZMEĐU SELIMA I I KANSUH AL-GAWRI-JA

Kānşūh al-Ġawrī, pretposljednji mamelučki sultan Egipta i Sirije poginuo je redžepa 922 / augusta 1516 u kobnom sukobu između otomanske i mamelučke vojske na Marj Dābiḳ-u, sjeverno od Alepa nakon invazije Selima I na mamelučku teritoriju. S obzirom na ogroman značaj Marj Dābiḳ-a za otvaranje puta otomanskim turcima za brzo osvajanje

cijelog mamelučkog carstva, korespondencija koja je vođena između dva vladara, u godinama prije ovog sukoba je od posebnog značaja za istoriju.

Jedini originalni dokument koji je izašao na svjetlo dana je pismo *Ḳānṣūh-s Selim-u*, na turskom jeziku, napisano sefera 922, koje je objavio *Ḥalil Edhem* u TTEM-u 1928. god. Tekstovi šest pisama *Selima Kansuh-u* (tri na arapskom i tri na turskom) i još dva *Kansuh-a Selim-u* (oba na arapskom) su obuhvaćeni u djelu *Münşe'ât-i Selâtin*, autor *Feridün* (sakupljeno 1575. god.). Problemi hronologije i povezanosti koje ova *Feridun-ova* pisma nameću dotakao je *Jansky* u djelu »Die Eroberung Syriens durch Sultan Selim I« (MOG, ii, 1926), ali do sada nema detaljnih analiza i procjene vrijednosti njihovog sadržaja. Posljednjih godina, naučnici koji su istraživali druge neobjavljene turske zbirke *münşe'ât* spominju još neke kopije ovih pisama, kao i neku dopunsku građu. I »Koca Nişancı« *Celâl-zāde Muştafâ* obuhvata u svom djelu *Selim-nāme* (napisano 1560. god.) kompletan arapski tekst dugog pisma *Selim-a Ḳānṣūh-u*.

Pokušaću da u ovom radu ustanovim povezanost i hronologiju cijelog korpusa ove korespondencije, na osnovu materijala koji su mi do sada bili dostupni i da postavim lična pisma u istorijski kontekst. Takođe ću razmatrati na šta ukazuju sadržaj i ton ovih pisama, jesu li ciljevi svakog vladara vidljivi kroz ovu korespondenciju i je li ona zaista imala uticaja na tok istorijskih događaja u poslednjoj fazi osmansko-mamelučkih odnosa.